



AWARD-WINNING

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PINTS WEST

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

Bristol Beer Festival moves to Temple Meads

MANY PEOPLE may already be aware that the popular Bristol Beer Festival cannot take place at its usual home of the Council House in 2004 as it will be closed for an extensive refurbishment.

We have been looking for a new venue and indeed asked the public where they thought we could hold a successful festival. The most popular suggestion was the Brunel Shed, Temple Meads.

We have pursued this and are pleased to announce that, subject to license, the Bristol Beer Festival 2004 will indeed take place at the Brunel Shed on Friday, 5th March and Saturday, 6th March.

Our recent festivals at the Council House have sold out of tickets long before they open. This is a much bigger venue, so many more people will be able to attend. With a location at Temple Meads, transport is excellent for those who may wish to travel by train.

This new venue will allow for much greater seating than at previous festivals. We have also extended the very popular Saturday lunch session by an additional half an hour.

Despite the much greater costs of using this venue, we have endeavoured to keep prices as reasonable as possible, with the dearest ticket still under a fiver.

Tickets will go on sale in early January and details of how you can get yours – plus opening times – can be found inside on page 4.

And what will we be offering at the festival? A fantastic range of well over 100 real ales plus a great selection of real cider and perry, that's what.

Updates regarding the beer festival will appear on the branch web site www.camrabristol.org.uk so check it regularly if you want to know the latest information.

See you at the festival!



www.camrabristol.org.uk

Smiles – *the* Bristol Brewery

AS we approach the end of 2003, it brings to a close an exciting 25th anniversary year for Smiles Brewing Company.

The anniversary was celebrated back in April at the Brewery Tap. Company founder, John Payne returned to pull the first pint of **Anniversary Ale** and in true “ale conning” tradition declared the beer fit to drink. And drink it they did. The Anniversary Ale was sold in the Brewery Tap for two months at 1975 prices – or was that 75 pence?

Following the success of the popular Anniversary Ale, Smiles have created another product, this time for bottling. The brewing industry was recently invited to partake in a competition by Asda Superstores, in a quest to establish what customers would nominate as the best handcrafted bottled ale. Smiles took up the challenge and launched a new bottled ale called **Bristol Imperial**. The beer made the finals, with three others, and should now be on sale throughout the UK in over 200 stores.

Bristol Imperial is a dark ale, brewed to 5.2 per cent ABV and is, they claim, “more satisfying than your favourite arm chair”. Smiles gained permission from the Lord Mayor’s office to use a format of the City

Coat of Arms as its bottle label thus enforcing the close links between “The Bristol Brewery” and the City. Samples were presented to the Lord Mayor in a ceremony at the Mansion House in Clifton.

Smiles brewed a special **Golden Brew** at 4.5 per cent ABV for another of Wether-spoon’s beer festivals. If you are local to the South West, you may have seen it available around the end of October.

In November, Smiles started brewing another new product, **Bristol Porter**. This is a stout brewed to 4.7 per cent ABV: “a heavyweight blend of pale ale and crystal malts with a touch of chocolate malt producing a wort (brewing liquor) dark in colour with a roast flavour. Smiles’ own yeast ferments the wort, creating a full dark roast flavour which is balanced with a clean bitterness from the addition of First Gold Hops.” For those wishing to experience Bristol Porter it will be featured at the Brewery Tap and other local free trade accounts during November, and possibly beyond.

Holly Hops returns as Smiles’ festive ale for December. This is a 5.0 per cent brew, representing a strong traditional festive ale, dark gold in colour with a warming character, brewed using crystal and wheat malts bittered with a blend of Fuggles

and Golding hops.

Smiles held its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 8th October at the University and Literary Club, Berkeley Square, Bristol – apparently well attended and with all the motions passed.

Some time ago Smiles was awarded a contract to supply certain cross Channel ports through an agent in Calais. It is confirmed that fresh supplies will be winging their way to France in the next few weeks in anticipation of the Christmas and New Year trade. The company is also in discussions through Neville Mort to recommence supplies to America.

Brewery tours continue apace. Tony Haynes has broken yet another record in numbers of tourists visiting throughout the year. Currently it looks like the company will have entertained over 2,400 visitors, all of whom will have sampled many ales!

In addition to the near legendary Neville Mort, who has been brewing real ale for a very long time indeed, Smiles now has a first class team led by Chris Thurgusson and his number two, Alex Kean. Apparently they have both recently passed their Associate Members Examination for brewing and hold certificates from the I.B.G. Our congratulations to them both.

Richard Brooks

Smiles
advert

Getting Fresh

ONCE again, the Bristol & District branch decided to take the CAMRA message to the new intake of students at the UWE (University of the West of England). This consisted of running a stall at the Freshers’ Fair and competing with all the other organisations who seek their custom and membership.

Many of the new students had actually heard of real ale and we tried hard to enlighten the others! Eighteen new CAMRA members were signed up and many more membership forms taken away.

Our thanks go to Bath Ales and Smiles for kindly supporting the event by donating beer for the students to sample.



Sampling the beer at the Freshers’ Fair

CAMRA announces dates for National Pubs Week 2004

Encourage your local to participate in Britain's biggest pub promotion — let's celebrate the Great British pub!

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has announced that National Pubs Week 2004 will take place between Saturday 21st and Saturday 28th February to celebrate British pubs.

National Pubs Week was originally launched in February 2003 to encourage more people to visit pubs more regularly. A staggering 15,000 pubs organised events and displayed promotional material in the first campaign.

Due to this success, CAMRA has now made National Pubs Week a calendar event. Mike Benner, CAMRA's Head of Campaigns said, "National Pubs Week was an event created to encourage people to visit pubs more regularly at a time of year when trade can be slow for the industry. We were delighted that 15,000 pubs came on board in February 2003 and hope the 2004 event will be even more successful."

Benner continued, "The key to the success of National Pubs Week is getting pubs involved in the campaign, ordering **FREE** promotional material from CAMRA and arranging a number of events to encourage people through the door to celebrate British pubs throughout the last week of February 2004."

It is very important that pub goers

encourage their local pubs to order the free promotional material as soon as possible and get them thinking about what events they can organise to encourage more customers to visit their pub more regularly."

Pub Participation

CAMRA has produced a wide range of promotional material for pubs to use. This includes three different poster designs, beer mats, press release templates and advice/briefing sheets.

People can order these, and find out more information on ideas for pub events, pubs issuing their own press releases, and the latest updates on National Pubs Week 2004 by visiting the CAMRA website at www.camra.org.uk/pubsweek or calling Samantha Jones on 01727 867201.

Mike Benner said, "The promotional material has now been produced and we will be distributing it to pubs from December onwards. I would urge all publicans, whether they serve real ale or not, to get their orders in as soon as possible so that CAMRA can get the packs out in time for them to build up local interest in National Pubs Week."

Benner concluded, "In today's competitive leisure industry, it is important that pubs

become more marketing focused to attract and keep custom. It should be stressed to licensees that the pub doesn't have to organise anything too imaginative – pub quizzes, food promotions, themed nights, pub crawls with other pubs can all work if that is what their locals want."

If you are reading this in a pub why not ask the landlord if they're joining in National Pubs Week?

National Pubs Week Industry Partnerships

To improve on the success of National Pubs Week 2003, CAMRA has formed a number of industry partnerships to help promote the event. Charles Wells, Fuller's, Bateman, Enterprise Inns, Tynemill, The Publican Newspaper and British Institute of Innkeeping have all pledged their support by agreeing to distribute promotional material, writing trade press features and encouraging pubs to organise events throughout the week.

(If any of the media require National Pubs Week 2004 images please email tony.jerome@camra.org.uk or visit the National Pubs Week website – www.camra.org.uk/pubsweek)

Bear Inn, Wiveliscombe
advert

Dorothy Inn, Weymouth
advert



Bristol Beer Festival 2004

THE 2004 BRISTOL BEER FESTIVAL will take place at the Brunel Shed, Temple Meads on Friday 5th and Saturday 6th March.

The times and ticket prices of the four sessions (there will be no Thursday evening session this time) are:

Friday lunchtime	11:30 to 3:00	£3.50
Friday evening	5:30 to 11:00	£4.50
Saturday lunchtime	11:30 to 4:00	£4.50
Saturday evening	6:30 to 11:00	£4.00

Tickets will go on sale in early January and will be available from the following pubs:

Bag O'Nails	Hotwells
Bridge Inn	Passage Street, Bristol
Wellington	Horfield
Off The Rails	Weston-super-Mare

They will also be available by post from:

CAMRA, c/o 7 Kellaway Court, 142 Kellaway Avenue, Golden Hill, Bristol BS6 7YP.

Please note this is a postal forwarding address only – tickets will not be sold to callers.

Do remember to state which session or sessions you want tickets for and enclose a cheque payable to “**Bristol & District CAMRA**”, together with a stamped, addressed envelope.

See you at the festival!

Butcombe
advert

Bell, Kingsdown
advert

Campaigning for Real Cider and Perry

AS reported in the last edition of Pints West, the month of October was to become CAMRA's first ever Cider & Perry Month.

And so it was that October saw CAMRA launch a national campaign to boost the market for real ciders and perries from Britain's largely unknown independent producers.

It was a call for pub owners to offer their customers a real cider or perry during October and beyond.

The biggest two cider producers have about 90 per cent of the market, while well over one hundred independent producers share the remaining 10 per cent.

CAMRA wants to see more real ciders on sale in local pubs and is calling on pub companies to make it a policy to allow their pub tenants to stock at least one real cider or perry.

Real ciders and perries (from pears) are a natural living product made using nothing more than fruit and water. It is the different methods and varieties of fruit which give each one a unique and distinctive taste and aroma which cannot possibly be matched by the bland pasteurized national ciders.

The Bristol & District branch was successful in encouraging a number of local pubs to stock some – or more – cider or perry. In particular, the Cornubia in Bristol agreed to fully support the initiative by stocking no less than four ciders and perries throughout one week in October (they normally stock one or two).

But let's not forget that there are other pubs where you can get real cider on a regular basis:

- **Apple Tree**, Bedminster, Bristol
- **Avon Packet**, Bedminster, Bristol
- **Beaufort Arms**, Clifton, Bristol (near the Downs)
- **Black Horse**, Clapton in Gordano
- **Blue Flame**, Nailsea
- **Bridge**, Shortwood
- **Coronation**, Southville, Bristol (only outlet for hand pulled West Croft in Bristol)
- **Coronation Tap**, Clifton Village, Bristol
- **Cotham Porter Stores**, Kingsdown, Bristol
- **Cross Hands**, Winterbourne Down
- **Elstons**, Hengrove
- **Essex Arms**, Kingswood
- **Grosvenor**, Southville, Bristol
- **Horts City Tavern**, Bristol (recently

added a second real cider)

- **Humpers Off-Licence**, Staple Hill
- **Long Bar**, Old Market, Bristol
- **Orchard**, Bristol
- **Star**, Pucklechurch
- **Sugar Loaf**, Easton, Bristol
- **Trout**, Keynsham
- **White Swan**, Downend

And there are no doubt others we've missed from the list.

Small producers can't compete with the huge national producers and it's up to consumers to demand the real thing in their



local. You ought to be able to try a real cider or perry in your local pub. Urge the landlord to stock them on a regular basis. And drink them!



Some perry on the bar (quite literally) at the Cornubia recently, lovingly watched over by the new management

Wot, no Cider Sisters?

WE'RE VERY SORRY to say that events of recent have conspired against us, meaning we won't be getting an article together for this edition of Pints West.

We are disappointed and promise to come back bigger and better for the next. Sorry about that but fear not... we'll be back!
Freya and Erica McLuckie

Abbey Ales Sermon

YOU may not yet have heard the sleigh bells or even any carol singers but you are probably still facing up to the fact that Christmas is coming!

However, Alan Morgan, Managing Director of Bath's Abbey Ales brewery says his brewing team are feeling that Christmas has already arrived!

The brewery, based at Camden Row, are already taking advance orders for 36-pint and 18-pint Christmas party boxes of Bellringer, and Head Brewer Martin Langham, as at the middle of November, had already taken delivery of the special malt and hops needed to start brewing the barrels of Christmas cheer in the shape of **Twelfth Night**, the brewery's annual Christmas Ale.

Brewed by Martin to give drinkers a glass of winter warmth, Twelfth Night is a dark, strong bitter brewed to a strength of 5.0 per cent ABV.

Alan Morgan said, "Twelfth Night is an ideal winter warmer, perfect for supping whilst sitting around a real log fire in your local, merrily eating hot chestnuts! We have even been told that it makes any pub's own carol singers sound, if not particularly good, then reasonably acceptable!"

The brewery, which Alan is forever pointing out to people is: "the first and only

brewery to be based in the World Heritage City of Bath for more than forty years", recently celebrated its sixth birthday. **Black Friar**, a special dark porter brewed to celebrate the occasion, proved such a big hit that another batch has been brewed and is available again now (*but will it still be when Pints West hits the streets? Ed*).

The recent special occasional beer – **Bath Star** – has also been selling well and at 4.5 per cent ABV this golden, hoppy brew is a complete contrast to the darker, stronger Black Friar and the Christmas brew, Twelfth Night.

Limited supplies of Twelfth Night – which features an unusual flashing pump clip – will be available from Abbey Ales from the last week of November and should be on sale in Bath's top pubs well in time for Christmas.

Sales Director, Simon Morgan added, "We are very fortunate in that all of the special beers that we brew are always very popular – in fact we are continually asked why do we not brew them on a regular basis. Unfortunately, we are restricted by the size of our brewery and the demand for our prize winning Bellringer has to take priority. We are constantly trying to find larger suitable premises but as Bath's own brewery we

need to be in Bath and these properties are hard to find."

A recent initiative from Abbey Ales has been to reward its many devotees by the introduction of a loyalty card scheme, giving drinkers who buy 12 pints of the brewer's leading brand Bellringer, the thirteenth one free!

Customers buying a pint of Bellringer at any participating outlet would receive a loyalty card with the first stamp validated by a member of the bar staff. When purchasing subsequent pints of Bellringer, each stamp on the card would be similarly endorsed until the 12-stamp card was complete and could then be exchanged at the participating pub for a free pint.

Alan commented: "At Abbey Ales we truly appreciate the immense loyalty that local drinkers consistently demonstrate towards our beers and Bellringer in particular. Now we can repay some of that loyalty by offering our drinkers a free pint on us."

The scheme has been running since its introduction in October in the Star Inn and one or two other pubs in Bath and has proved very successful. However, Alan says it will end sometime in early December because of the Christmas rush so hurry along to the Star now!

Star Inn, Bath
advert

Abbey Ales Bellringer
advert

New Abbey Ales publication

IN conjunction with the Star Inn and a number of their leading free trade customers in and around Bath, Abbey Ales is planning to launch an annual promotional publication which should undoubtedly raise the profile of everybody involved.

Based around the famous "Bellringer Crawl" (see below), this 'news magazine' should provide a topical mix of news and information about Abbey Ales, its brewery and its products, plus key free trade customers, and also its suppliers. It will circulate extensively throughout the local free trade network, as well as reaching all parts of the region via national wholesalers. The new magazine – most probably A4 format – will be produced in full colour throughout, be professionally litho-printed on gloss art paper, and be designed to remain current and in circulation for many months.

To enable them to produce such a quality publication, there will be space available within its pages for companies with whom they enjoy strong trading links to advertise their close association with Abbey Ales and its customers, both at present and for the future.

Abbey Ales would appreciate support in this new promotional publication and enquiries about advertising are welcome.

The editor is to be Chris Freer, a member of the British Guild of Beer Writers, who has wide experience within the licensed trade. There is a target deadline of Friday, 12th December 2003, so people need to be quick. Anyone interested can contact Alan Morgan, Managing Director of Abbey Ales, at the brewery on 01225 444437, or Chris Freer on 0115 9722775 or 07990 973267.

Pub news

The owner of the **Lion Tavern** in Church Lane in Clifton Wood, Giles Bate, has made big changes to the range of beers of late. His regular beer range, quite unusual for Bristol, is now Fuller's London Pride, Caledonian Deuchars IPA (last year's Champion Beer of Britain) and Shepherd Neame Spitfire.

It's worth the effort to try and locate this pub, even if as a first time visitor you might need a map to find it. And don't worry too much about any road-closed signs, as you can still drive to the pub.

Apologies to the **White Horse** in Westbury-on-Trym. Unfortunately, due to a typographical error, the pub has been listed in the new edition of the CAMRA Good Beer Guide as the **White House**. Beers available here include Draught Bass (their biggest seller), Smiles Best, Sharp's Cornish Coaster and Worthington 1744.

Julien Weston, who some time back ran the Portcullis in Clifton, is back in the trade and now running the **Chelsea Inn** in Chelsea Road, Easton. His equal partner in trade is Sarah Brand, who used to work at the Hope & Anchor. Together they have been working hard to turn the place around (and shed any former reputation the pub may have had).

High on the list has been improvements in the beer and the introduction of extra brands. A Bath Ales beer has become a regular feature, with more lines for changing guest beers being added as the real ale trade picks up.

Other things to report are an open mic night with top musicians on a Wednesday, plus live music (duos, songwriters, etc.) most Thursdays and Fridays.

