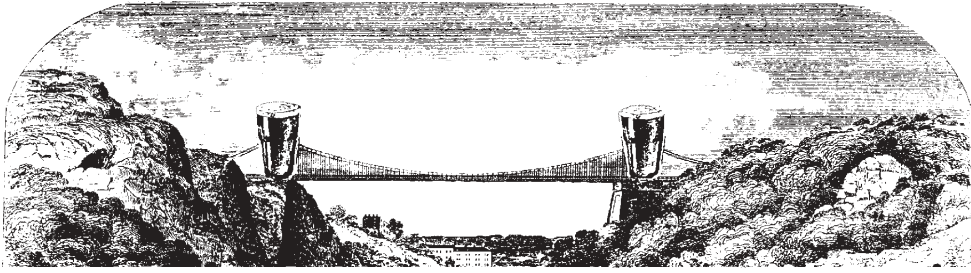




AWARD-WINNING



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PINTS WEST

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

It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



Come inside and join us



Young people do like real ale – if only they knew it

THE perception held by many young people is that they do not like the taste of real ale. However, new research from CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has shown that 69 per cent of 18 to 34 year olds have never even tried real ale.

CAMRA responded by running a competition in July to find twenty young men and women, who don't drink real ale, to participate in a blind beer-tasting session as part of a new campaign to tempt young adults to try it.

Tony Jerome, CAMRA's Press Manager said, "CAMRA's new market research report highlighted that over two-thirds of 18 to 34 year olds had never even tried Britain's traditional pub drink – real ale. Many in the survey stated that they didn't drink real ale because they thought it was 'too warm' or 'too bitter'. This is obviously not true about all 2,000 real ales in today's market and CAMRA thought a blind tasting session for young adults would be the ideal opportunity to dispel these myths and show the variety and quality of real ale that is available in many pubs."

Eight beers were chosen to highlight the different tastes that real ale has to offer. The beers were carefully selected by a small focus group of CAMRA members, aged 18 to 30, who already enjoy real ale. These were:

Rebellion Blond – 4.3% alcohol by volume (Buckinghamshire)

Bateman's Dark Mild – 3% abv (Lincolnshire)

Oakham White Dwarf – 4.3% abv (Peterborough)

Belhaven Fruit – 4.6% abv (Edinburgh)

Harviestoun Schiehallion – 4.8% abv (Clackmannanshire)

Arran Blonde – 5% abv (Isle of Arran)

Hop Back Crop Circle – 4.2% abv (Wiltshire)

O'Hanlon's Port Stout – 4.8% abv (Devon)

The competition to find the panel of twenty was run on local radio stations and a number of regional newspapers. Jerome said, "We had over a hundred people enter the competition by submitting a small survey on their drinking lifestyle. Those that had never drunk real ale and showed a serious interest in giving it a try were selected for the tasting."

The panel were blindfolded for the first three beers to highlight that the appearance of darker beers can sometimes be the deciding factor in not trying certain styles of real ale. Each beer was then scored on

appearance, aroma and taste with the highest-scoring beer being crowned "Young Person's Champion Beer"!

Champion

Belhaven's 'Fruit' beer was voted the best beer by the young adult panel, and thus declared Young Person's Champion Beer.

This beer is described thus: "Freshly picked fruit is the first aroma of this honey-coloured beer, which closes with a creamy, dry after palate. Scottish fruits such as raspberries and apples are used."

The final top five were:

1st – Belhaven Fruit

Joint 2nd – Arran Blonde

and O'Hanlon's Port Stout

4th – Oakham White Dwarf

5th – Harviestoun Schiehallion

Mark Bridges, who hosted the event for CAMRA said, "This tasting was a real success. We thought we would get our panel of young adults to try a variety of different real ales to show the range of tastes and highlight that real ale should be served cool and not always bitter. The Fruit beer was liked by all of the panel and most of them were pleasantly surprised that real ale can be so fruity."

Refreshing and Summery!

Here is what some of our participants had to say about the beer tasting:

"Lovely smell, summery and refreshing" said Ellie, aged 23 from London, of the winning Fruit beer from Belhaven. Ellie is a wine drinker and has never really tried real ale before. She says her partner told her that she would be surprised if she did and should give it a go.

Flash, 28 from London, usually drinks alcopops and described the winning beer as "Fruity and summery, easy to drink."

Anna, 23 a student in London, is a lager drinker who really enjoyed the joint runner-up, O'Hanlon's Port Stout. She described it as "Coffee like: I was expecting not to like it but I did!"

Rowan, aged 25, lives in Surrey and admitted that the joint runner-up, Arran Blonde would be an ale he would enjoy drinking in the pub. Rowan is normally a lager drinker who says the reason he doesn't normally drink real ale is because he wouldn't know which brand to try.

Tony Jerome concluded, "If real ale is to survive in today's competitive drinks industry then it is important that both brewers and pub companies start marketing their beer towards these younger age



groups. Real ale offers so much flavour and is part of our heritage. It would be a disaster to not see it in our pubs in twenty years time because the young age groups were never encouraged to give it a try. With so many good ales in pubs nowadays, I am sure that there is a real ale on the market that suits most drinkers taste buds."

What's in a name? Is 'real ale' old-fashioned?

Around a quarter of 18 to 34 year olds think calling real ale "Real Beer" would give the product a better image with younger people.

Mike Benner, CAMRA's Chief Executive, responded by saying, "The important word here is 'real'. It is this which enables consumers to differentiate between real ale and other beers and the word 'real' has positive associations for today's increasingly discerning consumer, suggesting a fresh and natural product. The word 'ale' is perhaps unfashionable with many consumers, but I think it is important for products to maintain their integrity over the long term. After all there are many examples of consumer products and trends which were popular in the sixties and seventies and are now enjoying a revival. 'Ale' has been used to describe British beer for hundreds of years and it would be a mistake to abandon it in the name of fashion."

"As a long-standing and well-recognised consumer group, CAMRA has no plans to change its name and I believe it is through the positive marketing of real ale brands that brewers will reach younger drinkers."

Pale Rider leads the field

Champion Beer of Britain 2004 results

PALE RIDER brewed by Kelham Island Brewery of Sheffield has been judged to be the best beer in Britain by a panel of brewers, beer writers and journalists.

The beer is described in the 2004 edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide as, "A full-bodied, straw pale ale, with a good fruity aroma and a strong fruit and hop taste. Its well-balanced sweetness and bitterness continue in the finish."

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

Roger Protz, one of the finalist judges and Editor of the Good Beer Guide, said, "The judges were struck by the superb balance of malt, hops and fruit. A wonderfully complex and refreshing beer."

Paul Ward, Head Brewer of Kelham Island Brewery, said, "I'm gobsmacked. I thought the beer would do well, but to win is amazing. At only 31 years old what do I do now? Thanks to our great team at the brewery, Stuart, Richard, Dave 'The Driver', David Wickett our Director and all our customers at the Fat Cat pub in Sheffield."

The Silver award went to IPA from Greene King (Suffolk). Bronze went to Ironside from the Hampshire Brewery.

OVERALL WINNERS

GOLD: Kelham Island Pale Rider
SILVER: Greene King IPA
BRONZE: Hampshire Ironside

Category winners:

MILDS

Gold: Lees GB Mild (Manchester)
Silver: Brains Dark (Cardiff, Wales)
Bronze: Hardy's & Hanson's Kimberley Mild (Kimberley, Nottingham)

BITTERS

Gold: Greene King IPA (Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk)
Silver: Oakham JHB (Peterborough, Cambridgeshire)
Bronze: Triple FFF Alton Pride (Alton, Hampshire)
Bronze: Whim Hartington (Hartington, Derbyshire)

BEST BITTERS

Gold: Hampshire Ironside (Romsey, Hampshire)
Silver: Hook Norton Generation (Banbury, Oxfordshire)
Bronze: Nottingham Extra Pale Ale (Radford, Nottingham)
Bronze: Woodforde's Nelson's Revenge (Norwich, Norfolk)

STRONG ALES

Gold: Kelham Island Pale Ride (Sheffield, South Yorkshire)
Silver: Mordue IPA (Shiremore, Tyne & Wear)
Bronze: Hop Back Summer Lightning (Salisbury, Wiltshire)

SPECIALITY BEERS

Gold: Cairngorm Tradewinds (Aviemore, Inverness-shire)
Silver: Harviestoun Schiehallion (Dollar, Clackmannanshire)
Bronze: Titanic Iceberg (Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire)

BOTTLE-CONDITIONED ALES

Gold: Titanic Stout (Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire)
Silver: Young's Special London Ale (Wandsworth, London)
Bronze: Yate's Isle of Wight Special (Ventnor, Isle of Wight)



Pubcos and beer supply arrangements

WITH national brewers largely disengaging from running pubs in favour of selling beer to pub companies ("pubcos") such as Punch, Enterprise Inns, Pubmaster, who collectively own in excess of 11,000 pubs, it is these that now dominate beer retailing in Britain. Not surprisingly, the larger the pubco, the bigger discounts they demand from the brewers. It is this heavy discounting that drives the often uninspiring choice of real ales on offer in so many of our pubs.

In Bristol, we used to strive to seek out an alternative to Draught Bass or Courage Best; it's now becoming a

challenge to find alternatives to the ubiquitous Old Speckled Hen, Abbot Ale (both produced by Greene King), Shepherd Neame's Spitfire or Marston's Pedigree. There's nothing wrong with these brands, in fact the writer of this article is rather partial to a pint of Pedigree, but they are becoming all too commonplace.

Around Bristol, we have local brewers such as Bath Ales, Wickwar, Butcombe, Smiles, Abbey Ales and RCH, all brewing tasty hand-crafted beers. Further afield, we have a further twenty or so independent brewers in Somerset and Gloucester-

shire alone, but they either cannot compete with the likes of the buying-power of the giant pubcos or find their access to market blocked due to the fact that the giant pubcos do not allow their tenants guest ale rights.

CAMRA is not calling for the abolition of the tie but would like to see pubcos, particularly those with over 2,000 pubs, loosen their ties in the interests of tenants, consumers and competition. Redressing the balance of power in the industry would ensure choice and fair pricing for the likes of you and I, plus effective routes to market for small brewers.

Sounds like common sense to me! If you really care what you're drinking, why not join CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, and help secure a fair deal all round?

Alison Bridle

Pub and club beer festivals

SEPTEMBER sees the welcome return of the real ale and music festival held in the large garden of the **Lamplighters** in Shirehampton. This is the fifth such event, and takes place on Saturday 11th from noon till dusk. Note that entry is by advance ticket. The pub is easily reached by train on the Severn Beach line and is always a good place to visit at any time for a drop of real ale next to the river.

From 17th to 19th September there is the "**Froth**" **Wedmore real ale festival**, once again to be held in the Wedmore Village Hall. There will be a selection of beers from around the UK, hopefully including medal winners from the Great British Beer Festival.

Also in September we have the **Rotary Club of Wrington Vale** presenting once again their beer and cider festival (nice to see cider get a look in) at the club house of the Winscombe Recreational Ground. Over twenty real ales will be available at the event, which takes place in the evenings of Friday 24th and Saturday 25th September, and lunchtime of Sunday 26th. Support this event and you'll be supporting the worthwhile Rotary charities.

The same Friday and Saturday (24th and 25th September) sees the first mini

beer festival to be held at the **Plume of Feathers** in Hotwells. This pub has improved much of late and is now a great place to go for real ales, where the excellent regular beers include Adnams Broadside, Timothy Taylor Landlord and Black Sheep Bitter. Opening times for the festival on both days are 11am to 11pm.

The first weekend of October should see the return of the mini beer festival at another Hotwells pub, the **Nova Scotia**.

We have also been informed that **Avon Valley Railway** are apparently planning a small beer festival at their Bitton site on the weekend of 9th and 10th October, with 16 cask ales from seven breweries, however no further details have been received.

Building on the success of their previous festival in February, the **White Lion** in Bristol's city centre will be holding another event they dub "Bristol's smallest beerfest". The small Wickwar pub will be offering 16 beers from around the country from 22nd to 24th October, some from handpumps, some directly from casks stillaged in the corner of the pub.

Thursday 18th November to Saturday 20th November are the dates for yet another Hotwells pub festival, this time at

the **Bag O'Nails**. As in previous years, the pub will be offering forty or more different real ales from all over the country. The pub is not exactly huge, so not all beers can be on at the same time. However, if you popped along on all three days you should get the chance to sample a good proportion of them. The pub will be open all day from noon over the period, with snacks available most of the time. Lovers of darker beers will be pleased to know that stouts and milds should be featuring.

While on the subject of the Bag O'Nails and dark beers, people might like to know that they are thinking of resurrecting the "port and stilton evenings" that previous landlord Gordon Beresford used to put on, but with a difference. Rather than port, the intention is to have "stout and stilton evenings". This sounds like an interesting combination. Alan Dean (licensee) and son James (manager) would like to know people's thoughts, so if you think this is a good idea, get down to the Bag O'Nails and tell them so. When you do visit, you should find a cleaner, fresher atmosphere as a new ventilation system has been installed, the toilets retiled, and redecoration is on the cards.

SP

Have you visited the Plume of Feathers yet?



If not you must be having "Sheep-less nights" as together with Timothy Taylor's Landlord, Adnams Broadside, Bass and guest beers from Everards, York Brewery, Cains, Elgood's and Titanic we have the Black Sheep (and the "Special" variety on occasions). A pint or two of these will surely give you enough bravado to come along to our fortnightly quiz (held on Thursdays around 8.15 pm).

Be plucky – come to the "Feathers"!

The Plume of Feathers
135 Hotwell Road, Hotwells, Bristol BS8 4RU
Tel: 0117-9298666

The Rotary Club of Wrington Vale
present a

Beer and Cider Festival

20+ beers plus ciders from all over the country

at

Winscombe Recreational Ground
(Rugby/Football/Cricket Club House)

on

Friday 24th, Saturday 25th and
Sunday 26th September 2004

Fri 7-12pm: Quiet evening £2.00

Sat 7-12pm: Live music £4.00

Sun 12-3pm: Quiet Sunday lunch drink £1.00

Simply turn up – no advance tickets necessary
ALLPROFITTOROTARYCHARITIES

Cotswold Way now runs through Gloucestershire's Tesco stores – via Wickwar

WICKWAR Brewing Company, located in the tiny village of Wickwar in Gloucestershire, has teamed up with Tesco stores throughout the county – fourteen in total – to supply them with the award-winning bottle-conditioned ale, Cotswold Way.

The brewery has been producing this 4.2 per cent beer for just three years, but in that the malty, testy, dark-amber-coloured ale has won numerous awards: it was winner in its class in the Beer of Gloucestershire competition in 2002 and 2003. In fact it has become the brewery's second best seller, hot on the heels of the ever-popular BOB.

Wickwar's founder and managing director, Ray Penny, said: "This is a great opportunity for the consumer to have the taste of real beer as it should be presented. We are proud of the fact that we only brew our beers using the finest floor-malted local hops and fresh Cotswold water."

Cotswold Way was chosen by Tesco for its taste and appeal to people living in and around the Cotswolds – "a real local beer for locals" as Ray puts it. It should be available in all tesco stores from Stow-on-the-Wold to Thornbury and Yate in the south.

This is the second time Tesco has favoured Wickwar beers. In 2001 Mr. Perrett's Traditional Stout, brewed to 5.9 per cent alcohol, won the coveted Tesco Beer Challenge.



Ray Penny holding up a pillar in the new brewhouse

Timing of the inclusion into Tesco couldn't come at a better time for Wickwar, as the company is about to open its "new brewery at the old brewery".

(If that last comment is too cryptic for some readers, as reported in the last issue the company is relocating to the nearby building that was once home to the old Arnold Perrett's Brewery.)

Top Sunday lunch and great ale to boot

ONE of the great weekend pleasures is to decide to take a day off from the cooker and dirty dishes, and treat yourselves to Sunday lunch at a nice pub. But where can you get a great Sunday lunch, and some really good beer to wash it down with? In the first of an occasional series on the subject I would like to recommend the **Port Of Call** in Clifton.

