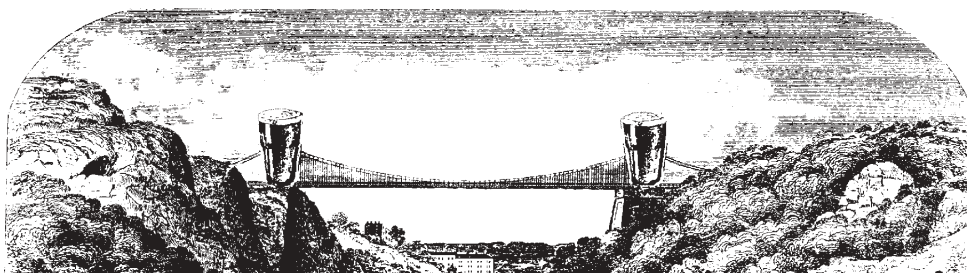




CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

# AWARD-WINNING



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

No. 64  
Winter  
2004/2005

CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

# PINTS WEST

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

## Bristol Beer Festival returns to Temple Meads

**THE EVER-POPULAR** Bristol Beer Festival is all set to make a reappearance at the Brunel Shed at Temple Meads this coming March.

While the original venue, the Council House at College Green, was always very popular, the Brunel Shed offers almost double the capacity, allowing for lots more seating and greater comfort.

The festival will take place on the first Friday and Saturday in March (4th and 5th), with tickets going on sale from early December.



Details of how to get yours can be found on the back page.

And what will we be offering at the festival? A fantastic range of well over a hundred real ales, that's what. And for lovers of all things apple and pear, there will be a great selection of around forty ciders and perries.

Updates regarding the beer festival will appear on the CAMRA branch web site at [www.camrabristol.org.uk](http://www.camrabristol.org.uk) nearer the time so check it regularly if you want to know the latest information.

**See you at the festival!**

# Can you meet the CAMRA Challenge?

## CAMRA wants 100,000 members by the end of 2006

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has set the challenge of reaching 100,000 members by the end of 2006 and is calling on everyone who loves real ale, pubs and breweries to help us achieve this milestone.

How would you feel if all your favourite pubs closed, or your favourite beer disappeared from the bar? You could accept it and find another pub or move on to a different beer or you could do something about it — join CAMRA!

CAMRA is a not-for-profit, volunteer-led organisation and the biggest single-issue consumer group in Britain today actively campaigning to protect local pubs and breweries as well as protecting pub-goers' rights.

So what would 100,000 members mean to CAMRA?

- A more powerful campaigning voice and greater political weight.
- Increased funds to put back into valuable campaigning.
- More activity in pub visits and surveys, producing guides and running beer festivals.
- Greater resources to help save indi-

vidual pubs and breweries under threat.

CAMRA currently has 73,000 members of all ages and interests who, above all, enjoy celebrating their favourite product – real ale. As a member you also receive some great benefits!

### Membership benefits include:

- Monthly newspaper *What's Brewing*, with the latest news on beer and pubs.
- Free or reduced entry to over 140 beer festivals in Britain including the Great British Beer Festival.
- Book discounts – money off our publications, including our best-selling Good Beer Guide.
- Regular local and national social events, brewery tours and city visits.
- Plus you will be supporting CAMRA on issues such as full pints, extended licensing hours in England and Wales and helping to campaign for good quality real ale and pubs.

Every single new member joining CAMRA is a step closer to our aim. So why not join and see what CAMRA is all about?

Joining couldn't be easier. You can use the form inside the back page of this copy of Pints West, paying either by cheque or by direct debit; you can call CAMRA HQ on 01727 867201; or you can join on-line at [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk).

If you join by direct debit you get three months' membership free for the first year. So that's fifteen months' membership for the price of twelve!



### Already a CAMRA member?

Well you too can play a part in the CAMRA challenge. We are asking all of our members to sign up one new member – either a friend, a colleague, or a family member.

### Stuck for a Christmas gift idea?

CAMRA membership is a fantastic gift for anyone who loves beer and pubs. Just call 01727 867201 to find out more or visit our national website at [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk).

## The Victoria

(next to the Clifton Pool)

## Butcombe Bitter Wadworth 6X guest ales planned

2 Southleigh Road, Clifton  
0117 - 9745675

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

# CAMRA announces dates for National Pubs Week 2005

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

**CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has announced that National Pubs Week 2005 will take place between Saturday 19th and Saturday 26th February as a celebration of British pubs.**

National Pubs Week was originally launched in February 2003 to encourage more people to visit pubs more regularly after research had shown that approximately 20 pubs closed every month. 15,000 pubs have participated in the previous two years of the campaign.

Due to this success, CAMRA has now made National Pubs Week a calendar event. Mike Benner, CAMRA's Chief Executive said, "National Pubs Week was an event created to encourage people to

visit pubs more regularly at a time of year when trade can be slow for the industry. We have been delighted with the success of this campaign over the last few years and urge all pubs to start thinking of what events they can run at the end of February to entice more people into British pubs."

#### **Pub Participation**

CAMRA will this year be offering free posters and beer mats for pubs to promote National Pubs Week. These can be ordered on-line by visiting the web site at [www.camra.org.uk/pubswweek](http://www.camra.org.uk/pubswweek) and following the various links, or by calling Samantha Jones on 01727 867201.

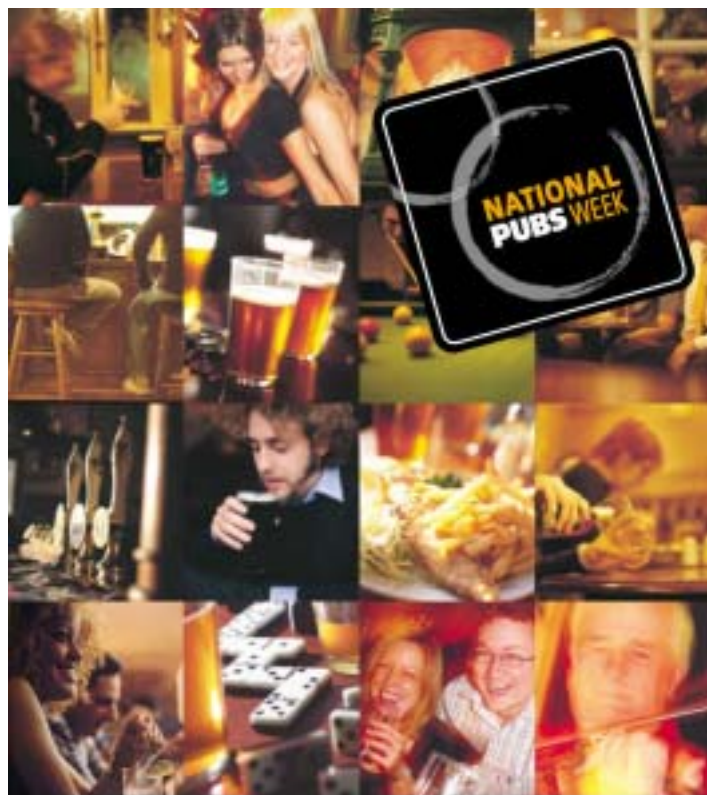
CAMRA's National Pubs Week website is being set up to help the media

and pubs to promote National Pubs Week. This is to include:

- A list of National Pubs Week events and a chance for pubs to advertise their events for free,
- Ideas for pub events,
- National Pubs Week press releases,
- A huge selection of pub crawls to try in National Pubs Week,
- Competitions,
- Press release templates for pubs to use to promote their National Pubs Week events to the media,
- Advice sheets for pubs.

Mike Benner said, "We will be producing the promotional material in the very near future and I would urge all publicans, whether they serve real ale or not, to get their orders in as soon as possible so that CAMRA can get the packs out in time for them to build up local interest in National Pubs Week."

Benner concluded, "In today's competitive leisure industry, it is important that pubs become more marketing focused to attract and keep custom. They do not have to organise really imaginative events – pub quizzes, food promotions, themed nights, pub crawls with other pubs can all work if that is what their locals want."



**There's a pub for everyone**

**19th - 26th February 2005**

[www.camra.org.uk/pubswweek](http://www.camra.org.uk/pubswweek)

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Email : [pub@bagonails.org.uk](mailto:pub@bagonails.org.uk)



# READERS' LETTERS



## The Lawns, Yate

Dear Steve,

There are plans to close and demolish the Lawns pub, Church Road, Yate and turn the site into elderly people's accommodation. As a resident of Yate and a member of CAMRA, I feel my voice should be heard on the matter.

The demise of the Swan public house in the shopping centre car park has highlighted the need to protect the few pubs left in Yate. Nearby, Sodbury high street has plenty of bright, lively plastic pubs that appeal to the area's youth, but the choice for the discerning drinker will soon be reduced to a few beers in front of the T.V.

The Lawns is in the centre of Yate, which is forever increasing in population and therefore the need and market for quality pubs is increasing also.

We all owe it to ourselves to save our pubs and preserve our heritage.

Yours sincerely,  
Richard Lobb,  
Yate.

See pages 14 and 15 for more readers' letters.

## The Regent in Clevedon

IT has just been brought to our attention that controversial plans for 17 flats at the Regent on Hill Road in Clevedon have recently been submitted to the North Somerset Council for approval.

The brewery that owns the pub, Hall and Woodhouse, apparently wants to extend the rear and upper floor of the Regent to provide space for the flats, and to create three new ground-floor retail units fronting onto Hill Road.

The application also seeks permission to change the use of the Regent from public house and restaurant to retail space, although the brewery may decide to keep the bar and restaurant.

We don't know if there will have been any outcome by the time you read this, but we can say that around 1,500 signatures have been collected for a petition that tenant landlord Tony Antoni has organised to prove to the brewery how popular the pub is in Clevedon.

We hope the brewery will take note!

SP

## Wickwar opens new brewery at the old brewery

AS reported previously in Pints West, Gloucestershire's Wickwar Brewing Company has been building up to relocating their brewery – to a larger site all of a stone's throw away across the road.

By the time you read this, the new brewery, with its greater brewing capacity, should be up and running and all set to be producing beer in time for Christmas.

The new location is actually a former brewery building itself, once home to Arnold Perrett & Company up until 1924 when it closed and subsequently became a cider factory. That too closed some 52 years later and the building has remained empty ever since – until now, that is.

The venture has taken some time, but Wickwar founder and managing director, Ray Penny, says, "It has really been worth the two and half years it has taken to realise this dream. It's a wonderful building and I'm still awed as I gaze at the incredible, vast stone walls that surround the shiny new vessels glistening in the light that penetrates from the huge brewery windows."

As production takes over at the new brewery, the old site will not be lost. Plans are in the making for it to become an outlet for Wickwar's products – maybe a shop, maybe a bar. But more on that in a future edition of Pints West.

SP

## Smiles goes Blond

A NEW beer has recently been added to the Smiles range, going by the name of Bristol Blond.

Smiles have said of the beer: "It is a light refreshing ale, which gives a clean bitterness and deliciously hoppy aroma. Our team of brewers, Chris, Alex and Pete, spent a great amount of time perfecting the taste and improving the quality of the brew to create a delightful core brand."

The Lord Mayor helped launch the Blond in October, and there have been good reactions to it where it has featured, including such far and wide places as the Unicorn in Somerset, the Ring O'Bells in Coalpit Heath, the Fox in Easter Compton,

the Alma Tavern in Clifton, the White Hart in Weston-in-Gordano, and the Tavern in the Town in Cheltenham.

### Beer at home this Christmas

Smiles will be selling boxes of beer to take home this Christmas. 36-pint and 18-pint boxes can be purchased from the Brewery Tap in Colston Street, from the Cornubia, or at their depot in Portbury Docks. Bristol Best bitter will be priced at £36 for the 36-pint box for a limited period only. Plus there will be a £1 discount to all CAMRA members – just show your membership card at the time of sale to qualify.

## Courage by another name?

THE Saint Petersburg-based "Baltika" Company was due to open its first pub in the UK in Glasgow at the end of September 2004, according to an announcement made on September 9 by its press service, REGNUMIA.

In 2003 Baltika sold 8,790 decalitres of beer to the UK, or 72 per cent of the total Russian beer imports to this country. Their premium bottled beer Baltika No. 3 Classic sells for £3.50 for a 0.5 litre bottle. Watch out for their No. 4 Original Dark though – according to the Bravo Solutions website, "Baltika Original Dark beer has a harmonical bread flavour of a caramel mould. This beer is brewed for you."

According to the Russian Beer Union, the corporate refrigerators of the Baltika

Company were installed in London and Edinburgh pubs from April 2004; so watch out for them in the Magic Box on Stokes Croft.

Baltika Brewery Co., founded in 1990, is the biggest beer producer in Russia. It is jointly owned by Carlsberg and Scottish & Newcastle (owners of the Courage brands). Late in 2003, S&N announced that they were selling all their UK pubs to the Spirit Amber Bidco group, then leasing them back; now a company half owned by them is opening pubs in the UK.

You couldn't make it up.

Norman Spalding



# Freshers' Fair 2004



THE Bristol & District branch decided once again to invest in taking the CAMRA message to the new intake of students at the UWE (University of the West of England). This consisted of running a stall at the Freshers' Fair and competing with all the other organisations who seek their custom and membership. And their p.a. systems!

This was a pretty hard slog for the two volunteers that ran the stall, and the students managed to get through 22 gallons of "free tasters" in a couple of hours. Some signed up as CAMRA members and many more took away CAMRA literature as well as promotional items from Smiles and Bath Ales, who both kindly supported this event.

Lots of students who are new to Bristol are now aware of the activities of the local branch and know that there are some good local ales to look out for.

Here are a few pictures of the fun and games on the day...



*Richard Brooks*





# A tale of two cities

## History, characterful real ale pubs, specialist shops and their 'own' breweries

Linked by the cross-country Virgin Trains route, the cities of Bath and York have more than a little in common, as I found when I travelled to the latter for work recently. If you're at a loose end for a long weekend, you could do worse than take in both — or spend consecutive weekends comparing and contrasting!