Julien says it's "great to be back behind the pumps again and down in that cellar."

The **Golden Lion** in Frampton Cotterell is hosting a mini beer festival between the

28th and 30th of November (you might just get a copy of Pints West before the event).

In addition to the usual range of three beers, they will be having ten extra on stillage in the bar with chillers. We saw the beer list chalked up when we visited on a recent trip, and it certainly looked an impressive selection. If all goes well they may have more in the future, so let's hope this one is a success.

Recent pub beer festivals that we hope you may have caught were at the **Nova Scotia** in Hotwells and at the **Bag O'Nails** between Hotwells and the city centre.

The Nova Scotia is definitely a pub to watch. It normally has up to four real ales and a real cider. Though not a big beer drinker himself, landlord Mark is very keen to promote the real ales, and likes to support the local brewers such as Smiles and Wickwar. Mark hopes to have more festivals in the future, and around the end of March is a possible date for the next.

The Bag O'Nails has just hosted its fourth annual beer festival. This pub is a favourite of many real ale fans at any time, with its ever changing beer range (and the excellent Abbey Ales Bellringer on all the time for those who prefer to stick with something they know and love). For a few days each November though the beer list grows enormously. This time the pub had over forty different real ales to offer its customers. How a small pub like the Bag manages such a feat is a wonder.

The landlord at the **White Lion** in the middle of Bristol is so dedicated to the real thing that one of the first things he did when taking over a few months ago was to assign all nitro-keg ale to the dustbin. Why have these bland smooth-flows competing with your real ales, he thought. The pub is a tiny one-room affair on the Centre, full of character, and an outlet for Wickwar's range of beers at good value prices. It always features a guest beer from another brewery as well.

S.P.

The Bellringer pub crawl

THE Bellringer city centre pub crawl starts from the Abbey Ales brewery at the top of Lansdown Road. These are the pubs that always have Bellringer on tap.

Old Farmhouse, Lansdown Road

Live jazz most nights and home of Bath's longest serving licensee, J.E. Bradshaw. Note the unusual pub sign.

Belvedere Vaults

Busy pub opposite the Farmhouse, noted for its excellent food. More winebar than pub, previously described as the Chapel of Rest by those who use it!

The Star, Vineyards, off The Paragon

Abbey Ales' own pub, described by

CAMRA as "a rare and unspoiled pub interior of outstanding historic interest" and listed on the national inventory of Heritage Inns. Beers served from the barrel via a jug.

Hat and Feather, London Road

Like taking a trip back to the '60s. Very interesting customers!

The Bell, Walcot Street

Great pub with an excellent range of real ales and live music most nights. Brilliantly run by Don Pillinger, one of Bath's snappy dressers!

The Porter, Broad Street

Part of Moles Club and a live entertainment venue. Always something happening here.

Pig and Fiddle, Broad Street

Lively busy youngsters' pub with outside patio. Recently extended but still gets packed on TV football nights.

Volunteer Rifleman's Arms

In the heart of the city amongst the corridors, a tiny pub that serves excellent food at lunchtime.

Pulteney Arms, Daniel Street

One of Bath's top rugby pubs. A wee bit off the beaten track but worth the effort.

Lambretta's, North Parade

New pub, part of The Parade Park Hotel. Good range of beers and Lambretta memorabilia – even a Lambretta.

Six of the best for Bath Ales

News from Bath Ales

CONGRATULATIONS are in order as all six of the pubs owned by Bath Ales are featured in this year's Good Beer Guide.

It's very unusual for any brewery to achieve a full house of entries. Each pub has to be nominated for the Guide by CAMRA members and then get through the vigorous selection process, and this can only be achieved by consistently serving beer of the highest possible quality throughout the year.

This is a tribute to the hard work of everyone in the supply chain from the brewers to the bar staff, but particularly to the people who look after the beer in the cellar.

The boys at the brewery at Webbs Heath have been working flat out to meet demand for the standard beers, Spa, Gem and Barnstormer. Unfortunately this has meant that confirmed sightings of the delicious thirst quencher Spa Extra and the aptly named Rare Hare strong premium ale, have been far too infrequent.

However, don't despair as Paul at The Wellington Hotel, Horfield is planning a unique event some time towards the end of November when for the first time ever all six

of the Bath Ales' beers will be on sale at the same time.

The Wellington continues to support local live music with blues enthusiast Paul booking talented musicians to perform every Sunday evening (no admission fee). It's worth making the effort to get there one Sunday.

Bath Ales supports other small independent brewers by serving guest beers in their pubs, and recent examples not often seen in Bristol have included Dark Star beers from Brighton.

Following the success of bottled Gem, the award-winning Festivity, a 5% dark rum porter usually only available during the winter months, is now on sale in bottles. It's on sale at Bath Ales' pub and other pubs and will probably be appearing in local branches of Waitrose supermarkets.

The Hop Pole, Upper Bristol Road, Bath (opposite Victoria Park playground) has twice been described in the local press as the best food pub in Bath. Its fame has spread and the pub was the subject of a very complimentary review in the Guardian by food critic, Matthew Fort.

The article praised both the real ale served by Elaine and more particularly the food cooked by Barry Wallace. He praised the Hop Pole for being unique in functioning equally well as both a boozier and an eatery.

The full article can be read by visiting the archive section on the web at www.guardian.co.uk or, even better, go to the Hop Pole and experience excellence at first hand.

The summer has seen a boom in the outside bar side of the business with Bath Ales providing the beer at numerous local and national events including the WOMAD festival in Reading.

The brewery is located at Webbs Heath, about half way between Bristol and Bath. They run pre-booked guided tours, which are a fun way of seeing how top quality real ale is produced with ample opportunity to sample the finished product.

Further information about tours and what's going on at Bath Ales can be obtained from their website at www.bathales.com or by 'phoning 0117 952 7580.

Steve O'Shea

Bath Ales pubs
advert

Annexe Inn
advert

It's Best if it's Bitter & Twisted

Champion Beer of Britain 2003 results

Bitter & Twisted, brewed by Harviestoun of Dollar in Clackmannanshire, was judged to be the best beer in Britain by a panel of brewers, beer writers and journalists at the Great British Beer Festival in August. This is the second year in a row that a Scottish brewery has won this prestigious award following the success of Caledonian's Deuchars IPA in 2002.

The beer is described in the 2004 edition of the Good Beer Guide as an "aggressively hoppy beer with fruit throughout. A bitter-sweet taste with a long, bitter finish. A golden session beer."

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

Ken Brooker, owner of Harviestoun said, "I'm overjoyed. It really proves that Scottish brewers are leading the way on tasty and distinctive beers. I am pleased that all the hard work from the team at Harviestoun has paid off. It's a great way to launch our new brewery building."

The Silver award went to Crouch Vale Brewer's Gold from Essex. Bronze went to Lidstones Rowley Mild from Suffolk.

Congratulations to local brewer RCH, a regular winner of awards in this competition, who came away with two this year, a silver for East Street Cream and a bronze for their bottled Old Slug Porter.

CHAMPION BEERS OF BRITAIN 2003

SUPREME CHAMPION: Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted
SILVER: Crouch Vale Brewer's Gold
BRONZE: Lidstones Rowley Mild

MILDS

Gold: Lidstones Rowley Mild (Newmarket, Suffolk)
Silver: Brains Dark (Cardiff, Wales)
Bronze: Bazens Black Pig Mild (Salford, Manchester)

BITTERS

Gold: Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted (Dollar, Clackmannanshire)
Silver: Daleside Bitter (Harrogate, North Yorkshire)
Bronze: Triple FFF Alton Pride (Alton, Hampshire)
Bronze: Caledonian Deuchars IPA (Edinburgh, Scotland)

BEST BITTERS

Gold: Crouch Vale Brewers Gold (Chelmsford, Essex)
Silver: West Berkshire Full Circle (Thatcham, Berkshire)
Bronze: Slaters Supreme (Eccleshall, Staffordshire)
Bronze: Rooster's Hooligan (Knaresborough, North Yorkshire)

STRONG BITTERS

Gold: Adnams Broadside (Southwold, Suffolk)
Silver: RCH East Street Cream (Weston-super-Mare, Somerset)
Bronze: Oakham Bishops Farewell (Peterborough, Cambridgeshire)

SPECIALITY BEERS

Gold: Cheriton Village Elder (Alresford, Hampshire)
Silver: Daleside Morocco (Harrogate, North Yorkshire)
Bronze: Oakham White Dwarf (Peterborough, Cambridgeshire)

GUARDIAN/CAMRA BOTTLE-CONDITIONED BEERS

Gold: O'Hanlon's Original Port Stout (Whimble, Devon)
Silver: Fuller's 1845 Celebration Ale (Chiswick, London)
Bronze: RCH Old Slug Porter (Weston-super-Mare, Somerset)

Bag O'Nails
advert

RCH
advert

Pub news

Hog's Head, who have two pubs in Bristol (Cheltenham Road and the Centre) are offering all their real ales at half price to card-carrying CAMRA members on Monday evenings.

London brewer, Fuller's has recently produced draught versions of its London Porter and 1845 Celebration Ale. Both have recently been on sale at their two pubs in Bristol, the **Fish Market** in Baldwin Street and the **Cambridge** in Coldharbour Road, Redland.

Were you lucky enough to try them? The porter was smooth, rich and strong (5.4 per cent ABV) and very drinkable. The 1845 weighed in at 6.3 per cent ABV. This beer was awesome: full of flavour, and an absolute classic.

Well done to Fuller's – can we have some more please?

Pete Bridle

Hog's Head
advert

Lamplighters, Shirehampton
advert

The Grapes Tavern

DESCRIBED in the 1996 "Last Guide to Avon's Ale" as: *Popular single bar pub with a variety of old chairs and curtains, interesting artefacts adorn the walls.* By its brevity, the description was rather off-putting for a pub in the heart of Bristol's Clifton Village.

Over the last few months the Grapes Tavern has had a make-over – it is no longer the old and largely unknown back street boozier, but a cleaned-up and handsome building next door to the Clifton Suspension Bridge Visitor Centre at No. 2 Zion Place.

Inside, the transformation has made this one of the smartest, cleanest and most welcoming pubs in the whole area and one that any visitor being shown the sights of Bristol should be impressed by if taken there. I should also mention that the whole or parts of the bar may be privately booked for a whole range of functions with catering available on application.

There is still a variety of chairs but all new, including a deep sofa towards the back. There are still interesting artefacts (botanical prints) on the walls and large clay potted plants are placed at strategic points between

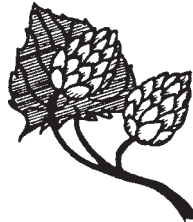
the seating on the scrubbed oak timber floor. The whole ambience has changed for the better making good use of the available space. Roman blinds neatly cover the upper part of the windows, and there are also stained glass panels around the inner part of the front door. The walls are painted in "aubergine and honey" colours and two open fires will warm the winter visitors. The background is a range of music from "funk to chill out beats" and is not intrusive.

The licensee, Marcia Taylor has had control over the refurbishment and in a short while has been building up a fine reputation and customer base. At present Wadworth's 6X and IPA are available in cask, plus the usual lagers and other drinks. There is a really good selection of reasonably priced wines which are attractively displayed behind the bar.

Lunches are served Monday to Friday 12 noon to 2:30 with daily special and excellent sandwiches. Sunday roasts are now available. Also available at most sessions are individual pots of nuts or the highly recommended home-marinated olives.

Check it out!

John Phillips



New owners at Cotleigh Brewery

THERE have been changes recently in Wiveliscombe in Somerset as new owners took over the town's famous Cotleigh Brewery.

Steve Heptinstall and Fred Domellof have purchased the brewery, which was established in 1979 and is well known throughout the country for its excellent beers.

Steve said, "We bought Cotleigh because we were so impressed by the reputation of the brewery and its beers. We don't intend to make any changes. We are looking forward to building on the tradition and culture that has been established over the last twenty years."

Running a brewery is a new challenge to Steve and Fred. Steve has worked in the international spirits business, most recently in Russia. Fred has twenty years' experience in the hotel and restaurant trade, and owned a large freehouse on the river Thames.

Fred added, "We have a lot to learn and are looking forward to every moment of it. The brewery has a superb team and we will enjoy learning from them."

Brewery life is not over for the former owners John and Jennifer Aries who have run Cotleigh since 1982. They will continue to be involved in the business on a consultancy basis for at least two years.

John said, "We are delighted to be passing the reins over to such safe hands. Steve and Fred are bringing a wealth of experience with them, but most importantly, they are bringing a genuine enthusiasm for the business and their new roles within it."

He added, "Jen and I have enjoyed 20 years running the brewery. We are pleased that we can continue to be involved in the future of the business whilst also enjoying some well-earned time off."

Summer of sorrow – then a ray of hope!

ONE of the biggest drawbacks with selecting pubs for the Good Beer Guide has always been the six-month lead-time between selecting entries and actual publication of the good book.

Inevitably, circumstances change during that period meaning that you can look foolish. Some branches have put pubs in the book, only for a sudden change of ownership to result in the total withdrawal of real ale! In several extreme cases, pubs have been demolished just before publication!

Whilst this branch has not, to my knowledge, ever been quite that unlucky, I do not remember any years when at least a couple of licensees have moved on just prior to publication. It is vital to realise that inclusion in the guide is recognition of the efforts of the licensee and their team, not of the pub itself. A new licensee without a passion for quality real ale can quickly ruin a pub's appeal and leave CAMRA looking stupid.

After the selection meeting in March, we can usually make late changes up until around the end of May, but after that we are stuck with our choices. For that reason, a pub changing hands in February, March and onwards is most unlikely to be included as it leaves us too little time to properly assess the beer quality under the new licensee. The only exception is when the incoming person is known and trusted by us, with a strong track record of running Good Beer Guide quality pubs.

All that said I don't think that the Bristol and District area has ever experienced such a high level of turnover of licensees in our chosen pubs as that experienced in 2003 to date. Particularly sad has been the high number of long standing Good Beer Guide licensees that have moved on – of our 57 chosen pubs no less than seven have changed hands this year. The list makes sad reading.

First to announce his departure was Mike Blake of the **Cornubia** in Temple Street, central Bristol – our Pub Of The Year in 2001 and 2002. Mike had been running this wonderful pub for some years, but the leaseholder had been attempting to sell the lease for some time. This was obviously unsettling for Mike (who lived at the pub too) but to his credit the pub went from strength to strength. In January 2003, though, Mike announced his intention to move on at the end of April.

At the time of our selection meeting in March we had been unable to obtain any information on future plans, so reluctantly we could not put it forward for the Guide. In fact Mike's assistant manager, Luke, took over and kept things perfectly well until he too departed in August. Mike and Luke were both last heard of in the Devon/Cornwall area.

A new management couple moved in at the

start of September and the pub seems as good as ever, if not better. As far as we are aware, the lease is still for sale, but if things stay as now the pub will of course be considered for the next Good Beer Guide.

Next we heard that Roger Morgan was retiring due to ill health from the **Annexe** in Seymour Road near the Gloucestershire cricket ground in Bishopston – a Guide regular for many years. Sadder still was the news that he passed away in July 2003.

Once again, we could not obtain any



information on future management at the time, so had no choice but to withdraw the pub before publication. My visits over the summer indicated that standards were still good, and a letter from the new licensee – Teresa Murphy – who took up the reins in September, indicates that she has every intention of building on Roger's work and continuing the supply of quality ale. Excellent news indeed and Teresa can rest assured that we'll be including her pub in our surveying for the next Guide.

Shortly afterwards, the **Swan** at Swineford, near Bitton, was sold by Dave Nunn. This is another long-standing entry, but the new landlord was already in place and we decided to allow it to stay in the Guide after many good reports. Visits since indicate that this was the right decision.

Just when we were recovering from all these shocks came another – Gary Bryant, long time landlord of the **Reckless Engineer**, opposite Temple Meads, announced that he was leaving the trade. A double blow as Gary had turned it into one of Bristol's leading venues for local bands as well as a great watering hole. The pub was removed from the Guide at the very last minute.

In June 2003 we decided to award our Pub Of The Year 2003 to the **Wookey Hole Inn** – a superb venture owned by Mark Hey and run for three years by Rob and Ginie Garbutt. Literally minutes after I gave Rob the good news he told me that they were leaving in July to run their own gite (a kind of farmhouse/

guesthouse) in Ginie's native France. Pub Of The Year by now was starting to seem like something of a "poison chalice"! Mark still owns the pub and his new management team seem to have continued with the winning formula. It was too late to withdraw the pub, and Pub Of The Year is a retrospective award anyway.

As if all this was not enough, more was to follow. Colin Brandling at the **Bunch of Grapes** in Denmark Street announced that he was seeking to sell the lease and return to truck driving. He has had a buyer, subject to contract, for some time, but at the time of writing (November 2003) is still at the pub. This is Bristol's only other central real ale and live music venue and has improved greatly under Colin's Management. Colin says that his potential successor has pledged to continue with the beer and the music and we hope she is good to her word.

Next we heard that the very long-standing landlord of the **Princes Motto** in Barrow Gurney was to retire. By chance, one of our survey buses called at the pub on his last night in October. The good news is that the new landlord has been at the

pub for some years and has been "promoted from within" with little likely to change.