The Port Of Call is situated in York Street, just off the top of Blackboy Hill. The main entrance is at the top of a bizarrely steep mini hump in the road, although you can also enter via the rear garden. The pub is owned by the Unique Pub Company which has an unusually relaxed policy on guest beers. Roger and Carol Skuse are the genial and friendly hosts here. There are seven or eight regular beers on, including two from Sharp's of Cornwall, Otter Ale, Caledonian Deuchars IPA and Theakston's Old

Peculier. In addition three or four guest beers are also normally on. The beer is not the cheapest in town but top quality is assured.

The Port of Call is a pub that does food, rather than a restaurant that does beer. That said, the food is very tasty, and is served at most times that the pub is open (12 to 2.30 and 5.30 to 11 Monday to Friday and all day Saturday, plus 12 to 5 Sunday, closed Sunday evening). Even after sit-down food has finished at night, they offer take-away food chip-shop-style (between 10 and 11pm). I have not seen this in any other pub, but what a great idea! The culinary highlight of the week, though, has to be the tremendous Sunday lunches sold from noon until 4pm.

For £6.25 a choice of beef, lamb, pork or chicken is accompanied by Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes and no less than five other vegetables. Portions are

generous, the meat is very lean, and it is all cooked perfectly. Washed down with a couple of refreshing pints, this sets you up nicely for the rest of your Sunday.

Whilst booking is not essential, it is advisable at peak times – especially when the weather prevents alfresco dining in the beer garden. This is an adult-only pub, so I am afraid will not suit those with children. If you have a family member who can't make the trip, then take a plate along and they will happily sell you the same meal to take away – once again showing the extra bit of flexibility and friendliness that make the Port of Call so special.

Vince Murray

Port Of Call, 3 York Street, Clifton, Bristol
0117 9733600.

Do any readers know any pubs that they would recommend for Sunday lunch and good beer?

Cider Sisters

IT'S another solo effort this edition, but from the other sister – sister no. 1 is just a bit tied up with her new and most beautiful baby. It does feel weird – like Bonnie without Clyde, or Saint without Greavsie – but I'll try my best.

I hope even the die-hard beer drinkers are reading this article because we need your support for the "Save the Orchards" campaign. Some of you will have read about this in the national and local press, but if there's anywhere we should be able to drum up support for the campaign, it's here in the West Country.

The threat is from the Government's new single farm payment system, which replaces current agricultural subsidies. This new system may provide an incentive for farmers to dig up old orchards – uniquely in Europe, they will not be recognised as farmland so won't be eligible for an automatic £340 per year per hectare.

An article in the Guardian in April brought this to light, and said that the exquisite English orchard is "under a threat which some rank as the ecological equivalent of the dissolution of the monasteries". Which sounds serious.

The article quoted Rodney Male of Somerset, describing how he would be forced to rip out his family's 200-year-old Donkey Orchard, near Kingsbury Episcopy, with its ancient Old Morgan Sweets, Kingston Blacks and Newton Wonders. If that's not enough to bring a tear to any cider-loving eye, how about the threat to the noble chaffer, identified by English Nature? I've no idea what it is either, but let's assume it's got something to do with orchards.

We've already lost around 60 per cent of British orchards in the last 30 years, so what can we do about it? The first thing to do is go to the CAMRA website (www.camra.org.uk) and sign their on-line petition (follow the link

from "Cider & Perry"). Hopefully, with enough attention and pressure, DEFRA will change its mind before it's too late – otherwise growers say the digging up could start this autumn.

There does seem to be another side to the story – speaking to people at CAMRA and DEFRA, there's a suggestion that the older, historic orchards (which have tall standard trees rather than bushes) might be eligible for a subsidy if they are registered as dual use, being also used for grazing. The advice, for growers who are unsure, is to get in touch with DEFRA through their help line (08459 33 55 77).

I was pleased and surprised to find out that this whole issue had been raised in parliament, by some of our local MPs, including Paul Keetch, MP for Hereford. It turns out Mr Keetch is the founder and chair of the Parliamentary Cider Group, so sounds like a worthy successor to the great 19th Century Hereford MP, Mr CW Radcliffe Cooke of Hellens in Much Marcle. One of our all time heroes, he so persistently advocated for cider as Britain's national drink that he was known as the "Member for Cider".

Anyway, looking on the bright side, the other thing you can do to support the campaign is – naturally – drink more cider! And not any old rubbish, but real cider, made from local cider apples, from orchards full of noble chafers. I'm writing this in August and it couldn't be a better time for cider drinking.

If you're not a regular cider drinker, or your favourite pub doesn't stock it (shame on them), you could start by trying some good quality bottled ciders. We've reviewed some in a previous column, but more are becoming available all the time and they range from average through to gorgeous.

Some are really widely available, such as



the organic bottled cider from Westons, which comes highly recommended, or the range of single varietal ciders from Thatcher's (Katy, Tremletts Bitter, Cox's etc.), all of which are more than worth a try. Another one we like, less widely available, is Sheppy's (and not just because of the nice picture of the bullfinch on the label, though that is appreciated).

The important thing is supporting traditional cider orchards and traditional cider making. If you go to any of the farmers' markets in the area (Bristol, Gloucester, Stroud, Cheltenham, Cirencester) you've got a chance to try Day's Cottage cider, from Brookthorpe in Gloucester. It's a family run business, making apple juices, ciders and perries, from orchards planted in 1912 by their Great Aunt Lucy. They're also planting new trees, including rare and traditional Gloucester varieties. I've tried a few of their different juices and ciders and they're lovely.

So I hope you'll do your bit for this campaign, because let's face it, it's your duty, and then we'll all get to see the West Country awash with apple and pear blossom again next spring. In the meantime, feel virtuous, get some cider down you and don't forget to sign the petition.

Cheers.

Erica McLuckie

Cider and Perry Month – why October?

LAST YEAR, CAMRA designated October as its Cider and Perry Month, and you may well ask, "Why October?" After all, there are eleven perfectly good other months, aren't there? How about sometime in the summer, when the weather's better, for example?

Well, October has several things going for it relating to both the fruit and the cider.

Some years back, an organisation called Common Ground came up with the idea of having an Apple Day each October. Now Common Ground does little in the way of events themselves, they have always encouraged other groups to do things, whilst supporting and publicising them.

However Common Ground did organise

the first Apple Day event themselves, which took place in London's Covent Garden. And it was a startling success. CAMRA ran a cider bar and there was a big market selling fruit produce. My lasting memory is that it was so windy we had to blue-tack the beer mats to the tables!

Since then local Apple Day events take place all over the country. Common Ground's website (www.commonground.org.uk) lists them all, county by county, from August onwards. Some have cider, some don't, but for some strange reason, they all seem to have a longest-apple-peel competition.

So one way for CAMRA to get involved in something cidery, is to link up with these

local events, which are already taking place. Last year, for example, there were over 100 of these.

And now for the cider itself. Cidermaking usually takes place from late summer to Christmas, so October is definitely a cider-making month. If you've never visited a cidemaker before, it's far better to go at this time of the year, as you can actually see the cider being made. Also, a number of cidemakers have their own Apple Day event, so it's possible to kill several rats with one hammer (so to speak!).

So yes, October is an ideal time to have a Cider and Perry month. It's just a pity that it can't be every month!

Mick Lewis

New owners at Blindman's

BLINDMAN'S Brewery is under new ownership following the decision of its founder to move to France.

The brewery was established in 2002 by David Capps-Tunwell MBE following a career in the Royal Navy. The name was considered appropriate as David was going into the venture somewhat blind, it being a bit of an unknown challenge for him. The venture was a

success from the start, though, with the beers being very well received.

The brewery is a five-barrel plant based between Frome and Shepton Mallet, at Talbot Farm, Leighton, in a converted milking parlour. It has its own water spring which is carefully quality-controlled, and all ingredients are procured locally wherever possible.

By early 2004, however, David had decided that France was the place for him, and he sold the brewery. The new owners are experienced brewers Paul Edney and Lloyd Chamberlain. Paul Edney previously spent ten years as head brewer at the Ash Vine Brewery based in Trudoxhill.

There now follows a period of investment and expansion at Blindman's Brewery and the introduction of new products, including new beers to complement the established range, both as regulars and specials.

Pubs in Bristol that have been known to sell Blindman's beers include the Bunch of Grapes, Denmark Street, and the Hope & Anchor, Jacobs wells Road.

Pub news

The Lion in Cliftonwood is offering up to four real ales, usually with Deuchars IPA, Fuller's London Pride and Wickwar Olde Merryford as the regulars, plus a changing guest beer. The pub does good meals and has a small decked patio garden.

People may not be aware that the pub can be reached by foot from Hotwell Road in Hotwells by walking up the steps opposite **The Plume of Feathers**. It's just a couple of hundred yards between the two, so why not take in both of these worthy pubs if in the area?

Things are looking up at **The Victoria** in Clifton, adjacent to the closed outdoor pool.

Kevin Wright is now in charge – a man used to looking after quality real ale as he ran the Park Crescent in Brighton a few years back when it was then in the Good Beer Guide.

Wadworth 6X and Butcombe Bitter are the permanent beers here. Kevin's hopes are to have more real ales if possible, and perhaps ditch some of the lagers. It now looks like a third changing guest beer is on the cards.

The pub, an Innspired house, currently opens from 3 to 11 weekdays, 11 to 11 Saturdays, and 12 to 4 and 6 to 10.30 Sundays, hours which may be extended in the future.

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The Victoria

(next to the Clifton Pool)

**Butcombe Bitter
Wadworth 6X
& guests**

2 Southleigh Road, Clifton
0117 - 9745675



Buy your beer direct from
THE Bristol Brewery

Smiles Best (4.1% abv)

18 pint box - £23.58

36 pint box - £42.81

Bottles by the case (12 x 500ml) or pack of 3:

	case	3 pack
Smiles Best (4.1%)	£16.29	£5.00
Bristol IPA (4.5%)	£16.33	£5.00
Heritage (5.2%)	£18.31	£5.50
Mixed pack		£5.50

Smiles Mustard & Chutney Gift Pack - £6.00

(includes 1 x 200g Smiles Original Beer Mustard, 1 x 200g Smiles Best Wholegrain Mustard, 1 x 300g Smiles Heritage Chutney)

You can buy from either the Brewery Tap or our depot at Portbury. Please telephone in advance to place your orders. Home delivery service in certain areas is available. Please call Jane at the depot for details.

Brewery Tap - 0117 9213668 Depot - 01275 375894
www.smiles.co.uk

News from Smiles

SMILES have been busy both inside and outside of the brewery. A new seasonal ale called Zummer Vat (4.0 per cent) is going to be available from 31st August for one month only. It is a light, refreshing ale with a light brown colour to acknowledge the passing of summer into the golden hues of autumn. There will be an exclusive promotion to selected customers, where Smiles will credit the vat back!

Smiles Brewing Company had a strong presence at the spectacular Bristol Harbour Festival. The event was a great success, with between 150,000 and 200,000 people visiting the area. There was a wide variety of entertainment including music, theatre, circus, French markets and water activities – and some beer! Smiles ran three bars on site, including a private mariners' bar, all stocking a selection of Smiles' finest quality ales.

By the time you read this, Smiles will also have been at the Bristol flower show, providing a full bar to the keen gardeners who flock to Bristol from all over the country for this three-day event, running from 25th August. If you attended the show you may have had the chance to drink some Smiles amidst the flowers and shrubs.

Richard Brooks

The power of the White Friar

WHITE FRIAR, Abbey Ales' latest occasional beer, sold out before it had even gone on sale! Advance orders taken for the beer, chosen by the Campaign for Real Ale to appear at this year's Great British Beer Festival, were in before the beer had even finished brewing!

The 5.0 per cent ABV (alcohol by volume) golden-coloured, hoppy ale – originally created as Jubilation to coincide with the Queen's visit to Bath in her Golden Jubilee year – was so well received that Abbey Ales re-introduced it under the name of White Friar.

Managing Director Alan Morgan commented, "We have always wanted to regularly brew a range of different beers to compliment our best selling Bellringer, but the need to meet the demand for our flagship ale takes up most of our production schedule. Head brewer Martin Langham has to fit in brewing occasional beers when he can and it is highly unlikely that he will be able to brew another batch of White Friar. Our customers are aware of this and therefore always order guests early but this is the first time we have sold out before brewing has finished!"

One of the first pubs to place an order

was the Volunteer Rifleman's, where licensee Paul Alvis held back casks of the previous guest, Bath Star, with the intention of putting on both beers with Bellringer for a mini Abbey Ales beer festival. It was to be the first time all three Abbey beers have been on sale together in Bath, though Matt Jackson did something similar in Bristol when he was manager at Horts.

Likewise at Abbey Ales' own pub, the Star on The Paragon, Bath, new manager Paul Waters quickly experienced the pulling power of Bath's own brewery and had customers ringing to ask when it would be available.



Is this the face of the White Friar?

White Friar was recently voted the favourite occasional beer on a poll recently held on the brewery web site www.abbeyales.co.uk.

At the time of writing, White Friar was still in a few pubs, but Abbey Ales are now brewing the next occasional beer, Chorister, a dark malty brew at 4.5 per cent ABV. They are advising customers to order early to avoid being disappointed as these beers do sell very quickly. The Old Green Tree in Green Street has already ordered their quota.

Message from Abbey Ales

"ABBEY ALES has been successfully selling its Bellringer beer boxes over the internet now for many years.

"In this issue of Pints West you will find the first Bellringer advert for Beer in a Box from Abbey Ales.

"And to all Pints West drinkers who mention Pints West when ordering Abbey Ales we will give an extra discount of £5 per 36-pint box for all orders collected from the brewery or from the Star Inn.

"Please remember it is not bright beer and needs to settle overnight. Once opened, if it is kept in a cool place and not disturbed, we are told it will keep up to 14 days. However Abbey Ales do not know of anybody who has yet kept it that long!

"18-pint boxes are also available."



THE STAR INN



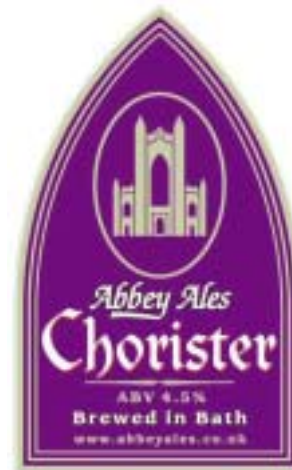
Worth a Visit!

Reputedly Bath's oldest inn steeped in tradition and renowned the world over.

Described by The Campaign for Real Ale as a rare and unspoiled pub interior of outstanding historic interest and listed on the National Inventory of Heritage Pubs.

Serving traditional English ales including:
 Bellringer brewed in Bath
 and Burton's favourite brew Bass.

23 THE VINEYARDS, PARAGON, BATH Tel 01225 425072



Cornwall comes to Bath

PAUL Waters, the new landlord at Bath's oldest ale house, The Star Inn on the Paragon, held a Cornish Real Ale and Food long weekend between Thursday 8th and Sunday 11th July. The weekend proved such a success that it is now to become an annual event.

A selection of Cornish ales were available, including offerings from Sharp's and Skinner's breweries, as well as genuine Cornish cream teas and pasties.

Paul, a proud Cornishman himself, also displayed the Cornish flags and bunting and invited everyone along to join in the festivities.

Bath's local beer, Bellringer from the local Abbey Ales brewery, was of course also available, alongside draught Bass served from the jug.

So if you can't get away to Cornwall for the weekend next year, why not make The Star your destination?

Cask Beer Week



Cask Beer Week, which runs from the 17th to 26th September, is this year being organised by the Independent Family Brewers of Britain (IFBB) in conjunction with CAMRA.

Cask Beer Week is now in its fourth year and has grown from being an IFBB event into a much wider industry occasion with freehouses and pub companies taking part, along with brewers such as Coors also lending their support.

Back in 2001, when the IFBB first decided to hold a national event to promote cask beer, the objective was pretty straightforward – the members wanted to create a week that would celebrate a highlight the best of British cask beers.

As the years have progressed, the thinking behind it has progressed too, and the event now has a number of aims associated with it. By holding a national Cask Beer Week in which IFBB members, as well as other interested parties, made a united, concerted effort to promote cask beer, the aim is that consumers will be encouraged to actually go and try a glass of cask beer for themselves.

While raising awareness is obviously key, it is also imperative that this awareness encourages trial. Cask Beer Week also makes a positive statement about cask beer at a time when so often communications from the trade focus on the apparent "doom and gloom" that is facing the sector.

Making a positive statement about cask beer involves communicating a number of key messages to consumers.