### York pubs

The **Maltings** is a short walk from York railway station, so you should still have energy to be overwhelmed by the cornucopia that awaits inside. The bar is a forest of handpumps and a font set offering draught Belgian and German beers. The chalkboard above announces a dozen or so country wines, a perry and three real ciders. The wine list isn't bad either. On our visit, we began to think that this might be rather a lengthy lunch break!

We took our first two halves (the 'permanent' Black Sheep bitter and Rooster's Drunken Duck, one of six or seven guests) to one of the many wooden tables dotted around and sat back to enjoy the beer and the view. On our visit, the beer list also included Dark Tribe's Bucket Hitch; Goose Eye Goose Lightning; City of Cambridge IPA; Scattor Rock Autumn Nights; and a Wheat Porter (brewery not noted). Foreign beers included Leffe Blonde and Liefmans Kriek, with several more bottled Belgian beers behind the bar. The floor features terracotta tiling and the walls and ceilings appear to have been panelled with old doors and wainscots, topped off with many old metal advertising signs and random framed prints and photos. The beers were all on good form and there's a selection of hearty pub grub on the menu. Sadly, with tables fairly close together, we couldn't stand the enveloping smoke fug as the place filled up, and had to take our leave.

Just opposite the city walls and in sight (just) of the Minster, The Maltings is a good start and end point to a tour of historic York. York CAMRA's web site offers mini-guides with maps to the city centre and surrounding areas: The Maltings isn't the only real ale treasure to find, but its range and character could be hard to beat.



Cheery service from Joe O'Reilly in the tap room of the York Brewery

### Bath pubs

Bath, of course, boasts many real ale treasures too. The renowned and unspoiled **Star** in the Paragon, with its many panelled rooms and Abbey Ales' beers, and Bass from the jug, is a good example. It is a bit of a walk from the station, but as it takes in a lot of the city's Georgian architecture (not to mention the Abbey) en route, it's a worthy end-of-tourist-trail destination.

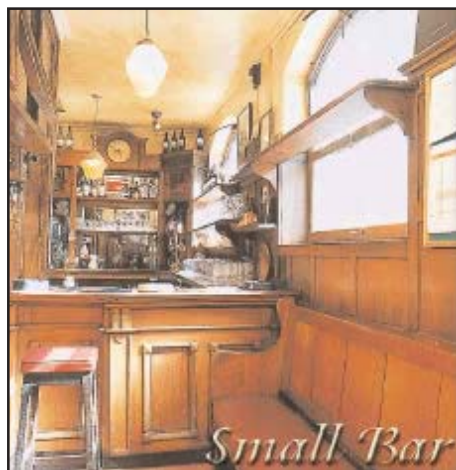
York's historic shopping lane, the Shambles, didn't obviously feature any real ale pubs. However, if Bath's specialist shops in 'the lanes' tempt you or your

loved ones, then there are plenty of pubs nearby to help you mull over your purchases, including the tiny **Coeur de Lion**, the bijou **Volunteer Rifleman's Arms**, and the famous **Old Green Tree**. The latter, like the Star, retains separate drinking rooms, features lots of wood and a range of real ales. There is usually a real cider available too. It also has a no-smoking area.

### City breweries

Looking for a smoke-free zone after the Maltings, we found signs advertising tours of **York Brewery** and, of course, followed them! The brewery is tucked away off Micklegate, and is the only brewery within York's walls. Established eight years ago, this is now a 20 barrel a day capacity plant, with four brews a week. Four beers are brewed all year round: Terrier 4.2% ABV (Champion Beer of Britain bronze 2000); Centurion's Ghost 5.4%; Stonewall 3.7% session bitter; and York Bitter 4.0%. Around nine seasonals, including a number of dark beers, are also in the portfolio.

Joe O'Reilly, our tour guide, made the most of the tour. They were in mid-brew, so we could watch Assistant Brewer Tariq Khan check the mash and see the yeast bubbling on top of one of the fermenting vessels from an earlier brew.



One of the many cosy areas in the Star



A quiet moment at the Maltings

York Brewery currently has three pubs in the city (the **Last Drop Inn**, the **Three-legged Mare** and the **Rook & Gaskill Inn**). With four tours a day, the brewery bar or tap room is a comfortable start and end place to try a couple of halves, with a small brewery shop to one side selling memorabilia and bottled beers (also available in Tesco). Both the Terrier and the Stonewall were good, and the Black Bess Stout (4.2%) came on just as we were leaving: a brief taste was sufficient to know we were going at the right time: very moreish! Their Christmas beer, Stocking Filler, 4.8% and "a dark rich full bodied ale, a distinctive finish of roast malt and chocolate with a hint of spice", is currently in production.

Bath also has its own breweries established in the last ten years, with **Bath Ales** bearing the name and **Abbey Ales**, like York Brewery, bringing brewing right back within the city limits. Bath Ales are helping to swell the number of characterful real ale pubs, with four in Bristol and two in Bath: the **Hop Pole** on the outskirts (with the added attraction of garden and restaurant) and the **Salamander**, right in the centre. Abbey Ales' home in Bath is the **Star**, but Abbey's beers appear on bars throughout the city and in Bristol too. Abbey brews Bell-ringer all year round (a lovely, golden 4.2% ABV best bitter) with five or six seasonals or specials, including Steeple-jack, recently launched at the Bath beer festival. Bath Ales brews a small number of occasional beers and has three year-round brews: Barnstormer (a ruby-coloured 4.5%), Gem (4.1% bitter) and, my favourite, the light and refreshing SPA (3.7%).

Like York Brewery, both Bath and Abbey treat their merchandising with as much care as their carefully crafted beers. Their web sites offer online stores (York is mail order) and much greater detail about their beers.

### More information

#### York Brewery:

[www.yorkbrew.demon.co.uk](http://www.yorkbrew.demon.co.uk)

#### Abbey Ales:

[www.abbeyales.co.uk](http://www.abbeyales.co.uk)

#### Bath Ales:

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

#### York CAMRA:

[www.yorkcamra.free-online.co.uk/york\\_camra.html](http://www.yorkcamra.free-online.co.uk/york_camra.html)

*Lesly Huxley*

*(Photos by Bob Thackwray)*



## Buckley back in business

WELSH brewing entrepreneur Simon Buckley, a member of Wales's oldest brewing family, is back in business. The first ales produced by his new West Wales brewery were launched in September 2004.

The **Evan-Evans Brewery** in Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire aims to produce one million pints of ale a year and create up to 40 jobs. Simon Buckley plans a visitor centre and pub for the two-acre site next year.

Evan-Evans started brewing trials in July and the first three beers to go on sale are Best Bitter, Cwrw and SBA. The cask conditioned beer – Cwrw go iawn Cymru – is named after the fifteenth century warrior-poet Lewis Glyn Cothi who lived at nearby Brechfa. One of the first recorded mentions of the term Cwrw – Welsh for beer or ale – was in his work. This renowned poet and philosopher praised the hops of Herefordshire, then part of Wales, which are now used to brew Evan-Evans.

Mr. Buckley said, "Cwrw is an everyday part of the Welsh language and we hope that the beer lovers of Wales will at last have a brand they can identify as a generic Welsh brand of beer from west Wales." He said the brewery would create ten new jobs in the first six months and a further 30 when the visitor centre and pub open next year. The new brewing plant had to be shipped from Canada, where manufacturers specialise in supplying smaller breweries, according to the BBC. The plant was purpose-built in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Mr. Buckley's family started brewing in Llanelli in 1767. The brewery is named after his ancestor William Evan-Evans, a west Wales brewer who married into the Buckley family in the mid 1800's. The company was due to hold a brewery open day in October 2004, when members of the public would be able to look around the new brewery and taste the new beers free of charge.

*Norman Spalding*

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**Homemade Food**  
**Sunday Lunches**  
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**Open Mon-Sat 11-3 / 6-11**  
**All day Sunday**



# Sermon from the Abbey

**“Steeplejack, an occasional guest beer from Bath’s only micro-brewery, Abbey Ales, has sold out before it has even gone on sale!”**

These were the words of Alan Morgan, founder and managing director of Abbey Ales, back in October as their latest (at the time) occasional beer was about to be released to the pubs.

It is a familiar story, as everything this brewery produces always sells extremely well, their quality earning the brewery and its products a tremendously loyal local following.

Steeplejack, a 4.7 per cent ABV tawny-coloured ale brewed with Maris Otter malt and Northdown hops, was produced to coincide with the occasion of the CAMRA Bath Beer Festival held, as in every year, at the Bath Pavillion. It also, incidentally, commemorated the company’s seventh birthday. As a result of all the advance order for the beer, Alan was moved to say: “We thought we had it covered as all of our occasional beers prove popular and are always pre-ordered. However, this time many landlords quickly put in repeat orders and we decided, although it meant working over the weekend, that it would be foolish not to brew another batch.”

Alan says that Abbey Ales has always wanted to brew a regular range of different beers to compliment the best-selling Bellringer,

but the need to meet the demand for the flagship ale takes up nearly all of its production. Head brewer Martin Langham has to fit in brewing occasional beers when he can.

Abbey Ales’ beers are generally only sold locally in pubs in the Bath area – including the Star Inn, the Green Tree, the Bell Inn, Lambretta’s Bar and the Volunteer Rifleman’s Arms – and within a radius of about 20 miles of Bath. Fortunately Bristol falls within this area, and places where either Bellringer or the occasional beers can often be found include the Bell in Kingsdown, The Watershed, the Holy Cross & Southville Social Club (open to CAMRA members and guests), The Bag O’Nails, and the Hope & Anchor – and Humber’s Off Licence too. So it looks like Bristol landlords are definitely supporting Abbey Ales.

SP

Abbey Ale’s booklet, *The Bath Bellringer Crawl*, mentioned in Pints West a few issues back, has been so popular with drinkers and visitors to Bath that a reprint has proved necessary. It is available from most of the Bath pubs which it features, as well as the tourist office, or direct from Abbey Ales if you send a 21p stamped, addressed, A5 envelope to the brewery at Camden Row, Bath BA1 5LB.

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

According to Alan Morgan, however, his brewing team at Abbey Ales are feeling that Christmas has already arrived, with the brewery already taking advance orders for 36-pint and 18-pint Christmas party boxes of Bellringer. Head brewer Martin Langham has also already taken delivery of the special malt and hops and is gearing up to brewing the barrels of Christmas cheer in the shape of Twelfth Night, the brewery’s annual Christmas ale. Twelfth Night is a dark bitter brewed to a winter-warming strength of 5.0 per cent.

Alan described Twelfth Night as: “An ideal winter warmer, perfect for supping whilst sitting around a real log fire in your local, merrily eating hot chestnuts! We have even been told that it makes any pub’s own carol singers sound, if not particularly good, then reasonably acceptable!” I’m sure that, while the log fire and chestnuts sound very enticing, the beer will go down just as well whatever the surroundings.

Until Twelfth Night hits the pubs, the special occasional offering from Abbey Ales is once again Black Friar. At 5.3 per cent ABV, this is a dark, malty porter which is also proving very popular.

SP



## 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**

## Supporting the country’s national drink

BATH politicians have responded to a call from the Society of Independent Brewers by publicly showing their support for the city’s brewery.

At the Great British Beer Festival earlier this year, John Grogan MP, chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Beer Group, called on the country’s mayors, councillors and MPs to support the country’s national drink. He said they should give beer the same support as people across the water in France give their wines.

Recently, Bath MP Don Foster and mayor Cllr Roger Symonds responded to the call by popping in for a pint at Abbey Ales’ pub, the Star Inn on the Paragon. “I have been supporting Abbey Ales for a long time and so I am more than happy to highlight their importance here in Bath,” Mr Foster said. “In the past, I have taken a cask of the brewery’s Bellringer to the Houses of Parliament to go on sale.”

Abbey Ales managing director, Alan Morgan, said Don and Rogers visit was designed to highlight the role of small breweries to local economies. “There is a vast selection of beer being produced by the UK’s micro-breweries,” he said. “Small local brewers and cask-conditioned ales are an important sector of the overall British beer industry. We pride ourselves on being Bath’s own brewery and maintaining the tradition of local brewing using only the finest local ingredients.”

Paul Waters, manager of the Star Inn, added: “The vast range of different flavours gives beer drinkers an incredible choice and we hope that many will help toast local craft brewers, preferably at the Star with a pint of Bellringer, but wherever they are, with some locally-produced, top-quality cask ale.”

## Extra discount from Abbey Ales

Mention “Pints West” when ordering a Bellringer beer box from Abbey Ales and you will get an extra discount of £5 per 36-pint box for all orders collected from the brewery or from the Star Inn. 18-pint boxes are also available.



# Volunteer in Bath

HAVING found some time to sit and read *What's Brewing* (CAMRA's national newspaper) recently it was a pleasure and surprise to find an article about the pubs of Bath, especially personal favourites in the centre. Hopefully, there will be another sometime examining equally worthy establishments on the outskirts.

However, there was only room in the article to mention a small number of pubs and, for me, there is one other that stands out as an establishment worthy of feature. This is the **Volunteer Rifleman's Arms**, with an address in New Bond Street but which is actually tucked away in the narrow passage between New Bond Street and Upper Borough Walls.

The pub has admittedly changed hands in recent years but is now under the sympathetic control of Paul Alvis who took over during 2004. With his arrival there has been a certain amount of refurbishment which in my view has not adversely affected the appearance or atmosphere of the establishment. The pub is tiny, competing with two other well known establishments for the title of smallest in Bath, but now has some café-style seating upstairs for the consumption of victuals.

Paul's boast is that he is open seven days a week and all year round for food, and I have yet to find any error in this assertion. The fare is modelled around traditional English food though on one visit I did have a curry.