Finally, a recent visit to the **Downend Tavern** (pictured), in its first year in the Good Beer Guide, saw me meet a very dejected licensee – Brian Thompson – who was leaving in September after a long and seemingly fruitless battle to buy the freehold. Brian had spent several years turning the pub into a real success story with high quality beer from the most impressive cellar I have seen. We wished him all the best and suggested he let us know where his next pub would be.

We left it for a few weeks and went back on 31 October to see what the new management were like. We were more than a little surprised to see Brian at the bar, grinning from ear to ear. A last minute deal had been done and he had clinched the purchase that very day!

So from yet another great loss **the Downend Tavern had suddenly become Bristol's newest FREE HOUSE!**

Brian will keep on three regular beers – Bass, Courage Best and Butcombe – but his other two pumps will be used for guest beers and he is actively taking suggestions at the moment – expect to see high quality local and regional beers.

Congratulations to Brian and thanks to the various departed licensees mentioned above, who provided so much pleasure. Good luck to those who have taken on the pubs – you have much to live up to!

Vince Murray

Watering Holes in the Desert

news from Weston-super-Mare

Beer Festivals: a celebration of Real Ale

IN last month's Pints West, we gave notice of various up-coming beer festivals. Festivals are held all year round, but late summer/early autumn always seems to be a peak time. Following this are some brief accounts of visits by local CAMRA members to just a few of the festivals attended in recent weeks. Also, we have a piece written by Steve Blanchard, who has recently organised his first beer festival.

First though, a brief overview of festivals:

Who organises them?

- CAMRA at National level organises the grand-daddy of them all, the huge Great British Beer Festival (GBBF) every August.
- Local CAMRA branches organise around 200 events across Britain each year – our local Bristol Beer Festival is held late February/early March and is always excellent.
- Local organisations, community groups and charities.
- Pub companies or individual pub landlords.

Where are they held?

- Venues run from small pubs, through to village halls, farms, marquees, leisure centres, all the way up to huge buildings such as Olympia in London.

Are beer festivals just quaint, out-dated "white elephants" or does running them actually make commercial sense? Is there really still a demand for real ale?

- For the answers to those questions, I suggest you ask the organisers of the Peterborough Beer Festival who saw over 42,000 people attend their festival this year. Or, more locally, the organisers of the Wedmore festival which ran out of beer with a whole day of the festival remaining. Or Steve Blanchard, the organiser of the Chew Valley festival, who had to spend much of the time turning people away at the door. Then of course there are the hundreds of charitable causes that benefit from the proceeds of beer festivals each year.

Why do people organise them?

Motives can vary. These include:

- For CAMRA, festivals serve two main purposes. Firstly, they are a campaigning and recruitment vehicle. CAMRA is already regarded as one of the most successful consumer organisations in Europe, but needs to continue to strengthen its membership. Getting people through the doors at festivals is an excellent way to communicate our messages and encourage people to join our ranks. At this year's GBBF over 1,000 people were motivated to join the organisation. A further 450 people joined at the Peterborough festival. And before you ask, no these new recruits do not join in a moment of weakness whilst under the influence, only to regret it later – the massive majority of members continue to renew their membership year after year. The second purpose for holding festivals from a CAMRA perspective is simply to demonstrate to people the huge range of styles and flavours that are being produced by skilled craftsmen across the UK. CAMRA hopes that having sampled some of the delights on offer at beer festivals, people will then seek out top-quality beers where they live and perhaps even encourage their landlord to stock something good if he or she doesn't already. Occasionally we even convert lager/keg/"smooth" drinkers to the real stuff!
- For non-CAMRA organisations the motives can sometimes be publicity for a cause or charity, or as a vehicle for fund-raising. As an example, proceeds from this year's Wedmore festival went to Wedmore Day Centre, the local Guide & Scout Troops, Children's Hospice South West and to support the sinking of a water well in Africa. Most CAMRA festivals also raise funds for good causes.
- Pub owners, be they breweries, pub groups or "free house" pub landlords often feel that a beer festival raises their profile locally and gets new people through the door who will then, hopefully, visit the pub more regularly.
- For other organisers it is simply a case of loving good beers and wanting to give people a chance to sample drinks that they would not normally get a chance to try.

One of the definitions of festival in the dictionary is a "celebration." This is an apposite term – all festival organisers are, in effect, helping us to "celebrate" a wonderful part of our heritage – the production of cask conditioned ale.

And here a few that we did earlier....

The Old Inn Beer Festival, Hutton, 25-27 July

The Old Inn is a Greene King house that holds an annual three-day beer festival. This includes live music during the evenings and family entertainment and barbecues during the day. The pub also does good quality food at reasonable prices.

On the beer front six beers were available on handpump at the bar. These were Greene King's own IPA, Abbot Ale and Old Speckled Hen, Courage Best, Bass and Charles Wells Bombardier. The more interesting stuff was housed in 12 casks in a room opposite the bar. As is usual, the Old Inn festival offers a good mix of nationally renowned favourites such as Fuller's London Pride, Badger Tanglefoot and Madonna's favourite, Taylor Landlord, together with popular local beers such as Butcombe Bitter, Exmoor Gold and RCH Pitchfork, and some more obscure beers for those wanting to try something a bit different. The latter category included Jennings Crag Rat from Cumbria, Redruth brewery's Cornish Rebellion, Shepherd Neame Goldings and Hook Norton Haymaker. My personal favourite was a beer from the excellent Moorhouse brewery, Burnley. Moorhouse are best known for brewing the 2000 Champion Beer of Britain, Black Cat, a superb mild. It seems they have decided on some company for the Black Cat in the guise of Blond Witch, a very tasty summer-style brew. I was clearly not alone in being rather taken by it – it was the first beer to sell out, with over a day of the festival still to run.

The Old Inn Festival is a very well run annual event which is well supported by locals and a decent number of CAMRA members. However, it deserves greater support from the wider real ale drinking community in and around Weston. Look out for it next year!

Tim Nickolls

Beer Festival Weekend at The Ashcombe Hotel, 9-10 August

Readers of the last edition of Pints West will have read a piece concerning this festival, the first attempted by this pub near to the town centre on Ashcombe Road.

The negative aspects were that it was arranged at a fairly late stage, which limited the advertising and marketing opportunities and affected the attendance. Also, it took place on just about the hottest weekend of the summer and it proved a struggle to keep the temperature of the beers down to a satisfactory level. This was just about achieved.

The main positive of the festival was that landlord, Peter Boyer picked a strong selection of beers, almost all from Somerset breweries (Berrow, Cottage, Exmoor, Glastonbury, Oakhill, RCH), the sole exception being Hanby Ales of Shropshire.

I cannot remember the tale of why Hanby should be the sole non-Somerset brewery, but they seem to do some interesting beers. According to the 2004 edition of the Good Beer Guide (£12.99 from all good bookshops) they brew 14 beers on a regular basis, including a

mild, stout and porter. The ones on offer at the Ashcombe were Draw Well, Black Magic Plus Mild and Cherry Bomb. The latter weighed in at a hefty 6% ABV and contains maraschino cherries. This beer raised a few funny looks amongst those who tried it – some appreciative, some not.

Amongst the Somerset beers, there were one or two that had not been seen before – Berrow ESB (Extra Special Berrow) brewed to celebrate the brewery's 21st anniversary and TLC, a new beer brewed by RCH with some of the proceeds going to Weston Hospice Care. Glastonbury's Golden Chalice and Cottage Champflower were my favourites, along with the "one for the road" – the mighty Exmoor Beast, 6.6% ABV and a fantastic, tasty dark beer.

It would have been nice if more ale drinkers in town had left the confines of their usual haunts and paid the festival a visit. The conservative nature of the British drinker..... a mighty hurdle to get over.

Tim Nickolls

Great British Beer Festival, London Olympia, 5-9 August

Ever been to the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia, London? No? Well give it a go next year if you can ... try it, maybe just the once.

It may not be a cheap day out when you have to pay for a return trip to London, shell out for the entrance fee (cheaper if you are a CAMRA member) then buy your beer and food t'boot. In the past it's an event I had often thought about visiting but never got round to it, until a couple of years ago that is.

This year's festival for example was a cracker. Outside the weather was steamin' but inside it was coooool!

Cooooo! Because the beer selection was fantastic.

Cooooo! Because the air conditioning was pumping.

Cooooo! Because the 'world' food also on sale whetted my appetite for an incredible choice of UK and World beers under one massive roof.

Cooooo! Because everyone was happy and just having a damn good time!

I won't bore you with details about the wonderfully varied beers I tried, suffice to say that if next year you read or hear about the GBBF, just remember this recommendation.

Give it a try and take a friend. I promise you it'll be worth it.

Steve Reed

Wedmore Beer Festival, 19-21 September

Eagerly looking forward to the third Wedmore Beer Festival, our trio of Weston Desert Legionnaires headed out on Friday night, arriving at the village hall around 7:45. The evening's entertainment opened with Pete Tinney (allegedly Wedmore's answer to Jethro), who recounted his tales of growing up in Wedmore in the fifties. This was followed by some old fashioned Irish rock from the Shenanigans.

We were promised over 30 real ales, local Wilkins cider, and also wine and soft drinks, with entrance very reasonable at £2 deposit on a glass. To keep the drinkers fed there was also the "Wedmore Whopper", a beer banger made especially for the festival.

In the end there were 29 beers on offer, as two were not ready. Unfortunately, these included Lidstone's Rowley Mild, which I was particularly looking forward to.

Glastonbury's Black As Yer 'At was

immediately sampled and pronounced delicious by all. This was swiftly followed by Moorhouse's Black Cat, which was just as good as usual. Next up were Triple FFF Afterglow, Summerskills Best and O'Hanlon's Blakeley's Best – all pretty good, but not a patch on the milds. After those Harvey's Sussex Best, Bullmastiff Welsh Gold and Butcombe Silver Jubilee all slipped down well.

Time now for a quick bite to eat (as we all had a taste of the munchies), washed down with Titanic Captain Smith's, which was very tasty. Unfortunately it was now time to head home, as we were hoping to get in another session on the Saturday night.

In the end we didn't get the chance to return, as we were all nursing unexpected hangers. Never mind there's always next year! Beer of the festival? It has to be Black As Yer 'At (or maybe your hanger).

Marianne Rake

The Vale of Wrington Beer & Cider Festival, 12-14 September

On Saturday September 14th I took the bus from Weston to Winscombe for the Vale of Wrington Beer and Cider Festival, organised by the local Rotary Club and held at Winscombe Recreation Ground.

Upon entry I entered the long bar where at least twenty casks of beer were lined up, along with half a dozen cider casks. Clutching my half-pint glass and beer list I had the hard task of choosing my first beer.

I eventually decided on a mild, Pressed Rat & Warthog, brewed by Triple FFF in Hampshire. It was gorgeous. By the end of the evening I had enjoyed another nine halves of

some of the finest beers that I have tried in the local area. These included Molecatcher by Moles, Riggwelter by Black Sheep, O'Hanlon's Port Stout, Freeminer's Resolution and the honey flavoured Pooh Beer by the Church End brewery.

It was a fantastic evening, well attended by the locals, including families and plenty of younger lads and lasses. Well done to the Rotary Club and sponsors for holding such a great festival.

Do try and catch it next year – you won't be disappointed!

Stuart F Jennings

Somerset Beer Festival, Minehead 13-14 September

Extracts from diary logs dated 13 & 15 September:

"Gloriously sunny late Summer's day."

"Steam Railway Station in Somerset."

"Beer Festival as usual organized by the Somerset branch of CAMRA."

"More than 30 excellent beers (and ciders) there today mostly from the best the South West can offer."

"Tried Spingo Special from Blue Anchor in Helston, Cornwall (my beer of the festival, closely followed by Cottage GWR from Somerset)."

*"Lost my *#@?!#@? wallet (yet again) on the bus returning from the festival."*

"My wallet was found today (Monday) on a bus by a driver back in Minehead. Everything inside present and correct."

"Cracking weekend!"

Steve Reed

Organising the Chew Valley Beer Festival – how it's done ...

ON Friday 12th and Saturday 13th September 2003, the inaugural Chew Valley Beer Festival took place in the large, modern Ubley Parish Hall in the heart of the Chew Valley, 12 miles to the south of Bristol.

The event was very successful, with the two evening sessions selling out two weeks in advance, and with a total of 450 enthusiasts attending over the weekend.

I am the Chairman of Ubley Parish Hall Management Committee, a registered charity, and back in February I formed a Beer Festival sub-committee, the aim being to create a new fund-raising event for Parish Hall projects.

The Beer Festival Committee comprised of nine local guys from Ubley with a common goal of running a successful beer festival with lots of fun on the way. Steve Glanville, the hall Bar Manager, was one of the driving forces behind getting the idea off the ground. We undertook some initial research by approaching one or two other festival organisers for ideas. The Wedmore people were particularly helpful.

Part of our success was having entry by advance ticket sales only. This way we knew to a greater degree how much beer to order. It also helped the caterers and from a security point of view we knew, within reason, who was coming!

Our theme was real ales from within a 50-mile radius of the Chew Valley. The beers included Exmoor Ale, Uley Hogshead PA, Bath Ales SPA, Berrow 4Bs, Butcombe Bitter and Butcombe Gold (both brewed in Chew Valley), Oakhill Best, Blindman's Mine Beer, Abbey Ales Bellringer, Glastonbury Lady Of The Lake, Wickwar Cotswold Way and RCH East Street Cream.

Thatcher's ciders were also available.

Our ticket price was £5, which included a free pint and a souvenir pint beer glass etched with the Chew Valley Beer Festival logo and enthusiasts thought this was extremely good value, especially as there was live entertainment at each session.

Thirty Ubley people helped with the event, manning various points and at its peak we had seven people serving real ale.

We have developed an extensive website (www.chewvalleybeerfestival.co.uk) which is worth visiting to see photographs of the festival, general details about the festival and confirmation of next year's dates – 10th and 11th September 2004.

The feedback has been excellent for our first try at running a beer festival and I know many enthusiasts who want to come next year, having left it too late for tickets this year.

The key success points for us were advanced ticket sales, bi-monthly team meetings, publicity/posters/local articles two months in advance of the festival, thirty local businesses sponsoring barrels, devoted website, top help from Beer Seller and a very keen beer festival team.

Steve Blanchard

(Footnote to above: As part of the CAMRA party that attended on the Friday evening of the festival, I can confirm that the festival was as successful and well organised as indicated by Steve above. This, despite the festival taking place at the same time as the annual Wrington Vale Rotary Club festival, held about eight miles from Ubley and the hugely popular Somerset Beer Festival at Minehead. Tim Nickolls.)

Ever since we started seeking out watering holes in the desert I've had to come up with all the witty comments... why don't you say something for a change?



WsM Diary

Non-members welcome at all events, except where otherwise stated.

Wednesday 19 November – Minibus outing visiting 4/5 current or potential Good Beer Guide pubs. The first venue will be the GBG-listed City Arms in Wells. The minibus will be leaving Off The Rails at 7.30. Further details can be obtained by contacting Mike Coleman on 631441.

Sunday 7 December – The Crown, Churchill. Minibus leaves Off The Rails at 7.00. Arrives back approx 10.45. Cost £4. Advance booking essential. CAMRA members only.

Wednesday 17 December – The 5th Annual Seasonal Ales Crawl. Starting point will be The Regency at 8.00.

Tuesday 23 December – Weston CAMRA Christmas Social at The Britannia, High Street. Meal and 3 real ales, one chosen for the evening by the local CAMRA branch. Aperitifs at 8.00. Dinner at 8.30. All members and their guests welcome. To book a place contact Tim Nickolls on number below.

Friday 9 January – Good Beer Guide survey trip, visiting 5 rural pubs. Minibus will be leaving Off The Rails at 7.30.

Wednesday 21 January – The Queen's Arms, Bleadon. 8.30.

Contact

Tim Nickolls - 01934 628996 (evenings)

(Bad) Poetry Corner

Back by popular demand (allegedly)

Bring Back BR!

For our outings, Wessex Trains say
There is a GroupSave fare any day
Offering travel to members four
At the price of just two, no more

But often we are in a fix
As they close their ticket office before six
And on the train the staff do say
They cannot issue the ticket any way

If one insists, they reluctantly relent
But staff on Temple Meads barrier leant
A less accommodating game do play
And one sadly must the full fare pay

Dr. John (aged 47 and ¾)

Weston Whispers

(pub and beer news)

The Regency in Lower Church Road was featured in the "Eating (and drinking) in Weston" column in the last edition of Pints West, gaining praise for its excellent value and quality lunches. During the three weeks between writing my article and Pints West publication, the pub upped its prices! Therefore, most of the costs previously quoted for meals should be ignored. However, I'm happy to say that the Regency still represents excellent value for lunch and on my last visit, a couple at a neighbouring table thanked the waitress clearing up and commented to her that their meal had been the best they had had during their holiday in town.

There are new people at the helm of **The Ship Inn, Uphill**. Russ Morrissey and Ali Yianni are now running "The oldest pub in Weston." Happily, they have introduced RCH Pitchfork as a permanent beer alongside the Bass. Russ says that he was keen to have something locally produced to offer customers. If only more landlords had this attitude, particularly when RCH, one of the finest breweries in Britain, is on our doorstep at Hewish. Happily this initiative has been well-received by locals and visitors alike and The Ship is now shifting two barrels of Pitchfork a week. Most importantly, all reports on beer quality have been very good.