The IFBB aims to increase understanding about the product – that it is:

- a quality drink
- an ideal accompaniment to food and
- made using fresh, local ingredients.

There are literally hundreds of different brands and flavours available, made by breweries that are British owned and run. Independent, British breweries are an integral part of the local community in which they sit, providing employment opportunities and valuable investment into the local areas. Essentially, Cask Beer Week celebrates British beers and British industry.

Cask beer week in Bath

Brewers toast the best of British

STAFF at Bath's Abbey Ales brewery will join millions of beer drinkers across the UK in raising a glass or two of their own locally-produced ales in celebration of Cask Beer Week which runs from 17th to 26th September.

Cask Beer Week has become a time to highlight the best of British beers and emphasise the fact that cask ale is part of our tradition and heritage. Research shows that 61 per cent of regular pub-goers believe that at least one beer in every pub should be locally-brewed.

According to Abbey Ales Managing Director Alan Morgan, "There is a vast selection of beers being produced by the UK's microbrewers. Small local brewers and cask-conditioned ales are an impor-

tant sector of the overall British beer industry. We pride ourselves on maintaining the tradition of local brewing and using only the finest local ingredients. We are currently brewing Chorister, our dark, malty, 4.5 per cent bitter which will be available for cask beer week along with Bellringer, our regular, golden, 4.2 per cent prize-winning best bitter."

Paul Waters, Manager of the Star Inn on The Paragon in Bath added, "The vast range of different flavours gives beer-drinkers an incredible choice and we hope that many will help toast Cask Beer Week – preferably at The Star with a pint of Bellringer – but wherever they are with some locally-produced, top-quality cask ale!"

Abbey Ales presents...

Beer in a **box!**

36 Pints of the award winning bellringer from the brewery of Bath

Just **£55**

Order Online at
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or collect direct from the brewery
Camden Row, Bath, BA1 5LB

01225 444437

Including VAT and delivery

Delivered to straight your door, anywhere in England and Wales

News from Bath Ales | Pub news

THE lengthy brewery relocation process from Webbs Heath to the much larger site in Warmley is finally over. All the office administration team have now joined their brewing colleagues at the new site. The ever-increasing volume of top quality beer being brewed has led to an expansion of the sales force with new signing Vicki West now on the team.

To celebrate this final stage of the move there will be an event on 11th September 2004 at the site in Tower Road North to "officially open" this new era for brewing in the Bath and Bristol area.

Increased production capacity is good news for beer lovers as the summer-strength Spa Extra has been widely available this year, as has the brewery's latest offering, the 4.8 per cent alcohol Festival Gem. A distribution deal has led to Spa Extra being sold in pubs across the Midlands with sightings as far North as Liverpool.

The six Bath Ales pubs are having an eventful summer with the Wellington in Horfield, Bristol building on its winning the award of local CAMRA Pub of the Year for 2004. In addition to serving excellent beer and food, Paul and Dee present some of the best blues-based live

music on Sunday evenings, with no entry charge.

Over in Bath, Barry and Elaine are now back at the Hop Pole following their honeymoon in Mexico. The Salamander has appointed Duncan, a Canadian chef, so look out for some interesting additions to the already excellent menu.

The Hare on the Hill in Kingsdown, Bristol is staging a beer festival on the 18th September 2004. Last year's festival was so popular that beer started to run out before the end, so get there early this year.

Bottled Gem, at 4.8 per cent alcohol, is now available in local branches of Tesco and Sainsbury supermarkets, and with typical forward planning, moves are already in hand to ensure that ample supplies of the award-winning bottled Festivity will be available for Christmas.

The brewery has now begun to offer guided tours of the new brewery on Tower Road North, Warmley. Details are posted on the recently revamped web site, www.bathales.com. Whilst on-line you can also order five-litre micro-casks of real ale to drink at home during the autumn's many sporting events.

Steve O'Shea

The Lamplighters in Shirehampton has dropped the Fuller's London Pride, and now has two changing guest beers and two regular ones. Recent guests have included RCH Old Slug Porter and a beer from Hidden Brewery.

The Station Master at Warmley, which reopened a few months ago after being closed for a long period, has three cask ales, which recently included Charles Wells Bombardier and Hook Norton Old Hookey.

The New Inn at Cross, near Axbridge, has up to four real ales including some fairly exotic guests (e.g. Titanic White Star).


The Crown and Horseshoe at Oldland Common has three real ales, recently including Bath Gem and Moor Porter.

Norman Spalding

Pub news

The Bunch of Grapes in Denmark Street in central Bristol has apparently had new cellar equipment, such as chillers, helping ensure an excellent drop of real ale.

Richard Brooks



bath ales

To enjoy the full range of bath ales beers at their best, pay a visit to one of our pubs

The Hop Pole
Upper Bristol Road, Bath (opposite Victoria Park playground)

The Hare on the Hill
Dove Street, Kingsdown, Bristol

The Merchants Arms
Merchants Road, Hotwells, Bristol

The Salamander
John Street, Bath

The Wellington
Gloucester Road, Horfield, Bristol
and at

The Bridge Inn
Passage Street, Bristol

Casks and beer boxes available for parties and functions
Contact bath ales on 0117 9527580 or email hare@bathales.co.uk
www.bathales.co.uk

Enjoy a Warm Welcome
and a Pleasant Atmosphere

The Annexe Inn

Seymour Road, Bishopston, Bristol
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A Real Ale Pub

- 7 Real Ales
- Large conservatory (available for private hire)
- Family room (including baby changing facilities)
- Enclosed garden open throughout the year
- Disabled access
- Lunchtime and early evening snacks - including children's menu -
- Pool table
- All TV sports events covered
- Relaxed, friendly atmosphere

Monday Night is Quiz Night
You can also enjoy various promotions
and special offers during the year

Open Lunchtimes & Evenings
All day Saturday, Sunday & Bank Holidays

Clifton Renaissance: part II

THE QUADRANT in Clifton Village has long been one of my favourite stopping off points on the way home from work. It is now under new ownership and, if reported plans are anything to go by, is in line for some changes that will do nothing to detract from the Clifton renaissance in real ale reported some issues ago in Pints West.

The Quadrant's previous owner Tony Garcia has retired and sold this two-tier pub on the corner of Regent Street and Princess Victoria Street to the owners of the Clifton Sausage. The regulars' jokey rumours about a rebranding as "The Clifton Chipolata" are unfounded: new landlord Wade confirms that the Quadrant will keep its name.

So what's new now, and what's planned for later? The Quadrant was closed for a few days for a bit of a wash and brush-up, but the beer range remains at three (currently Butcombe Blond, Butcombe Gold and Courage Best). The quarter bottles of Cava are nearly all gone and I've yet to investigate whether sparkling wine is available by the glass for those occasional celebratory moments (or

just the end of a long week!).

The tall, clear windows all round the pub's corner frontage continue to offer those in the upstairs (street-level) bar good views of Clifton's comings and goings. The bar has had a visit from *The House Doctor*, with extraneous clutter removed. The panelling and bar has had a smart lick of green/blue paint and the former red walls have been lightened up in cream. A simple touch of candles on the tables in the evening make for an intimate and relaxed atmosphere. The slightly disturbing black and white prints showing skyscraper workers of the 1920s high above New York remain as a conversation point! The music is still good and, with the TV, continues to be unobtrusive.

More radical work is planned both for the expansion of the beer range and the pub itself. The downstairs bar has been largely unused for some time, but will be completely refurbished as a cellar bar with beer on gravity (and on show). Premium lagers are mentioned, as is a range of real ales. Lots of seating is planned, and the ladies loo will be moved downstairs to join the gents.

What of the upstairs bar then? A new kitchenette will be added to allow for a small range of bar food, the bar counter will get some modernisation and the current seating will be retained. The new owners have already introduced a wider range of wines. It will be interesting to see whether these dominate this smaller bar, or whether beer will also be on tap up here.

These major changes are planned for a six-week closure period that could start early September. So far the improvements have been modest and welcome. For some reason it also seems far less smoky. I hope that we might see some Belgian beer on draught available as part of the new range, alongside real ales from the UK and other beers from farther afield. A real cider or perry would be a welcome addition too. Whatever the detail, I look forward to experiencing the Clifton Renaissance part III in the Autumn.

Lesly Huxley



Butcombe on a winning streak

BUTCOMBE brewery has been declared "Somerset Drinks Producer of the Year" at this year's Somerset Life Food and Drink Awards. The prize-giving ceremony was held on the Friday evening of the Bath and West Show, and included, not surprisingly, a fabulous dinner of Somerset's finest food and drink.

The latest beer in the brewery's range of three, Butcombe Blond, has scored in the Asda Beer Challenge. This new brew from Butcombe has won the Western section in a blind tasting contest of 37 new beers.

Blond now goes up against the other three regional winners – beers from St. Peter's (East), Daleside (Central), and Darwin (North) – in a race to see which beer sells 3,000 cases the fastest nationally throughout Asda UK from mid-September. The winner gets a national Asda listing for the whole of 2005. So if you want to show your support for one of your local breweries, get down to your local Asda and clear the shelves!

We reported last issue on the plans to relocate brewing to Cox's Green, Wrington, now that Guy Newell has taken over the company from its retiring founder, Simon Whitmore. Guy tells us that the new brewery is on schedule, and looking good! It should be finished by the end of the year, and ready for occupation in early 2005. The brewery will occupy a site of 14,000 square feet in total, encompassing a brewery shop. As Guy is keen to point out, brewing will be done with the "Same Water" by the "Same People" producing the "Same Great Beer!"

SP



To sample perfectly kept Butcombe Bitter and Butcombe Gold, plus numerous Guest Beers, why not visit a Butcombe Pub...

THE BELL

Hillgrove St, Bristol
01179 096612

RING O'BELLS

Compton Martin
(A368 between Blagdon & West Harptree) 01761 221284

THE LAMB

The Square, Axbridge

THE QUEEN'S ARMS

Bleadon
Near Weston-super-Mare

OLD CROWN

Kelston
Near Bath
01225 423032

THE SWAN

Rowberrow
(Off A38 south of Churchill)
01934 852371

THE RED TILE

Cossington
Near Bridgwater
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GREAT BEER / GREAT FOOD / GREAT WINE / GREAT COMPANY

BUTCOMBE BREWERY...01275 472240

www.butcombe.com

PRIDE IN EVERYTHING WE BREW

Shine on Sport

Duncan Shine takes a look at pubs where you can watch the match and have a decent pint. Full details, opening times and photographs of all the pubs mentioned can be found on the www.britishpubguide.com web site. Landlords and regulars in these pubs are welcome to update the information on the website whenever they like.



Picture the scene. You are a devotee of the finer things in life. You like good food and you like good wine. You also like good cask-conditioned beer or real ale – or perhaps a real traditional cider – and when out socialising at the pub that's what you like to drink. But more than that, you like sport. You want to enjoy a fine pint of Butcombe Blonde while appreciating the skills of Mateja Kezman, Muttiah Muralitharan or Jaco van der Westhuyzen.

So, where can you go and bask in the glory of sporting excellence, while drinking something more inspiring than mass-produced, dead and tasteless lagers brewed 'in the UK under licence' or fizzy liquids full of chemicals that once had an apple waved thirty feet above them so they could now be called 'cider'?

The sad truth is that there are far too few pubs in and around Bristol that would meet your requirements. The problem is that, since Sky Television put their pub subscription prices through the roof, it has become prohibitively expensive for all but the most financially secure landlords to afford. For the most part, the only pubs that can afford Satellite Sport in their pubs are the ones owned by the massive national chains who, in general though not exclusively, also concentrate on lowest common denominator drinks rather than fine local ales for the discerning punter.

However, there's no need to despair, because there are oases of plenty hidden in the apparent *beer-sport* desert that is the Greater Bristol area. With the rising price of Sky in pubs, and the inevitable changes in real ale availability, it's always a good idea to check with the pub first whether they are showing the *European Underwater Hockey Championships*, and

indeed whether they are still selling *Owd Favourite*. But the pubs below are a good place to start.

For example, let's start in Clifton. Tucked away under the Clifton Hotel in St. Paul's Road is **Racks**. It's a subterranean single bar venue with waited service and three televisions. Any sport will be shown here if you ask nicely, whether its Premiership Football, Six Nations Rugby or even *Synchronised Jumping Into A Swimming Pool*. They also serve a lovely pint of Bath Spa, along with Fuller's London Pride.

Not far away in Thomas Street North just below Fremantle Square in Kingsdown is the **Hare On The Hill**. A favourite of real ale drinkers for some years now, with its fine offering of Bath Ales' portfolio, this pub is also rumoured to be host to a real-life Gooner, and therefore a good place to watch the latest Premiership match, particularly if it features North London's finest.

Or perhaps you live in Fishponds? Here I can recommend two pubs. The new Barracuda outlet, the **Old Post Office**, is a rare outlet for Wye Valley beers, but also boasts a large number of TV screens on which to see whether the Trotters can overcome the Toffees. Just at the top of 'The Strip', however, is the recently very much improved **Cross Hands**. Not offering a guest beer, admittedly, but the Smiles Best is as good as you'll get in this part of Bristol, and sport is enthusiastically featured.

Meanwhile, out in Henleaze, the **Beehive** will always have the live match in the sportsman's bar to the right, and offers up to five real ales including Pedigree, Young's Bitter and the seemingly ubiquitous Sharp's Doom Bar.

Head south of the river to Bedminster, and you have some choice. The **Engineers Arms** in St. John's Lane offers a good pint of Greene King I.P.A. to accompany the spitting and shirt pulling, while you can try the Tetley Imperial at the **London Inn**, or the Bass at the **Black Cat** with the reassuring sight of stud against groin on the screen in front of you.

Still in the south of Bristol, we must mention the **White Hart** in Brislington village. The White Hart is not just a good place to watch the football, it is a champion of sports fans all over the country.

"How come?" I hear you ask. Well, when the Football World Cup was held in Japan and South Korea in 2002, the matches were played at breakfast time, outside normal licensing hours. It was the White Hart which successfully challenged the magistrates for the right to open during England's matches, thereby setting a precedent followed by pubs throughout England. An irregular guest beer should improve the football experience no end.

Down in Somerset, you could try the **Market Inn** just outside Yatton (Greene King beers here), or the **Trout Tavern** in Keynsham, offering Bass and Greene King beers as well as Taunton and Thatcher's traditional ciders.

Up in Gloucestershire, the externally ugly but friendly and welcoming **Tern Inn** offers Bass, Bombardier and a guest along with the match, while the **Star** at Pucklechurch offers Bass straight from the barrel, along with 6X and traditional ciders in the exquisite form of Thatcher's Cheddar Valley and Dry along with Taunton Traditional. Also thoroughly recommended is the **Wheatsheaf** at Thornbury, featuring a large screen TV as well as Bass, Greene King I.P.A. and Wadworth 6X as well as a memory-erasingly drinkable pint of Mole's Flat Rat cider.



There is not enough space here to mention anything like all the pubs showing football and serving decent real ale in the Bristol area, but here are a few more worth a visit...

The **White Bear** in Hotwells; **Wedlock's** in Ashton; the **Rhubarb** in Barton Hill; the **Wackum** in Speedwell; the **Millhouse** in Emersons Green; the **Three Crowns** in St. George; the **Sandringham** in Brislington; the **Oxford** in Totterdown.

Of course, football is not the only sport and, while the pubs above all offer soccer (and other sports) and secondary-fermented beer, there are some pubs worth mentioning for their loyalty to other sports.

The **Royal Oak** in Clifton offers five real ales (two from Sharp's, plus Bass,

LAMPLIGHTERS (Riverside Bar)

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Bristol BS11 9XA Tel: 0117 9823549
(2 mins Shire station)

Sat 11th September
Noon till Dusk
5th Annual
Real Ale & Music Festival
Entrance by ticket only
£6.00
(includes glass & programme)

Courage Best and Greene King I.P.A.) while providing a very enthusiastic base for rugby fans. The England tours of the southern hemisphere and the Six Nations Championships are an experience when watched from here.

The **Cotham Porter Stores** in, er, Cotham, is perhaps the best place to sit and watch England conquer the world at cricket. A large screen gently wafts in the breeze every time someone opens the door on the way to the outdoor loos, but you won't notice after the third pint of Cheddar Valley or Thatcher's Dry Cider, or the fourth of Spitfire.