But what of beer? The Volunteer has four hand pumps each equipped with a swan neck (though happily no sparklers). When asked about the policy for stocking ales, I was told that one standard was always available. This is currently Abbey Ales Bellringer from the pub's closest brewery. The other three pumps are reserved for guest beers, usually sourced from local breweries. At the last visit the three guests were Exmoor Gold, RCH Pitchfork and Abbey Ales Steeplejack. I have noticed on previous visits that the Volunteer will usually get involved with Abbey Ales experiments and seasonal specials. I particularly recall trying the Abbey Ales Mild there a few months ago.

But it doesn't just stop there; the Volunteer also tries to come up with novel ideas. For instance, during the Battle of Britain celebrations the Volunteer investigated and sourced Lancaster Bomber from Thwaites and Spitfire from Shepherd Neame.

So, on your next visit to Bath, give the Volunteer a try and make sure that you talk to Paul about any other ideas for beer lists or preferences that you have. I'm sure that he will always be receptive.

*Phill the Pint (Phill Butler)*



Abbey Ales presents...

**Beer in a box!**

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

Order Online at **www.AbbeyAles.co.uk**

**Just £55** or collect direct from the brewery

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**01225 444437**

Delivered to straight your door, anywhere in England and Wales

## Organics at the Hobgoblin

POPPING into the Hobgoblin in Bath for the first time in ages, I found that this old haunt had changed hands very recently.

The man at the helm is now John Whinnerah who took over on 1<sup>st</sup> October this year. His policy is to stock brews particularly from microbreweries, but there will always be one from Wychwood. On the bar were Carlow O'Hara's Stout and Keltz wheat ale plus Evan Evans Best Bitter, Bath Gem and Wychwood Hobgoblin.

When chatting, John told me about his experience recently when stocking an organic beer. He said that it disappeared so quickly that he is planning a mini-festival of organic ales between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of December. One for the diary, I suggest.

*Phill the Pint*

# Pub news

**Bar Essential** in Charlotte Street has been sold by Brain's and, after a major refurbishment, has now reopened as **Zee Bar And Grill**. We wish the venture well, although we hope they will add at least one real ale in the coming months.

Just around the corner in King Street, the former warehouse known to successive generations as the **Steam Rock** has now reopened as **Brownstone**. This bar is aimed at combining New York Chic with Bristol Cool. Again, no real ales on offer, but hopefully that will change one day.

Across the road, the pub formerly known as **Dr Thirsty's Surgery**, **Mulligan's Whiskey Emporium** and **Indigoes** has now reopened under its original (we think) name of the **Bunch of Grapes**. Pie and sausage feature prominently on the menu, as does a decent pint of Old Speckled Hen.

The **Gloucester Arms** opposite Horfield Leisure centre is currently closed for a major refurbishment, and promising a completely new look when it opens. We don't yet know what real ales will be served, although it was Courage Best before they closed.

The newly opened **Pipe And Slippers** in Stokes Croft (formerly the **Berkeley Castle**) is selling Shepherd Neame Spitfire as well as the seasonal beer from Smiles (it was Wurz Ale Gone when I visited). They also have Thatcher's Traditional Cider on draught.

Running until 28<sup>th</sup> November was the Ember Inns British Ale Festival. This followed on from the successful 'Lagers of the World' festival some months back. Each participating pub featuring a wide range of ales from all across the country, from independents as well as the big boys. The Lager festival was extended, so you may catch the tail end of this one. Ember Inns in the Bristol area include the **White Lion** in Westbury-on-Trym, the **Sandringham** in Bromley Heath and the **Three Brooks** in Bradley Stoke.

As we went to press, the **Quadrant** in Clifton had closed to undergo its planned refurbishment. As it promises to be a free house with an emphasis on real ale, we are very keen to try this one out. All being well, there'll be a report in the next Pints West.

**Koda**, the bar overlooking the river from Recliffe Street, has now changed its name and is **Toto Rothchild**, described as a

high-class champagne bar (as opposed to Low-Class Champagne Bars?).

The **Soda Bar** in Frogmore Street has had a complete refurb, and has reopened as simple **Soda**. No real ales, sadly.


**Racks** in Clifton has decided to get rid of long-time resident ale Fuller's London Pride, and is now selling Young's Bitter alongside Bath Gem.

The **Robin Hood's Retreat** is now open (Tuesday to Saturday evenings only), selling 6X and Speckled Hen, and due for a refurbishment in the New Year.

Still closed with no signs of opening are: the **Prince of Thieves** on Park Row, lease available from Pub Estates; the **Masons Arms** in Old Market, freehold available; the **Sedan Chair** in the Centre (possible change of use here); and the old **Forgeman's Arms** in Barton Hill, which is for sale with planning permission for conversion.

*Duncan Shine*

*If you're a landlord/lady or regular with some news about your pub, feel free to email duncan.shine@britishpubguide.com or steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk (we'll share the info) and maybe we'll consider including it in the next Pints West.*



## 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](http://www.bathales.co.uk)

**Enjoy a Warm Welcome  
and a Pleasant Atmosphere**

## The Annexe Inn

Seymour Road, Bishopston, Bristol  
Tel. 0117 9493931

### A Real Ale Pub

- 7 Real Ales
- Large conservatory (available for private hire)
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- Enclosed garden open throughout the year
- Disabled access
- Lunchtime and early evening snacks - including children's menu -
- Pool table
- All TV sports events covered
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**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



# Bristol's brewing heritage

## The preview

### Steeped in the Past: Bristol's Brewing Heritage

14th of September, 2004

"Following his success during Archive Awareness Month in September 2003, Mike Bone, Chair of the Association for Industrial Archaeology, will develop the brewing theme, looking at the industries surrounding and vital to the brewing industry in Bristol. The evening will be presented in partnership with the Wickwar Brewing Company and the Beaufort Arms, Hawkesbury Upton. Mark Steeds, landlord at the Beaufort Arms, is a keen industrial historian and frequent user of Bristol record Office. He is planning to create a pub atmosphere for the talk, promising beer and snacks!"

## Mark Steed's report

ON the evening of Tuesday 14 September, Ray Penny (of Wickwar Brewery fame) and myself were behind schedule, heading for Bristol's splendid Record Office. We were stuck on the M5, trying to skirt around Bristol's horrendous rush-hour traffic. We were left with just 50 minutes to set up the beer and food for an evening of brewery history.

The star of the show was Mike Bone, whose knowledge of the subject, especially in the West Country, is second to none. His talk was entitled "Steeped in the Past: Bristol's Brewing Heritage". It was a new talk for Mike and slightly overran, but it was fascinating none the less.

He split the talk up into four "topics" as it were, and applied brewing history to its locale. It proved once again that Bristol and its surrounding area played a full part in this history and that it was in the forefront of all sorts of developments, including unfortunately the most recent "re-modelling" of the industry.

The talk featured archive footage of George's Bristol Brewery, alongside Mike's phenomenal collection of slides. This diverse collection encompassed the last horse-drawn dray delivery in Bristol, some lost gems of Bristol pub architecture (and the need to be diligent when areas are being redeveloped), to the picture of a dodgy looking pub landlord (yours truly) studying what's left of George's Brewery and, according to Mike, still wanted by the police.

Highlights for me were Mike's current campaigning to save an old Bristol United maltings, and his very pertinent pictures of both Llewellyn & James, and Adnams, prominent brewery engineers in their day, and currently only remembered in Mr. Bone's slide archive.

It is evident from his talk that Mike looks into some pretty obscure places to obtain his



"B" Bond Warehouse, home of the Bristol Record Office

facts and figures. His interpretation of them is even more revealing: who would have known that late 19th century Bristol had more floor space given over to malt and its production than anything else – a city of a thousand trades?

To finish the talk, Mike held forth on his theory that mergers, acquisitions and floatations in the monetary world had their roots in the brewing industry (the dot-com stocks of their day) and who is to argue?

It was a difficult talk to follow, but muggins was given the task of doing just that, and in front of the three dozen people there spouted forth on how Mike had inspired me and several others to use the fantastic resources of the Record Office to help follow their own research.

Having already sampled some of Wickwar's delightful beer, I was forced to keep my little speech brief – much to the relief of the audience – focusing on my own research which has shown that the George's site had been brewing commercially right back to 1567, older even than Young's, when it was shut down in 1999.

Ray Penny followed me and talked briefly about his trials and tribulations in trying to move a brewery back into a brewery and referring to Mike's speech, reflecting upon the similarity of the brewing process now as compared to the past.

With thanks to Richard Burley and John Williams of the Bristol Record Office for arranging the talk as part of the National Archive Awareness Campaign, the assembled party then tucked in to Wickwar's excellent Coopers WPA (3.5 per cent ABV) and exciting new IKB (4.5 per cent). This was accompanied by "Bread & Cheese" from the pub (gastropub we are not) and a good old chat.

To add to the occasion the Record Office display cabinets had been turned over to breweriana particular to the West Country. Featuring works from Pountney, Price & Powell, three great Bristol factories who had a prolific output, they completed the scene.

Jeff Sechiari from the Brewery History Society tried to attend (complete with his tape recorder) but unfortunately fate intervened and he had to rescue his wife from a breakdown on the M25, so we're left with just this report. However, I hope it encourages Society members to get involved with their own Record Offices, enabling everyone to be "Archive Aware".

Many thanks once again to Ray and Mike for making it such a great night.

*Mark Steeds*

## The context

Local and national archives, large and small, public and private, opened their doors this Autumn to hold a host of special events celebrating and promoting the wealth of archival treasures.

Archive Awareness Campaign 2004 is an ongoing campaign and promotion of celebratory events across the UK and Republic of Ireland.

The campaign's aim is to show everyone that they can find something that's relevant to their history in archives, hoping to break the stereotype that archives hold boring, dusty papers... and that archivists are dusty, old people in cardigans!

Archive Awareness Month is coordinated by The National Council on Archives with support from The National Archives and MLA.

Check out the Archive Awareness Campaign web site at [www.archiveawareness.com](http://www.archiveawareness.com).

# Boddies closure

**THE world's biggest brewing company by volume, InBev, has announced plans to close the historic Boddingtons brewery in February 2005.**

InBev, which was formed in 2004 by a merger between Interbrew of Belgium and Brazil's biggest brewer, AmBev, plans to move production of the Boddingtons brands elsewhere, with the loss of 55 jobs.

A spokesman for InBev said the Boddingtons brewery, at Strangeways in Manchester, is "an inflexible, old cask ale brewery. The tide is that cask ale is declining, and we can't fight that."

But the Transport and General Workers' Union (T&G) argues that the brewery contributed £16.5 million to InBev's profits last year and sales are still growing. It accused InBev of "cynical corporate greed".

InBev admits Boddingtons ale is still profitable, although not as profitable as its other brands. The Manchester site is incapable of putting the ale in cans or kegs, and money is wasted transporting 90 per cent of it off site for canning, it says. Manchester City Council has been vociferous against the closure proposal; a spokesman said, "Boddingtons has helped promote Manchester around the world. If InBev think they can sell off the land to property developers, that's not going to happen." InBev said it was nowhere near deciding what to do with the site.

Actor Bruce Jones, better known as Coronation Street's Les Battersby, lent his voice to the campaign, saying at a press conference at the town hall: "I'm here to support Boddington's Brewery. Everyone in Manchester was weaned on Boddies beer. Every man in Manchester, when you left school and started drinking, you were taken out for a pint of Boddies. They are going to take one of the most famous breweries away from us."

T&G regional organiser Franny Joyce said: "There's no disguising the anger and sense of betrayal at the brewery. It is the work force who have developed this brand and the success of this brewery and they now face their jobs being taken away while the owners cry crocodile tears."

Andrew Dodgshon, a spokesman for the T&G said that Interbrew now faced a consumer backlash if it pressed ahead with its plans. He said: "We have had a lot of feedback from people angry about this decision, and our save Boddingtons website has had more than 100,000 hits. Many people are saying that if they close Strangeways then they are going to stop drinking Stella Artois. So this decision will be bad for Boddingtons and Interbrew's other brands as well."

Mr Dodgshon also said, "Since the last threat of closure in 2002, the Boddingtons brand has grown by four per cent, contributing to £16.5 million profits."

T&G organiser Franny Joyce said, "Interbrew has shown little regard for the

history and heritage of many of the local beer brands it has acquired, transferring them from pillar to post and often eventually axing them."

That is one of CAMRA's greatest fears: so many well loved brews have been lost through unsuccessful attempts to match their taste at a different brewery, leading to falling sales which then become a reason for discontinuing the beer – which has usually had little or no promotion since being moved.

Brewing corporations have been shelving and selling off small traditional breweries for decades to focus on internationally branded lagers like Fosters, Carlsberg and Stella Artois. However, many drinkers want to support local people and tastes, not corporations.

And what is the relevance of all this to beer drinkers in the Bristol area?

Well, Interbrew took over the former Whitbread breweries in 2000, when its slogan was "The world's local brewer". This has now been dropped in favour of "a true global brewer... ranked no. 1 or 2 in over 20 key beer markets around the world." In other words, Britain's unique beer heritage has become the plaything of people whose ambition is to be a global corporation with global brands. If anyone prefers locally produced food and drink with diverse and often distinctive tastes, this kind of company will have less and less to

offer them as time goes on.

In recent years, Boddingtons Bitter has been heavily promoted as a national brand, and real ale drinkers generally regard it as a pale shadow of the beer that won widespread recognition in the 1970s. The quadrupling of brewing capacity at Strangeways in 1978, to meet demand which came solely from the northwest, seems like ancient history now. But it is still a brand with a strong local following in its home territory, and given the right treatment the brewery could once again produce a range of beers to be proud of (including milds and strong ales like those that were part of its portfolio until not many years ago).

CAMRA has always been about choice. A few years ago, its main concern was to preserve and promote beer whose appeal was local or regional, against opposition from national companies who wanted to replace it with heavily advertised, bland tasting and nationally distributed drinks. Now even those brews seem preferable to what the latest owners of Britain's biggest breweries want us to buy, namely even more heavily advertised and bland tasting internationally distributed drinks. The best way to resist these trends is to refuse the insipid products offered by these national and international companies, and seek out and insist on locally produced and distinctive brews at every opportunity.

Oh, and join CAMRA and help to spread the word.