There is also new management at **The Major From Glengarry**. The new people are putting a strong emphasis on it now being a family pub, which is probably a sensible move. All other recent attempts to bring back the good times to the Major have been unsuccessful, so this is worth a try. The area previously occupied by a pool table and skittle alley has now been converted to a young children's play area and there are plenty of good value children's options on the menu. Don't worry – the pub has not been converted to a playground. There are still four real ales on offer – three from Wadworth and one from another regional brewer with whom Wadworth have a reciprocal arrangement. Jennings and Charles Wells beers have been on offer. There are occasional live jazz bands.

All change again at **The Whistling Duck** in Banwell. At the end of the summer Ruth and Peter decided to move on having found the pressures of the industry a little too demanding and the batten was passed on to new residents. Sadly, having enjoyed an extended run at the Duck the (rare-for-these-ere-parts) Adnams beers have now been dropped apparently due to "lack of demand". A little puzzling this, as they had been very

popular at the pub during the last 18 months! Still, if no one is drinking them....

Now with only one cask beer available at the time of writing, draught Bass, choice is somewhat limited. On the 'up' side, however, it was good on my visit.

Other new pubs that have recently been operating "Under new management" are **The Manor** and **The Night Jar** in Worle.

Local drinkers will have been intrigued and excited by an article in the 3rd October edition of the Weston & Somerset Mercury. This announced the intention of Tom Newman to start commercial brewing at a garage in Wolvershill Road, Banwell. At the time of writing Mr. Newman was awaiting planning permission from North Somerset Council and hoped to start production as Newman's Brewery in time for Christmas (before you have any cynical thoughts in relation to local authority planning departments, it is Christmas 2003 that we are talking about).

Only one beer is planned at present – this is to be called Wolver's Ale. The paper quoted Mr. Newman as saying that he had had "a great response from many pubs in the area." Good to hear, but the vast majority of pubs in the Weston area are not allowed to choose what beers they stock and only a tiny minority sell a beer brewed within 100 miles, so it will be interesting to see where they appear.

We wish Mr. Newman well and look forward to drinking his beer.

Special beers produced for the Rugby World Cup have started to appear. Moles Rucking Mole went down well at **Off The Rails**.

The Pints West distribution rounds normally throw up a surprise of two. The most recent was Moles Mollenium at **Daunceys Hotel**.

The Winscombe Club remains a great local attraction. It is located in the centre of the village in Sandford Road. Two or three real ales are always available, and with the prices of their beers (Wickwar BOB at £1.50) and rolls, the bus fair soon gets repaid! The BOB is usually accompanied by Bass and a guest beer, which always seems to be something interesting. For drinkers of real cider, the news is just as good – Thatcher's is a mere 95p a pint. The club grants admittance to CAMRA members.

Further to the above, on a recent Weston CAMRA social in Winscombe, we visited **Winscombe Cricket Club**, located at the

end of The Lynch. This is another club that deserves praise for taking the trouble to source good real ales and, just as if not more important, keeping it in good condition. At the time of our visit, two beers from the St. Austell brewery were on, Dartmoor Best Bitter and Tribute, both very attractively priced at £1.55. Even allowing for the costs of club membership at the cricket club and The Winscombe Club (a mere £3 at the latter, which would very quickly be recovered), Winscombe ale-drinking residents are lucky people.

More sports news: **Weston-super-Mare Cricket Club** on Devonshire Road is a place to investigate. The regular beers are Fuller's London Pride and Butcombe Bitter, with an occasional guest beer. St. Austell's Tribute proved very popular with regulars recently – four casks went in one week. This is another club that grants admittance to CAMRA members – yet another good reason to join (application form on back page)!

The St. Austell brewery's vans have been seen with increasing regularity in the area. Other venues in Weston where Tribute has been appearing are **Weston Golf Club**, **The Conservative Club** and **Off The Rails**.

The Dragon Inn has been surpassing itself with fantastic offerings in recent weeks. On one recent occasion the range included three dark beers (and they say Guinness is the only dark beer that sells) – Black Bess Stout from the excellent York brewery (if you see their beers anywhere, buy!), Coteleigh Old Buzzard and Mauldon's Black Adder. In addition to these and a few of the regulars were a couple of rarities – a new beer from Clark's brewery of Wakefield called Here We Go Round The Mulberry Bush and Arizona from the Phoenix brewery of Heywood, Lancashire.

The following day a brilliant quality Nelson's Revenge had arrived from Woodforde's of Norfolk and Cains Formidable. All this coming shortly after a festival of all the Wickwar beers that included the mighty Mr. Perrett's Traditional Stout and Station Porter. When Manager Lucy Williams gave me the tasting notes for the Wetherspoon's Halloween festival, I felt that there was not much to get excited about, compared with the normal range of offerings we are used to. More than one Dragon regular has pointed out that we in Weston must be the only people in the country who look forward to Wetherspoon's festivals finishing, so that we can get back to normal!

Tim Nickolls

The Ale Ages of Axbridge (part 1)

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN Frank Jarman is the man to talk to about the medieval market town of Axbridge. Of today's three hostelrys, two existed in 1600. Over the years, there have been a total of over a dozen public houses, inns and hotels, a proliferation of ale and beerhouses and many home and church brews. Originally, some premises were beershops with only one room and no public house fittings. Others were more like today and, in 1686, Axbridge provided travellers with 27 beds and stabling for 86 horses. This was just before James I ruled that all inns and victualling houses must provide accommodation for travellers, although taverns were not required to do so. I suppose their customers just passed out on the benches and were removed with the other debris the following morning. Most of the locals drank in the town, as venturing forth was neither necessary nor advisable. Vagrants found outside their parish were severely punished. The cost of dealing with other people's problems was obviously realised then if not now. In more recent times, the Irish navvies building the Cheddar Reservoir in the 1930s found its intended contents somewhat insipid and preferred what Axbridge had to offer. Modern earthmovers get nothing better than diesel. Below are the other things I have found out about the town so far. I would be interested to receive further information from any reader.

All real ale then

Partly on a late-15th Century site with an 18th Century façade, the 1606 Lamb Inn is still Axbridge's focal point at the western end of the present Square, which was the Market Place until the mid-19th Century. Opening as a half-timbered building off a lane where the adjacent Corner House now stands, it was the Holy Lamb until the late 18th Century. It opened as one of about 2,500 inns in England. There were also about 27,000 alehouses and taverns and attempts were being made to reduce their numbers. Licensing had begun in 1495 and JPs had powers of closure. As it was all real ale in those days, I assume they had little success. The 1552 Alehouse Act required a consent from the local JPs and a guarantee of good behaviour on the premises.

In the 14th Century, Richard II had decreed that all inns should have a pictorial sign. People then had the same reading problems as I have with my tasting notes. Using the Borough crest of St. John the Baptist, a lamb with a St. George's flag, the inn became variously the Lamb and Flag, Borough Arms and Commercial Hotel. Under the 1729 and 1753 Licensing Acts, it would have been registered and licensed annually at special local Brewster Sessions, requiring certificates of good character. On the part of the landlord not the customers, that is. As part of a business deal,

the pre-1840 eastern end of the first floor had to be built as the new 1796 Guildhall by the then landlord. In 1830, that business moved to the first floor of the new Town Hall. As there were no white-collar unions in those days, the bean counters would have had little chance of protesting at being moved to a site several doors away from the nearest pub. In 1832, the Riot Act was read after an incident at the Lamb but it is not indicated if beans were split at the scene.

Around 1900, landau trips were provided by the Lamb to places such as Cheddar. Another Anglo-Bavarian enterprise. The hotel was extended to the rear in 1920, when electricity was available from the

stables. The generator horsepower is not known. There was a further extension in 1932. In 1938, the noisy generator over the stables ceased operation, perhaps at the insistence of the RSPCA. The Lamb Hotel was sold as a Whitbread house in 1978. It is now owned by the award-winning North Somerset brewer and pub owner Butcombe and is run for them by Alan and Sandy Currie.

The late 15th Century King John's Hunting Lodge Museum is opposite the Lamb. The town was on the edge of a Royal Forest until the 14th Century but this was a merchant's house and the hunting connection is to a saddler who occupied it. However, it housed the 17th Century King's Head Inn, inspired by Civil War fervour. By those supporting the King, not the John the Baptist Salome types, that is. Courage's Wine Vaults occupied the building to the south and part of the ground floor of the Hunting Lodge in the early 20th Century. Handy for a stirrup cup, rather than pump, I trust.

The George Hotel was on a 13th Century site in the Square two doors away from the Lamb, in the western part of the present building society offices. That's progress for you. The 1453 Nonyesyn hospice, sometimes referred to incorrectly as Nunney's Inn, was originally on the site. From some time after 1796, the George, thus named for patriotic reasons during the 18th Century, occupied the first floor eastern end of what had been the old Guildhall. A more desirable change of use. The Guildhall had owned and occupied the site from about 1307. After 1841, the name George and Dragon was used for a period, even if locally St. George was more into lambs. It was also the George House B&B and closed in the late 1960s.

The 16th Century first floor Angel Inn, on the site of a 15th Century building in the Square three doors away from the George, has a restored 1670 frontage and 1730 rebuild. Angels are messengers but there is no record of this having been a post house. Perhaps they were more the Jimmy Cagney type. The site once had three licensed premises, including the Ship Inn, as Axbridge was once a port. At the back was the Dolphin alehouse, making one wonder what the sailors saw in place of pink elephants on their return to the landing stage. On the second floor was the Checker Chambers where they presumably also played casino. The building is now the Old Angel, having lost its last two licences in the latter part of the 20th Century. The present butcher's shop between the sites of the George and Angel, selling neither dragon nor dolphin, was a medieval weigh and wool sorting house, a coffee shop and then a garage.

Until the 17th Century, the 1484 Christopher hospice was two doors to the east of the Angel Inn, in front of the original 14-15th

Adnams
advert

Century Market Cross. It may have been the first hostelry in Axbridge. Although King Edgar would have permitted just one such establishment in the mid-10th Century, the status of Royal Burh would have made such unlikely. St. Christopher is the patron saint of ferry workers and travellers. In Axbridge, it must have been the latter who were of interest as the river was not very wide.

Further to the east of the Angel, it appears there was the Old Ale House, which disappeared around 1800 and was replaced by a chemists shop. That, again, is progress for you. In the present Square in the early 1840s there was also the Bush beerhouse, named after one of the first Roman tavern signs. Nowadays, a Bush beerhouse would probably have bombs on the sign. The spate of mid-19th Century beerhouses followed the Duke of Wellington's government overturning the 1828 Licensing Act by passing the 1830 Beerhouse Act to promote beer as a healthier alternative to gin. You cannot really say that not many people know that. Beer duty was abolished and local JPs lost control of beerhouse licences.

Proliferation

Under the new Act, any poor householder could obtain a two-guinea excise licence to sell beer, ale and cider, but not wines or spirits, in their home for consumption on or off the premises. During the first six months, over 24,000 new beerhouses appeared nationwide and even more were opened up to 1872, many without a proper record being kept. The number of full licences changed little. Beerhouses were accused of harbouring thieves and prostitutes and promoting drunkenness. That was probably just spin and the truth was that most simply provided beer in a sociable environment. No change there then, unless you count the curious stuff that looks like what Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi drank at breakfast, instead of orange juice. Beerhouses were open from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. and almost all day Sundays.

In contrast to beerhouses, licensed victuallers saw no changes. They sold all types of drink and were aka ale drapers although the only cloth they had was for spills. An 1834 Act still required them to obtain an annual local magistrates' licence. This Act also classified beerhouses for on and off sales. Sadly, the 1869 Wine and Beerhouse Act brought back justices' licences for all, even off sales, and numerous beerhouses were refused them. The 1872 Intoxicating Liquor (Licensing) Act also required registration of all licensed premises. The 1902 and 1904 Licensing Acts required plans of the premises to be submitted. With all this parliamentary legislation, our MPs seem just as interested in real ale as CAMRA.

Well, that covers one side of the Square. Next time, perhaps we could take a look at the rest of the town.

Dr. John

The Crown Inn, Axbridge a real pub

THE CROWN INN at Axbridge was only mentioned for the first time in local CAMRA circles a few years ago, but has quickly become a firm favourite, and it has just celebrated its second consecutive entry in the Good Beer Guide.

Colin and Christine McDougall took over at the Crown five years ago and have tampered very little with this old coaching house. It comprises of two rooms. The front bar reeks of a typical village pub. In winter a real fire (as opposed to a keg fire) blazes away and despite being quite a small room, it contains collections of cups, plates, tankards, jugs, banknotes, old sewing machines, historical pictures of Axbridge and pumpclips. The latter includes no less than 28 from the Cottage brewery of Lovington, Somerset. The back room houses pool, darts and skittles.

The Crown is what I call a real pub. Unusually for a rural pub, it has managed to avoid the temptation/necessity to do food and concentrates on providing good beers in a pub full of character and atmosphere. As with all good village pubs, it is reputedly haunted – just ask Christine.

The pub is well supported by locals and others from outside the village. It runs two table skittle teams, three long-alley skittle

teams (two men's, one women's), two pool teams and a darts team.

All pubs have their faults – the back bar of the Crown gets full of Manchester United supporters when football is on. Also, as with various other rural gems, some “tampering” with the outside toilets probably wouldn't go amiss.

From a real ale drinker's point of view the Crown is excellent. There are always two real ales available. There is no “regular” beer – both beers constantly change. Invariably, these beers come from the excellent Somerset breweries that we have around us – Cotleigh, Cottage, Moor, Glastonbury, RCH, etc. I personally have never had a pint at the Crown that has been anything less than top quality and have never heard any complaints from anyone else. It is always a firm favourite on our minibus outings to the area and I would regard it as being one of the top three pubs in the area for guaranteed beer quality, right up there with the Crown at Churchill and Off The Rails in Weston. It should be high in the list of venues for anyone in the area who likes their ale. Oh yes, and they do real cider too.

Real ale, real cider, real fire – in fact, simply a real pub.

Tim Nickolls

Mike's Upholstery
advert

Reed on..... 'Dunking' the Dispense ("Reed's Rant")

WHY do the best beers I have ever tasted involve **not** dipping the 'dispense' into my precious glass of ale?

It's perhaps just me, but the eager anticipation for that first pint of the evening, perhaps that rare beer you've just discovered, quickly diminishes when, all too often, the bar person dunks the 'spout' into the bottom of my glass then proceeds to create a

frenzy of froth like something akin to my worst nightmare pint of John Smiths!

The beer usually cascades into the slop buckets continuously until the 'tight' head has more or less settled down to the correct level.

I need to be enlightened. Please can someone tell me if this 'dunking' method of serving beer is necessary perhaps when

using certain types of pump? Fair enough if it is. I just hope the taps are cleaned regularly.

Obviously traditional handpumps taps are not always available (pity), but for me two or three carefully controlled pulls from a traditional beer engine, producing that natural 'open' head, falls only slightly behind my real preference for beer drawn straight from a barrel behind the bar. In either case the 'outlet' should always remain above the level of the liquid. Ale seems to taste much better when served this way!

Steve Reed

A Round with Robin

THE photo is from the Wedmore beer festival Sunday 21st October at noon showing the sorry state of affairs that greeted us when we arrived – they'd been so successful they'd sold out of all the beer by late Saturday night!

However the organisers rushed up to Butcombe brewery and purchased six barrels of Butcombe Bitter and Butcombe Gold, and a polypin of Butcombe Silver Jubilee, to placate the Sunday crowd.

Some who turned up sadly left immediately as they found no "great selection of beer" as advertised. Those who stayed were rewarded by some Morris dancing from the Chalice Men, and a fine jazz band playing inside the village hall, but best of all some lovely sunshine, and a laid-back atmosphere.

It has been a good summer for beer festivals and the weather for drinking. I only went to three but I was lucky enough this summer to imbibe at various watering holes in the south-west. There have also been some good ales served at Weston-super-Mare hostelries. The most interesting change has been at **The Regency** which has now replaced Boddington's and Wadworth 6X with Young's Bitter and Butcombe Bitter.

The Dragon Inn continues in my opinion to have the best selection of beers in Weston, and I recently had a very fine pint of Rebellion Red Oktober there. I noticed however that the pump advertised it as just Red. Is this a subtle name change like Watney's changed from Red Barrel to Red? Other pubs in Weston that have had a changing selection have been **Off the Rails** by the railway station and the **White Hart** in Palmer Row.

Some of the most varied brews coming out of the south west independents have to be from Cottage Brewery. Many Somerset pubs that I go to for Morris dancing nearly always have one beer from them. Cotleigh, Moor, RCH and Glastonbury beers are also quite often found, but Exmoor and Butcombe seem to be less rarely found than



they used to be in mid-Somerset. For example I went, on a very hot and humid day, to dance at Hambridge Folk Festival near Langport, in Somerset on the 24th August (to celebrate Cecil Sharp's Centenary). The pub in the village, the **Lamb & Lion**, was so full up that I relied on the festival beer tent. I was glad I did, for not only were the beers cheaper, but the choice was six beers all on gravity. The beer tent was run by the Moor Brewery of Ashcott, and they were most apologetic that they had none of their own beers left as they'd been consumed by thirsty concert-goers the previous evening. My favourite was Dr. Hexteth's Healer from the West Berkshire brewery, with Porker's Pride from the Ring O'Bells brewery at Launceston a close runner-up.