If horse racing is your thing, we can heartily recommend the **Myrtle Tree**. Perhaps the finest Bass, straight from the barrel, in Bristol, along with a steady stream of equine endeavour. There is a challenger, however, out at the **Cross Hands** in Winterbourne Down, where the only thing to spoil the combination of good racing combined with up to five real ales (including ever changing guests) and Taunton Traditional cider, is the sound of the regulars cursing after losing their shirts on yet another three-legged nag.

That's just a taste of the pubs in and around Bristol offering the combination of good sport and fine ales. There are plenty more, so please support them.

Duncan Shine



If any pub mentioned above fails to meet your required standards, please email Duncan.shine@britishpubguide.com and let me know. Similarly, if there is a pub that you think deserves a mention in a future Pints West, let me know and I'll try and fit it in.

Relax with Pipe & Slippers

THE Pipe & Slippers has just opened (at the beginning of August) on Cheltenham Road, Bristol, in the building formerly occupied by the Berkeley Castle.

I spoke to owner Joby Andrews, who has set up this pub along with partner Mike Cranney. They have been running bars in Bristol for many years, and have now set out with this, their own, independently-owned, pub. They say that the aim is to create an "un-trendy" pub, which feels like a pub, but which has the drinks choice of a good quality bar.

They serve two real ales: one Smiles beer, which changed from Maiden Leg-over to Bristol IPA on the day which I attended, and Shepherd Neame Spitfire. They also serve Thatcher's cider. The range extends to a selection of cocktails too.

They also offer food. Petiscos are a Portuguese version of Tapas, and they are cooked by local chef Tucha, who may be known to some having run a Portuguese

cafe nearby. They also serve pies from Pie Minister, for those of a more traditionally British taste. Food is available at all hours that the pub is open.

The pub is a fairly friendly, airy, one-roomed pub, with wood panelling, and a few arm chairs scattered around. There was some music playing, which wasn't overly obtrusive, and on the whole we felt that it was a nice pub to come to. On a Wednesday evening it was fairly busy. There is a DJ booth in one corner, so there may be livelier sounds on at some times.

At the moment, the pub is open from 5pm to 11pm Monday to Friday; 12 noon to 11pm Saturday; and 12 noon to 10.30pm Sunday. They are applying for a later licence, so these hours may change.

Our impression was that this was a friendly pub, which will develop some good local character over time. It certainly makes a pleasant addition to the pubs in the area, and is well worth visiting.

Conor O'Neill

Sustainable Southville – and cider

AS one of the branch's greatest cider enthusiasts, I was recently pleased to have been contacted by Charlie Bolton, who is part of the **Sustainable Southville** project. Along with the **North Street Traders**, the project is in the process of organising a local food week, based around North Street in Bedminster, during the week of 25th to 30th October. The aim is to promote food which is locally

sourced, organic, GM-free or fair trade. He contacted us because we too promote products which can fit some of those categories – with us it's food in liquid form: real ales and real ciders.

Coincidentally, October is CAMRA'S Cider and Perry Month, and with many local producers in the area, we thought that it would be a nice idea to celebrate the event with a 'Southville Cider Saunter'

on Thursday, 28th October 2004. The itinerary will be as follows:

7.00pm **Apple Tree** (Philip Street);
7.45pm **Coronation** (Dean Lane);
8.30pm **Orchard** (Hanover Place);
9.15pm **Avon Packet** (Coronation Road);
10.00pm (ish) close.

Please feel free to come along and join us. In doing so, you will hopefully enjoy the taste of locally produced cider, and also learn about an excellent initiative at the same time.

Richard Walters

The BELL

Alfred Place, Kingsdown, Bristol

**A Genuine Freehouse
offering
Excellent Local Real Ales
Good Wines, Interesting Lagers**

Opening times
4.30 - 11.00 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
12.00 - 11.00 Wednesday
4.00 - 11.00 Saturday
12.00 - 3.00 & 7.00 - 10.30 Sunday

Watering Holes in the Desert

news from Weston-super-Mare

Weston Whispers

(pub and beer news)

FRIDAY the 10th and Saturday the 11th of September sees the second **Chew Valley Beer Festival**. Regular *Pints West* readers may remember a piece on last year's very successful inaugural event in edition 60. This year's event promises to be even better, as the beer range is being doubled to around 30 and there will be a far more interesting range. Once again all beers will be sourced from breweries within a 50-mile radius of Ubley. These are expected to include some rarely seen beers in these 'ere parts, from the Odcombe, Juwards, Burrington, Cwmbran, Cottage Spring and Quay breweries. There will also be some beers to tickle the fancy of people who like their ales strong and/or dark. These should include Berrow Porter, Hop Back Entire Stout, Bullmastiff Son Of A Bitch, Cottage Norman's Conquest and the

sublime Old Freddy Walker from the Moor brewery. There will be live music at all three sessions (Friday evening 7-11, Saturday afternoon 12-4 and Saturday evening 7-11) as well as a range of pub games, quizzes and hot snacks. Tickets are available from Steve Blanchard at CVBF Tickets, Birchcombe House, Frog Lane, Ubley, Bristol, BS40 6PW. SAE and cheques for £5 payable to "Chew Valley Beer Festival." This covers admission, festival glass and entertainment. Further information can be obtained from the organizers' website at www.chewvalleybeerfestival.co.uk.

The Night Jar on Mead Vale is owned by the Badger Brewery. Licensee Di Bradley has removed the Badger Best and Sussex Best, as neither were selling well enough, and replaced them with Badger's seasonal beer. This is currently **Fursty Ferret**, which is a major upgrade on the previous beers. At the time of my last visit Di was awaiting the arrival of the relaunched **Tanglefoot**. **Tanglefoot** and **Fursty Ferret** are also available in bottles at **The Night Jar**.

As indicated in the last Weston Whispers, **The Borough Arms** has ditched **Courage Directors**. Its replacement has been **Butcombe Bitter**, which has apparently been selling well. Further guest beers are possible.

The Britannia has changed hands. Nothing to worry about – it hasn't become an Irish theme pub. In fact, the few changes that have taken place seem to be for

the better. The kitchen and menu have had a make-over, whilst still being good value. On the beer front, **Sharp's Doom Bar** is now a permanent beer, with **Courage Best** and **Butcombe Bitter** alternating as the second beer.

At the time of writing **The Imperial** is closed – "for the first time in more than 160 years" according to the *Weston & Worle News*. It looks a rather sad sight at the moment, but it doesn't surprise me that the leaseholder has had trouble making it pay. My last visit was over two years ago and I paid £2.40 for a very moderate pint of **Courage Directors**. I haven't darkened its doorstep since. The premises are owned by the **Unique Pub Company**. Whether or not this is yet another case of a pub company setting terms and conditions that make it nigh on impossible for the operator to be viable is not known.

Happy to see **The Elm Tree** on Meadow Street selling real ale again. The ubiquitous **Wolver's Ale** is the generally available beer on offer.

Ditto **Jack Stamps Beerhouse**. After some months without real ale, Tom Newman has got his foot in the door and his **Bite** has been on sale.


Wolver's Ale has also taken up pretty permanent residence at **The Woolpack**, St. Georges, and **Old King's Head** in Worle.

Sharp's of Wadebridge, Cornwall continue on their march for world domination. Their excellent **Doom Bar Bitter** is now a permanent beer at **The Dolphin** in Uphill, where it sits alongside **Butcombe Bitter** and **John Smith's Cask**.

The range of beers at **The Queen's Arms** in Bleadon has taken a rather drastic hit since the takeover by **Butcombe Brewery**. The new normal offering seems to be the three **Butcombe** beers, supplemented by one guest. Many people felt that the previous landlord tried to keep far too many beers, which led to weaknesses in quality, and four ales is probably about right to meet the demand in Bleadon. However, it is still sad to see the departure of favourites such as **Ringwood Old Thumper** and **Badger Tanglefoot**, and there is some grumbling in the hills.

Tim Nickolls

'Everyone carries his own
inch-rule of taste,
and amuses himself by applying it,
triumphantly,
wherever he travels'.
(Henry Adams)



Waiting for you...

Courtesy of Newman's Brewery

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A round with Robin

AS the last issue was a bit of a historic tour, this time I hope to amuse and inform you about some excellent pubs I have been into this summer. This piece starts when I was staying with friends in Appledore, in North Devon, not far from Bideford. The most common real ale around these parts is from the aptly named Country Life Brewery, situated in Westward Ho! At **The George Inn**, Appledore, I had an excellent pint of Appledore Bitter, their weakest, but hoppiest beer, and later in other pubs in this area, I tried most of their other brews.

Later that same week I visited friends in Leicester but it wasn't Everard's Tiger, the local brew, that caught my attention. I visited a favourite pub there – **The Hat and Beaver** – and was pleased to see that it hadn't changed since I was there last about nine years ago. In fact the locals told me it hasn't changed since 1920. It had just won the local CAMRA branch pub of the month award, and it was there I picked up their newsletter, *The Leicester Drinker*. From this I decided to visit a further two pubs in the city: the Pub of the Year, **The Ale Wagon**; and a pub not in the Good Beer Guide, but where the local branch committee were meeting that evening (I thought that'd be a good bet). **The Hat & Beaver** had the Hardy & Hanson's Kimberley range, with the Mild at £1.55 a pint. The Classic was most expensive at £1.70. All were in brilliant condition.

On then to the **Ale Wagon**, a former Hotel. The main bar being rather smoky, I stayed in the Stair bar. I don't know if that's what it's called but the bar is at the bottom of the stairwell. Although a free house, they stocked three Hoskins beers, with four guest beers. The Hoskins were Hob Best Mild, Hob Best Bitter and Supreme. The also had Hoskins EXS as one of the guest beers, the others being Tom Kelly's Stout, Joules Bitter, and White Dolphin Wheat Beer. I had a half pint of all the Hoskins on offer, the Stout,

and the Joules, and had change from a fiver!

The last pub I tried was **Out Of The Vaults**, which only opened in late March, the owners having previously run a bar called The Vaults. It is one of those wonderful, but rare moments when you enter a pub, and they have twelve real ales and two draught ciders and you have never tried any of them. In fact there were only two brewers that I'd heard of there, and only two brews that are regulars. I won't bother listing them all, as if you go there they're sure to have changed, but the two regulars are Hairy Helmet from the Leather Britches brewery, and Hophead (a local beer?). The best beers I tried, and I tried nearly all of them (over two days) were the Abbey Gate Black Mass (6.6 per cent), Dragon Smoke Stout from Beowulf, Forest of Mercia Brewery, Oakham's Momperson Gold, and Three Sisters Atlas Wayfarer. All beer was served in Out Of The Vaults lined glasses. What's more, as well as being a very friendly pub, and having a buzzing atmosphere, the food is very reasonable, and there are non-smoking areas. I'm sure this should be in the next Good Beer Guide.

A couple of weeks ago I was having a splendid pint or three in **The Bargeman's Rest**, on the quayside at Newport in the Isle of Wight. Though only built five years ago it has a feel of permanency about it, having previously been a warehouse. It is filled with all manner of seafaring bits and pieces, some repro, but mostly genuine. There is a surprise in the gents' loo! They have the Badger Beer range and four guests, three from Isle of Wight breweries. Food and beer are excellent, but don't expect the reasonable prices charged in Leicester.

A favourite pub of mine in Crediton, where my brother's family live, is the Good Beer Guide-listed **Crediton Inn**. A single-bar pub, it has interesting old deeds on the walls, and is older than it

looks. They stock four beers, and I have to say that they're always in top-notch condition, and there are always two from the South-West. Not easy to find as it is on the Tiverton Road. The pub got praise in the *Exe Ale* CAMRA newsletter for its cask mild ales during Mild Month this year.

In the desert of Weston-super-Mare, **The Raglan** has been the first pub here to ever stock Hop Back Brewery's GFB. OK, it's only 3.5 per cent alcohol, and you lucky people in Bristol can get it at the Coronation any time, but for me it's a session beer that takes some beating. Well done Gary at The Raglan, and keep up the musical Friday nights. **The White Hart**, **The Regency** and **Off The Rails** are all experimenting with interesting guest beers. Good desert this one!

Robin E Wild

Weston Diary

○ **Friday 10 September – Visit to the 2nd Ubley Beer Festival.** Contact Tim Nickolls on number below for travel arrangements. For festival tickets, see article in Weston Whispers.

○ **Saturday 11 September – Somerset Beer Festival at Minehead Station.** A party will be going from Weston. If you wish to join us (and possibly save some money from travelling with a group), contact Tim Nickolls on the number below.

○ **Wednesday 15 September – 3 venue social.** 8.15 Weston Cricket Club, Devonshire Road, 9.15 The Ancaster, 10.00 The Waverley.

○ **Wednesday 29 September – Branch Meeting, Backwell Village Club, 12 Backwell Hill Road, Farleigh. 8.00 start.** Travel options are a train from WSM at 18.34, which arrives at Nailsea & Backwell at 18.52. The Club is an approximate 25 minute walk. Another option is bus 353 from Weston. This leaves the town centre at 18.35, arriving at Backwell near to the Club at around 19.10.

Admission to the Club is 50p. Prices are £1.80 a pint, so the admission charge should be easily recouped. At least three real ales and real cider.

○ **Wednesday 20 October – Social at The Raglan, Upper Church Road. 8.30 onwards.**

○ **Friday 5 November – Rural Pubs Crawl.** Minibus outing visiting at least five current or potential Good Beer Guide pubs. Minibus leaves Off The Rails, Weston Station at 7.30. Cost £5. Advance booking essential.

○ **Wednesday 17 November – Bath Crawl.** Visits to at least five pubs in Bath, including two of the finest pubs in the, er, world – the legendary Star Inn and Old Green Tree. Train from WSM at 18.35, arrives Bath 19.30. Train back from Bath at 23.05, arriving back in WSM at 23.45.

Non-members welcome at all of the above events.

Contact

Tim Nickolls - 01934 628996 (eves)

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Tim Nickolls, you said...
We don't need no-one making our
travel arrangements, you said...



If you really can't get out to the pub...

This article is a follow-up to the "Beers By The Fireside" article that appeared in Watering Holes In The Desert three years ago – Pints West edition 51 to be precise.

The bottled beer market continues to grow. An increasing number of people choose to enjoy a beer in the comfort of their own home, rather than visit the pub. This is a rather sad state of affairs with many reasons behind it. Society has changed a lot over the past 30 years and in many communities the pub has lost its place of prominence.

Various reasons are given by people for not visiting pubs as often as they did. The smoky environment is one common reason – nowadays the majority of potential pub-goers do not smoke and many people are no longer prepared to choke their way through a couple of pints in their local.

Other factors are cost (a fine pint at home can be anything from 50p to a pound cheaper than a pint in the pub), convenience (getting a quick one from the fridge is easier than going out to the pub) and the fear factor. Rightly or wrongly, many people feel that visiting pubs is a dangerous business, particularly in town centres at weekends. Also, many companies who own pubs only seem interested

in getting under 25s through their doors. Indeed it would not be much of an exaggeration to say that the people who control many of the nation's pubs seem to be on a mission to drive the over 25s out of pubs and into their armchairs. Happily, drinking at home has never been as pleasurable as it is now.

Many of the country's craft breweries have responded to the changing marketplace by producing bottled versions of their beers and in some cases brewing beers just for the bottled beer market. Worryingly, it is easier for many brewers to get their products on to supermarket shelves than it is to get them into pubs.

Surprisingly, the off-licence chains (or at least those represented in Weston) have shown little interest in leading the way in this growing market. It might have been expected that they would want to be seen as the "specialists" in all areas of alcoholic refreshments, but they seem to have surrendered the field to the supermarkets.

All of the "Big Four" supermarket chains have demonstrated their desire to appeal to the armchair drinker and regularly take out full-page-advertisements in CAMRA's monthly newspaper, *What's Brewing*. This is a quick round-up of what you can expect from their Weston stores.

Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's in Worle devote about 14 shelf-metres to British bottled ales and seven or so to foreign bottled beers and bottled lagers. About 50 British ales are stocked, of which about three quarters could be termed "regulars". Several breweries are very well represented: Wychwood (Goliath, Hobgoblin, Circle Master, Firecrest, Osprey, the latter two being exclusive to Sainsbury's), Young's (Old Nick, Special London Ale, Elysium, Waggledance), Fuller's (London Pride, ES, Honeydew, Jack Frost, 1845), Marston's (Strong Pale Ale, Pedigree, Empire). Some other regulars are St. Austell Tribute, Black Sheep Ale, Arran Blonde, Coniston Bluebird and Deuchars IPA.