*Norman Spalding*

## End of a Somerset institution?

SOME worrying news has reached Pints West. **The Coopers Arms** next to Highbridge station in Somerset has been sold, apparently to a branch of the giant Scottish and Newcastle Corporation.

Although not actually in the area covered by Bristol and District CAMRA, it is well known and loved by many Bristol and Weston members, probably most of all me. That is because I originate from Highbridge and it served as my local for many years, before I moved to Bristol.

My visits have become more infrequent, but it always seemed that nothing ever changed about the place. I well remember the landlord, John Hayes, taking over the reins from his father, the late John senior, some time around 25 years ago. At the time the Coopers was offering about three or four real ales, including the best pint of Eldridge Pope Royal Oak that I have known. Guest beers appeared too, which was a rare thing indeed at the time.

Over the years the range expanded to about three or four regular beers and four guest beers. The pub always seemed to offer a particularly good selection of stronger guest beers, rarely seen elsewhere in the area – Hopback Summer Lightning, Ringwood Old Thumper, Cotleigh Rednose Reinbeer to name a few. Beer quality has always been absolutely top notch, despite John's bizarre preference for drinking Heineken himself! One

of my lasting memories is of John removing a pint of beer from my table and insisting on replacing it "because it is hazy and we don't serve hazy beer here", despite my protests that it was fine.

The pub itself has always been a very convivial and welcoming place – consisting of three separate drinking areas with lots of quiet corners to sit and chat in. Unusually the skittle alley is inside adjacent to the bar and is frequently in use, with John himself amongst the participants. The bar staff seem to change very infrequently over the years – another sign of a good pub.

Despite John being well qualified in French cuisine, he never wished to offer meals and the pub has remained very traditional as a proper drinking place. One of the few exceptions has always been New Year's Eve when free "Haggis, Neeps and Tatties" were distributed to all present – very tasty indeed.

I am told that the handover will not be until early January so I suggest those of you that have enjoyed the pub, or wish to experience it whilst still a free house, make the effort to visit it before then. The new owners may well surprise and delight us, but somehow I have my doubts.

We would like to wish John and his team all the best in whatever they go on to do, and heartfelt thanks for the last 25 and more years.

*Vince Murray*



# The Hillgrove Porter Stores

**Once in a while, someone comes along to transform a pub into a real ale fan's delight.**

Real ale fans in Bristol may well know the Hare On The Hill, the splendid Bath Ales pub and former branch Pub Of The Year. The Hillgrove is probably less than a minute's walk along the same road as the Hare.

The Hillgrove Porter Stores is a Victorian pub situated close to Stokes Croft. The first record of it that we are aware of is from 1854, when it was known as the Dublin Porter Stores. It is a brick-built street-corner pub and was a George's (the former name of Courage's in Bristol) house. Built on a hill, there are still three distinct drinking areas, vestiges from the old multi-room layout. Now two lounges feature either side of the bar with comfy leather chesterfields, one of which is non-smoking until 9pm. Air filters are fitted throughout.

Licensee Glen Dawkins has been at the pub for just a few months since taking over from Martin and Anita Creed who retired in June. Real ale has been a passion for Glen since he was about 18 when a friend bought him a pint of John Smith's Magnet (that's not the smooth-flow stuff so heavily advertised on TV). Even though it is brewed in Yorkshire, Glen tells me that Magnet was a rare find in his Sheffield home town.

So keen is Glen to promote and sell real ale

that he says it accounts for over half of draught sales already.

Glen has known the Hillgrove for several years. In fact, it has been his local since he moved to Bristol about a dozen years ago. So, when the previous licensees were leaving, Glen leapt at the chance to take over. He had already gained experience in the trade from regular relief duties over the last few years and had also run the Miners Arms in St. Werburghs. Glen had built up a similar real ale trade at the Miners having also spent a decade with Bottoms Up.

At the time of writing, permanent beers on the pumps are Butcombe Bitter and Wadworth 6X. Additionally, rotating guests – which are chosen from the tied Innspired list which changes monthly and features different styles and ABVs – have included beers Butcombe Gold, Young's Waggledance, Black Sheep Riggwelter, Sharp's Eden Ale (makes a change from Doombar), Cottage Gone With The Whippet, Oakleaf Nuptu'ale, Ushers Autumn Frenzy, Hook Norton Generation, and Everards Tiger. Other beers that may feature from time to time include Jennings Cumberland, Brakspear Bitter, Young's Bitter and Special, and Wychwood Hobgoblin.

At the time of my visit I was wholly impressed not only by the quality of the beers on offer but also the very friendly welcome I received.

With the pub itself refurbished back to the



Photo from Duncan Shine's web site at [www.britishpubguide.com](http://www.britishpubguide.com)

wood where possible, and given a lick of paint elsewhere, the next step is to introduce a bit of food very soon. Home-cooked and free-range items are to be on the menu, including curries and chillis.

Glen wishes to make the Hillgrove renowned for its great beer as well as for its relaxed, friendly atmosphere attracting all ages.

The pub is currently open 5pm to 11pm Monday to Saturday and 7pm to 10.30pm Sunday. Its popular pub quiz is at about 9pm Sunday.

Give it a try – you are within easy reach of the Hare On The Hill as well as the Bell in Hillgrove Street – another pub with a great interior and good beer.

*Pete Bridle*

## The Hillgrove Porter Stores

Hillgrove Street North (Dove St), Kingsdown, Bristol  
0117 9444780 [hillgrove@dawkins-taverns.co.uk](mailto:hillgrove@dawkins-taverns.co.uk)  
Open 5pm-11pm Mon-Sat, 7pm-10.30pm Sun

*Choose from five Real Ales including three regularly-changing guests served by Glen Dawkins and team.*

*Newly refurbished with a non-smoking area 'til 9pm.*

*From December a new menu will offer good value, quality food featuring free-range and home-cooked dishes. Quiz Sun 9pm.*

## The Miners Arms, St Werburghs

Mina Road, St Werburghs, Bristol  
0117 9556718 [miners@dawkins-taverns.co.uk](mailto:miners@dawkins-taverns.co.uk)  
Open 4-11 Mon-Fri, 2-11 Sat, 12.30-10.30 Sun



*Find Alex Hill and team in the heart of this vibrant community, near the busy Climbing Centre.*

*Choose from five Real Ales including guests, relax on a sofa in the quiet lounge or celebrate victory at pool or darts in the games room. Quiz Thursdays 8.30pm.*

**DAWKINS TAVERNS: PROPER BRISTOL PUBS!**  
Fresh Ales, wines & spirits, warm welcome

## 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.)



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

### Zerodegrees

Dear Steve,

I read Vince Murray's response to my own review of Zerodegrees with interest.

My Zerodegrees review in the Bristol Evening Post certainly seemed to divide opinion, and while I stand by my comments on the food (based on that and subsequent visits), I feel I must take issue about what Mr Murray calls my obsession with so-called gastropubs.

As a real ale drinking CAMRA member, of course I don't want Bristol pubs to become "expensive dining experiences". I just want some of our pubs to wake up to the fact that many other major cities have followed the lead of London 'gastropubs' by finding chefs who want to cook simple, seasonal dishes at affordable prices in a proper pub environment.

Anybody who has visited London food pubs such as the Anglesea Arms in Hammer-smith, the Havelock Tavern in Brook Green and the remarkable Anchor & Hope in Waterloo will know what I'm talking about.

If not, I suggest a few forward-thinking Bristol landlords should charter a minibus to the capital to see for themselves what all the fuss is about and why our city is lagging behind. These are pubs that take their microbrewery real ales as seriously as they take their bacon and snail risottos, and Bristol's food and drink scene would be a lot richer for places like them.

Best wishes, Mark Taylor,  
Restaurant Critic, Bristol Evening Post.

### A Greek microbrewery

Dear Sir,

I just read a brief article in your publication by Mr. Bob Ford, and I thought that it might be a good idea to introduce myself and our company.

I am the founder and principal owner of Craft Microbrewery, the first true microbrewery in Greece. We currently run two brewery-pub-restaurants both in the Athens area (the first and only ones in the country), and a new industrial facility close to the new Athens airport for kegging and distribution of our fine ales and lagers.

We now have 300 draught beer customers nationwide and the number is

growing. Our beers were rated top in the country by Per Samuelson ([www.ohhh.myhead.org](http://www.ohhh.myhead.org)). We are dedicated to brewing and marketing top quality, full of aroma and flavour beers in a country that is monopolized by one company (85% market share) and drinks mass produced blonde lagers (99% of total consumption).

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you or your readers need further info.

Sincerely,

Paul Emmanuelides, Managing Director,  
Craft Breweries, Athens, Greece.

Email: [pecraft@panafonet.gr](mailto:pecraft@panafonet.gr)

Tel: 0030-210-6640144.

*Well that's definitely something to look out for when next holidaying in Greece. When I asked Paul where he came across his copy of Pints West, his answer was, "I was given a copy of Pints West by our distributor in Crete."!*  
*In which other exotic places have people spotted Pints West? Ed.*

### Real ale activities in Keynsham

Dear Steve,

My name is Alison Smith, co-owner with my husband Richard of Cafe Bar One Nine in Keynsham. I wanted to write to you to let you know of our real ale activities.

We have been running the business since Christmas last year when we took over a failing high street young persons' venue and created a continental-style cafe-bar. We started stocking Bass several months ago and it has been extremely popular – we do a jug served straight from the cellar at the moment, but will shortly be installing a new handpull to enable us to dispense a second ale. We have been really happy with how this traditional product works next to our wine, lattes and cappuccinos!

We have a diverse range of customers drinking our real ale – we put a lot of effort into the quality of the product and are



The Coronation, 18 Dean Lane, Southville, Bristol BS3 1DD

The Coronation offers a warm welcome and a full range of Hop Back beers that include the multi-award-winning Summer Lightning (GBBF champion strong bitter) plus monthly specials and guest ales.

**Saturday special: noon to 6pm**  
all Hop Back beers @ £1.50 a pint.

**New menu available for eat in or take away**  
evenings only.

**Sunday lunchtime: complimentary**  
cheese board.

**All beer available to take away in polypins and minipins**  
at superb discount prices.

**Summer Lightning £24 for 18 pints & £46.50 for 36 pints.**  
Order by ringing Matt on 0117 940 9044.

## 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





busy converting new drinkers!

Kind Regards, Alison Smith  
www.baronenine.com, by email.

*When asked what their second ale might be, Alison replied: "We'll be serving London Pride first. We're looking to keep Bass permanently and then rotate a second ale as seems appropriate."*

### Beer at the Claverham Village Hall

Hi Steve,

I thought you might be interested in a retrospective on the beer festival we had here at Claverham, and advance notification for next year. So, here are a few words...

Claverham "Zecond" Beer Festival, organised by Claverham Village Enterprises and Yeo Valley Lions, was a rip roaring success. A range of fine ales from the South West was matched with everything from a traditional sing-along to an Irish Ceili and smooth Jazz. The event raised £3,000 for breast and prostate cancer appeals and Lions charities.

Main sponsorship was from Heritage Estate Agents who were delighted with the event. Friends from Weston-super-Mare CAMRA joined us for a couple of sessions and thoroughly enjoyed the experience, commenting on the carefully selected range and quality of the beers, which included offerings from Blackawton, Branscombe Vale, Doghouse, Sharp's and St. Austell breweries.

Next year's festival is already set for the 1st to the 3rd of July, and will be bigger and better in Claverham Village Hall's enlarged premises. The beers featured will be from Dorset, Wiltshire, and Somerset. Why not email the organisers with your favourite selection? There will be 26 beers on view, and ciders too if you wish.

Kind regards, and congratulations on your latest Pints West award – a lot of hard work went in to achieving it!

Nigel Carson,  
Email: n.carson@tiscali.co.uk

### The Box Steam Brewery

Hello Steve,

We've just set up a new brewery in Box, "The Box Steam Brewery". It's the first time in 80 years that Box has had a brewery. I wondered if there's any chance of a mention in Pints West?

Look forward to hearing from you.  
Paul Dabson,  
Email: dabbosmail@yahoo.co.uk  
Tel: 07792129792.

*We did ask for more information on the new Box brewery but didn't get a reply. Hopefully we shall have something for the next issue. Ed.*

### In response to an article by Vince Murray on pubs doing great real ales and Sunday lunches, in particular the Port of Call...

Dear Steve,

After reading the article by Mr Vince Murray on the Port of Call, I congratulate him on a superb piece of writing.

My best mate Bob and I have been regulars at the PoC ever since Roger and Carol

Skuse first came on the scene. I would rate them very friendly but also very professional, and they certainly know how to keep a fantastic pint. Even through illness and unforeseen circumstances recently the beer has been kept to the very high standards Roger and Carol always maintain.

Only one fault is that it's not the cheapest in the area, but you get what you pay for. A few pennies more for a pint of Best or Bass which tastes like it should do. So why save a few pence and get dishwater which one or two other establishments nearby also call Best or Bass?

Come up to the PoC and try a pint for yourself – you'll be back for more.

Cheers, Andy Kruger, Brentry.

Steve,

I nominate the Cadbury for their superb Sunday lunch, at an affordable price: Nut Roast and Wickwar Bob (or Olde Merryford). Kids can run around, and there's cider for the Mrs. Even the odd view of the city, and handy for the railway (Montpelier).

Cheers, Mike Jones, by email.

Dear Steve,

Please suggest to Vince Murray and your readers that they try Horts City Tavern, Broad Street, for Sunday lunch. The food is well-cooked and served in generous proportions. As well as traditional roast dinners there is a range of lighter and vegetarian options. Food is served until 4 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon, which is appreciated by some who don't get out of bed till midday. If you don't mind live music, you can be entertained for free by local traditional jazz bands. If you don't care for the music there is always plenty of room further back, where it is quieter.

The bar serves a good range of Young's beers (and guests), Export lager, Thatcher's ciders (Traditional and Cheddar Valley), and some good quality, fairly-priced wines.