In closing I must make mention of a peculiar thing for me to write about, that is coffee in a pub. The best price and quality

has to go to the **City Arms** in Wells. It's in the Good Beer Guide and serves up to seven real ales as well as good coffee!

Robin E. Wild

Pub Quiz

Q. How do you get a cavy, a ruler and their headgear, and a leather worker and their bicycle, all for £2/6/7¼ ?

A. The cavy is a guinea pig at £1/1/-. The ruler is a £1 sovereign. His or her headgear is a 5/- crown. The leather worker is a 6d tanner. And, finally, the bicycle is a 1¼d penny-farthing. Add them all together and you have £2/6/7¼.

(That's two pounds six shillings and seven pence farthing for people who don't know old money.)

Island in the sea

By your Nailsea correspondent
Laurie Gibney

SOME readers may wonder why this column about real ale in the North Somerset town of Nailsea is entitled "Island In The Sea".

Well, many pints ago the place is reputed to have been surrounded by the estuary of the Bristol Avon river before that cut through the Clifton Gorge, hence it was an "Island In The Sea", which translates to "Nailsea".

Firstly, may I start by offering my congratulations to the Windmill at Portishead for being voted into the 2004 CAMRA Good Beer Guide.

And commiserations to Nailsea pubs, none of which got into the Guide this year. One third of the pubs nationwide in the 2003 Guide didn't make it into the 2004 Guide so Nailsea pubs are not alone. There just isn't room in one book for all the pubs we might like to include. But keep looking after those real ales well and who knows what the future may bring.

And so on to other news. Regrettably the **Sawyers Arms** is no longer dispensing Adnams Broadside, which appears not to have been sufficiently popular during a recent trial (strange considering it won a

gold award in this year's Champion Beer of Britain competition).

I reported in the last Pints West that the Ball family were not renewing their tenancy of the **Star Inn** at Tickenham after 20 years. Since then, on 23 October, a local newspaper, the Mercury, reported that the new tenant was to be former Bristol City footballer, Paul Cheesley.

The best choice of varying guest beers in Nailsea is to be found at the **Ring of Bells** and the **Moorend Spout**. At the time of writing the Ring of Bells' guest beers on handpump or in the cellar were Ballard's Best (4.2 per cent ABV) from West Sussex, Bass (4.4 per cent) from Burton, Cotleigh Tawny (3.8 per cent) from Somerset, Goff's White Knight (4.7 per cent) from Gloucestershire, Haggard's Imp Ale (4.7 per cent), a tawny, fruity, sweet beer from London, Smiles Best (4.1 per cent) from Bristol, and Wychwood Hobgoblin (4.5 per cent) from Oxfordshire.

The **Moorend Spout's** guest beers on handpump or in the cellar were Adnam's Broadside (4.7 per cent) from Suffolk, Bass,



Brains Reverend James (4.5 per cent) from Cardiff, Courage Directors (4.8 per cent) from Yorkshire, and Hook Norton Old Hooky (4.6 per cent) from Oxfordshire.

If you were thinking of booking for Christmas Day lunch at the Moorend Spout, don't, it is fully booked! However, if you are quick to book (on 01275 790206) you may get a table for the New Year's Eve party night.

Apologies to Ron and Joyce Peters, licensees of the **Sawyers Arms**, High Street, Nailsea for suggesting in the last Pints West that their real ale prices were on the high side. At a very acceptable £2 per pint for both Courage and Smiles Best they are indeed 2p below the average real ale price for the South West region and only 2p above the national average price, as published in the CAMRA Prices Survey for 2003.

As this will be the last edition of Pints West before the festive season of Christmas and New Year, may I wish all readers of this "Island In the Sea" column the blessings of Christmas and a happy New Year. Take care and if you Drink *Real Ale* – Don't Drive!

Laurie Gibney

Windmill Inn, Portishead
advert

Moles
advert

Wot, no prize competition?

Afraid not. Maybe next time. However, here are the answers to the last issue's competitions...

Thirty Questions

1 Day's Cottage. 2 Gin Palace. 3 Malt, hops, yeast and water. 4 White Friar. 5 Wiltshire. 6 Terracotta. 7 October. 8 Young's. 9 The Ashcombe. 10 Malt 'n' Hops. 11 Bring your own sandwiches. 12 Beer. 13 £1.50. 14 Highbury Vaults. 14 John Street. 16 Wadworth. 17 Six. 18 Alan Morgan. 20 Moles. 21 Watershed. 22 The Annexe Inn. 23 Guy Newell. 24 Weymouth. 25 The Lamplighters. 26 Off The Rails. 27 Minehead Station. 28 The Bear Inn (Wiveliscombe). 29 Milk Street Brewery. 30 Australia.

Crossword

Across: 7 Wookey Hole Inn. 9 Rose. 10 Tipple. 13 Shepherd Neame. 15 And Crown. 16 Swan.
Down: 1 Swordsman. 2 Hogshead. 3 Zen. 4 Shy. 5 Albion. 6 Annexe Inn. 8 Imp. 11 Shire. 12 Crawl. 14 Easy.

The winner of Thirty Questions was **Bob Bishop** from Bristol. The winner of the crossword was **Nigel Birkett** from Westbury-on-Trym. Both receive £10 and a copy of the CAMRA National Inventory booklet.

Dedication Pub news

"WE'RE passionate about the quality of our real ales. We take pride in ensuring that our casks are carefully stillaged, tapped and regularly checked for taste and clarity to ensure they have fully conditioned before we fill your glass at the bar. One of our greatest pleasures is to share the taste of some of the finest real ales available in the country with our customers. With this in mind we'll be stocking a selection of different ales over the coming months. Please see our blackboards which list the real ales that we currently have available and those that are on the way. If you have any particular favourites you'd like included, please talk to us and we'll do our best to feature them."

So proclaim the menus in Channings Hotel in Pembroke Road, Clifton. It's good to know they regularly check the beers for taste – it's not unknown for some landlords to continue to sell beers long after they've gone off, sometimes completely oblivious to the quality of what they're dispensing.

Hog's Head
advert

Regular readers will be aware that I have written several times about the possible reopening of **BJ's Liquor Emporium** (formerly the Sceptre) on Bristol Bridge. The scaffolding is now down and the hoarding removed to reveal.... a sandwich and coffee shop!

The **King's Arms** in High Kingsdown has been open now for several months after a major refurbishment which saw it closed for a few weeks. The pool table and large screen TV have gone and apparently there is a bigger emphasis on food. Courage Best and Draught Bass are available.

The **Station Master** in Warmley High Street, which has been closed for at least a year, is currently being prepared for a reopening soon. The **Spinner** just down the road has also had an overhaul.

The **Star** at Pucklechurch will be holding a Christmas Beer Festival on the 13th of December – we understand admission will be by ticket only, and that tickets are available from the pub.

I should have realised that, by mentioning in the last Pints West a pub that has probably had more name changes than almost any other in history, it would yet again be the subject of a name change. **Bar Tiny** (see issue 59 for previous names, such as Royal Fort an Blues House Tavern) in Kingsdown is now **Bar 153**. Still no real ale in sight though.

The **Victoria** in Southleigh Road, Clifton now sells Thatcher's cider.

Young's Winter Warmer is now available from their pubs and will probably be on the guest beer list for several pub companies. Production of their cask conditioned Triple A ceased in October and is now only available in a nitrokeg version.

A large banner outside the **Scotchman and his Pack** on St. Michael's Hill proclaims that it is under new management and we wish the new incumbents every success.

The **Cornubia**, a former Bristol Pub of the Year, is also under new management following the departure of Luke in August. Jason and Julia have taken over and are keeping up the tried and tested policy of ever changing guest beers. In addition, two traditional ciders and/or perries are normally available, and the kitchen has reopened for food.

Horts City Tavern in central Bristol now offers two real ciders – Thatcher's Traditional and Cheddar Valley.

Pete Tanner

Wickwar BOB in a Box
advert

Hope & Anchor
advert

A better bit o' Boddie's bitter

MANCHESTER brew Boddington's Bitter has been relaunched with a new recipe and a higher alcohol content, now at 4.1 per cent, up from its previous 3.8 per cent. It will also be made using fuggles and goldings hops and a full malt grist to give it more depth of flavour.

There is no doubt that sales of Boddington's has fallen significantly in recent years. The brewery owners, the Belgian group Interbrew, hope that the relaunched beer will reverse that trend.

Boddington's brewery was established in 1778. Those old enough to drink in the 1970s who lived or visited the Manchester area rave about how the beer was an outstanding brew – for being an exceptionally bitter beer and also pretty strong. It has been suggested that the unusually high alcohol content may have been caused by, in brewers' language, a higher degree of attenuation, that is, more of the fermentable material being turned into alcohol than was typical. However, by the early 1980s, concern was being expressed about the quality of the beer – it was losing some of its character and distinctiveness.

Around the late 1970s, and while still independent, Boddington's invested heavily in the brewery (at Strangeways in Manchester) substantially increasing brewing capacity. It is possibly that it was as a result of this increase in brewing capacity, but not a similar increase in fermenting capacity, that may have compromised the beer quality. It was being sent into the trade with less fermentation having taken place.

Boddington's lost its independence in 1989 when Whitbread bought the brewery. Whitbread made Boddington's a national brand and quality certainly didn't improve with this strategy. Also, in their wisdom, they also produced a version of the brand in nitro-keg form, that is, a "smoothflow" type beer.

Now the brand is being relaunched by current owners Interbrew. We are told it will be stronger and with more depth of flavour. Of course, this begs the question: why was the quality of the beer compro-

The Port of Call

THE Whiteladies Road and Blackboy Hill area of Bristol is well known for its range of modern bars and restaurants. However, for the real ale drinker, most of those outlets do not offer a whole lot of choice.

But do not despair – a very brief walk off Blackboy Hill into York Street (very close to the Downs) and you will find yourself in the welcoming Port of Call with its range of interesting real ales. The Port is also only a very brief stroll from the Red Lion in Worrall Road, which was also recently profiled in Pints West.

Before it became a public house, rumour has it the building used to be a dairy with a bakery next door. Records of it as a public house go back to 1788 when it was then known as the Upper Ship. Then, in 1851, to prove that the change of pub names is nothing new, it became the Down's Porter Stores. Note that although pub names were changed in those days, they didn't appear to adopt the habit prevalent in the 1990s of giving them stupid names!

P. Vaughan & Others then purchased the pub in 1886 and they were subsequently acquired by the Bristol Brewery, George's & Co., in 1888.

The pub was renamed the Port of Call just after the Second World War.

Current licensees Roger and Carol have been in "the trade" for around 14 years. They have been at the Port for two and a half years as tenants for the Unique Pub Company. Fortunately for consumer choice, Unique form part of the Small Independent Breweries Association "Cask Ale Club". This allows the Port to have two guest ales in addition to the existing brands they now have on offer, which enables the pub to have up to twelve real ales on.

The pub itself is a comfortable place with a cosy atmosphere. Pump clips of former guest ales adorn the bar and beams with fish nets (not stockings!) and lobster pots hanging from the ceiling. There is no music or fruit machines, which is pretty rare. If you need to entertain yourself there are board games available – ask at the bar. For those sunny days, there is a beer garden to the rear.

As well as all the above qualities, this pub is friendly and professionally run. The staff, including the seemingly ever-present Garry, are always helpful. The pub is clean – it is pleasing to note that the tables are cleared regularly. There is an extensive menu, ranging from sandwiches to steaks. Food is served from 12 to 2.15 and 5.30 to 10 Monday to Saturday, and from 12 to 5 on a Sunday. Sunday lunch includes beef, pork, lamb, chicken, home-made nut loaf, vegetable lasagne and more. Takeaways are also available.

Now – **about those beers!...**

Currently on all the time are Courage Best, Bass, Fuller's London Pride, Hobgoblin, Smiles Best, Sharp's Doom Bar and Cornish Coaster, Theakston's Old Peculiar, and last year's CAMRA Champion Beer of Britain, Caledonian Deuchars IPA.

In addition, recent and forthcoming guest ales include beers from Bateman's, Sutton Brewing Co., Springhead Brewery, Frog Island, Hogs Back, Blackawton, Elgood's, Wood Brewery, Church End, Highwood, Moor and Oakhill. Not a bad choice!

Roger and Carol have certainly put this pub on the map as far as real ale is concerned – so much so that the Port features in the new 2004 CAMRA Good Beer Guide. It is certainly a pub worth checking out.

Pete Bridle

mised in the first place? Nonetheless, we wish the beer success – it is important for the future of real ale that national brands are of good quality as they have such a high profile.

As well as the change to the brewing, there will be significant marketing of the beer, particularly in the trade. New accounts will receive branded glasses and "yellow" handpumps.

I haven't tried the relaunched beer yet and await my first tasting with some interest.

Pete Bridle

Eurobeer
advert

Lowdown on Totterdown

In search of Totterdown's finest alehouse

MANY of us enjoy a drink and a chat with friends at our local pub, but how many people don't venture much further than their regular drinking haunt? How well do we know all the pubs in our area? What about the history of these fine local hostelrys? What were they like 50 years ago (coronation year) or beyond? Where's the best place to find some live entertainment? Or some good food and a pint of real ale? With these burning questions to answer (and a raging thirst to quell!), a team from the Totterdown Area Community Association set off to discover what's on offer in all of Totterdown's pubs.

In the spirit of fair play our intrepid 'researchers' visited every pub, staying just long enough to enjoy a pint (or whatever took their fancy) and to sample the atmosphere. Each landlord (or whoever was behind the bar) was asked the same questions. Then, at the end of the evening the pubs' best points were put to the vote to find out which can claim the title of "Totterdown's Favourite Local". Well, our favourite anyway!

First on our map was *The Shakespeare* on the corner of Henry Street and William Street. Landlady Hilary describes her pub as: "A traditional, friendly locals pub, with the emphasis on music (especially live) and real ales."

Next question: *What do you know about the pub's history? – What do you think it was like 50 years ago, in the coronation year?* Hilary has no idea where the pub's name came from. On the history though, the pub was a lot smaller and was divided into lots of little rooms, including a bagatelle room, a smoke room and a scullery. There was also an off-sales hatch and some stables (now the 'cosy' beer garden). On the wall in 'The Shakey' is a list of all the previous landlords from 1870 (when the first to run the newly opened pub was a Mr. G.M. Thomas) through to Vernon Somers, who ran things with his wife Joan until Hilary took over two years ago. Vernon, or 'Mad Ernie', was something of a Totterdown legend, and Joan's dad Bill is still a regular customer and a familiar face to many. One story still told is that of a previous landlord who went out to the stables to fetch some coal and never came back, as he unfortunately died on the spot, in the process of trying to keep his customers warm... For those who really want to know the pub's history in detail, Hilary has a booklet that was written in Mad Ernie's day, kept behind the bar.

So onto the important issues of *beer, food and entertainment policy*: Hilary says

her beer policy is "To sell as much as possible!" This is pretty successful as the pub always has two regular real ales, Smiles and Courage (*since changed – see letters page, Ed.*), along with a weekly guest beer. At the time of our visit this was Exeter Old Bitter, and was described by our tasters as "Very nice, very well kept", and although one of the team said it tasted of "toothpaste and apples" the rest of us thought it just tasted of good beer! A beer festival is held twice a year and there's also a full range of other lagers, ciders, stouts, wine and bottled drinks to suit all tastes. The Shakey doesn't do food, but more than makes up for it by way of live entertainment. There's free live music every Saturday night – everything from blues, punk, funk, rock and jazz – Hilary chooses what goes. There are DJs every other night playing anything from Motown to Dance and a monthly 'open mike' session is due to start. The pub has held school discos and other fancy dress bashes, but never karaoke. Lastly, there's also a fortnightly pub quiz every other Monday.

When asked to *describe the 'average punter'*, Hilary reckons they are "Fun-loving and slightly inebriated! And music's important to them too." On leaving the pub, I was accosted by someone who fitted this description quite well who told me to tell people that it's a: "Great pub, great pub. Doesn't look much from the outside, but its excellent once you're through the door." So there you go.

Next our mission took us to the *New Found Out* on Green Street and Henry Street. The pub has been run by Paul and Gillian for the past two years, and has seen something of a turnaround in that time. Paul describes his pub as simply: "Brilliant!", while Gillian reckons its "A proper local – very friendly, especially for ladies", which was one of her main aims when taking it on.

On the history of the pub, they told us that it has been there for nearly 150 years, but no-one knows where the name came from. They do know that it is now the only New Found Out in the UK – there used to be one in Newport but its now closed down. Other than that, Paul told us that he knew that the pubs in the area used to be a real family affair as the wife of the landlord of the King William (now Glasnost) used to run the NFO. (NB: Interesting pub fact: the NFO began life as the Builders Arms, but why or when it changed is unclear).