The remaining quarter are what could be termed "guest beers". These sometimes have a seasonal factor to them. For example, Wychwood White Wych is currently in season.

Amongst the more unusual foreign beers and lagers seen in recent times are Sierra Nevada pale ale (which is very good), Kingfisher, Nastro Azzurro, Tiger, San Miguel, Hoegaarden, Duvel, Brooklyn lager, Kriekbier, Westmalle Trappist and beers from Leffe and Chimay.

There are frequent offers, which are



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worth looking out for. "2 for the price of about 1½" discounts on particular beers abound. Sometimes there are "any 4 for £5" deals applying across a group of four or five beers. At the time of writing there are two four-pack deals on, both of which are particularly attractive: a Hobgoblin quartet at £5.49, and the "Badger Sett" at £5.25. A while ago there was a 33% off deal across the entire range, which lasted for several weeks and was extremely good value. However, after that, the prices appeared to "overshoot" their original level for a period. Things seem to have settled back down to normal now, though.

Asda

I must admit to having something of a downer on Asda ever since they took out a full page ad in *What's Brewing* to announce that RCH's Double Header had won a national competition that they had run. I paid the Weston branch a visit and found that they did not stock it. Given that this store is about three miles from the brewery I thought this was a pretty poor show.

Recently Asda have signed a deal with the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA), which will enable them to source beers from local microbreweries.

There has not been any discernible impact at our local branch yet. This currently gives about half the space that Sainsbury's does for bottled beers and aside from Charles Wells Banana Bread Beer, there is rarely much to get excited about.

I am not sure whether beer is a product range where it is left to individual store managers to decide the space they will give to beer and what products to stock. We will wait and see how the deal with SIBA impacts on our branch.

Tesco

Tesco have been a bit of a mystery with regard to their bottled beer offer. They are a company that prides itself on being better at everything than all of its supermarket rivals and this attitude has seen it rise to being the shopping market share leader. In one recent edition of *What's Brewing*, they took out a full page to advertise the three brewing competitions that they run – "Beer Challenge," "Best Innovation in Brewing" and "Best New Imported Beer." They also took out a further advertisement in the same paper promoting four beers from their range.

Their commitment seems to be clear and genuine. However, their beer offer in Weston has always been rather disappointing, both in terms of space and, more importantly, in the products. These have invariably been a very uninspiring selection, with practically nothing on offer from our region. However, in recent times things have been looking up. On the British side of things, there are an increasing number of goodies appearing and they have recently introduced RCH Pitchfork and Cottage Norman's Conquest under a "new" banner – so hopefully these will now become permanent features. The range of foreign beers has also improved enormously and includes beers from a growing number of countries – no less than six from Czechoslovakia on one recent visit.

Safeway/Morrison's

Over the past few years, the best selection of bottled beers available in the area has been at Safeway. The shelf space dedicated to both bottle-conditioned and pasteurised beers is testament to the open-minded and enthusiastic approach to sourcing and supplying bottled beers.

Local enthusiasts were, naturally enough, very worried about the impact of the recent takeover of the company by Morrison's, particularly as Morrison's beer offer at their Cribbs Causeway store is much inferior to the what we have come to expect from Safeway.

However, so far there does not seem to have been any adverse changes. Not only do we still have an excellent array of local south west breweries on show, but we are treated to a fine selection of micro and craft breweries from the USA, Germany and Belgium.

Five shelves of the best beers Britain can offer from Skinner's, St. Austell and Otter in the South West to Okells, Heather and Orkney in the North all supplemented by offerings from our own RCH brewery. Of course the larger regionals such as Fuller's, with their Vintage Ale, ESB and London Pride, and Marston's with Pedigree, Oyster Stout and Owd Rodger, are also amply rewarded with shelf space. Right next door the Beers of the World also have five shelves of space. The selection leaves you with a very difficult decision to make. Do I have another bottle of Alaskan Smoked Porter or should I try Black Chocolate Stout from Brooklyn Brewery, both excellent representations of the USA Craft Breweries. Top this off with the fine Pauvel Kwak in a special four-pack with the weird and wonderful test-tube glass and holder (one from the chemistry lessons at school).

In conclusion, there are plenty of excellent beers to be had in stores in Weston for those who like a tippie in the comfort of their own home. However, remember, there is nothing quite like a good pint of real ale in a good pub, ideally with good company!

Richard Curnow, Rich Neale, Tim Nickolls



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Socials Review

The Weston CAMRA branch tries to provide a wide range of events for local ale fans to enjoy. The last few months has seen a typical variety of excellent events.

May

An evening at **Off The Rails**, the spiritual home for CAMRA members in Weston. The three real ales were all in excellent condition, as usual. These included the very wonderful Old Slug Porter from the local RCH brewery. Our number for the evening was swelled by two CAMRA members from Aylesbury who had, quite wisely, made the trip. They loved the place. Although OTR has now been a firm favourite for several years, it has noticeably got even better over the past few months. One or two people used to comment about the lack of dark beers or stronger beers. Colin Hicks has put this right by regularly featuring the likes of Wickwar Station Porter, Moor Peat Porter and Ringwood Old Thumper. Another excellent development has been the introduction of a real cider – usually one from the Thatcher's range. No need for cider fans to have to suffer fizz any longer.

If you're lucky you might even get to meet the legendary Rockin' Ron.

June

An evenings pub crawl in Bristol city centre. This included visits to **The Bridge**, **The Bunch Of Grapes**, **The White Lion**, **The Commercial Rooms**, **The King's Head** and **The Cornubia**. Being a rare, lovely summer's evening, the pint outside The White Lion was just the ticket, as was the visit to the wonderful King's Head on Victoria Street, which now features Sharp's beers. The Dark Star Sunburst in The Commercial Rooms was very good, but we had to wait an age to get served. The visit to The Cornubia was our first since the Smiles takeover. It was heartening to see that four ever-changing "guest" beers were still available. However, it is difficult to see this situation remaining, when Smiles are trying to sell three of their own ales as well. Demand for seven beers? We pondered this dilemma lubricated with Peat Porter from the Moor brewery.

July

Our regular third Wednesday social was a Seaside Saunter, featuring visits to seven pubs on or near the seafront, some of which we had never visited on a CAMRA event. Despite being a wet day and threatening clouds hovering above, the rain thankfully held off for the duration of our evening's stroll. We began at **The Captain's Cabin**, where Bass and Courage

Best were on offer. We were met there by Chris, a CAMRA member from Derby, who had seen the evening advertised in the local paper (perhaps we will have to start offering a prize at our socials for the person who has travelled the furthest).

Next was the nearby **Dauncey's Hotel**. This proved a nice surprise as it had Bite from Newman's Brewery. The bar staff report that they manage to keep a real ale ticking over quite well, which is sadly unusual for a hotel in Weston. Beer quality was good. They also do a real cider – Scrumpy Jack. The balcony provides possibly the best spot to enjoy a pint in Weston.

Another two-minute walk to **The Claremont**. A nice bar in a good spot on the front. There are usually two real ales and on the night these were Bass and Newman's Wolver's Ale. Most people went for the latter and enjoyed it. Again, beer in good condition.

The next port of call was due to be **The Chalice Bar**. Unfortunately, there was a complete lack of real ale! Apparently they had a late delivery, which sounded a bit spurious. We made sure that everyone in our group went in to emphasise the lost opportunity as we all then did an about turn and left.

Moving on to **The Major From Glengarry**, which has just seen yet another manager depart. There were four ales on – Wadworth's 6X, Henry's IPA and Summersault, with Everard's Tiger as a guest beer. The problem with the Major (or at least one of them) is that there is just not the demand necessary to keep four ales in tip-top condition. Hence one or two of the beers were less than perfect.

We decided to make up for the loss of The Chalice with a visit to the nearby **Raglan**. As reported in the last *Pints West*, this pub is now in the hands of Gary Havard, who is determined to turn it into a high quality "real ale drinkers' pub." He must have had a premonition that we might pop in, as we were greeted by a very welcome spread of sandwiches, crackers and cheese. My wife snaffled the last pint of the very popular Butcombe Blond, but we were still left with a choice of Hop Back GFB, Bass, Wolver's Ale and Bite. We hope that real ale drinkers in Weston will give The Raglan their support, as the future there could be very promising.

Having had some supper we marched back down to the seafront to visit **The Cabot**. Tom Newman's presence was again evident, as Wolver's Ale was in attendance, alongside Bass and Courage Directors.

Finally, we adjourned to **The Dragon**. There is usually something good on at The Dragon and this night was no exception. Cottage Norman's Conquest,

RCH Pitchfork, Titanic White Star and Harviestoun Schiehallion were there alongside the regulars.

All in all a very enjoyable evening, with quite a few people being pleasantly surprised by places that they had not been to ever before or at least not for several years. Quite a lot of decent beer around.

On Saturday the 24th, we met at Weston Station at 9.30 in the morning, heading for Topsham in Devon. This required changes of trains at Taunton and Exeter, but at about 11.45 we were sitting outside the historic **Bridge Inn** overlooking the River Clyst. The Bridge does not open until 12.00 and our impatience was exacerbated by the beer list that was pinned on one of the doors. This listed a new beer from the award-winning Triple FFF brewery called Summer Is A Comin', Otter Head, Teignworthy High Tide, Harviestoun Schiehallion, Exe Valley Exe Calibre, O'Hanlon's Yellowhammer, Branscombe Vale Branoc and Summa That, and finally a beer called Topsham Ferryman from a new brewery called Topsham and Exminster. At midday we were in and enjoying the ambience of one of the finest pubs in the country. At about 12.15 we were joined by a contingent of CAMRA members from Bristol, swelling our party to about 20 in number.

The Bridge is a Grade II-listed inn and has been run by the same family for over 100 years. The interior is an absolute delight – truly a step back in time. On the train down one or two of our party had been talking about visiting some other pubs in Topsham. However, once they had got settled inside The Bridge there was no question of leaving until the last possible moment. All of the beers got sampled and all were in excellent condition. The Exe Calibre and Topsham Ferryman got rave reviews from all who tried them. The beers were accompanied by a superb choice of sandwiches and Ploughman's, which set us up nicely for the afternoon's exertions. The landlord had a chat with us and he and his staff seemed to appreciate their customers almost as much as we appreciated their pub.

With some reluctance, we forced ourselves out at about 1.45 for the first leg of the walking element of the trip. We embarked on a three-mile jaunt alongside the River Exe up to **The Double Locks Hotel**, arriving shortly after 3.00. It was a lovely sunny afternoon and this pub is in a great spot. Despite its rather isolated location the pub was absolutely packed with a long queue for a beer and very few outside seats available. Beer-wise it proved to be rather disappointing. The pub is owned by Young's these days. Not a problem in itself as they brew some good beers, but the offering fell some way short of the "dozen cask ales" as prom-

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used by the Good Beer Guide. The choice was Young's Bitter, Waggle Dance and Golden Zest, with two guests, Otter Bright and Branscombe Vale Branoc. A few people had been looking forward to a pint of Young's Special, but this had gone off shortly before our arrival. The Golden Zest was inappropriately named (well, it was golden I suppose, but lacked zest) and the Otter Bright was also uninspiring. We cut short our intended staying time and headed on into Exeter. As we departed part of the Bristol group arrived by ferry. Despite the day being billed as a Walking and Drinking Trip, it was noticeable that some of the Bristol people were not too keen on the walking element!

Another couple of miles walk up-river and we were in the centre of Exeter. We made an unplanned visit to **The Well House**, which sits looking out on to the cathedral. A quick scan of the pump-clips indicated that we had made a good decision. Teignworthy Strawberries and Cream, Otter Bitter, Cotleigh Blue Jay, Well House Bitter (brewed by Otter) and Archers 25th Anniversary ale were the fine selection. Everyone was very happy with the quality of their beer here.

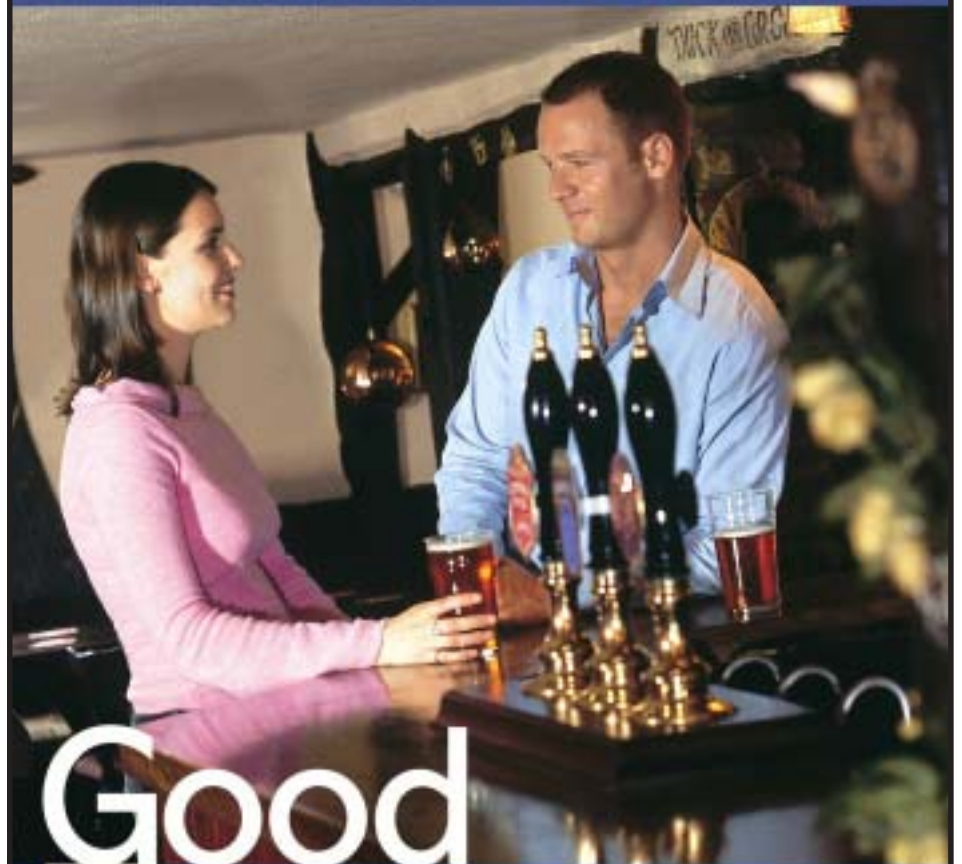
Time was marching on, so we headed to our final port of call – **The Great Western Hotel**, next to Exeter St. David's Station. The selection seemed to be a bit disappointing compared with my previous visits, but on reflection it may have been that we had been spoilt earlier in the day, as the choice included Cottage Golden Arrow and Southern Bitter, Timothy Taylor Landlord, Adnam's Broadside and Branscombe Vale Branoc. The quality and value of the food is excellent at this pub and everyone tucked into a wide range of meals.

Hopping on the 18.40 train from Exeter, back in Weston just after 8 o'clock. A great way to spend a summer's day.

Check out our up-coming events in the diary section. Why not come along to one of our socials? A warm welcome is guaranteed.

Tim Nickolls

BRITAIN'S BEST PUBS



Good Beer Guide 2005

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Zerodegrees – Bristol’s newest brewery



MANY of you will now be aware that an exciting new venture opened for business in Bristol in mid July. Zerodegrees opened their second outlet, following on from their successful brewpub/restaurant in Blackheath (London), and chose to do so in Bristol. It has already featured in a Mark Taylor review in the Bristol Evening Post – much of which I found to be extremely negative and in direct contrast to my own experiences, and those of my friends. More of that later.

The new venue is situated almost opposite Smiles brewery and Tap, just up from the Colston Hall and close to the Bristol Royal Infirmary and Children’s Hospital. Entrances are sited on Park Row and Colston Street, and you can also approach by walking up Christmas Steps – you will not be able to miss the place coming from that angle. The building has been ingeniously designed around a disused former tram shed and goes under the second tier of steps leading on to Park Row. Inside it is surprisingly large and spacious, with restaurant seating for 200 spread over two levels, plus a bar with plenty of standing room and limited seating, and two outdoor balconies. A third balcony, hidden away on the top level, is reserved for alfresco dining, as we discovered when asked to move one evening! The place is open until midnight Monday to Saturday and 11pm Sundays,

attracting a genuinely mixed crowd of all ages.