Early arrival ensures a comfortable seat and choice of all the items on the menu. The popularity of this bar can make it a bit busy between 1.30 and 3pm, by which time some of the menu choices may be sold out, but there will still be plenty to choose from.

Maureen Armstrong, by email.

### In response to Duncan Shine's article on pubs and sport...

Dear Steve,

I am surprised that Duncan Shine's article in the autumn issue of Pints West failed to mention Horts City Tavern in Broad Street. A large Young's pub, it has plenty of room for fans to gather round the large screen, as well as a small subsidiary screen in the middle of the pub. They serve a good range of Young's beers, including what I consider their best kept secret, Young's Export lager. This bears no relation to the fizzy stuff with Australian connections, but is a tasty and refreshing brew with a strongly European flavour. In addition you can get Thatcher's cider, both Traditional and Cheddar Valley, and often a Smiles guest beer. Wine is fairly priced and good quality,

none of your "Chateau Ribena" rubbish, and the food served until 9pm is varied and excellent.

You really should give Horts a try.

Maureen Armstrong (again), by email.

*Duncan Shine replies: As you will understand, there is only limited space so not every pub gets mentioned in our articles. However, we very much encourage readers to write and let us know additional pubs that we have missed, and so are happy to give this mention to Horts (particularly for the delicious cider!). Thanks for the feedback, it really helps to know someone is actually reading what we write.*

### A history of pubs – info required

Dear Steve,

As I mentioned in our recent telephone conversation, I am writing the history of the pubs in my home town of Thornbury. There is one aspect of pub development which I am finding difficult to fathom out and in which you or your readers may be able to help me.

I have found that as a result of the 1830 Beerhouse Act any householder could sell beer after purchasing a two-guinea licence. This proliferation of outlets was curtailed from about 1850 onwards when a new outlet could not be licenced unless a licence was surrendered from somewhere else.

What I would like to know is, was this one-open-for-one-closed routine the result of government legislation or a restriction imposed by local magistrates?

Yours, George Ford,  
195 Gloucester Road,  
Patchway, South Glos BS34 6ND.  
(01454) 614221.

### Plea for mild

To CAMRA Pints West,

Many, many years ago a small farmhouse was bought by the Lancashire brewery Daniel Thwaites, now the Black Sheep at Aztec West, Almondsbury.

All the Thwaites beers were tried out down here but alas everybody wanted lagers. Soon good old mild disappeared.

Can I call on CAMRA Bristol branch to visit and maybe reintroduce Mild, Bitter, Thoroughbred?

D. Richards, Stoke Gifford, South Glos.

### Anonymous?

We did receive a letter from an "ex-drinker of the Queen's Arms" in Bleadon. There was no printed name, just an illegible signature. Sorry, but we don't publish anonymous letters, which this effectively was. Suffice to say he bemoaned the reduced range at the pub since its take-over by Butcombe. I suspect it's the Ringwood Old Thumper in particular that he's missing.

A number of us on a CAMRA trip recently visited the Queen's Arms and found the three Butcombe beers plus two guest ales in the form of London Pride and Hobgoblin. Between us we tried them all and found them all in excellent condition – something that was not always the case in our experience when the range of beers was larger. Ed.

# Watering Holes in the Desert

*news from Weston-super-Mare*

## Weston Whispers

(pub and beer news)

**The New Inn** at Cross has been getting good reviews. The pub is owned by Enterprise Inns and is being run by Steve Gard and Emma Britton, who took over in October 2003. Steve had previously run the Robert Fitzharding (Wetherspoon's) in Bristol. The pub offers Ringwood Best Bitter as a regular beer, along with two changing guest beers. On my last visit these were Bass and Ringwood Fortyniner. All beers were in excellent condition. The up-coming guest board included beers from St. Peter's, Wychwood, Skinner's, Cotleigh and Sharp's breweries. A full food menu is available and the garden is a lovely spot for sipping a pint. Bus 126/826 from Weston stops very close to the pub. Well worth a visit.

Dave Gough and Sam Preece, who run **The Windsor** in Milton (mentioned elsewhere), also run **Bar Shallus** on Alexander Parade, previously known as Jack Stamp's Beer House. The pub has undergone quite a transformation and is now much more comfortable than previously. Cheap food, a DJ booth and karaoke feature and it won't be everyone's cup of tea during the evenings. However, the beer range looks promising. On my only visit Red Stag Bitter from Newman's was on sale, along with Smiles Bristol Blond.

Dave Gough, a busy man indeed, has also taken over and re-opened the **Imperial**, in partnership with Tony Wignall. A major refurbishment is planned for February.

The Windsor, as mentioned in a separate article, is not the only pub in Weston that is disproving the view much-believed by national/global brewers (or rather purveyors of alcohol) that real ale is in decline.

Pete Boyer at **The Ashcombe** is a keen champion of real ale and organized a beer festival at The Ashcombe in the summer of 2003. Prior to this he only felt able to offer one real ale, the safe Courage Best. I had heard that he had been introducing an occasional guest beer so paid a recent visit. I was pleased to see that Wild Cat from the Exmoor brewery was keeping the Courage Best company. Also, a polypin (36-pint box) of East Street Cream from RCH brewery was on the bar.

Pete reported that he had been offering a guest beer for nine months and occasionally put on a third beer at weekends. Pete said that the guest beer was not being drunk at the expense of Courage Best – sales of the latter

had increased over the past 12 months. Sales of real ale has been growing, partly due to existing keg, lager and cider drinkers being keen to give the guest beers a try and partly due to the good support that his real ales get from visiting darts and skittles teams. Pete said that the Wild Cat (Exmoor brewery's Autumn special) was so popular that if they brewed it all year round, he would install it as a second regular without hesitation. The pint I had was certainly excellent.

The good news from Pete just kept on coming as he told me that he will be having at least three special Christmas beers in during December, including the very wonderful Santa Fé from our local RCH brewery.

If you haven't visited The Ashcombe for a while, I would urge you to give it a try.

It is now some years since a pub guide was compiled covering the Weston area. Local CAMRA member Dave McVittie owns **The Highlea Hotel** on Upper Church Road and has produced a "Guide to Real Ale and Pubs in Weston" for his guests. The guide covers ten pubs, giving recommendations where appropriate for good ales and/or food. It also advises on the location for the "best fish and chips in town."

If you like your beer strong and rich, then head for **The Waverley** on Severn Road, where Hobgoblin from the Wychwood brewery is a permanent fixture. Much enjoyed on a recent CAMRA social.

**The Oak House Hotel** on The Square in Axbridge serves RCH Pitchfork and Newman's Wolver's Ale.

Landlord Gary Havard at **The Raglan** made a lot of people happy at the October CAMRA social by securing the new Champion Beer of Britain – Pale Rider from the Kelham Island brewery in Sheffield. It is always difficult to say whether a beer deserves the badge of being the best in Britain, but Pale Rider is definitely a fine beer, described in the 2005 edition of the Good Beer Guide (available in all good bookshops) as: "A full-bodied, straw pale ale, with a good fruit aroma and a strong fruit and hop aftertaste." Pretty strong at 5.2 per cent ABV.

The Raglan saw one cask drunk dry on the day of our social and a further cask went over the following weekend. Gary is promising return visits for the Pale Rider. All real ales at The Raglan (and there are usually at least four of them) are £2 a pint.

The ever-increasing cost of beer has been catching people's attention of late. A CAMRA member in Worle was aghast at being charged £2.50 for a pint of Ridley's Rumpus in the **Nut Tree**. On another occasion Greene King IPA had been going for £2.40 a pint. Given that IPA is one of the weakest beers on the market at 3.6 per cent ABV and that the cost of a pint is supposedly affected by the alcoholic content, one wonders what price would be charged for a pint of, say, the aforementioned Pale Rider, which is 5.2 per cent ABV and goes for £2 in The Raglan?

It is perhaps unfair to just pick on the Nut Tree. It is not alone in charging prices that will drive people into the grateful arms of the supermarkets. **The Old Colonial** charges £1.30 for a half of Otter Bitter, another weak beer.

For those old-fashioned types who yearn for some change out of two quid for a pint, I am pleased to report that there are still several options around, although these are all in a very close area in the centre of town. **The Dragon Inn** (Wetherspoon's) offers a range of ales around the £1.60 mark. Across the road at **Hot Shotz** (the pub formally known as The Shillelagh) Bass and Young's Special go for the eye-popping price of £1.50 and £1.30 respectively. Up the road at the **Bristol Hotel** you can get an excellent pint of Butcombe Bitter for £1.90. Across the road in **Off The Rails** you still get change out of two pounds for RCH Hewish IPA.

Congratulations to Weston CAMRA member and occasional Pints West contributor Dr John who was recently successful in his attempt to become a Councillor.

In his publicity materials he followed the usual stuff about tackling crime, drugs, lack of investment, making the world a better place, etc, with a brief pen picture of "the man." In this he mentioned that he was a CAMRA member.

This comment incurred the wrath of a sitting Councillor from another party, who wrote to the local papers accusing Dr John (not the name on the ballot paper I can reveal) of being on the side of the young drunks who allegedly wreak havoc in the town centre every weekend.

This "dirty tricks" campaign proved fruitless and in our opinion his CAMRA credentials probably sealed Dr John's success. To pinch a phrase from *The Sun* after the 1993 election – "It Woz CAMRA Wot Won It!"

*Tim Nickolls*



# A round with Robin

WELL readers, thank you for your feedback from my articles over the last ten issues of Pints West. The column was to have originally been only one insertion, then it became six, and now it has gone into double figures.

The time spent drinking ale since the last article in PW 63 has been much varied and includes attendance at three beer festivals, a few pubs dancing with the Chalice Morris Men, and trying to find a decent beer in Australia.

Of course, I suppose if I'd done a bit of research using the internet, I'd have found where the micro-breweries are to be found, and where the best pubs to drink are. I didn't, so blundered through Adelaide, Melbourne and Canberra and came up with one or two lucky breaks. In Canberra, which is the place where all the foreign consulates are to be found, it's predictable that the bottled beers will be of a great range for the consumer.



Wrong. This was Australia. There are a good selection of Australian beers and lagers, the best of which I found to be *Tasman Bitter* (yes, you've guessed, from Tasmania). The best thing about buying bottled beer in Oz is that you can decide how to serve it. All the beer served in bars is freezing cold, even micro-brewed beer without fizz. There are to be found in Melbourne, beers from the Fitzroy Brewery near Geelong that are served as well as can be expected down under, but you need to hold the glass for 20 minutes before you can appreciate the finer flavours in the IPA and Amber. I was informed they also produce a Porter but could not find it. I also found in the famous hotel opposite Flinders Street Station, two or three locally produced wheat beers, the best of which was named *Naked Beer*. If you know the hotel art, you'll know why. If on the other hand, you're partial to South-East Asian beers and lagers, or you're a fan of full bodied red wine, Australia is paradise.

Closer to home I attended the **Wedmore Beer Festival** on 19<sup>th</sup> September with the Morris Men, and those of you who saw my report and photo on the 2003 event will remember that they ran out of



beer on Saturday night. This time I'm glad to say that the majority of the 35 beers were still good at the Sunday session and the jazz band was kept busy entertaining the crowds, as well as the shaving of a beard for Cancer Research. The best beers I thought were those from the Glastonbury Brewery.

A week earlier I had been to the **Somerset Beer Festival** held at Minehead Railway Station, with many fellow CAMRA members from the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch. Some of us travelled by steam train from Bishop's Lydeard to Minehead on the West Somerset Railway, which was as good a way of getting there as can be imagined. This was due mostly to the fact that the Beer Engine's Rail Ale was on sale in the buffet car. However Paul and Rachel on holiday in Dawlish travelled north-west to get there. The RCH launch of new beer What No Tender was memorable, as were some excellent stouts. The photo shows most of those who attended from Weston, but some were obviously buying ale or visiting the town at the time the picture was taken.

On 16<sup>th</sup> October, with a few die-hards from our sub-branch, who were not either watching football or in Belgium sampling funny beer, I attended the **Bath Beer Festival**. This was my first time here and I was most impressed by both the selection and the organisation. If I have one moan, it was that the beers at the stage end were cooler than those at the entrance end, due to the proximity of the exit doors. I only had time to sample 12 beers, but my clear favourite was the one not on the programme – the Belhaven Fruit at 4.6 per cent alcohol.

Most fruit beers have, I fear, too much fruit flavour, but this beer tastes like beer but with a magnificent aftertaste of those tinned travel fruit sweets. Other favourites not readily available included Tunnel Vision from the new Box brewery, Espresso Stout from Dark Star (I'd love this one for breakfast!) and the Village Elder from Cheriton in Hampshire.

Back in Weston, **The Raglan** im-

pressed mightily with nine real ales on our last social, including three ales from Newman's, Bath Ales Barnstormer, two from Butcombe, two from Smiles, and Kelham Island Pale Rider.

Mention should be made of the **Imperial Hotel** that has re-opened recently and has Bass and Butcombe Bitter served at just the right temperature, but of

course those who drink at **Off The Rails** have come to expect that from Colin.

*Robin E Wild*

## Weston Diary

○ **Wednesday 15 December – The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Seasonal Ales Crawl.** We will endeavour to visit all pubs in the town centre offering a Christmas/Winter beer. We will commence at The Raglan at 8.00.

○ **Thursday 23 December – Christmas meal. The Castle, Kewstoke.** Aperitifs at 8.00 for an 8.30 start. £5 deposit required to secure a place at this prestigious event in the Weston social calendar. Enquiries to Tim Nickolls on number below.

○ **Wednesday 5 January – Visit to Smiles Brewery and Zerodegrees.** Bus 370 from Weston at 18.35. Places are limited for the brewery visit.

○ **Wednesday 19 January – Old Inn, Hutton.** 8.30 onwards.

○ **Friday 4 February – Rural Pubs Crawl.** Minibus outing visiting at least 5 current or potential Good Beer Guide pubs in the Portishead/Nailsea areas. Minibus leaves Off The Rails, Weston Station at 7.15. Cost £5. Advance booking essential.