With regard to beer, food and entertainment policy: the NFO always has a good pint of Bass (Paul's tried other real ales – but they "didn't work out") and the full

ranges of other lagers, stouts and ciders (including the local Natch). If it's food you're after, they do a good range of quick snacks – burgers, pizza, etc. – to fill you up. Music-wise, the pub doesn't have a juke box, but always has music as customers can bring in their own CDs, which always makes for an 'interesting' variety of sounds! (A fine selection of ska tunes were playing during our visit.) There's a resident DJ every month and on bank holidays, regular karaoke, and live music on Sunday afternoons. For extra entertainment Paul himself occasionally sings along to whatever's playing, though Gillian says this is guaranteed to empty the pub!

According to Paul and Gillian, their average punters are "Local, good as gold, friendly and sociable. And kids are welcome until 8 p.m. too." Paul was born and bred in Totterdown, the NFO was the first pub he ever had a drink in, and when he became landlord his vision was to turn it back into a "locals' local". Our team agreed he's done a good job. Just before we left, Paul was keen to show us his "fantastic collection of bonzai trees", and was also keen to say he's willing to part with some of the best of these – for the right price of course!

So, on to *The Oxford*, on (unsurprisingly) Oxford Street. The landlady Emma Jones and partner Julius weren't there for our visit, but barmaid Liz helped with the questions. She describes the Oxford as: "Totterdown's version of the Queen Vic! Widely used by all groups and ages in the area."

The reason for the name of the pub is obvious as it was named after the street and was built at the same time as the houses (it opened in 1868). In those days it was smaller – originally a pub and two houses, and was known as the Oxford Hotel. As to what it was like 50 years ago – Liz only knows that it's got bigger since then as the house next door became part of the pub in the 1970s (Liz grew up opposite the NFO), and that there used to be a men-only bar, "until emancipation!"

There's usually a choice of real ale ("until they run out!" – which they had on our visit) and the normal full range of other drinks. Food-wise, the Oxford offers snacks and rolls, with the popular curry nights on Sundays and Mondays starting again in the autumn. There's usually live entertainment on Friday and Sunday, and this can be "everything and anything". For example, the previous Sunday had provided a jazz trio in the afternoon and a solo artist doing popular cover versions in the evening.

According to Liz there's "No such thing

as an average punter at the Oxford – they're all exceptional!" One punter at the bar tried to insist that: "We is all posh in 'ere", but we weren't convinced!

Our journey then took us over the Wells Road to *The Bush*, run by Jason and Sarah, who describe their pub as a "community sports local" – which seems pretty accurate.

The Bush is Totterdown's newest pub, being only 15 years old. Our hosts knew that it had been built before the houses on the new estate and named after the Bush Inn Hotel that used to be on the green opposite the YMCA building. On a jubilee theme, they had decorated the pub for the jubilee, "but the World Cup sort of took over!"

Beer-wise Jason told us there was "No call for real ale" so it's the normal range of keg beers, lagers and cider, plus wine and bottled drinks. They don't do food either (bar nibbles only).

However, there's lots of entertainment on offer. There are normally groups playing every Thursday. Jason usually chooses after listening to demo tapes, although he said the bloke warbling away in the corner during our visit, and murdering most of the songs he covered, "must have slipped through the quality control net!" There are pool competitions on Mondays (the Bush has lots of good pool tables), table football and they have even tried Scalextric racing evenings. The pub speciality is "all the big footie matches and other live sports" shown on the big screen and the five other TVs throughout.

The Bush is also the only Totterdown pub to be home to local sports teams – being the base for the Bush Sports and St. Philip's Sunday league football teams. (Congratulations to Bush Sports on their promotion in their first ever season.) Regarding their average punter, Jason and Sarah said: "We have very mixed and diverse customers – from 18 to 80 year olds who all like a drink and like their sport." However, Assistant Manager Mag ("Just call me Ethel") thinks the average punters are "Definitely dodgy pool players!" Anyway, if City ever play Rovers again, or you want to catch any other, less important games while enjoying a drink and some friendly banter, then you know where to go.

By this time it was close to 10.30 so we headed down the hill onto the Bath Road and to *The Turnpike*. Unfortunately it was already closed (on a Thursday) so we are unable to offer any assessment of the delights that may be on offer (we may have to visit on another occasion to complete our survey).

So it was finally on to *The Cumberland* at the bottom of Windsor Terrace, run by

landlord Tom and partner Lydia. Tom describes his pub as: "Somewhere a local can enjoy a drink. We look after our locals and cater for whoever comes in."

He doesn't know much about the history of the place: "There's some that think the pub was named after a ship called the Cumberland, while others say there's some connection to do with the Duke of Cumberland." Tom's been landlord for three years but using the pub as a local himself for eighteen. In that time it's changed – "It's quieter now than it used to be, but it's picking up." The layout of the two bars remains the same.

For those that like their ale real, there's always a pint of bass, but no guest beers. There's no food: "'Cause the kitchens too far away..." and the musical entertainment is somewhat limited, although they do have occasional acoustic evenings. Otherwise you can enjoy table football, pool, a free jukebox and Totterdown's only skittle alley.

Tom says his average punters are "Mad but nice! – Really lovely people. I'd like to see more of the people living here dropping in a bit more often – I think they'd be

pleasantly surprised." Our team wouldn't argue with that. A friend who was trying to catch up with us on our survey that evening said that this was his favourite of them all, being "Just a good solid place to enjoy a drink and a chat."

And so, all too soon, our 'research' was complete. And the verdict? A quick straw poll revealed that the Shakespeare was our favourite on the evening, for its mix of good beer, relaxed atmosphere and music, with the New Found Out next in the voting and nothing to separate the others. (Bizarrely, one of the team voted for the George on the Wells Road – perhaps having one too many was causing some confusion by this time?) It was unanimously agreed that Totterdown is blessed with some great local boozers, and that each has something to offer. Our thanks go to the landlords, landladies and bar staff who, without exception, gave us a warm and friendly welcome.

And if you're not sure which you fancy next time you pop out for a pint – why not follow our lead and try them all! As Tom in the Cumberland says, you might be pleasantly surprised!

Dan Cooke

A (very) brief and rough history of Totterdown's pubs

A MAP of Totterdown dated 1882 shows a grand total of 30 public houses and off-licences. In those days the emphasis was firmly on the quality and price of the beer, rather than other comforts and entertainment on offer, and when it came to food, bread, cheese and onion was the order of the day. Things have moved on (although good value and quality beer and food still remain a priority for many) and the number of pubs has now dropped to six, plus a couple of 'offies'.

Many were knocked down for various road widening or local 'improvement' schemes. For instance the two pubs on St. Luke's Road that used to back onto Victoria Park – the Bridge Inn and the Princess Royal were lost when the road was widened and deepened under the railway bridge (some-time in the 1960s?). The widening of the Bath Road saw the end of the Blue Bowl, the Swan (one of the only Bristol pubs to sell Guinness directly imported from Ireland in boats docking at Welsh Back) and (probably) the Bath Bridge Tavern.

Unsurprisingly, the much-talked-of outer circuit ring-road scheme (the road that was never built), which flattened a large chunk of Totterdown in the 1970s and the subsequent watered-down scheme to widen the Wells Road, had a major effect on the watering holes in the area. This (almost certainly) destroyed the Three Elms, the Phoenix, the

Prince Rupert, the Bell, the Totterdown Hotel (close to the site of the present-day Bush Pub), the Bush Hotel, the Cambridge (?), the Robin Hood and, possibly, the Raglan on the corner of Wells Road and Cambridge Street, where a small apartment building stands now.

Other pubs have simply become something else, such as the King William, now the fine restaurant that is Glasnost, and the Boar's Head, on the Oxford Street, St. Luke's Road and St. John's Lane junction, which became a double glazing business. Still others will have befallen a similar fate and just gone out of business – does anyone know who drank the last pint before the lights went out at the Three Lamps (now being converted into flats) on the Bath Road? It's worth a mention at this point that one pub has stood proudly through all this and more, and can claim the title of Totterdown's oldest pub. Step forward the Turnpike, which was built just after the Bath Road improvements in 1833 and originally refreshed stagecoach parties before they began the steep ascent up Pylle Hill!

If anyone has any (probably more recent!) interesting snippets or facts concerning Totterdown pub life, we'd love to hear from you. Two things are for sure: firstly, nothing stands still, and secondly, the same lesson applies to pubs as to local shops: *Use 'em or lose 'em!*

Dan Cooke



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)

Hi Steve,

I'm writing to you with a couple of observations on articles in the last edition of Pints West. (Congratulations on the award, by the way, it's well deserved.)

Firstly I was rather amused by the article entitled "Shine on South Gloucestershire" by Duncan Shine. In the article heading it states: "...he looks at the real ale situation in some of the villages to the north-west of the City". Well, if you head north-west from central Bristol, the first notable real ale venue you will encounter is the Lamplighters at Shirehampton, which is still well within the city rather than South Gloucestershire.

After that you will encounter the somewhat dubious pleasures of Avonmouth, followed by a six-mile expanse of murky water and mud that is the Severn Estuary!

Mind you, I think Duncan can be forgiven for confusing his north-west with his north-east if he visited all the pubs in his article in one go! I should think after that lot he wouldn't know the bottom from the top, never mind NE from NW.

(Duncan Shine responds: Firstly, thanks for taking the trouble to write. Apart from being useful feedback, it is also reassuring to know that people are reading this publication. As to your specific point, I can only plead guilty as charged. It's odd: I could take you to every pub in and around Bristol and not get lost once, but ask me whether we're heading north, south, east or west and I'm stumped. Between you and me, I'm secretly quite pleased that I got the 'north' bit right. I hope that the error, my ramblings in general, didn't spoil your enjoyment of Pints West too much. Keep the feedback coming.)

Secondly, I would like to endorse the article by Tim Nickolls entitled "Eating and Drinking in Weston - 2: The Regency". Me and my friend had a day trip to Weston in June and we also ate at the Regency. We had chilli con carne with potato wedges, which was top class

and great value for money at £3.95. All washed down with a perfectly kept pint of Bath Gem.

Kind regards,
Ian Smith (by email).

Dear Steve,

It was a raw, stormy evening in February. I was ensconced in the Mouse, Westbury-on-Trym, pint of Abbot in hand, observing the fiery particles darting up from the welcoming, crackling log fire. The bells of the church clock of the medieval Holy Trinity church struck eight clearly across the ancient graveyard next door. The Mouse had an expectant atmosphere, with a buzz of jocular conversation among the regulars..

And then, very suddenly, my reverie was shattered. The door was flung open. A draught of cold air rushed in - as did maybe 20 happy young folk, bright eyed, pink cheeked and bushy tailed. I soon rose from my seat by the fire and engaged them in conversation. They were, they informed me, members of a hockey club, on a fearsome mission called The Westbury Eight!

They had set forth from the Black Swan (a.k.a. the Dirty Duck) in Stoke Lane, proceeding via the Prince of Wales, then across Falcondale Road into the heart of Westbury village, where the White Lion, the White Horse, the Forresters and the Post Office Tavern lay before them. After the Mouse, the Queen Victoria, before navigating a return to base camp at the Duck (or was is it the Prince of Wales?).

As I am relatively new to the fair city of Bristol I must ask more knowledgeable readers of Pints West whether this is a tradition of long standing. Do your readers have any recollections and memories of the Eight? Is there a similar mission elsewhere in Bristol?

Best wishes,
John Macrae (by email).

PS: Billy and Elaine, from London, who have recently taken over the lease of the Mouse, would like to know as well!

Dear Steve

You and your readers may be interested to know that here at the Shakespeare in Totterdown we now have Sharp's Cornish Coaster, Smiles Best and Old Speckled Hen as our three regular real ales with one additional weekly changing "guest ale". We have ditched Courage Best due to its declining popularity!

Yours,
Hilary Ellis,
The Shakespeare, Totterdown.

Hi Steve,

Thought you might be interested in an event which is imminent up here at the Wellington we're calling "The Complete Hare". All Bath Ales' beers (Spa, Gem, Barnstormer, Spa Extra, Rare Hare and Festivity) will be available at the same time, for one night only.

This is the first time this will have been

done, and will take place on Thursday 27th November. The evening will include a complimentary buffet consisting of six traditional pub foods.

Best regards,
Paul Tanner,
The Wellington,
Gloucester Road, Bristol.

(The event will have been and gone by the time people most read Pints West - perhaps it could be repeated some time? Ed.)

Dear Steve,

Many, many moons ago now they developed Aztec West, Patchway Common. Right in the middle was an old farm that became a Daniel Thwaites house. Its name I think was perfect - surrounded by large modern offices the old farm became "The Black Sheep".

With the demand for lagers alas their mild didn't sell and was taken off. It would be nice to try those dark northern beers again down here. If RCH can sell their dark beer, maybe your influence could get that Daniel Thwaites dark one down here again? Anyway, go and have a look at The Black Sheep - it's perfect.

R. Richards,
Stoke Gifford.

(The Good Beer Guide has this to say about Thwaites Mild: "Has become hard to find in cask form. A traditional dark mild presenting a thin, malty flavour and slightly bitter finish." Ed.)

The Lamplighters, Shirehampton Fourth Real Ale and Music Festival (13 September 2003)

This year's festival was a sell out with an attendance of 200 people.

The ales on offer included the current Champion Beer of Britain, Harviestoun's Bitter & Twisted; the Champion Mild, Lidstone's Rowley Mild; and Butcombe Brewery's 25th anniversary brew, Silver Jubilee.

There was also real cider and perry to try, supplied by Heck's of Street.

At the end of a cracking late summer's day everyone was asked to vote for the ale of their choice, with local brewery Bath Ales' Rare Hare taking first place, and Uley's Pig's Ear runner-up.

This was, undoubtedly, the biggest and best festival yet at the Lamplighters and there will be more of the same on the second Saturday in September next year.
Leon Franklin.



Tempus Publishing – Archive Photographs Series

Dear Steve,

I wanted to contact you as I am interested in producing histories of local South West pubs, in particular those in the Bristol and Bath areas.

As you may know, Tempus are publishers of local history books and, in particular, collections of old photographs. Our **Archive Photographs Series** has become established as a front-runner in this popular way of presenting local social history. We also produce a series of oral history books called *Voices*, a *Then & Now* series, and a *History and Guide* series.

Books in the series are usually put together by a local person (or persons) who has access to a photograph collection or who could assemble one from local sources. Because we need someone with good local knowledge we usually approach local librarians and local history groups but all kinds of people have successfully filled the role. Each **Archive Photograph Series** book is produced to a standard format. We require around 200 old photographs each with an appropriate caption to fit well into 128 pages. The layout and sequencing of the images is at the choice of the author, the costs of production are borne by ourselves and we pay a royalty to the compiler(s). We have a comprehensive sales and publicity department to market the book effectively when it is published and can provide as much editorial advice as is necessary.

As I mentioned, I am interested in producing a series of pub histories that would cover the key sites in major locations, such as Bristol and Bath, and which illustrate the social history of the area as seen through images of pubs, their interiors and patrons. Our *Birmingham Pubs* book has been very successful and is an interesting way of documenting the place of the breweries and their establishments in daily Brummie life.

I was wondering if you knew of anyone who might be interested in taking up this project, or whether yourself or other Pints West contributors or readers would like to know more about producing a pictorial history of local pubs. I would be very happy to discuss the idea in more detail with anyone who might be interested.

Yours sincerely,
Katherine Burton,
Senior Commissioning Editor,
Tempus Publishing Limited,
The Mill,
Brimscombe Port,
Stroud,
Gloucestershire GL5 2QG.
Tel: 01453 883300
Email: KBurton@tempus-publishing.com



In praise of a local institution

MICHELLE AND JIM MURRAY opened Humpers Off-Licence in Staple Hill seventeen years ago and today it is a thriving business, the only dedicated real-ale off licence in the locality.

When they began all those years ago, the only real beer they had available was Smiles Best. These days, Humpers sells five regular beers on tap (currently Bass, Smiles Best, Hop Back Summer Lightning, Butcombe Bitter and Smiles Bristol IPA) and up to three guest beers – sometimes even more in winter. The beers are sold at well below pub prices. Michelle stated that if there are any breweries reading this article out there who want to put their ale behind the counter, please call her.

Jim Murray sadly died in 1996, but Michelle continues to run this 'local institution' with her dedicated team. She is justly proud of the fact that she is one of the longest continuous Good Beer Guide entries in our branch's geographical spread – 13 years at the last count!

Not content with that, she also appears in the Good Cider Guide, selling in the region of 50 gallons a week of Thatcher's, Cheddar Valley and Weston's Organic, and is happy to listen to customer requests for other varieties. The Thatcher's presently retails at a mere 80p a pint!

Additionally, she appears in the Good Bottled Beer Guide, and recalled a customer around Christmas time last year who travelled up from London specifically to sample and

purchase a number of her bottled selection, numbers which increase considerably around Christmas.

Humpers is also ideal for those pleasant, balmy summer barbecues, with beer available in take-out containers, either provided by yourself or at the off-licence itself. At this point, can I also suggest that readers of this magazine also think of Humpers when it comes to parties and other celebrations. Michelle explained that a rugby club had recently been let down by another supplier and she was able to pour 240 pints in four hours for them – not surprisingly, they will be using her facility again!