All of the brewing equipment is on full view, and is lit up by blue and magenta neon lighting after dark. Stainless steel pipes and fittings are the dominant feature throughout and especially around the bar area. There is very little information on show at the bar as to what is on offer – you need to pick up a menu, which lists the beers as well as food, or ask the staff, all of whom seem very friendly and helpful. Several silent plasma TV screens are constantly set to show Sky Sports News, but will presumably be used to show major sports events too. Background music, set at a reasonably unobtrusive volume, seems always to be of the “modern jazz” genre.

Zerodegrees only sell their own beer, all of which is produced with live yeast, are not filtered or pasteurised, and do not contain any artificial colouring or sweeteners. All are commendably sold in lined glasses which allow for the often generous head on the beer. Five beers are normally on offer, as listed below. All are available in four-pint jugs, or to take home in five-litre mini-kegs or fifty-litre party-kegs. I would like to tell you exact ABV’s of all the beers, but this information is strangely missing from the otherwise very informative menus, and I cannot see it

displayed anywhere else in the bar either (is that legal I wonder?). One tricky issue yet to be fully clarified is whether any of the beer technically qualifies as real ale (it is kept in cellar tanks or similar) and whether Zerodegrees will be eligible for consideration for future editions of CAMRA’s Good Beer Guide. Watch this space!

Zerodegrees Pilsner is the house lager and is brewed in the Czech Saaz style. We have found it to be very tasty, with an underlying creaminess. If all lager was this good we wouldn’t keep bemoaning its popularity. A mini-keg label revealed it to be 4.8% ABV.

Zerodegrees Pale Ale is billed as copper-coloured ale, similar to English bitter, but in a US west coast style. It aims for rich malt flavours, with floral and fruit (peach and grapefruit) characteristics from American hops. The first time we tried this it seemed very bitter, but not unpleasant, in character. A week later it was very different and much as described in the menu. No information on ABV so far.

Zerodegrees Black Lager – a deep dark Czech style dark lager, using roasted and caramelised malts. It has chocolate and coffee flavours, and a cappuccino-style head. No information on ABV, but my personal favourite so far.

Zerodegrees Wheat Ale – the menu suggests that this one will vary from brew to brew between various styles, including German Hefe style, American style and the orange and spicy Belgian style. The offerings so far seem to be of the Belgian variety. ABV on a mini-keg said 4.2% but tastes stronger.

All of the above beers cost £2.40 a pint, £1.25 a half (don’t get me started on that one as I feel very strongly that two halves equal a pint full stop!). A four-pint jug costs £8.95, it’s £14.95 for a five-litre mini-keg, and £85.00 for the fifty-litre party-keg.

At any one time a **speciality or seasonal beer** will be on offer – for £2.50 per pint, £1.35 per half (why should this one be even more severe on half pint drinkers?), yet still £8.95 for a four-pint jug, and £14.95 and £85.00 for the kegs. The menu promises that this beer could be

anything from a fruit beer to a porter, stout, red ale, blonde ale or anything else they may come up with. Since opening night, it has been **Mango beer**, which a mini-keg revealed to be 4.0%. This has drunk like a wheat beer, with a big infusion of mango, giving it a very full body and fruit flavour. It has proven very popular with the ladies, and I have enjoyed trying it too, but find it quite heavy going and don't usually fancy another. This is probably just my personal taste though.

An added bonus is that every weekday from 4pm to 7pm is designated as "Happy Hour" where all beers are sold at £1.75 per pint (excellent value), and £0.95 per half (you know what I think of that!). No reduction for four-pint jugs is mentioned so I have to assume that four individual pints would be £1.95 cheaper than a four-pint jug during these hours! A range of wines and champagnes are also listed in the menu.

Where Mark Taylor and I seem to really disagree is in relation to the food on offer. In my humble view his regular reviews seem obsessed with the awful term "*gastropub*". He constantly bemoans Bristol's alleged lack of such places. I would argue that people wanting such a dining experience are perfectly well served with restaurants in Bristol, and we do not need our pubs to try and become expensive "dining experiences" too.

What most people I know want is somewhere that they can enjoy good-quality tasty food, from an imaginative menu (with some plainer options for those who want them), at an affordable price. They also want pubs to welcome those who just want a drink and a social outing. Very few pubs can justify charging £25+ for a three-course dinner and these are normally reserved for special occasions by those of us on normal salaries.

The point of all this is that I felt that Mark was judging Zerodegrees against the loftiest criteria, which I do not feel that its menu and prices are aimed at achieving. In my view, the food is several notches above normal pub fare, shows good imagination, but does not allude to be what it is not. At between £7 and £12 per main course it is also priced well within bounds. Mark was most unflattering about the food quality. I have eaten there on three occasions with five different people and strongly disagree. Starters are very generously sized and filling. I can recommend the *Spiedini* (four skewers of halloumi cheese, sage and parma ham grilled with balsamic vinegar) at £5.25, and my fish-loving mate raved about *Trio of Crostini* which clearly included a lot of fish at £4.95. Other starters range from £2.75 up and include four vegetarian options. Main courses fall into several main categories, each with multiple options, plenty of them vegetarian or nut-free.

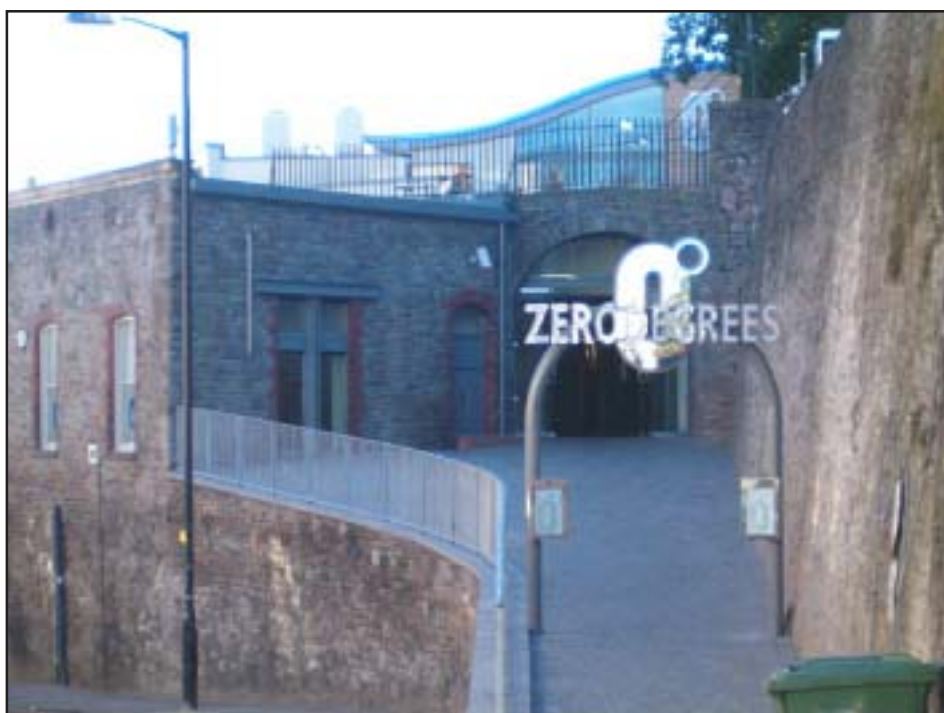
Salads are priced at between £6.95 and £8.95. Six different flavoured varieties of mussels, served with fries (unusually chunky for this dish) and mayo are the most expensive items at £11.95. No less than 22 different pizzas at between £6.50 and £8.95 are offered on soft thin bases (fine with us if not Mr Taylor!) and are generously topped with meat, fish or vegetables. I tried the Thai chicken option which had most of a chicken breast aboard and Fish Face's Salmon and Mascarpone looked even more generously topped! Various types of pasta dish plus gourmet sausages and mash complete the choice. Desserts are another quirk of the place as they are not mentioned in the menu, there is no blackboard or trolley, and on two of the three occasions the staff failed to suggest them! They do however exist and my wife described her ice cream dish as delicious.

The other really unusual thing about the restaurant area is that it is all apparently smoking-allowed (you got that wrong too Mark!), despite the huge potential for segregation in a place this size. I find this truly amazing in this age. Despite being a life-long non-smoker, I am not in favour of complete smoking bans, but do expect to eat in a smoke-free area and thought that policies like this were long gone. The issue is alleviated only slightly by the high ceilings and big gaps between tables.

Overall my few negative feelings (smoking, premium prices for half pints and lack of info on ABVs) are massively outweighed by the positive factors and I think that Zerodegrees is one of the most significant new things to happen locally for a long time. Perhaps more than anything it will cajole more people to become aware of the huge choice of quality beer that is out there if you know where to look. By only selling its own beers, which are very good, it may well act as a "bridge" to convert many to convert to drinking fresh, living beer and demand its wider availability elsewhere. Its fruit beers and other varied styles are also likely to attract more young people and females to beer that is not necessarily bitter and brown. Every year Bristol beer festival sells out and the thousands that attend always praise the products that we offer, so we know the demand is out there.

Vince Murray

Photography by Marilyn Murray



Anyone want to open a *Real Ale* pub?

A FRIEND of mine mentioned about four years ago that there was no need to worry about the future of pubs in Bristol – there had been so few closures in recent years that the city was doing alright compared to other parts of the UK. I am not sure that, some four years or so later, he would still take the same tack.

Consider the Rummer, the Mendip Gate, the Duke of Cambridge and the Old Fox in Easton, the Crown & Anchor in St. Phillips, the Old Castle Green in Old Market, Condell's Old Ale House in St. Nicholas Street, the former Sceptre Tavern (later BJ's Liquor Emporium) in Baldwin Street, the Albert in Bedminster, the Berkeley in Cheltenham Road, the Assize Court in Small Street, the Robin Hood in Gloucester Road, the Bristol Bridge in Baldwin Street, the Don Juan Cross and the Gin Palace, Old Market, naming but a few.

All these pubs have, in recent times, either closed or been threatened with closure. A small number of these may still

be open but with the threat of closure looming. Some others have closed but reopened, maybe under a different name. In fact, the good news regarding the former Berkeley in Cheltenham Road, which has now reopened after a refurbishment as the Pipe and Slippers, is reported elsewhere in this edition of *Pints West*.

The fact remains though that some of the remaining pub stock in the city is under threat of closure, quite possibly on a permanent basis. Witness for example the once superb Sceptre Tavern in Baldwin Street (which was senselessly rebranded BJ's Liquor Emporium). The pub closed a few years ago and now the premises have been turned into an Irish sandwich bar! A great pub lost forever!

How many more will there be? Witness the Assize Court. This was once a thriving pub. Not so long ago, it served a wide range of real ales in top form and was doing a huge amount of business. Yes, it was serving good beer – just what the discerning customer wanted. And it was doing a good trade – just what the business wanted! Then it was decided that the beer range had to be restricted, i.e. a limited range of beers to suit the brewery supply arrangements, but *not* what the customers wanted. Trade dropped off. Some

time later the pub adopted an Aussie theme name. Trade dropped off even more – and the pub has now been closed for a very long time. Who knows, it may never reopen as a pub again. Yet another pub lost for the citizens of Bristol.

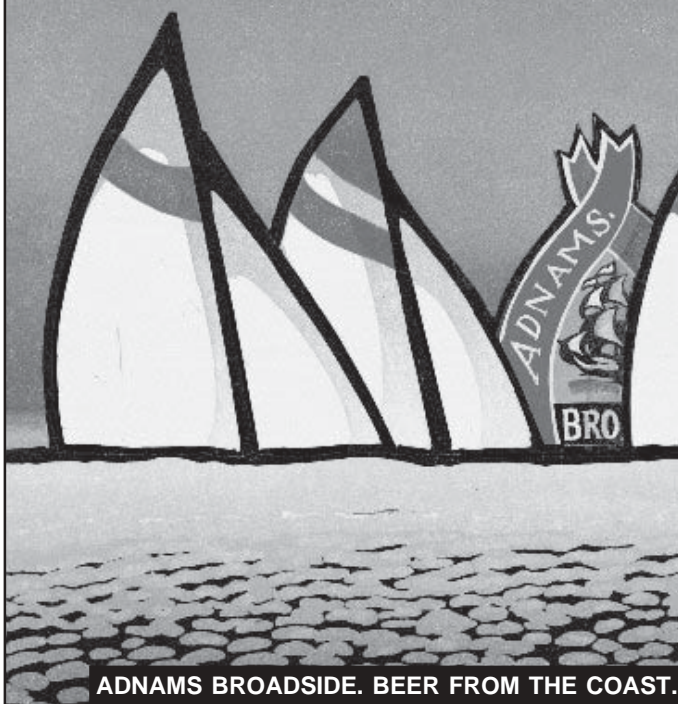
Am I alone in thinking that, given the right licensee, a freedom to buy beer from whoever he or she so chooses, i.e. either direct from wholesalers or local breweries, there could be scope for another good real ale pub in this city of ours? Yes, as consumers, we would like a select choice of quality beers from good breweries. The beers should be kept in good condition, served at the right temperature via clean beer lines. The staff should be friendly and able to engage with the customers in a genuine way. The tables, etc., should be cleared regularly and the pub maintained in a clean and efficient manner. The prices should be reasonable. Maybe some decent pub grub. A bit of promotion for the place.

Perhaps someone will come along and, if the terms are right, acquire one of the many pubs that are no longer wanted by whatever pub chain or brewery is sitting on them. It is interesting to note that some of the best free houses are pubs that are ones formerly owned by national breweries that deemed them unviable. These were then taken into private ownership, turned into genuine free houses, and became thriving locals. The current national CAMRA Pub of the Year is an example. A former South West CAMRA Pub of the Year in Gloucestershire is another example.

Does such an opportunity exist in Bristol? Does anyone want to take up the challenge?

Pete Bridle

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Good Bottled Beer Guide

5th Edition – by Jeff Evans

THE new edition of this book provides a comprehensive guide to all Britain's bottle-conditioned beers. There are a huge number of bottled real ales now available from brewers around the country and this publication contains full details. Find out more about real ale in a bottle and why it is the closest equivalent of the draught beers you enjoy at the pub.

- Fully revised, updated and expanded
- Features bitters, lagers, wheat beers, milds, stouts, porters, fruit beers and barley wines
- Profiles more than 600 bottle-conditioned beers
- How to buy, keep and serve real ale in a bottle
- The best foreign bottled beers



The book has only just been published (August 2004) so is bang up-to-date.

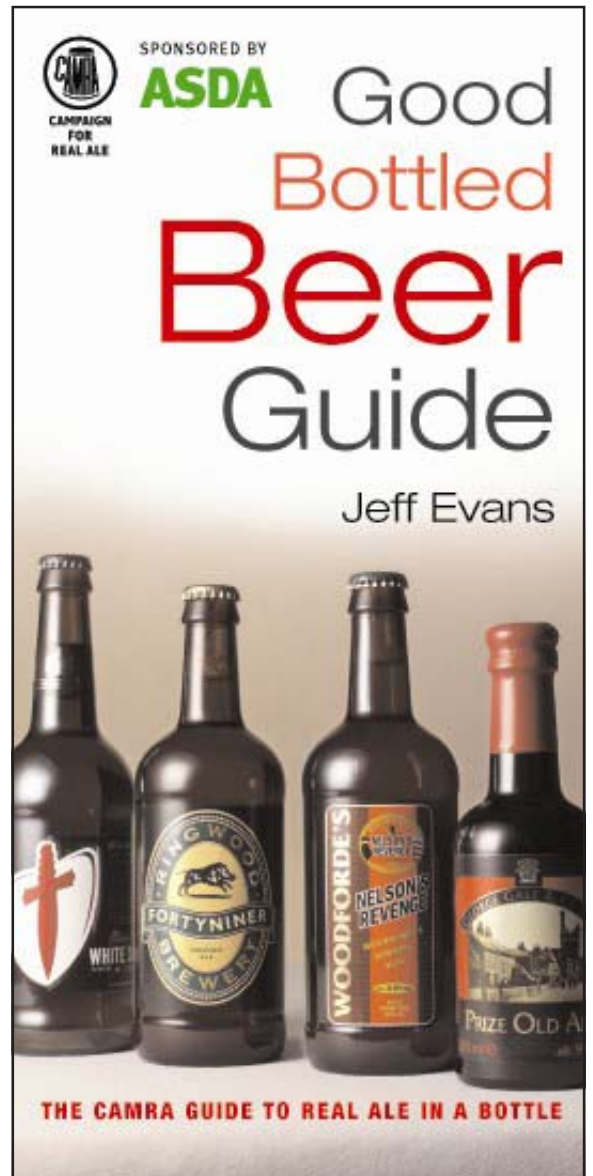
South West breweries featured in the book include Bath Ales, Hop Back, Moor, RCH and Wickwar, the latter two having no less than a dozen beers listed between them.