○ **Wednesday 16 February – Axbridge/Cross two-pub social.** We will be catching bus 826 from Weston Railway Station at 19.50. First stop will be The Crown, Axbridge. After an hour there we will walk to The New Inn, Cross for another hour's stay, arriving back in Weston just after 23.00.

○ **Wednesday 16 March – Skittles Evening, White Hart, Palmer Row.** 8.30 start.

**Non-members welcome at all of the above events.**

## Contact

**Tim Nickolls - 01934 628996 (eves)**

# The Castle, Kewstoke

REGULAR readers of Pints West will have read about the ever-increasing impact of Tom Newman on the local ale scene.

Newman's Brewery was launched last November, initially intended as an extended hobby for Tom, whose ambitions then only stretched as far as having about a dozen pubs regularly taking his Wolver's Ale. Since then, two further beers have appeared – Woolly Mammoth and Bite IPA – and Newman's beers have appeared in over 100 different pubs and clubs across the region, with over 30 places taking Newman's beers on a regular basis. Demand has gotten so great that both Tom and his wife Rebecca have had to give up their jobs in order to focus on the brewery.

As if the huge take-up of Newman's beers was not enough to keep Tom busy, he has now opened The Castle Country Pub and Restaurant in Kewstoke, located at the Kewstoke end of the Toll Road. The Castle opened on 27 August after a lengthy struggle to get the licence authorised. It appears that some local residents feared a wave of lager loutery on their doorsteps. Happily, sanity prevailed and Kewstoke is now the lucky recipient of an excellent, high-quality restaurant.

The feel of The Castle is very much that of a modern restaurant/bistro and



Cheery service from king of the Castle, Tom Newman.

Tom has secured a chef who quickly began earning rave reviews. Word has spread and The Castle now has a growing

number of regular diners from Kewstoke and further afield. Tom is aiming for high quality and sees the route to achieving this as focusing on local produce, both on the solids front and liquids. On my only dining visit to date, I had braised lamb shank in Wolver's Ale gravy, accompanied by roast root vegetables and parsley mash. The quality was top-notch, the servings were generous and at £8.95 I felt that I had had good value.

There are plenty of restaurants around where you can get great food, but how many also offer good quality real ale? (Answers on a very small postcard please).

Tom naturally uses The Castle as

an outlet for his beers. Wolver's Ale and Bite IPA are permanent offerings, together with an occasional guest beer from another microbrewery. The real ales cost £2 and CAMRA members get 5% off.

Although there is a strong focus on food, drinkers are welcome and the background music of rhythm & blues and jazz provides an excellent ambience for a chat if you don't wish to eat. There is also occasional live jazz on Sundays.



At the time of writing, a 3.6% ABV red ale from Newman's, called Red Stag Bitter, has hit the streets. I sampled a half in **Bar Shallus**. Although the beer was served a few degrees too cold, the flavour burst through and on one tasting I would say that it is my favourite Newman's beer to date.

We are eagerly awaiting the next brewing venture from Newman's – Cave Bear Stout, which Tom describes as "rich, dark and full bodied, with a burnt coffee aroma." This should be out before Christmas.

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

Call 07879 665 999



# The Windsor Castle, Milton

**The Windsor Castle** on Upper Bristol Road in Milton is a pub definitely worth visiting.

Although fairly small, an awful lot is crammed in. The front bar is, in effect, the public bar, housing a pool table, dart board and TV for major sporting events. The back bar is quieter and houses the food area, which is popular both at lunchtimes and evenings. The menu is wide-ranging with something to suit all tastes. Prices are fairly reasonable, with most main courses being in the £6 to £9 range.

The Windsor is well supported by the local community and is the meeting place for many organizations ranging from the local Scout Committee through to the Operatic Society. The pub has two men's and one women's pool teams and has begun holding a quiz night on the last Sunday of each month.

The views across to The Mendips from the garden make it one of the best drinking spots in Weston on a sunny day.

What about the beers, I hear you ask. Well, the pub has long served Bass and Courage Best as regular beers. These used to be accompanied by a guest that was for a while Smiles Best, then Adnams Bitter, then Charles Wells Bombardier. The latter's popularity has meant that it has now been a permanent fixture for the past year or so.

The Windsor is yet another pub that Tom Newman – of Newman's Brewery –

has used his charms on and the pub tried his Wolver's Ale in the summer. The response was overwhelming, with casks being drunk dry at a rate of knots (three in five days has been the record so far). The "trial" did not last long and Wolver's is now available on a permanent basis.

I asked Assistant Manager Keven Williams whether Wolver's Ale had been successful at the expense of the other real ales. Keven said that whilst there were quite a lot of Courage Best and Bass drinkers who switched to Wolver's when it was first introduced, keg drinkers and also some lager drinkers had tried Wolver's and liked it.

Overall sales of real ale have increased over the past year and the management team are confident that the pub can

continue to sustain four real ales in good condition.

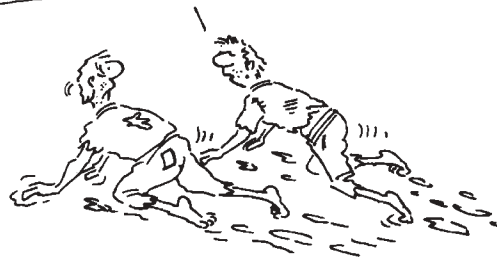
The Windsor is my nearest pub and from my own experiences I would say that beer quality has definitely improved over the past year. In the past I found that quality was occasionally inconsistent. This no longer seems to be the case and I get in much more often than I used to!

The Windsor is owned by the Unique Pub Company and run by Dave Gough and Sam Preece. The Windsor is not suited for those who only like dark, quaint, 16<sup>th</sup> century inns. However, I feel that it is a good example of how to organize and run a modern pub that is viable, vibrant and serves its local community well.

*Tim Nickolls*



My favourite oasis  
is a castle.  
What's yours?



## Zerodegrees update

IN my review of the new Zerodegrees brewery and restaurant in the last Pints West, I made a number of points that now require updating.

I questioned the fact that no ABVs (alcohol by volume) were displayed either at point of sale or in the menu for the beers. This has now been corrected and new badges on the pumps now show the following:

- Pilsner is 4.8 per cent.
- Wheat Ale is 4.2 to 4.4 per cent.
- Pale Ale is 4.6 per cent.
- Black Lager is 4.8 per cent.

Thanks also to Simon Haywood who emailed us this information after my article.

I also described the music as being "set at a reasonably unobtrusive volume, and of the modern jazz style." No sooner had I written that than it seemed to change, both in style and volume. More pop and rock in style now and often played at high volume that makes conversation very difficult, this is a change that I feel reduces my and others' enjoyment and adds nothing to the experience. I am far

from being an old "fuddy duddy" with music but I do like to be able to hear what a friend is saying from two feet away!

My review also criticised a previous article in the Bristol Evening Post by Mark Taylor which was very critical of the food at Zerodegrees. I disagreed strongly and still do – if it is so bad then why is it virtually impossible to get a seat in the 200 cover restaurant at the more popular times?

Mark has responded (see letters page). I have read Mark's pub reviews over a number of years. I have always felt that far too much emphasis is put on outlets that are primarily restaurants that do beer, and not enough on more traditional pubs that either don't do food, or do not let it take over to the point that drinkers feel unwelcome. I would also differ from Mark in his interpretation of what constitutes "affordable" prices for food in pubs. Most people of my acquaintance would see anything over say £5 for a starter or £12 for a main course as a meal to be reserved for a

special occasion, rather than a frequent expense.

The other point about the pubs that Mark reviews is that they tend to be a long way out from Bristol – sometimes 40 miles or more. How many people are going to drive that far for a pub visit? It would be nice to see the Evening Post supporting our local pubs. They may not qualify as "gastropubs" (how many people really care about that?) but we have a very rich and diverse range of pubs in and around Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

To come back to Zerodegrees, the point is that they do not aim to be a gastropub (I still hate that term!) and are not priced at the top end – I feel that Mark was wrong to judge them on that basis. I will carry on eating there when the mood takes me.

*Vince Murray*

*Mark Taylor is welcome to have the final word in the next issue if he so desires. Ed.*

# Island in the sea

By your Nailsea correspondent  
Laurie Gibney

## Zider

THERE couldn't be many Zumerzet folk that haven't heard of Adge Cutler and the Wurzels, those folk who launched "Scrumpy 'n' Western" music in November 1966 in Nailsea at the **Royal Oak**.

Adge was born in 1930 at Nailsea and worked in the Coates cider mill in the town as well as being a road manager for Acker Bilk and his Paramount Jazz Band. Adge was with the Wurzels until his untimely death in 1974 when he overturned his MGB sports car at a roundabout while driving himself home from a gig. He is buried in Christchurch, Nailsea but his Wurzels play on.

Cider was an essential ingredient of their performances and an early hit was the song *Drink Up Thy Zider*. Coates cider mill has long since gone, but many small cider mills still thrive in Somerset, plus larger traditional cider mills such as Thatcher's mill and shop at nearby Sandford, but the dominant cider on bars in the area is Matthew Clarke's keg Blackthorn.

CAMRA's *Apple* group champions the cause of traditional ciders and perries, so where do we find such cider in Nailsea & District? Sadly no perries were on local bars last October, which happened to be Cider Month, but ciders were not so difficult to find. The **Royal Oak** where Adge Cutler and the Wurzels and Scrumpy 'n' Western music was launched no longer offers scrumpy but only Blackthorn, as does the **Battleaxes**, the **Courtyard Wine Bar** and the **Mizzymead Club**.

The **Blue Flame** at West End is a favourite cider drinkers' pub and has cask Thatcher's Traditional Dry, plus keg Mendip Magic and Blackthorn. Also well known by cider drinkers is the **Black Horse** at Clapton in Gordano which offers cask Thatcher's Traditional Dry, plus keg Kingston's Press Dry and Blackthorn. The **Jubilee** at Flax Bourton has Addlestone's Cask Conditioned Cloudy Cider; the **Friendship Inn** has cask Thatcher's Traditional Dry and keg Blackthorn; the **Moorend Spout** offers cask Thatcher's Cheddar Valley and keg Blackthorn; and the **Nailsea & Backwell Rugby Club** offers keg Blackthorn and occasionally cask Thatcher's ciders.

The **Sawyers Arms** offers keg Blackthorn, Thatcher's Mendip Scrumpy and Old Rascal. The **Star** at Tickenham offers bottles of Thatcher's Cox's Apple Cider, keg Blackthorn and Thatcher's Traditional Dry. The **Old Barn** at Wraxall offers keg Thatcher's Traditional Dry, Weston's Stowford Press and Blackthorn. The **Olde Farmhouse** has Blackthorn and bottled White Lightning. The **White Lion** has keg Blackthorn and Taunton Natch, and the **Ring of Bells** has keg Thatcher's

er's Traditional Dry and Blackthorn. At Backwell the **George Inn** has Blackthorn and bottled Woodpecker and the **Backwell Village Club** has keg Thatcher's Traditional Dry and Old Rascal.

## Festive season

Have you ever tried going to a pub at Christmas time and been disappointed to find it closed?

The **Battleaxes** at Wraxall and **Olde Farmhouse** at Nailsea are open at usual times throughout the Christmas and New Year period but the kitchen at the **Olde Farmhouse** will be closed throughout Christmas Day. The **Friendship Inn** might look open on Christmas Day evening, but is open *by invitation only* to regular locals who have no family to enjoy Christmas evening with – a kind gesture in the spirit of Christmas.

The **Moorend Spout** is open every evening until midnight from 24<sup>th</sup> December until 1<sup>st</sup> January except on Christmas Day evening when it is closed, and the **Old Barn** (Wraxall) is open on New Year's Eve by ticket only.

The **Jubilee** in Flax Bourton will be open on Boxing Day until midnight, and just turn up to see the New Year in until 2 a.m. on New Year's Eve into New Year's Day.

To avoid disappointment, here are the occasions I've been informed that pubs are closed during the Christmas period:

- closed all day on Christmas Day – **Nailsea & Backwell Rugby Club**
- closed on the evening of Christmas Day – **Black Horse, Blue Flame** (possibly), **Friendship Inn, George Inn** (Backwell), **Jubilee** (Flax Bourton), **Moorend Spout, Old Barn** (Wraxall), **Ring of Bells, Sawyers Arms, Star** (Tickenham)
- closed all day on Boxing Day – **George Inn** (Backwell)
- closed on the evening of Boxing Day – **Blue Flame** (possibly), **Nailsea & Backwell Rugby Club, Star** (Tickenham) (possibly)
- closed on the evening of New Year's Day – **Blue Flame** (possibly).

## Pub talk

Take your acoustic musical instruments along to the **Black Horse** at Clapton in Gordano on any Tuesday evening and enjoy their recently introduced Acoustic Open Music evening, as well as good ales and ciders at this Good Beer Guide-listed pub.

Oh what a pleasant change has graced the **Friendship Inn** on Stockway North in Nailsea. Not only has the outside been thoroughly renovated and decorated but the

inside has too, and the last troublesome "customers" have been banned for life! The long awaited guest ale to complement Courage Best is still being negotiated with the owners Punch Taverns by the licensees Kathleen & Dave Allen.

Home-cooked food is available at the **Friendship Inn** during lunchtimes after a long absence, courtesy of Bernadette – who was until last year at the **Moorend Spout** – and David Hemmings. The regular menu includes the most expensive dish "Steak" at £6.50 and also ham or sausage, egg and chips, chilli, scampi, veggie pie, sandwiches, baguettes and jacket potatoes. On the specials board at a recent visit were stilton, cauliflower and broccoli soup, home-made corned beef hash and cottage pie, breaded plaice, sausage & leek mash, and an enormous spanish omelette. The writer very much enjoyed the soup and corned beef hash. Individual bottles of wine instead of the ubiquitous boxes in a glass case were available in addition to real ale and cider to wash down this excellent grub at a reasonable price.