Finally, as we are approaching the Christmas festivities, I can recommend the polypins/beer boxes available during December; lists are available earlier, so if you are interested give Michelle a ring. Some are available in pints (normally minimum 16), or some in litres, but breweries' beers that Michelle sold last year were RCH, Smiles, Cottage, Hop Back, Wickwar and Fullers, for example, so you may well be able to get your favourite beer for Christmas.

All in all, Humpers is a 'must' visit for the discerning real ale drinker. The phone number for further details is (0117) 9565525. Opening hours during the winter are 12 to 2 and 5 to 10.30 every day, though open 12 to 11 Christmas week. Summer hours are 12 to 2 and 5 to 10.30 Monday to Friday and 12 to 10.30 weekends.

Richard Walters

Wadworth 6X
advert

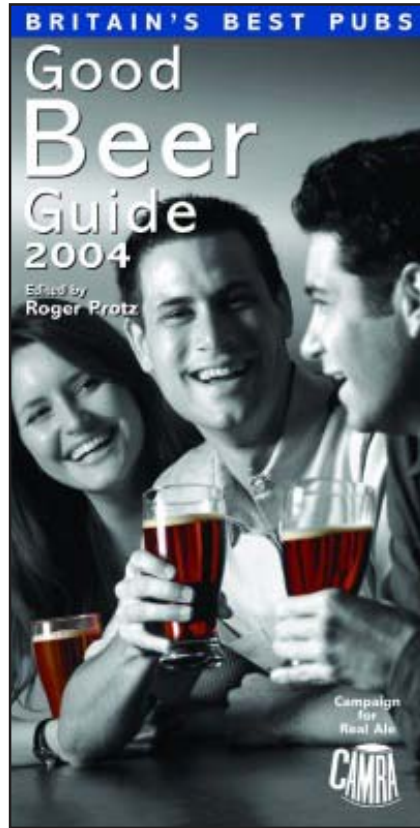
Good Beer Guide 2004

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale recently launched the 31st edition of the award-winning Good Beer Guide.

This best-selling guide highlights the top 4,500 real ale pubs in Britain and offers a unique directory to every brewery in the country, large or small, with details of all the cask-conditioned and bottle-conditioned beers they brew, together with unique tasting notes (around 500 breweries in all, 35 being new this year).

Each pub entry, surveyed on a regular basis over the year by CAMRA members, gives a detailed summary of why the pub has been included in the Good Beer Guide and highlights information on the pub's facilities for families and the disabled, history, architecture, food, accommodation, local places of interest and, of course, the beer!

There are almost 900 *new* pub entries in the 2004 Guide and each entry has been visited throughout the year by CAMRA members. There is no charge for entry into the Good Beer Guide. These elite pubs are selected by the real pub goer (unlike some guides, some of which may only send a questionnaire and are never visited). The pubs that appeared in the previous edition have all been updated with new information for 2004, making this the most up-to-date



and comprehensive guide to British pubs in today's book market.

An entry in the Good Beer Guide is a stamp of approval from CAMRA and the Bristol & District branch take this seriously. The number one consideration for entry is consistently good quality real ale. We endeavour to survey all year round to check on this and hold an open and democratic selection meeting. We certainly don't rest on our laurels, and there are always changes in the pub entries each year.

Space is limited in the Guide, and each branch of CAMRA has its own quota of places it can fill. Inevitably if a hitherto unremarkable pub shines out as a gem for real ale worthy of recognition in the Guide, another must unfortunately make way for it, possibly even one whose own beers may still be just as good as ever.

If you would like to assist us in our never ending quest to find the best real ale pubs, please come along to a branch meeting (see the diary on the back page for details).

As well as being on sale in most book shops (just £12.99), the Good Beer Guide is also available at Bristol & District branch meetings. There is a substantial discount in the price for CAMRA members if you buy from us direct.

Wikwar BOB
advert

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Big brewers distort real ale's market share

Good Beer Guide claims regional brewers are leading the way in sales of traditional beer

REALALE's share of the beer market is far bigger than statistics claim, says marketing expert Martyn Cornell in the 2004 CAMRA Good Beer Guide.

While leading brewing industry analysts AC Nielsen claim that cask beer represents only 8 per cent of the total beer market at around 2.75 million barrels in 2002, and is declining, many regional brewers report increased demand for their beers.

Martyn Cornell, managing editor of Martin Information, the leading supplier of news and analysis for the leisure industry, says that Greene King's volumes of Abbot Ale have risen by 20 per cent, with Old Speckled Hen up 13 per cent. Wolverhampton & Dudley is investing millions in its Burton-on-Trent plant that produces Marston's Pedigree and has just launched Old Empire, a genuine recreation of a 19th-century India Pale Ale.

Fuller's of West London saw brewing profits rise by 18 per cent in 2003, while Shepherd Neame of Faversham, Kent, reports sales of Spitfire bitter up by 20 per cent. Hardy's & Hanson's of Nottingham have announced a substantial increase in sales for 2003, while sales of Young's of Wandsworth's

Bitter were up by 6.6 per cent and its Winter Warmer climbed by 21 per cent. Adnams of Suffolk reports that its Bitter sales have risen by 11 per cent while Broadside increased by 15.5 per cent.

The reason for the gap between statistics and brewers' own figures lies in the retreat from cask beer production by the Big Four national brewers: Scottish Courage, Interbrew, Coors and Carlsberg-Tetley. Scottish Courage now owns the French lager brand Kronenbourg, Interbrew concentrates on promoting Stella Artois, Coors owns the leading lager brand Carling, while Carlsberg-Tetley, wholly owned by Danes, brews Carlsberg lager in Northampton.

Scottish Courage and Carlsberg-Tetley own the two biggest ale brands in Britain – John Smith's and Tetley Bitter – but puts the overwhelming bulk of its advertising spending behind the "smoothflow" nitro-keg versions of the beers, not the cask versions. The declining amount of real ale brewed by the nationals, who are responsible for eight out of ten pints brewed in Britain, distorts the overall market statistics and seriously under-reports the real ale revival enjoyed by regional and micro-brewers.

Martyn Cornell points out that AC Nielsen works closely with the British Beer and Pub Association (the former Brewers Society) which is funded mainly by the big brewers and pub companies. An independent statistical company, CGA, has drawn a startlingly different picture of real ale's share of the beer market. CGA's survey shows that cask ale sales are actually around five million barrels a year, and that cask in reality is more than 20 per cent of total on-trade beer sales, making it the second biggest category after heavily advertised standard lagers.

While Nielsen says the nationals' brands account for nearly half of UK cask ale sales, CGA claims the Big Four sell much less, only 27 per cent of all the cask beer drunk in Britain, with 40 regional brewers accounting for 57 per cent and 400-plus micros mopping up the final 15 or 16 per cent.

"Despite gloomy talk about a declining market overall, the number of outlets for cask ale is actually increasing," Cornell adds. "CGA found that compared to 2001 there were another 1,160 pubs stocking cask ale, a 2.9 per cent increase, which means that 63 per cent of pubs now sell at least one cask ale."

Giant Pub Cos are restricting choice

Leading beer writer accuses pub companies of exploiting drinkers

GIANT pub companies – "pubcos" – have replaced brewers as the biggest retailers of beer in Britain and they are ruthlessly exploiting drinkers and squeezing smaller brewers out of the market. That is the claim made by leading beer writer Ted Bruning in the 2004 CAMRA Good Beer Guide.

"The pubcos rule the roost," says Bruning. "The country's brewers own just over 10,000 pubs while the pubcos now control more than 30,000. The top three pubcos – Enterprise Inns, Punch and Pubmaster – own more than 15,000 pubs.

Many other pubcos are financed by foreign merchant banks interested solely in profit, not providing choice and diversity for drinkers. The Japanese banker Nomura at one time owned almost the entire pub estate of former brewer Grand Metropolitan. Deutsche Bank owns Laurel, which runs many of the former Whitbread pubs, and an American venture capital house is behind InnSpired, the pub estate of former West Country brewer Usher's."

The pubcos are the result of government action in the early 1990s to weaken the power of the national brewing groups, which acted as a price-fixing cartel. The nationals had to sell off a large proportion of their pubs which ended up in the hands of bankers and entrepreneurs determined to make a fast buck at the

expense of drinkers.

"As a result," says Ted Bruning, "pub prices have soared in the past 10 years. At the same time, pub tenants have found their rents rocketing while the level of service from their owners has dwindled to nothing while they pay top dollar for their beer."

"At around £2, you may be paying twice as much for a pint as you did 14 years ago. But don't blame the poor licensee: most pubco tenants are worse off than they were as big brewery tied traders, and a staggering 48% of them, according to a recent survey, loathe their landlords and regret ever having signed their leases."

"Brewers don't see much of the £2 either," Ted Bruning adds. "Pubcos typically pay £35-£40 for a 72-pint cask, and the brewers must pay the duty out of his share. His only chance of profit is to be ruthlessly efficient himself, laying off workers and squeezing his own suppliers, who in turn must do the same. So maltsters pay animal-feed prices for top-quality malting barley, and as that's below the cost of growing it, the farmers depend on subsidies to make a living — subsidies paid by you and me."

Even when a regional brewer manages to get his beers listed by a pubco he faces the hugely expensive task of promoting his beer to the pubco's tenants. "Wadworth of Devises

found itself in this position in 2002," says Bruning, "when it had to pour £1 million into promoting its famous 6X. As Wadworth only brews 100,000 barrels a year, that's £10 per barrel blown on a single advertising campaign".

The reason so many regional brewers have disappeared in the past decade – at the same time as the pubcos have developed their iron grip on the pub trade – is because they couldn't make a living after they had paid the huge discounts on beer demanded by the pubcos, in addition to the added expense of promoting their brands.

Life is even tougher for Britain's 400-plus small "micro" brewers. The discounts demanded by the pubcos – usually 50 to 60% off the wholesale price of a cask of beer – means it is just not worth the micros selling to them.

The result is that while some regional brewers have done deals with the pubcos, the main beers sold in pubco outlets are such national brands as Tetley, John Smiths and Boddingtons, which are sold significantly cheaper than smaller brewers by global brewers.

Ted Bruning says that following the revocation of the Beer Orders in 2002 the Government needs to act to curb the power of pub chains. "A full review of the industry is required to establish the true effects of pub co power on consumers, publicans and brewers."

Shine on Clifton Village

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 his second report, he looks at the real ale situation in Clifton Village.

Full details, opening times and photographs of all the pubs mentioned can be found on the www.britishpubguide.com web site.



Picture the scene... One sunny day you've decided to head up to Clifton and drink in the beauty of Brunel's magnificent Suspension Bridge. The view from up there takes your breath away. But you can't help wondering why they thought they needed a bridge. Maybe they wanted a way for residents of Leigh Woods to get to the Visitor Centre. You decide to adjourn for a drink to consider the matter further.

But what pubs are going to satisfy your frankly rather stringent taste criteria? You pull out your CAMRA Good Beer Guide 2004 (available from the CAMRA web site www.camra.org.uk) but, horror of horrors, none of the pubs in Clifton village is featured. You wonder whether this is because Clifton has a CAMRA Obscure. Suddenly, as if from nowhere, a shambling, slightly jaded looking figure approaches you, and clears his throat...

"Sadly" he says, "there just isn't enough space in the Good Beer Guide to include all the pubs that serve good real ale, but don't worry, I can help".

"Just down there is the **White Lion Brasserie**, part of the Avon Gorge Hotel. If you haven't visited the terrace there, you've missed the best pub view in Bristol. They also do Courage and Smiles Best bitters on handpump.

"A little further down this beautiful crescent, you'll get to the **Portcullis**, where Dave Crofton opens his doors for weekday evenings and all day at the weekend. The beers in there are Courage Best, Butcombe and Wadworth 6X, with the Butcombe on very good form the last time I was in there.

"Tell you what, though" he says as he grabs you just below the elbow. "Let's have a wander down Princess Victoria Street". The first pub you get to is the **Greyhound**, a two bar Unique pub with two arched windows at the front. It offers four cask ales (Bass, Courage Best, Greene King Old Speckled Hen and award-winning Adnam's

Broadside) but you press on until you get to the **Somerset House**. Your guide shambles in first through the double doors, followed by you and your new partner (readers of the last Pints West will remember that your last partner dumped you after a pub crawl ending at the superb Globe in Frampton Cotterell).

The Somerset House is a Scottish & Newcastle pub (or is that Spirit Group now?) so you're not at all surprised to see the ubiquitous Courage Best Bitter and Old Speckled Hen on handpump. Your guide points you towards the third pump, however, which boasts Piddle In The Hole from the Wyre Piddle Brewery in Worcestershire. Landlady, Emma Jones pours you and your guide a pint and, while your partner (who is researching an article for the eminently fictitious newsletter *Soft Drinks West*) asks for a *Star Anise Floater Coffee*. Emma explains that she has a weekly changing guest beer from Scotco's 'Cellarman' range.

From the Somerset House you move straight to the **Quadrant**, pausing briefly to admire the beautiful new painted signs outside. Butcombe and Courage Best are on offer, but again there is a guest beer, which changes regularly. You spot a laminated "Clifton Renaissance" article in the window here – a cutting from a previous Pints West penned when the Quadrant first introduced its guest beers. Butcombe is such a drinkable bitter that you have a pint, while your partner plumps for an *Elderflower Energy Drink with essence of Rhino tusk* for added va va voom.

"Down that road by W. H. Smiths" warbles your guide, "is a cobbled walkway leading to the **Albion**, where there is Smiles Best Bitter on handpump. Alternatively, if you head down Regent Street, you'll see the **Clifton** on your left." Your guide explains how they are planning a major refurbishment after which new licensee Neil Liley – fresh from the Crown in St. Nicholas Market – should be offering Fuller's London Pride and Wadworth 6X. They're apparently knocking the two bars into one huge one, so it will be interesting to see how it turns out.

You leave the Quadrant, though, and head up the hill. Your guide points to the **Hophouse** with its imposing façade overlooking King's Road. He tells you it's a Wadworth pub converted from the old entrance to the shopping arcade. 6X and Henry's I.P.A. are both available, plus occasional seasonal offerings from Wadworth. Your partner asks if they serve *Full Fat Milk dispensed by Gravity*. Your partner is something of a soft drinks purist.

Your next stop is the **Clifton Sausage Bar & Restaurant** in Portland Street. Although more restaurant than pub, they complement the excellent Butcombe Bitter with Weston's Draught Scrumpy and an excellent pint of Leffe Blonde. You are

captivated by the huge range of flavoured sausages available, but you have to leave following an accident involving an unfortunate attempt to open your partner's *Lemongrass & Galangal Fruit Shoot*.

As you walk up the Mall, your guide points out the **Mall** pub at the top, which sells Bass, London Pride and an occasional guest, as well as Addlestone's Cloudy Cider. He pulls you in, however, to the **Royal Oak**. He orders a pint of Courage Best – even though there are three other real ales (Bass, Greene King I.P.A., and Marston's Pedigree) and a traditional cider (Addlestone's) on offer. Your guide explains that the Royal Oak turns over massive amounts of Courage Best and, as such, is one of the best places in the city to sample what is, still, one of the most popular cask drinks in the city. He's right, it's excellent, and a perfect example of how a well kept pint of any real ale is infinitely preferable to an extra-smooth, extra-cold, extra-expensive nitro-keg. Your partner sips happily at a *Twiglet 'n' Pork Scratching Smoothie*.

From there you wander down the narrow road opposite, past the **Grapes Tavern** – Marcia Taylor's beautifully refurbished Wadworth house offering 6X and Henry's I.P.A. on top form, which is featured in much more detail elsewhere in this issue of Pints West – and down to the famous **Coronation Tap**.

There are something like five traditional ciders (Addlestone's Cloudy, Coronation Tap Exhibition, Taunton Traditional, Thatcher's Cheddar Valley, Thatcher's Dry) as well as Marston's Pedigree, Bass, and Usher's Best. You order a pint of Cheddar Valley, which to your surprise is exactly the same colour as your partner's *Caffeine-Free Carrot & Orange Sparkler*. Your first pint goes down so easily, you order another one...

Two hours later, you emerge a very happy drinker, stagger up the hill and wonder exactly how they ever got planning permission to build a second suspension bridge right next to the first one – especially one that seems identical to the first in every way apart from being slightly out of focus.



N.B. In the last issue of Pints West, we incorrectly stated that the Fleur De Lys in Pucklechurch serves Bass, 6X and Smiles Best. This was hopelessly wrong, as there is no 6X, but a lovely pint of Butcombe Bitter instead. Sorry for the error.

Duncan Shine

Theakston's brewery independent again!

NORTH Yorkshire brewery Theakston's has regained its independence after nearly 20 years in the ownership of other breweries.

Theakston's became famous around the country when CAMRA started the real ale revolution a few years ago. Its Old Peculier became one of the most famous strong ales and has won many CAMRA awards.

Founded in 1827 and based in Masham, North Yorkshire, the brewery lost its independence in 1984 when it was taken over by the Matthew Brown brewery of Blackburn. Ownership of Theakston's then passed to national brewer Scottish & Newcastle in 1987.

Although brewery takeovers are most often very bad news for the beers and consumer choice, the upside to Theakston's losing its independence was that one member of the Theakston family, Paul, set up the now hugely successful Black Sheep brewery also in Masham. Founded in 1992, Black Sheep is now brewing a range of great beers.