Pub news

The Dog and Duck, adjacent to the now closed cinema on Whiteladies Road, has reopened after a major refurbishment and is now called **The Picture House**. There is normally one real ale available (Butcombe Bitter on my last visit) and a table service is provided to save walking to the bar.

The Kings Arms in High Kingsdown, Bristol is under new management. The current incumbent is Teresa who, until recently, was at the Annexe in Bishopston.

Pete Tanner



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Pub news

Bar Essential in Queen Charlotte Street has closed for refurbishment.

Channings Hotel in Clifton has pronounced its move to two ever-changing guest cask ales a roaring success. Offerings at the time of writing are from Titanic and Hyde's, but they do change quickly.

The tenants of **The Golden Lion** in Frampton Cotterell have moved on, and the pub is again to let from owners Greene King. We hope whoever takes it over will carry on the good work of the beer festival held there earlier this year.

The Royal Oak in Clifton has added a second beer from Sharp's after Doom Bar proved such a success. Cornish Coaster is now one of five real ales on offer.

The Cross Hands in Pilning has added a traditional cider, with Thatcher's Heritage Cider now on draught.

Duncan Shine

A guide to beers that don't taste much like beer!

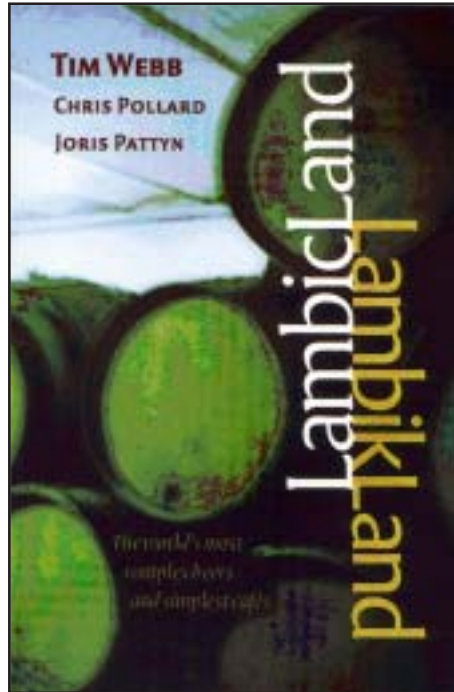
Vince Murray reviews "Lambicland" by Tim Webb, Chris Pollard and Joris Pattyn.

Some issues back I reviewed the fourth edition of Tim Webb's *Good Beer Guide to Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg*. My conclusion was that, aside from adding a few good street maps, the first-time "beer tourist" to Belgium would need little else in the way of guide books. I still hold that view – anyone setting off without it will definitely miss out on much of the best that Belgium has to offer.

I have been over to Belgium a dozen or so times and visited all the more obvious beer cafés, and a few less obvious ones, in the main cities – Bruges, Ghent, Brussels, Liege, Antwerp, etc. Along the way I had occasionally dabbled in some of the rarer "Lambic" beers that crop up on the better beer menus. Whilst at home last summer I started to read up on these in Tim's book and discovered the existence of an area just west of Brussels called Payottenland – the home of all things Lambic. Intrigued, Phil Cummings and I vowed to visit the area on our forthcoming trip. As it transpired we managed an afternoon in Beersel, about 30 minutes by slow train from Brussels. We got to try the wonderful *Drie Fonteynen* beers at source and several other excellent bars. To our eternal disappointment we got lost and failed to find the famous *Oud Beersel* café and decided to look again on our next visit – only to read a month later that it had since closed for ever! Never put off what you can do today!

That trip certainly whetted our appetite for more of the same and on our next visit we will be armed with "*Lambicland*" – the brand new book from Tim, in conjunction with Chris "Podge" Pollard and Joris Pattyn. Joris's role seems mainly to have been providing the Dutch translation that runs side by side with the English text throughout. In an amusing introduction, Tim and Podge admit that "for all we know Joris may have written a load of rubbish as neither of us speaks a word of Dutch".

It is high time that I attempted to explain exactly what "Lambic" or "Lambik" means. It is a type of beer uniquely produced in this area of Belgium by means of "spontaneous fermentation" – the yeast occurs naturally in the air and is not from a specially developed culture kept locked away, as with all other ales and lagers. Barley and wheat produce the wort, which is left in an open vat and then comes into contact with natural yeast in



the air, before being cooled and drained into large oak casks. It then slowly ferments for between six months and three years. Old hops are used which leave little obvious hop flavour in the end product. The book explains in a much more detailed and scientific way.

There are several styles of Lambic beer, some but not all involving the steeping of fruit in the beer. *Gueuze* (pronounced more like *curze*) is made by blending old and young lambics – it is characteristically a very dry and acidic flavour that comes as a shock to the unwary. This is beer that takes some getting used to, but the better ones are well worth the effort. Occasionally brown sugar is added to Lambic to spark refermentation – it is then known as *Faro*, but my one experience of this was not to my personal taste.

Fruit lambics, most commonly, but not exclusively, made with cherries or raspberries, usually exhibit a little more sweetness than gueuzes, whilst usually remaining dry and tart in flavour. The book points out that many of the brewers now resort to pulped fruit, fruit juice or concentrate, with varying results. Belgian brewers are not legally required to list ingredients so the book offers tips on how to spot what the beer is likely to contain.

Once the beer styles and history has been explained, the book goes on to a section listing the nine remaining lambic brewers and their main products. There is

a short introduction to each producer (except *Cantillon* which merits its own chapter later) followed by a description of each of their beers. In common with Tim's guidebooks, each beer receives a star rating out of five, and no punches are pulled. If they don't rate a beer then they make it plain.

The next chapter introduces the area known as Payottenland, detailing transport links and listing available hotels. It then launches into an exhaustive list of all cafés in the area known to regularly sell lambic products. Many come with pictures (full colour) and all show opening hours and type of food offered, if any. All lambics available, draught or bottled, are detailed along with the number of other beers sold – beers considered as highlights are named too. A total of 69 cafés and bars in the towns and villages of Payottenland are detailed, the great majority not shown in the main beer guide, due to not meeting the "40 beers or more" entry criteria for that book. Many sound utterly fascinating, ranging from upmarket country food establishments to quirky backstreet bars.

Although many of the towns in Payottenland have train or bus links, you are likely to experience much walking or cycling if you want to visit a good number of the bars. For the terminally lazy, the book kindly lists all the main lambic outlets in Brussels – some of which also appear in the beer guide. It also lists a couple of outstanding cafés just outside of the area – one of which we visited – the magnificent *Heeren van Liedekercke* in Denderleeuw: allow a few hours to enjoy the place, plan to eat there, and enjoy the superb range of over 300 beers, including its big range of top quality lambics. The book's directions from the station sound simpler and shorter than we remember, but it is well worth the effort. The book finishes up with the chapter on Cantillon, one on how to arrange a visit to a brewery or beer museum, and how to buy lambics to take home.

To conclude: if you are a first-time visitor to Belgium you should invest in the main beer guide, but be sure to at least sample a lambic or two during your stay. If you are a regular visitor and have developed a taste for lambics, or are curious to try new beer styles, then you will find *Lambicland* an essential travelling companion – it is nicely compact and lightweight, if not quite pocket-sized. Me? – I will always carry both books as they complement each other with very little duplication.

The cover price is £6.95 and the book is published by Tim's own new company, Cogan & Mater. Both *Lambicland* and *The Beer Guide to Belgium, Holland & Luxembourg* can be obtained (signed if desired) via the web site at www.booksaboutbeer.com.

Vince Murray

CAMRA launches new bottled beer accreditation scheme

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has launched a pilot accreditation scheme for bottle-conditioned beers.

The scheme known as "Real Ale in a Bottle" was launched at the Great British Beer Festival on 2nd August, after CAMRA's Bottled Beer Competition, at a reception for beer buyers.

"The scheme has been devised in response to an increased number of enquiries from both CAMRA members and the general public about what constitutes a bottle-conditioned beer, how they can be identified, and most importantly where they can be bought," said CAMRA's Georgie Howarth. "Many more people are learning to appreciate the brewer's art to the full by savouring the complex, fresh taste of a beer that has been allowed to mature naturally in the bottle."

To coincide with the pilot launch, CAMRA will highlight the consumer demand for bottle-conditioned products. The aim of the scheme is to recognise bottle-conditioned beers as a separate category to other bottled beers, and encourage buyers to stock and promote them in their retail outlets.

Ms Howarth continues, "All breweries listed in the CAMRA's Good Bottled Beer Guide are eligible to join the scheme and of those surveyed, 90 per cent think that it is a good idea. The general consensus appears to be that once consumers understand that they are drinking bottled real ale, they really appreciate and enjoy



exploring different tastes, styles and products."

The accreditation markings form two parts to be used on the label artwork: a method of dispense and a clearly identifiable hallmark, "CAMRA says this is real ale". The logo is to help consumers easily differentiate products. The objective of the method of dispense is to create a better understanding of how to look after and serve bottled real ale.

CAMRA is now discussing with breweries wanting to participate in the pilot launch to encompass these elements on their bottle artwork. Piloting partners

include Wickwar, Hop Back, Young's, Fuller's, and many others.

CAMRA will be running a supporting promotional campaign over the coming months.

What is Real Ale in a Bottle?

Real Ale in a Bottle (RAIB) is the bottled equivalent of the draught real ales you enjoy at the pub. The beer is unpasteurised and contains yeast and enough fermentable sugars to allow for a slow secondary fermentation in the bottle.

Care should be taken when pouring a RAIB to ensure that the yeast remains in the bottle and the refreshing flavoured beer ends up in the glass. The yeast is completely natural of course, and any poured out will cause no harm, except perhaps to cause a slightly cloudy appearance in the glass.

It is important to note that though a particular beer is a real ale in draught form, this is not a guarantee that the bottled version will be real also. Most real ales will be clearly labelled, but a quick check to see if there is any yeast sediment will confirm if the beer is a RAIB



Ten reasons to buy Real Ale in a Bottle

1. It's a living product, which means lots of stimulating, fresh flavours.
2. It's the nearest thing to a pint of real ale down at your local.
3. It's not artificially carbonated; the pleasant effervescence is generated wholly by the yeast in the bottle.
4. Almost all bottled real ales are made from just four natural ingredients: malted barley, hops, water and yeast – there are no additives or E numbers.
5. It's mostly brewed by small or regional breweries and sold locally, so you'll be helping your local economy.
6. It's a hand-crafted product and brewers take extra care when producing real ale in a bottle.
7. There is so much variety to be enjoyed – well over 500 real ales in a bottle are now produced in the UK.
8. There are some magnificent bottled real ales from other countries, which go to prove that life outside Britain isn't all bland, international lagers.
9. It makes an excellent accompaniment to food and with so many different bottled real ales available, it's fascinating to try to match their flavours with various dishes. Try real ale in a bottle instead of wine for a change. Most importantly...
10. It tastes great!



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Island in the sea

By your Nailsea correspondent
Laurie Gibney

Nailsea and Backwell Rugby Club held their first, and very successful, beer festival from Friday 17 until Sunday 19 July. *The Mercury* reported that it attracted 500 people and raised £3,000, including £1,300 for charity "Dreams Come True", which helps terminally and seriously ill children to translate their cherished dreams into reality. Almost 50 casks of beer and cider sold at 60p a half pint were sponsored by various local businesses, clubs and individuals including, in the licensed trade: The White Hart, Weston in Gordano; RM Bar, Nailsea; NSS Reequip (Bar and Catering Supplies), Clevedon; and The Westward Stocktaking and Valuation Agency, Nailsea.

The Rugby Club usually has no real cider and only one real ale, Courage Best. Fifteen casks of Thatcher's and Orchard's cider and perry were sold out during the weekend so there should be a demand in the club to do better than stock just Blackthorn! On the ale side, with such a wide variety of ales at the festival, there must have been a demand created to stock guest ales, so watch this space! My ale of

the festival was the light coloured Everard's Sunchaser brewed with lager malt and hops, closely followed by the dark coloured Theakston's Old Peculiar and Younger's No 3. CAMRA now has *Pints West* and membership forms in the club.

As CAMRA members involved in organising and helping at beer festivals well know, these events don't happen without a lot of volunteer effort. The Rugby Club was lucky in having Ian and Androulla Hawes, Nick Williams, Emma Davies, Paul Turner and a happy band of helpers to make the event so successful that they are being asked to make it an annual event! Nailsea is a little haven of real ale and cider, and this event has helped the CAMRA campaign. The last time that Nailsea saw a beer and music festival was in the year 2000 when **The Old Barn at Wraxall** hosted one.

And so to another local beer festival, and welcome to Rich Geisens and Mel, the new managers at **The Jubilee** in Flax Bourton, where Eldridge Pope are the

licensees of an Enterprise pubco house. Their beer festival may be over by the time you read this copy of *Pints West* or you may be just lucky; it runs from Friday 27 through to Sunday 29 August in a marquee behind the pub, with nine ales from Bath Ales and Smiles Brewery and one cask-conditioned cider from Addlestons. A midnight license with food available throughout, live musical entertainment during the evenings and children's entertainers and a bouncy castle during the afternoons, all sponsored by Eldridge Pope, look set to re-launch this attractive pub with its new manage-


ment. It is at the southern end of the Long Ashton by-pass on the A370, with bus stops nearby and good car parking.

Rich and Mel came to the area from Bourton-on-the-Water where they were managers of **The Kingsbridge Inn**, and previously deputy managers at **The Barn Owl**, Torquay. They are skuba divers and are interested in aquatic conservation so only sell replenishable fish stock on their fish menu, which at the time of our visit included sea bass, fish pie, trout, and baramundi, otherwise known as mahi mahi. The restaurant area is no-smoking and the regular cask ales are from the SIBA list.

Welcome also to Kathleen and Dave Allen who are now in residence at **The Friendship**. They have restored one real ale, Courage Best, and have plans for a guest ale. After lengthy negotiations they signed a ten-year license agreement only when Punch Taverns agreed to spend £50,000 on renovations. Kathleen has spent many years in the licensed trade, as did her family before her, and will stand no nonsense from young and under-age drinkers for which the **Friendship** has suffered a reputation in the past. She has plans to restore lunch-time meals and attract a clientele of all ages to this historic flagstone-floored gem of a pub, which used to compete with **The Blue Flame** for character.

After much planning by the writer of this article, I was glad that Saturday 19 June dawned with good weather because it was the day of the **Nailsea & District CAMRA Explorer** pub crawl. Unfortunately I had almost as many apologies from people who would have liked to join us as the ten people who did. June is too popular for weddings, holidays and other events, so maybe next time we will choose another season. I met the nominated bus and no-one I recognised got off, so on to **The Courtyard** where three of us enjoyed an excellent pint, although most of us reduced to halves later to ensure we could stay the pace with ten bars visited.

The Mizzymead Social Club was our next port of call for lunch where three others joined us. Walking on to **The Ring of Bells**, then down to the garden of **The Moerend Spout**, and on to **The White Lion**, the group commented what a lovely route it was with many lanes, footpaths and interesting properties to be seen.



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The Clevedon bus was then taken to the recently Cask Marque-accredited **Star at Tickenham** where two new faces joined us by car, just as we were about to join the bus for the return journey to Nailsea and the **Sawyers Arms**. Here we took more refreshment and enjoyed listening to landlord Ron Peters, who is the Chairman of Bristol Licensed Victuallers, tell us about their campaigns for better licensee contracts. For the next two legs John Firth kindly made two car journeys between each pub, firstly to the **The Old Farmhouse** and then over to Backwell and **The George Inn**. Just a short walk across the road took us to our last bar, **Backwell Village Club**, where members made us so welcome with five real ales that CAMRA is to use their skittle alley for some future events and meetings.