The **White Lion** in Silver Street, Nailsea has reintroduced food at lunchtimes, which I hope to report upon in a future Pints West after trying their fare. Ralph Milne has taken over as manager. He is well known locally in the licensed trade and amongst football fans, having been a professional player for Dundee United, Charlton Athletic, Bristol City, Manchester United and Sing Tao in Hong Kong.

Being a firm supporter of CAMRA's Light and Dark Supporters Group (that's light as in strength rather than colour), I regret to say that the **Market Tavern** at Yatton has ceased stocking a mild beer due to wastage, and Bass looks like going the same way. Dark ales are usually available, however, at the **Prince of Orange** at Yatton, from November onward through the winter, and at the **Mizzymead Club** at Nailsea they are offering light guest ales on a regular basis.

The **Jubilee** in Flax Bourton, at the southern end of the Long Ashton by-pass on the A370, has replaced national real ales with ales from more local breweries such as Bath Ales, Otter and Smiles. The ales are sold at £2 per pint or £1.25 per half pint, the pint price being a special offer while trying to promote real ale, so Rich and Mel at the **Jubilee** do deserve our support.

Eldridge Pope, the pub company holding the lease, has recently been taken over by Michael Cannon's company, "SMB". Michael visited the **Jubilee** shortly after taking over.



Plans are being formulated to introduce Thursdays as Curry & Real Ale Nights when a curry and pint of real ale will cost £6.95.

**Claverham Hall** on Bishops Road at Claverham is opposite the primary school, and was a Millennium project to provide a hall for the village. To help pay the running costs, the nicely furnished lounge bar at the hall is open to the public, so you are all welcome. The friendly atmosphere is enhanced by two real ales – Butcombe Bitter, and a guest ale which on a recent visit was Harviestoun Ptarmigan, a very enjoyable ale from Scotland. Ciders are all bottled and are Weston's Organic, Symonds Scrumpy Jack, and Stowford Press Low Alcohol.

## Palmer's Brewery

Away from Nailsea & District some local real ale enthusiasts enjoyed a pilgrimage to sunny Dorset, to visit the **Palmer's Brewery** at Bridport. An early start was made to ensure arrival in plenty of time to park the car and join the only tour of the day at 11 a.m. Booking is essential unless you live or are on holiday nearby (phone 01308 427500 or see [www.palmersbrewery.com](http://www.palmersbrewery.com)). Tours are not available to under-13-year-olds, and under-18-year-olds must be accompanied by an adult, and it should be noted by the less able that some staircases are very steep. The brewery dates back to 1794 and some parts have thatched roofs. Some machines still in daily use date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the

waterwheel which used to power the machinery is only operated on special occasions.

Palmer's brews five ales: Copper Ale (3.7 per cent ABV) is their fruity and hoppy session ale; IPA (4.2 per cent) is their premium bitter; Dorset Gold (4.5 per cent) is a full fruity golden premium ale. The Palmer's 200 at 5 per cent ABV was brewed to celebrate 200 years of brewing on the site, and Good Beer Guide editor Roger Protz's tasting notes say: "The palate of the beer is complex, a finely balanced blend of malt, hops and quenching citric fruitiness from the yeast". Finally, Tally Ho! at 5.5 per cent ABV is Palmer's strong dark ale and was your writer's personal favourite – a strong, nutty, full-strength, dark "sipping" ale with a long-lasting taste. This beer attracts a cult following of connoisseurs, the brewery tells us. Palmer's also make ginger beer, lemonade and other soft drinks.

The tour ended with a beer (or ginger beer and lemonade) tasting in the board room, where one was afraid to put a glass down on the beautifully polished table. This was also where each person was presented with a tour certificate with their name on it. A visit to the excellent wine store (where tours start) to purchase wines, including George Gale & Co's Country Fruit Wines and Palmer's own beers and soft drinks, is a must after a tour.

As Tally Ho! was not available after the tour, we asked the tour guide at what pub we could try it and were directed to one of their own pubs, the delightful three-hundred-year old thatched **Three Horseshoes** in Mill Street

at nearby Burton Bradstock. While sampling the aroma and taste of Tally Ho! at the bar, a voice behind me said, "Is that good?", to which I replied, "Absolutely beautiful." I turned to find the voice was that of the Palmer's Head Brewer who had gone ahead of us while we were in the wine shop. The food was excellent too!

## And finally

If looking for real ale in London, I can recommend the **Market Porter** in Stoney Street beside Borough Market (but the nearest Station is London Bridge not Borough), where I enjoyed Crouch Vale Blackwater Mild. Also on sale were Elgood's Barley Mead, Ossett (West Yorks) Silverlink, Acorn Harvester from Barnsley, and others.

It was a short walk to the **Royal Oak** in Tabbard Street near Borough tube station, the only London pub owned by Harvey's Brewery of Lewes Sussex, which was founded in 1790 and escaped the mass take-overs of the past decades. Their Sussex XX Mild (3 per cent), Sussex Pale Ale (3.5 per cent), Sussex Best Bitter (4 per cent) and seasonal ale South Down Harvest (5 per cent) we available during our visit and were very enjoyable.

Apart from the excellent ales, the pub is worth a visit to see its internal decorative Victorian bar screens, fittings and loos! This is a pub which should perhaps be considered for inclusion in CAMRA's National Inventory of pubs to be protected, but wasn't in my 2003 version.

Laurie Gibney



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# Small craft brewers bring choice back to Britain

## *Good Beer Guide highlights greater choice for beer drinkers*

“THERE is more choice for British beer drinkers today than at any time in CAMRA’s 33-year history,” Good Beer Guide editor Roger Protz said recently at the launch of the 2005 edition of the Good Beer Guide.

The guide lists more than 60 new breweries, twice as many as in the 2004 edition. Protz points out that there are 306 members of SIBA, the Society of Independent Brewers, which represents Britain’s micro-breweries.

But not all micros, including pub breweries, belong to SIBA. “The total number of micros is in excess of 400,” Roger Protz said. “This means that Britain now has more micro-breweries per head of the population than any country in the world.”

Protz added that many new brewers had been encouraged to start up as a result of Small Brewers’ Relief and this has helped to secure the future of any small brewers. In the 2004 Budget, Chancellor Gordon Brown extended the relief for smaller brewers to an upper limit of 36,000 barrels a year.

“The savings in duty are considerable – around £100,000 a year for a brewery producing 20,000 barrels,” Protz went on. “But Gordon Brown should bring in a true Sliding Scale of Duty on the European model in order

that all independent producers can benefit.”

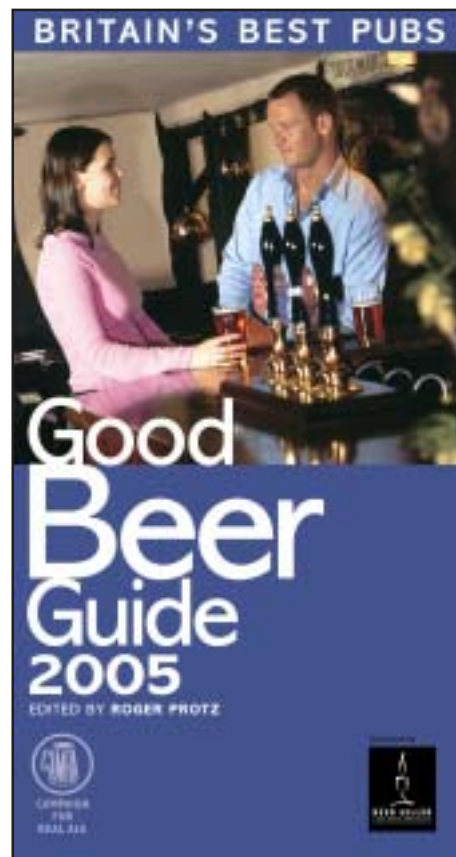
Roger Protz said it was “grossly unfair” that Refresh UK, for example, does not benefit from Small Brewer’s Relief. “Refresh owns the Wychwood Brewery in Witney, Oxfordshire, and has also bought the Brakspear brands from the former Brakspear Brewery in nearby Henley-on-Thames.

“It has spent around £1 million extending the brewery and building a separate fermenting hall for the Brakspear brands. It has saved the classic Brakspear pale ales from oblivion but receives no help from the government, as the combined Brakspear/Wychwood plants produce more than 36,000 barrels a year.”

“As a result of the growth of small craft breweries, most parliamentary constituencies in Britain now enjoy the services of a brewery,” Protz added. “This means that beer drinkers can put considerable leverage on MPs and parliamentary candidates in an expected election year in 2005 by asking them to lobby the Chancellor on the need for a more equitable system of beer duty.”

The boom in craft breweries can be measured by their success. Titanic Brewery — owned by SIBA chairman Keith Bott — which won the Champion Bottled Beer of the Year competition in August for Titanic Stout, has moved to a new, enlarged site in Burslem, Stoke-on Trent, to cope with demand.

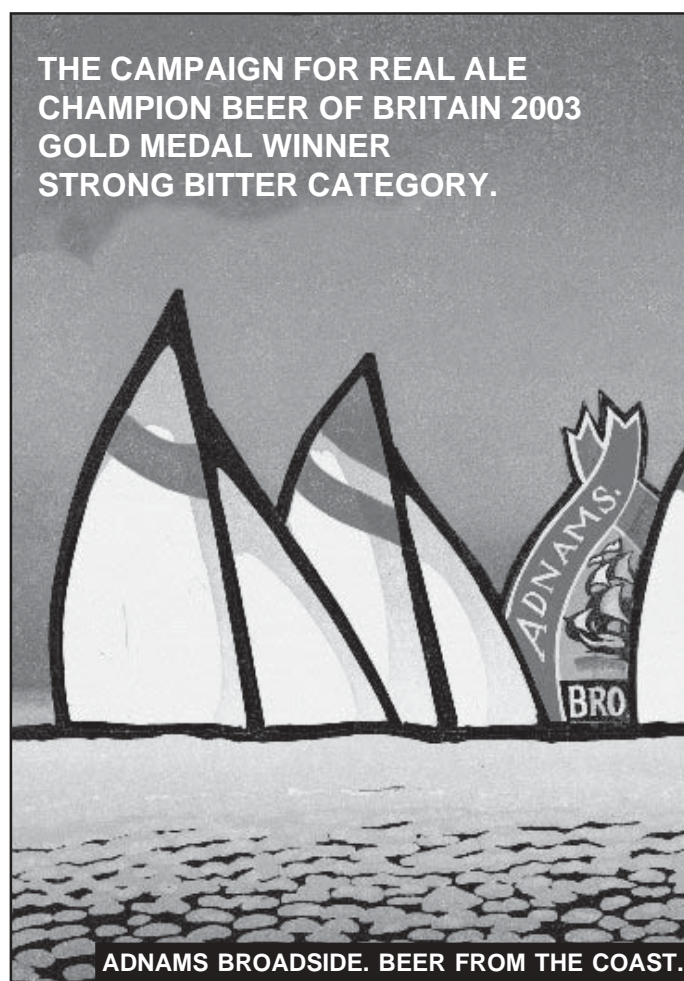
Kelham Island Brewery in Sheffield, which won the supreme Champion Beer of Britain award in August, is opening a second plant in Derbyshire to



“Every time I tour the nation, it’s the first thing I pack” - Oz Clarke

meet the demand for Pale Rider and its other beers.

Ringwood in Hampshire, which started life 25 years ago as the tiniest of micros, opens a new brewing hall and fermenting area this month to keep pace with orders for its beers.



## Over 1,000 new pub entries!

THERE are over a thousand new pub entries in the 2005 Guide. Each entry has been surveyed throughout the year by local CAMRA members.

Roger Protz, Editor of the Good Beer Guide said, “CAMRA members have spent an enormous amount of time carefully selecting the final 4,500 pub entries and, unlike some other pub guides, there is no charge for entry into the Good Beer Guide. These elite pubs are selected by the real pub goer!”

Protz continued, “The pubs that appeared in the previous edition have all been updated with new information for 2005 and I am also delighted that we have over a thousand new pub entries this year. This just goes to show that this book, now in its 32nd year, is the most up-to-date and comprehensive guide to British pubs on today’s book market.”

## Over 60 new breweries in Britain

THE 2005 Good Beer Guide includes over 60 new breweries in the brewery directory, which lists nearly 500 British breweries. Roger Protz said, “It is great to see more than 60 new breweries in this year’s guide. The majority of these breweries are producing a wonderful range of real ales and as long as these are given the opportunity to be sold in British pubs then this can only be good for consumer choice.”



# Pub companies are the supermarkets of beer

## *Good Beer Guide castigates pub companies yet again*

THE 2005 edition of the CAMRA Good Beer Guide castigates the majority of modern pub companies as acting like beer supermarkets by demanding heavy discounts from suppliers, restricting access to market for small brewers and ignoring the needs of millions of beer drinkers.

But a handful of “pubcos” win a star rating for their dedication to real ale and their support for small independent breweries.

Editor Roger Protz said recently as he launched the new edition of the guide: “Big brewers have disengaged from brewing and handed retailing to the new breed of pubcos. This has led to dramatic changes in the way in which beer is retailed – and the changes have not been to the advantage of publicans or their customers.

“Pubcos tend to favour big suppliers over small ones and wrest enormous discounts from those suppliers – discounts that are pocketed by the pubcos and not passed on to publicans or drinkers.”

“The pubcos force their tenants to pay top dollar for the beers supplied to them and the prices are carried over to the cost of a pint at the bar. Most of the pubcos take their beers from global brewers, who produce such vast volumes they can afford discounts so deep that they are selling beer at only a fraction more than the cost of production.”

Editor Roger Protz is sharply critical of the government, which, he says, has turned its back on pubgoers. “Two years ago, the government axed the Guest Beer Policy, which allowed pub tenants to buy real ales of their choice free of the tie. The government did so

because it said it was satisfied that ‘full and fair competition existed in the brewing industry and pub trade’. If it believes that then the moon must truly be made of green cheese.”

“The Guest Beer Policy must be brought back to tackle the power of the giant pubcos and to give choice back to publicans and beer drinkers.”