And now Theakston's is also independent again. Owners Scottish Courage (Scottish Courage is the brewing division of

the Scottish & Newcastle group), who have, of course, closed several breweries in recent years including the historic Courage Bristol Brewery, wants to focus on its big brands and has decided to sell Theakston's off. Scottish Courage is truly an international concern these days with interests around much of the globe. Perhaps Theakston's was just "small beer" to them.

Brothers Simon, Nick, Edward and Tim Theakston are joined by Colin Wood, a former managing director of Theakston's, as the management team. Part of the deal that has been agreed is that Theakston's will continue to supply Scottish & Newcastle with its beers for a good few years. This should ensure that the brewery remains busy while the new management team develops the beer brands and the business, which could also include the buying of pubs – they already own the White Bear in Masham.

Brewery takeovers and closures have been such a negative feature of the industry down the years, but this move really does buck the trend. CAMRA welcomes this move and wishes Theakston's well.

Pete Bridle

The beer belly myth

RESEARCH by the University of London indicates that the beer belly is misnamed, because that distinctive bulge isn't caused by beer. Further, the study found that women who drink beer tend to weigh less.

A research team led by Martin Bobak used data based in the Czech Republic, which boasts of the highest per capita beer consumption in the world. The data included 891 men and 1,098 women aged between 25 and 64 who were either non-drinkers or drank exclusively beer and compared their body mass index (a measure of overweight) and waist-hip ratio, which measures beer belly.

The researchers found that when corrected for factors such as smoking, there was no significant link between beer drinking and a beer belly — and women who drank beer tended to weigh less, rather than more, than those who did not.

"It is unlikely that beer intake is associated with a largely increased waist-hip ratio or body mass index," the researchers wrote in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. "The association between beer and obesity, if it exists, is probably weak."

Boback said beer may not be the real culprit in a beer belly but beer drinking is linked to other aspects of diet and lifestyle that may cause a beer belly.

Borrowed from www.realbeer.com

CAMRA member declares ale abstinence!

I have a confession. And in a magazine that is entirely dedicated to the manufacturing, guzzling, and appreciating of all things ale-like. I could probably have chosen a better publication in which to make it. There's no kind of preparation for this sort of admittance, either; no warm-up or preamble to soften the blow (to both myself and you, dear reader) so here goes:

I'm on the wagon. For three months.

And once the gasps of horror, shrieks of disbelief, and guffaws of suspicion have settled enough to allow me to raise a calming hand to disperse and appease such a reaction of recoiling mystification, I feel I should dedicate some quality time to explain the reasons for my so doing.

Firstly – and at the risk of sounding like a new arrival at an AA meeting – I have been overdoing the ol' drinkage of late. Not excessively, but certainly to the point where I have to take into consideration the effects and the cashflow. With a slightly addictive personality, one pint of Smiles Heritage acts as a prelude to the inevitable, additional consumption. Which is fine on a Friday night, but not quite so marvellous for a

Tuesday or Wednesday, when I need to be up with the larks the next morning, alert and not cloudy-headed or fuzzy-brained.

Slipping into the "OK, just one more" epithet was becoming too easy, and I undoubtedly appreciated the pubs I drank in and the ale or cider (depending on the weather and mood) I drank, there comes a time when, for the sake of common sense and sanity, you have to pull back the reins and scrutinize exactly what you're doing. For me, that time had come, and the gauntlet had to be thrown.

Cash-wise, too, it was piling up. Ever the generous drink purveyor (Go on! Ask any of my mates. They'll back me up!), purchasing a drink for yourself is one thing. But if you're out with friends, it's simply *rude* not to offer to chip in for a round. Which, at a tenner or so per go is OK, but not if you're offering two, three, four rounds, as the beer and benevolence ran and ran... The wallet was screaming and pleading for me to actually keep some cash inside its velcroed boundaries!

So, I'll still be venturing to the same pubs, as it would be pretty impossible to live

my life without frequenting such public houses as the Cornubia, Bag O'Nails, Hare on the Hill, and Brewery Tap. The only difference will be that I won't be sampling Landlord's Choice, rather the lemonade. (Ridiculous? Especially bearing in mind that the pivotal reason one generally goes to these pubs is precisely *because* of their reputation for good quality products? Possibly, but I can still appreciate and embrace the atmos through alco-free eyes, whilst knowing I'm continuing to support the existence of these smaller, independent pubs by actually going there, and avoiding the ten-a-penny theme bar merchants. It'll simply be orange juice rather than Old Speckled Hen.)

Us ale drinkers love the fine things in life, but my three month curfew (it seemed a wholesome, rounded number, so why not?) has begun. For the time being, my epicurean cravings have to be curtailed.

And just imagine how wonderful that pint will be when the curtain has been raised and the cask can flow freely once more.....

Jamie Caddick

Ulverston beer festival weekend

IN PURSUIT of the fine ales of Cumbria we arrived in Kirkby-in-Furness on a Friday lunchtime. The car was parked up for the weekend and, after cups of tea and fig rolls at our lodgings, we switched to train for the journey back down to Ulverston. The train was late but we still made our connection at Barrow-in-Furness and finally arrived in Ulverston. We followed a likely looking CAMRA type out of the station but he had no idea where the beer festival was either and we all got lost. Vital minutes slipped away but eventually we found the Coronation Hall. This was a fine venue and, for cricket fans, there was the added advantage of the Test Match live on the big screen. The festival proved to be well organised, so thanks to the Furness branch for all their hard work – it was much appreciated.

One member of our crew quickly showed his worzel roots by finding the cider bar and sampling some Gwatkins. Clive and I stayed put on the fine selection of around 50 excellent ales and we all feasted on the quality sandwiches and sausage rolls. We were soon talking to a CAMRA member from Essex who was accompanied by his wife and small child. As a keen scooper, the man from Essex was able to consult his logbook and give us invaluable information such as the date, location and tasting notes for his previous encounters with most beers at the festival. An interesting discussion followed until one member of the Bristol mafia became very agitated as Channel 4 had spelt the name of the former Gloucestershire cricketer Proctor wrong on the TV screen. We managed to calm the agitated one down with a free beer festival T-shirt; bright yellow for some reason not being popular and the local CAMRA branch were keen to find any takers for their stock.

It was good to see that the afternoon session attracted a wide range of people and not just fat blokes. The image of the pint drinking, fashion conscious young woman wearing shoes that were covered in rubber spikes was worthy of the cover of the Good Beer Guide. The family from Essex left. The small child insisted on stroking the hair of each of us as a way of saying goodbye. Perhaps this is some quaint local custom but it proved an awkward moment as the small child had some trouble locating much hair to stroke on my head. It was hard to single out a favourite beer and opinions were divided but Newby Wyke Premium Bitter was certainly up there.

We left the festival at tea time and called in at the **Farmer's Arms** for further refreshment. This pub was also recommended for its food but unfortunately the kitchen had suffered a breakdown and

nothing was being served. We went to the Chippy Bank for fish and chips instead – the length of the queue indicated the popularity of this establishment. We then caught the train to the **Prince of Wales** at Foxfield for our evening's entertainment. This was an excellent brew pub and landlady Linda did the beer list for the Ulverston Beer Festival and stored most of the beers in the pub cellar. We played bar billiards and after working our way through the real ales we switched to the fine selection of bottled Belgian brews. One of our number suddenly became attracted to an ornamental fox perched on the pub piano and he picked it up, insisting it was a bat. After much persuasion he finally agreed it was a fox – the bushy tail, lack of wings and the fact that we were in Foxfield and not Batfield eventually convincing him. He promptly dropped the ornament and it bounced across the pub luckily sustaining no damage. It would be fair to say that our palates were probably not alert to quality by now but everything tasted fine and we resolved to return tomorrow.



We got the train back to Kirby. This being a request stop and the journey only taking about two minutes we had to run up and down the train to find the conductor. We timed this wrong as he still had time to sell us tickets before we arrived at our destination. We headed for the **Ship Inn** and met up with two Yorkshire friends who had just arrived in The Lakes after working all day. The **Ship** was built in 1691 but its interior resembled a tasteful wine bar. The pub only reopened in February this year and it has a no smoking rule which suited us fine – the pipe smoking Bristol member not being on this trip. Tall people should beware of the low light fitting in the toilet which nearly decapitated me. More real ale was drunk and the Yorkshire contingent were challenged to defend the unnatural practice of serving beer with an over-large head on it. This argument was not resolved! It should perhaps also be pointed out that Clive was to have no recollection of even visiting the **Ship** when we returned the following day. It rained on the short walk back and night time navigation with no street lights provided some fun – apologies to the person whose drive we walked up thinking it was the road.

The following day we embarked on a 13-mile walk that included several pub

stops. The walk itself proved rather taxing for a certain Bristolian who complained that Lake District footpaths were often bumpy and also kept going uphill quite a bit. The first stop was the **Blacksmith's Arms** at Broughton Mills. This was a fine pub which is on CAMRA's national inventory. It had suitably low ceilings as the author again learnt to his cost. The beer was excellent and included Jennings, Dent and Heskett Newmarket brews. The Saxon cider also proved irresistible to one member of our party. The pub is apparently up for sale – we all hope it finds its way into safe hands and is not gobbled up by some keg monster.

Soon after leaving that pub we thought we saw one of the Cider Sisters ahead of us on a steep hillside. What an amazingly small world to meet a fellow Bristol CAMRA member up here we thought. However, as we got closer we were disappointed when it proved to be merely a wisp of mist twisting sensually around a fence post. Next stop was the **Manor Arms** at Broughton-in-Furness. This pub is a frequent CAMRA local award winner and did not disappoint. We discovered with horror that we had missed the Furness Morris Men who had performed earlier in the day but the majesty of the Coniston Bluebird Bitter (and others) helped us overcome this cruel blow. Dave enlivened the conversation by revealing that the purple paintwork in the Manor was exactly the same shade as the wheelie bins in Liverpool. It also bucketed it down as we were in the pub and a disastrous attempt at parking by a hapless driver in the village square provided some amusement.

When the rain stopped we scampered to the **Prince of Wales**. The beers were again excellent with Phoenix Monkeytown Mild proving popular. Great food was also available cooked by the friendly landlord and the presence of several members of Wakefield CAMRA and Bob from Leeds CAMRA enlivened the proceedings. They had all been visiting the Silloth Beer Festival. A certain Bristol person decided to go his own way by drinking cider and also removing his shoes and socks. We managed to catch the train back to Kirkby and the **Ship** was visited once more. The hospitality at our lodgings was much appreciated after a long day.

James and Dave stayed in The Lakes for a walk on the Sunday while the Bristol crew headed back home after a hearty breakfast. Both the **Manor Arms** and the **Prince of Wales** provide accommodation and, despite the long drive from Bristol, the area is certainly endorsed as a haven for real ale tipplers and walkers.

Rob Wilson

Bath Pubs An evening in Pill

HOT OFF the Akeman Press is a new book of Bath's pubs entitled, unambiguously, "Bath Pubs".

More than just a pub guide, the book tells the history of Bath's pubs. And with nearly 200 pages of text – supplemented by black and white photographs, drawings, plans and documents – there's plenty to tell.

Every pub in the city is included, not just the well known ones in the city centre. There are also chapters on brewing in and around Bath, and a look at the pubs which have closed in the last 100 years.

Beer has a long and honourable tradition, and Bath's pubs are just as much part of the city's story as the Roman Baths and the Assembly Rooms. The tale the authors tell is one of high life and low life, where temperance campaigners rub shoulders with sozzled soldiers, and magistrates deal out punishment to hat-removing harlots – a rumbustious, boozy tragi-comedy.

Bath Pubs is the fruit of many hours trawling through dusty deeds and documents, and indeed by regular visits to the pubs in the book – researching is apparently thirsty work!

Akeman Press was founded by Kirsten Elliott and Dr. Andrew Swift to publish a series of books mainly about Bath, its history and heritage. A celebratory launch of Bath Pubs, the first book by this new company, took place at the Museum of Bath at Work on 19th November.

Akeman Press is located at 58 Minster Way in Bath and can be contacted by telephone on 01225 310364 or 07734 289450 or by emailing kirsten@akamanpress.com. Bath Pubs is priced at £12.99.

A quote from Bath Pubs:

"Two pubs which no visitor to the city should miss are the Old Green Tree and the Star Inn. They are both on CAMRA's National Inventory of "pubs whose interiors are of outstanding heritage interest." Less than 250 pubs in the UK (out of a total of around 60,000) feature on this list, a measure of how pub interiors have suffered at the hands of modernisers since the 1960s. Bath is lucky to have two. The Star's interior dates from the mid-nineteenth century, while the Old Green Tree's dates from 1928. Both pubs also have terrific real ale (the Star is the tap for Abbey Ales Brewery) and a terrific atmosphere. The old Green Tree also has great lunchtime food."



PINTS WEST hasn't had any reports from the Pill area for some time. A Saturday evening visit in August produced the following results:

The George at Abbot's Leigh, a fairly up-market place with a respectable food trade and its own chef, was offering Courage Best, Greene King IPA and Sharp's Doom Bar, with the latter two in very nice condition. A fourth handpump appeared to have contained Marston's Pedigree, but this had sold out.

The Anchor at Ham Green, a busy local with separate dining room, was also doing a bustling food trade, although with a slightly more down to earth menu (and prices). Beers on offer were Courage Best and Draught Bass.

In the centre of Pill, **The King's Head**, another pub with a lively local trade (and a live musician accompanied by karaoke machine), had some more Draught Bass.

Near the creek, **The Star** was selling Butcombe Bitter on gravity. Sadly, the place was devoid of customers, apart from yours

truly; the landlady told us she was leaving in a few days' time, after 16 years at the pub. She expected the new owners to continue selling beer, but to put more emphasis on food than hitherto.

Further along towards the riverfront, **The Duke** of Cornwall was offering handpumped Courage Best.

Back uphill next to the site of Pill's former railway station, **The Railway**, whose licensees had only recently taken over, had handpumped Butcombe Bitter alongside the ubiquitous Courage Best.

The evening's final port of call was **The King's Arms** at Easton-in-Gordano, where some very nice Wickwar Olde Merryford was on offer alongside yet more Courage Best and (guess what) yet more Draught Bass.

The writer's overall impression of Pill and environs? Good if you like Courage Best and/or Draught Bass; otherwise, there isn't a lot to tempt the discerning drinker far from the main road to Portbury. Best beer of the night was the Sharp's Doom Bar at Abbot's Leigh.

Norman Spalding

Welcome news for armchair drinkers

MUCH as we all enjoy drinking beer in pubs, you will be pleased to know that there's no reason why you can't also enjoy the unbeatable taste of real ale from the comfort of your own armchair. The most authentic bottled beer you can buy is real ale in a bottle. This is because, like real ale in a pub, the beer contains yeast and continues to mature for a fuller, fresher taste.

Many brewers describe this beer as bottle-conditioned, so look out for this description on labels. Real ale contains a huge range of tastes and flavours and you will find that the same is true with real ale in a bottle, so whether you prefer something dry and hoppy or rich and biscuity there will be a bottled beer to suit your tastes and that will also go perfectly with food.

Real ale in a bottle should be kept cool and then lightly chilled before serving. It should be stored standing up so that the yeast sediment settles to the bottom of the bottle. The yeast keeps the beer alive so that it can continue to mature and improve. Treat it with respect, as it has been brewed with care rather than being mass-produced, and remember not to shake the bottle but to pour it slowly into your glass so that if there is any sediment it remains in the bottle. Many of

the brewers which produce real ale in a bottle are independent local brewers, so why not check if your local supermarket or off-license stocks locally brewed beer and support your local producers as well as enjoying a taste of your local area?

CAMRA, in conjunction with the Guardian newspaper, makes an award every year for the best real ale in a bottle. This year's winner was O'Hanlons Port Stout, and previous winners include Fuller's 1845, Hop Back's Summer Lightning and Young's Special London Ale. Many of these award-winning beers are available in specialist off-licenses, by mail order or internet as well as in some supermarkets and off-licenses.

New book for armchair drinkers

The new edition of the **Good Bottled Beer Guide** contains tasting notes and useful information including details of where you can buy real ale in a bottle across the UK. This pocket book costs £8.99 (£5.99 for CAMRA members buying direct from CAMRA) and is available from all good bookshops as well as online at www.camra.org.uk/books.



DIARY



Diary of the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA.
See inside for the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch diary and contact.

Tuesday 2nd December: Trip to Portishead. Start at the Cornubia, Bristol, 6.45pm.

Sunday 7th December: Christmas social with Weston sub-branch at the Crown, Churchill. Bristol bus departs Bridge Inn, Counterslip, 6.00pm.

Tuesday 9th December: Cheltenham Road/Gloucester Road crawl. Start at the Magic Box, 7.30pm.

Tuesday 16th December: Hotwells crawl. Start at the Bag O'Nails, 7.30pm.

Wednesday 17th December: Committee meeting, Cornubia, 8:00pm.

First Sunday in January: "Westbury Wobble" – starting at the Post Office Tavern, 12-12:30.

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

THANKS TO THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS:

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Watch the Web

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

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

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

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)
- 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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