The event was declared a success by all present. There were a few "tired" real ales bought, but some were noted to be in excellent condition, particularly at **The White Lion** and **The Sawyers Arms**.



What is a "Guest Beer"?

That is a good question. From the licensed trade viewpoint it is a beer to which a licensee is not tied by a contract or other considerations. Some pubs have permanent "guest beers" on the bar which I believe misses the point of having a guest beer and denies customers choice. "Specials of the day" are the first thing most people look for when eating out, and some look for "guest beers of the day", mostly in vain. The number of breweries has increased four-fold over the last few years with thousands of ales available, but we still find the same old tired line-up of real ale on bars, with some excellent exceptions. Real ales are available in casks, boxes or bottles, so there is no excuse for not offering choice, and denying small local brewers the chance to establish a market, if you are not tied heavily by your contract. It is no wonder young people are driven to alcopops! Ask at you local for a variety of real ale to put some spice into your life!

Venturing away from the Bristol and District CAMRA Branch, just, four of us visited Old Sodbury and Tormarton in the Cotswolds not far from the M4 junction 18, for a family wedding weekend. We stayed at the Cross Hands Hotel at Old Sodbury, booking through the CAMRA deal with the Greene King Brewery-owned

Old English Inns, saving almost £100 on the normal tariff and gaining back our annual CAMRA membership fee in one weekend. The 3-star hotel has 21 bedrooms, a large restaurant, meeting rooms, Greene King real ales and a function room across the car park.

On the Friday evening we drove about a mile to the CAMRA Good Beer Guide-listed **Portcullis Inn** in Tormarton, a quiet Cotswold village, and fell in love with the quaint pub. The reasonably large long bar was busy but the no-smoking oak-panelled "Bistro" restaurant was not, which was surprising as it was neatly laid out with white linen table cloths and ornate cutlery for three courses. There is a function room and two bed and breakfast rooms upstairs with three more stable rooms off the car park. The varying beer range that evening included Bass, Butcombe Bitter, Moles Barley Mole, Otter Bitter, Uley Pigs Ear, and Wadworth 6X.

With only four staff in evidence in this the busy pub, the experienced landlord and his assistant in the bar and two young chefs in the kitchen appeared friendly and confident.

From the chalk board menu we chose chicken Caesar salad, chicken and mushroom pie, 16oz fillet steak, pork slices in a scrumptious lemon and black pepper vinaigrette sauce served with salad, new potatoes, julienne carrots, petit pois and just softened broccoli – just perfect!

On Saturday 31st July Alan Sibley, Tony Morton and three other local CAMRA members visited the **28th Cotswold Beer Festival** at Postlip Hall, near Cheltenham. The venue, some five miles east of Cheltenham in the Cotswolds seems an unlikely choice for a major festival. Public transport options are certainly limited, with only the lunch-time session on the Saturday being accessible by bus in both directions.

Arriving in Cheltenham by train, we followed the pleasant railway

path into the town centre, which starts opposite the station approach and is actually the old GWR route to Birmingham Snow Hill via Stratford upon Avon. From the Royal Well Bus Station we caught the two-hourly service 606 to Winchcombe at 12.00 for the 15-minute journey. From the bus stop it's a thirst-raising 15-minute walk down the pleasant tree-lined drive to Postlip Hall. In the grounds of the Hall lies a splendid stone-and-timber tithe barn and this is where the beer and cider is served from. Drinkers then spread themselves around the ample grounds.

Around 90 beers and 12 ciders were on offer in excellent condition with good representation from local brewers, plus barbecue-style food. Music on Saturday was provided in the barn by a local brass band. Camping is available. Closing time at 15.00 gave us ample time to stagger back down the drive for the 15.35 return bus to Cheltenham. A somewhat brief but memorable drinking session was the verdict.

This is an advance-ticket festival and is over-subscribed, so early application is recommended. If you want to be put on the list of Nailsea & Backwell people to go next year or to similar events, get your name down now – contact me on (01275) 798479 or email laurie@lgibney.freeserve.co.uk .

Laurie Gibney



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READERS' LETTERS

Froth Off



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

Dear Steve,

I have the following for disposal, which are free to the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA if they are of use to them, or to anyone else you know who can provide a safe home for them.

Back issues of What's Brewing from circa 1999 to now.

A collection of (empty) beer bottles from the 1970s and 1980s with labels still attached, mainly from regional breweries.

If there is someone who would like either of these items, could they please contact me on 01454-773699 to arrange collection.

Yours sincerely,
M. Fryer,
Stoke Gifford.

Dear Steve,

I walked into the Cornubia a while ago and the first beer I noticed was Archers Dark Mild, 5.0 per cent ABV.

Five per cent? If that's a mild I'm a Japanese Scotsman.

Happy drinking mate.
Dennis Richards,
Stoke Gifford.

Hope you enjoyed it nevertheless. Mild is actually a style of beer, rather than a strength. While it's indeed true that your typical mild will be lower in alcohol than you average bitter, and darker, it's the lower amount of hoppiness and bitterness that really makes it a mild. Ed.

Dear Steve,

I have a comment in regards to the entry for the Anchor at Oldbury on Severn in the 2004 Good Beer Guide. It wrongly states that the pub does not do lunches on a Saturday. The pub has been doing lunches on a Saturday since I returned to Bristol in 1980. So perhaps an apology in Pints West is in order.

Cheers,
Tim Bowly
(by email)

Yes - sorry - we don't know how that happened. Ed.

Dear Sir,

We as owners of the John Cabot pub were somewhat bemused to find that you know something we do not, when you said in your "secret patios" feature in issue 62 that the John Cabot was about to change its name again.

I can assure you that within the next few days new signage will be erected as

WARNING
From the Management of the
HOPE & ANCHOR
Exceptional Public House
SPILL BEER
DON'T

part of the re-fit displaying the name John Cabot and we have no intentions of changing it.

Best regards,
Gofan Lewis,
Good Time Taverns Ltd.

We'll have to stop listening to pub gossip! Ed.

Hello Steve,

Just to say I enjoy reading the Pints West magazine. There are some good articles about various breweries that have started up again. On passing through the village of Pill the other day, I noticed a building which was up for sale called "The Old Brewery". I think at the moment it is being used as offices. I was wondering if you or your readers know the history of the building, and when was it being used as a brewery.

Roy Fineman
(roy.fineman2@btinternet.com)

Duncan Shine answers:

Is this the Lodway Brewery, founded during the 19th century, and run by Messrs Hall & Sons? The building is in the Lodway locale within Pill. They were acquired by George's either during or immediately before the Great War (1912 or 1917 according to two sources).

Tied houses I can identify that still exist include the Golden Lion at Frampton Cotterell, the Lamplighters at Shirehampton, and the White Horse at Northwick. But there were apparently 39 at the time of the sale.

Hope that helps.



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The taste of Fuller's London Pride

IN issue 61 of Pints West, Vince Murray wrote an article in which he told of a few beers he felt had changed over the years, for better or worse. He stressed that this was a personal viewpoint. This is what he said about Fuller's London Pride:

"Another beer regarded by many as a classic is Fuller's London Pride, the 4.1 per cent flagship brew from Young's big Chiswick-based rivals. This beer always had a wonderful

balance of flavours, with a very distinctive underlying nuttiness. About two years back I started to notice changes to the beer, especially that the nutty flavour had disappeared, and been replaced by a fairly prominent caramel flavour. Caramel is a legitimate beer flavour enjoyed by many, but definitely does not suit my palate. For a while I assumed that a batch of Pride had simply gone a little awry, and that the old flavour would return. That has not

been so, so I have to wonder if the recipe changed, deliberately or otherwise? I would love to know. I have personally stopped choosing this beer, but know many who still enjoy it."

Fuller's response is below. (It is worth mentioning that in the same issue, articles by other contributors had included favourable comments on London Pride.)

Vince Murray responds to John Keeling of Fuller's:


I would like to thank John for taking the time to respond to my article in an earlier edition of Pints West. I had rather hoped secretly, but not really expected, that it might come to Fullers' attention. John's reply is a very gracious one considering that I was not entirely complimentary about my most recent experiences of London Pride.

I fully accept his remarks about the difficulty of maintaining exact flavours in a changing world, and those about each person's taste buds changing as they grow older. However I stand by my claim that a significant change in the end flavour of London Pride took place a couple of years ago. Whilst caramel flavour was indeed always a part of the character, it became much more noticeable – to the point that, for me at least, it was totally dominating other more subtle flavours. This had not been the case previously and the flavour that seemed no longer evident was the lovely subtle "nuttiness" that made the beer stand out and be easily identifiable even in blind tastings.

I do indeed still enjoy other Fuller's offerings and thought that last year's Porter was absolutely superb – what a pity it was available for just a few weeks! I for one would love to see it around for most, if not all, of the winter months.

Following on from John's letter I have endeavoured to revisit London Pride on several occasions recently. I am pleased to say that in recent tastings the caramel flavour seems far less dominant, with the beer tasting crisper and fresher to me. Sadly, however, I still cannot detect much of the old nutty flavour. As John says, though, each person's taste buds and perceptions are different, and I promise to keep checking Pride out. Pints West would be interested to hear other views on this subject. John Keeling would also like to hear opinions, and we can pass feedback on to Fuller's where appropriate.

Vince Murray



FULLER SMITH & TURNER P.L.C.

Mr V Murray
C/o Pints West Editor
Garden Flat
6 Royal York Villas
Clifton
Bristol
BS8 4JR

Dear Mr Murray

I thought that I would just drop you a line regarding your comments on London Pride and whether this beer has changed in any way.

Firstly, I should say that the way we brew, ferment and mature London Pride has changed very little over the period I have worked for Fuller's (23 years and counting!). The only changes we have made have been minor adjustments to the hop grist. However, all beers will change due to the biological nature of beer production. Also, we cannot buy the same malt and hops that we used to 20 years ago!

I don't doubt that your perception of change is true for you although I should point out that as you grow older you too also change and that it could be your taste buds rather than the beer.

Cask beer in particular is influenced by so many factors that any one of these can be the cause of your perceived change. London Pride is now drunk by more people than ever before and for every negative letter or comment, I get hundreds more positive letters and comments.

I will certainly look into your comments regarding caramel flavours and after looking back through several books released over the last twenty years by various beer writers, caramel is a flavour often mentioned.

I hope then even if London Pride is no longer your favourite tittle, you will still try other Fuller's products such as ESB and 1845.

Yours sincerely



John Keeling
Brewing Director

Quality Service and Pride

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Membership matters

NATIONAL membership numbers continue to increase at about five per cent per annum and at the last count stood at around 73,000. Whilst the rate of increase is not quite as high in the Bristol & District branch, there is still a healthy year-on-year increase. There are over 1,100 members in this branch – which covers all of the former county of Avon with the exception of the City of Bath – many of whom are active in some form or another.

Obviously, being a member shows that you care about the quality and variety of the real ales available and the pubs where you can drink them. But did you know of the other benefits that it brings? You will receive a copy of What's Brewing each month that will keep you abreast of the latest campaigns and goings-on in the British real ale scene; you will get reduced cost admission to, or a free beer at, all CAMRA-run beer festivals; and most CAMRA books, including the flagship Good Beer Guide, are available with a member's discount.

The branch cannot operate without active members and all members are welcome to attend branch meetings (I just hope that all 1,100 don't turn up on the same night though!). As you can see from other articles in this and previous issues, we organise at trips each month to visit both current and prospective entrants in the Good Beer Guide, organise a successful Beer Festival and support national CAMRA campaigns.

You may have noticed that we have now included a Direct Debit form that can be used for membership applications. It was first introduced here in the last issue and has proved to be a success, with approximately 50 per cent of the applicants choosing the "DD" way.

By opting for this method of payment, not only can you forget about missing your renewal when it comes around, it is a more efficient way of collecting subscriptions. This helps CAMRA save money on sending out reminders which means more money for campaigning and keeps membership prices down.

Pete Tanner



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Diary

Diary of the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA.

See page 15 for the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch diary and contact.

Wed, 8 Sept - Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia, 8pm.

Mon, 13 Sept - Beer Festival committee meeting at the Cornubia, 8pm.

Tues, 21 Sept - A37 / Wansdyke Explorer. Start at the Cornubia, 6.45pm.

Wed, 29 Sept - Branch meeting, Backwell Village Club, 8pm.

Tues, 5 Oct - Pucklechurch survey trip. Start at the Cornubia, 6.45pm.

Wed, 13 Oct - Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia, 8pm.

Wed, 20 Oct - A370 Explorer. Start at the Cornubia, 6.45pm.

Wed, 27 Oct - Branch Meeting, Holy Cross Social Club, Dean Lane, Southville, 8pm.

Thurs, 28 Oct - Southville Cider Saunter - see page 13.

Tues, 2 Nov - Survey trip. Start at the Cornubia, 6.45pm.

Wed, 10 Nov - Branch committee meeting probably at the Cornubia, 8pm.

Tues, 16 Nov - Survey trip. Start at the Cornubia, 6.45pm.

Wed, 24 Nov - Branch meeting probably at Horts City Tavern, Broad Street, Bristol, 8pm.

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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Views expressed in Pints West are those of the individual authors and not necessarily supported by CAMRA.

Inclusion of an advertisement does not imply endorsement by CAMRA.

Past editions of PINTS WEST on-line

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. It is also the place where you can find past editions of Pints West, from edition 50 onwards. Number 50 also contains a potted history of Pints West from the very first edition in 1989, when it was then known as Avon Drinker.

PINTS WEST ~ brought to you entirely by unpaid volunteers . . .

Seven thousand copies of Pints West are distributed free to pubs in and around the cities of Bristol and Bath ... and beyond.

Letters: please send any correspondence to *Pints West Editor, Steve Plumridge, Garden Flat, 6 Royal York Villas, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4JR*

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Advertising: contact Steve Plumridge (details above) or call – evenings or weekends – (0117) 9743242. Current rates are:

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CAMRA Good Beer Guide: suggestions for future entries, and comments on existing ones, 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).

Trading Standards Officers: contact numbers for problems such as consistent short measures, no price lists...

Bristol: 0117 9223444
S. Glos: 01454 624000
Glos: 01452 426201
N. Somerset: 01934 632026
B.A.N.E.S.: 01225 396755



An invitation to CAMRA members



John Cockwell pulling a guest beer in the upstairs bar

GORDON PAGE has decided to invite CAMRA members into his club. Located in Dean Lane, Southville (just down the hill from the Coronation), the Holy Cross & Southville Social Club will be familiar to many Bristolians as a venue that can be hired on week-ends for parties. Gordon has decided to make more use of the upstairs bar during the week and believes that a range of real ales is the way to do it.

For many years the club has been serving a fine pint of Bass, but now they are planning to add up to three changing guest beers every week, and all at just £1.65 a pint. This will be served in the upstairs bar from Monday to Thursday. Card-carrying CAMRA members will not have to wait the normal 48 hours to register for membership, as they are treated as affiliated club members. They will also get an attractive 10% discount on the price of real ales from Tuesday to Thursday. However this discount doesn't extend to Mondays, as real ale will be available then for the special price of just £1.30 a pint!

The club is completely free of tie and Gordon is interested to know what beers people would like to try. Tell him what you want and he just might be able to order it in for you.

Although the guest beer promotion is primarily aimed at Monday to Thursday in the upstairs bar, there may also be guest beer available in the skittle alley bar on week-ends.

Of course, if you are thinking about hiring a function room for an event and would like somewhere that can put on a variety of real ale, then Gordon could be the person to oblige you.

Richard Brooks

Holy Cross & Southville Social Club

UPSTAIRS BAR

Real Ale Festival every Monday - Thursday

Bass plus 3 changing guest beers all at £1.65 a pint.

Tell us if you want a specific beer – we may be able to order it for you.

Monday Special Offer : All Real Ales only £1.30 a pint

Tuesday : Quiz Night Wednesday : Cheese Board

CAMRA members are treated as affiliated club members and can bring in 3 guests.

10% discount Tuesday - Thursday on Real Ale for card-carrying CAMRA members!

Dean Lane, Southville, Bristol, BS3 1DB, Tel 0117 9631282

(Just down the hill from the Coronation. Some guest beers may also be available in the skittle alley bar on weekends.)