Mergers and takeovers at the top have created four giant national pub companies that now dominate beer retailing and dictate choice to their tenants and customers. Enterprise Inns has bought the Unique Pub Company, while Punch has merged with Pubmaster and only recently finalised its acquisition of over 1,000 pubs from Innspired. Between them, the two groups own over 17,000 pubs.

The four biggest pubcos – Enterprise, Punch, Spirit, and Mitchells & Butlers – own close to 22,000 pubs, a third of the country’s stock. Roger Protz said: “This gives the Big Four pubcos enormous marketing power and leverage with even the biggest global brewers. This power is used to drive up the price of beer in order to boost profits and concentrate on big volume, heavily advertised brands, mainly lagers and keg beers.”

“The enormous choice available to beer drinkers today from regional brewers and more than 400 micros is not reflected in the beers available to consumers in outlets controlled by the big pubcos. Regional brewers have a route to market through their own tied estates but many micros cannot gain access to pubcos and have to find alternative routes, such as borrowing to buy a few pubs or concentrating on farmers’ markets and specialist beer shops.”

The Good Beer Guide says that the “awesome power” of the pub retailers has been brought in to sharp focus by evidence given by publicans and CAMRA to the House of Commons Trade and Industry Select Committee’s inquiry into pubcos. Complaints include:

- Tenants bear prices as much as 39 per cent higher than their true market value.
- Extortionate rents increased by as much as 40 per cent a year.
- Ruthless imposition of the tie between publican and pubco that forbids a tenant from buying guest beers. If the tie is broken, tenants are threatened with eviction or legal action.

The Good Beer Guide says that in order to redress the balance of power in favour of pubgoers there should be:

- Guest beer rights for all pubco tenants.
- Pubcos should be obliged to offer every prospective tenant the option of a free-of-the-tie tenancy at a competitive rent.
- The annual increase in pubco price list prices must not exceed the annual increase in the Retail Price Index.
- The Office of Fair Trading must monitor pubco mergers and takeovers to see if they are against consumers’ interests.

The Good Beer Guide does single out a handful of independent pub companies for their support for real ale, independent breweries and fair prices. However, the Good Beer Guide’s Wooden Spoon Award goes to national pub company Mitchells & Butlers of Birmingham. M&B was named recently as the worst payer in the FTSE 100 group of leading quoted companies. M&B’s 4,000 employees earn an average annual salary of just £9,401.

## The taste of London Pride

IN the last two editions of Pints West I have engaged in an exchange of views with Fuller’s, over what I have maintained have been changes in the flavour of London Pride, their flagship beer.

I suggested last time that the beer had changed again, this time for the better, with the “offending” caramel flavour no longer so evident.

I have since gone out of my way to keep trying the beer, both in Fuller’s pubs and in the free trade.

I am very pleased to say that the improvement I perceived has continued with the beer back close to its former glory and it now once again a beer that I would choose more often than not.

I will never know whether my original article played any small part in this!

Vince Murray

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# Shine on Cheddar

**IN his umpteenth report on the pubs and bars covered by the Bristol & District Branch of CAMRA, our Dunc looks at the real ale situation in Cheddar. Full details, opening times and photographs of all the pubs mentioned can be found on the [www.britishpubguide.com](http://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.** There are four things in life that you truly love with all of your heart. One of them involves an inappropriate – if imaginative – use of *plaster-of-paris*, so it's best we don't go into that here. However, the other three loves are:

1. Of course, a decent pint of real ale or cider. Kept at the right temperature, matured for the right length of time, and served in pints rather than dished out in smaller quantities topped off with enough foam to put the Diana Memorial Fountain out of action for months.

2. Firm flavoursome farmhouse cheese in the traditional style. Not orange with bits of chive and onion stuffed in it; not full of blue veins that make it look like a mature lady's thigh; not thin and runny like a small child's play-dough, nor wrapped in wax that you're never sure whether you should eat. No, good honest yellow cheese, the way God intended.

3. Gorges. Oh, you love a good gorge. The steep sides, the rare and beautiful wildlife, the open-top bus trips with scores of Japanese tourists... Wasn't it Shakespeare who said: *"Shall I compare thee to a Somerset Gorge? Thou art not a patch on it, frankly. And since we are on the subject, Thou dost verily look a right plonker in thy ruff."* [No, it wasn't – Ed.]

But where can you go to satisfy such unusual, albeit for the purposes of this article suspiciously convenient, tastes? At this point, a shambling, slightly jaded looking figure approaches, and clears his throat...

"Well, if it's the combination of gorge, cheese and decent beer you want, there's not much choice. The Avon Gorge is beautiful, but Portway Goat's Cheese never really caught on; Australia's magnificent Bunyeroo Valley does a lovely Platypus Leerdammer, but you can't get a decent pint. No, you're best bet is the beautiful village of Cheddar".

Down the A38, and round the Axbridge bypass, you find Britain's largest gorge, forged from carboniferous limestone rock by the great melt that followed the last ice age. The first pub you come to is the **Bath Arms Hotel**, a large friendly pub in the village centre. It is set back from the road, with an impressive creeper-clad exterior giving way to a thriving L-shaped 'Village Bar' area and separate dining room. There is outdoor seating where the old



stagecoaches would have parked at the front, and also a large children's play area to the rear. The beers on offer are Bass, Courage Best, and Morland Old Speckled Hen. You try the Speckled Hen and find it's in tip-top condition.

From there you head up North Street to Silver Street, in the old part of the village. It is beautiful up here, and the stone built **King's Head** appears directly in front of you. But there's a problem. You arrive at lunchtime and the King's Head doesn't open until 5pm



during the week (5:30pm Mondays). "Bother." You say to your Guide, "We can't sit and wait for five hours". Your Guide points out that one advantage of being fictitious is that a five-hour wait need only take up three words, and you agree to wait. Five hours later, you are in the bar of a lovely, dimly lit local, choosing between Bass, Butcombe Bitter and Courage Best. Since you are in Somerset, you enjoy a very good drop of Butcombe before heading along Silver Street to Cheddar's very own *gastropub*.

**The Gardener's Arms** dates from the



time of Elizabeth I, not that you'd know it from the modern interior. Landlord Will Nichols is rightly proud of the food that is served here, and you and your Guide enjoy the *"Pan-fried haunch of Somerset Venison with a sweet potato dauphinoise, on a blackcurrant and port jus"* tremendously. The beers are those Innspired stalwarts Bass, Butcombe and Courage Best. Again, they are in better condition than a Crufts Supreme Champion, and you and your Guide leave thoroughly satisfied by the experience.

At the end of Silver Street you head back down the hill and into the more touristy part of Cheddar. Here, you come to the pub you have been most looking forward to, the **White Hart**, which is listed in the 2005 CAMRA



Good Beer Guide (which you ordered direct from CAMRA, of course). You are not disappointed. Landlady Ann Atherton greets you with a winning smile and a choice of Butcombe, Speckled Hen, Wadworth 6X and Traditional Dry Cider from Thatcher's, only about five miles away. You go for the cider, while your Guide professes himself very happy with the 6X. Although Innspired's lease agreement means that guest beers are a no-no, Ann focuses on keeping three highly regarded real ales in perfect nick, and is rightly proud of Cheddar's first Good Beer Guide entry for some years.

Next, you wobble along Cliff Street to the **Riverside Hotel**, a large pub and restaurant



situated between the Gorge and the town centre. You meander into the lounge and choose from Butcombe, Fuller's London Pride and Smiles Bristol I.P.A., while your Guide plumps for the Thatcher's Dry Cider. You can't help but be impressed that, although this pub seems to be considerably less in focus than some of the others, it is the fifth consecutive pub serving splendidly well-kept ale.



Acutely aware you are taking up too much of Pints West's limited space, you hurry back to the **Galleries Inn**, where landlord Paul



Sturmey has been in place since June. This is a pretty little bar up some steps from Cliff Street. Paul serves just the one real ale, Butcombe Bitter. He hopes to add a second beer in the summer, but for now he makes it six-out-of-six for good beer, with the Butcombe tasting very fresh indeed.

From the Galleries, you head via the **Cheddar Cheese Shop** to **Cox's Mill Hotel**, which is slap bang in the Gorge. Here, you



return to the trusty Thatcher's Dry Cider, while your Guide chooses between Butcombe and Young's Bitter, which are also faultlessly kept. It is at this point that you realise all the drink is starting to go to your head, as you are sure you can see a large lioness eating a deer above the toilets, and a sign saying "Waterfalls this way". You know you must be imagining things, as waterfalls can't read signs.

As this is the last pub on your odyssey, you have a second pint of Thatcher's. The next thing you know you are waking up tied to a waterwheel behind the hotel. You vaguely remember making a perfectly reasonable observation that the Gorge was 'nothing a couple of tins of polyfilla wouldn't solve' but then everything is blank.

*Duncan Shine*



Is there an area covered by the Bristol & District Branch of CAMRA that you would like to see featured in this column in a future issue? If so, send an email to [duncan.shine@britishpubguide.com](mailto:duncan.shine@britishpubguide.com), and we'll see what we can do.

## South West Pub of the Year 2004

EACH year, the eleven branches in the South West region of CAMRA make awards for their pub of the year. Readers maybe aware that the Bristol entry was the Wellington in Horfield.

All the winners are then judged against each other with the region being split into two halves, the Southern section taking in branches in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, and the Northern section taking in branches from Gloucestershire, North Wiltshire, Bristol and Bath.

Each branch will nominate judges to make visits to other branch winners. These visits are unannounced and judges will assess against criteria such as service and welcome, value for money, characteristics of the pub building, both interior and exterior, sympathy with CAMRA's aims, community focus and, of course, the quality of the beer.

It is fair to say that the entries were generally of a very high standard. Our own entry held up very well but sadly did not reach the regional final, that is, the winners from the south and the north. The accolades went to the New Inn, Halse, Somerset and the Check Inn, North Wroughton, Wiltshire.

If the judging in the previous stage was tight, the final round was even closer. Both these pubs were championing the cause of real ale superbly, although each pub was very different.

The New Inn is anything but new. It dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and features a wood burner and old oak beams in the quiet, cosy

bar. It's a small, friendly village local with a great atmosphere in the bar and also has a no-smoking, candle-lit dining room.

By contrast, the Check Inn, a modernised pub, is almost situated on the hard shoulder of the M4 between Junctions 15 & 16! It's a genuine free house serving around eight real ales at any time and the guest beers, which are usually from local and independent brewers, change frequently. Traditional cider is also available. It offers excellent value for money and as well as the outstanding beer, good home-cooked food is available. Both the beers and food are very reasonably priced.

It was a shame that one pub had to lose, but in the end it was decided that the New Inn at Halse be named as the CAMRA 2004 South West Regional Pub of the Year.

As well as the features already mentioned, this outstanding pub usually sells two real ales from its own brewery, Somerset Electric, as well as an ever-changing guest beer. It also sells a local traditional cider. Licensee Mark Leadeham was obviously delighted at winning. Commenting on the award, Mark said, "I believe achievement and success can only be the result of endeavour and not luck. That's why I'm delighted with the news that the New Inn is now CAMRA's South West Pub of the Year. This is truly fantastic news. I always knew the New Inn possessed the potential to be singled out from the other pubs around. It's a very special place for me and I am incredibly proud to be its proprietor."

Mark also went on to praise his loyal staff and customers, past and present, and looks forward to welcoming new customers in the future.

If you wish to visit or stay at this pub (the pub offers B&B), it is situated off Junction 25 of the M5, and is located off the B3227, which is signed from the A358 (Ordnance Survey reference OS142280). The pub's telephone number is 01823 432352 or visit [www.NewInnHalse.co.uk](http://www.NewInnHalse.co.uk). Other interests nearby include the West Somerset railway, which is approximately one and a half miles away, and the Quantock Hills and Exmoor National Park.

The New Inn at Halse will go forward to the next stage of the competition, when it will be judged against 14 other regional winners.

*Pete Bridle*

### 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

# My favourite six British pubs

OVER the years I have been lucky enough to travel extensively throughout Britain, giving me plenty of opportunity to check out Good Beer Guide pubs in other parts of the UK. Recently I thought it might be interesting to come up with my top six pubs and try to explain what makes them special for me.

After much head scratching I finally came up with the following six. I am afraid that none of them is very close to Bristol but that may possibly be a case of familiarity breeding contempt! (The Rose and Crown in Iron Acton still came close though.)

I have listed them in alphabetical order, as I am not inclined to decide between them any further. They are each very different from the others but they all have one thing in common – great beer!

## BARTON ARMS

144 High Street Aston, Birmingham  
0121 3335988 [www.barton-arms.co.uk](http://www.barton-arms.co.uk)

This magnificent building, incongruously set amongst high-rise flats and dual carriageways, was astonishingly allowed to close by its previous owners and lay idle for a few years. Mercifully, the small Oakham brewery of Peterborough came to the rescue and reopened it in 2003. It now offers several guest beers from micro-brewers as well as the excellent Oakham beers, and hosts frequent beer festivals. In addition there is a wide range

of foreign beers – it remains the only pub in the UK in which I have found my idea of the world's greatest beer, *Westvleteren 12*, a mighty 12 per cent ABV Belgian beer that is even very hard to find in its own country – actually on sale. In addition, the pub serves up superb authentic Thai food at very affordable prices. The real reason for it making it into my top six, though, is the spectacular pub interior which almost defies description – it has magnificent fittings, a wonderful staircase and the most amazing tiled decorations. I have visited on three occasions in the last year and still look at it in awe.

*Open all day.*

## BLUE ANCHOR

50 Coinagehall Street, Helston, Cornwall  
01326 562821

This is a very historic, thatched-roofed pub in deepest Cornwall. It is one of the few remaining of the original brew pubs that survived the culling of breweries in the 1960s and 1970s. "Spingo" beers are brewed here and people travel from far and wide to sample the beer and the pub. The long serving owner retired in 1993, but Simon and Kim Stone took over and have kept things very much the same. They have recently acquired the building next door and opened a superb bed & breakfast at very reasonable prices. This is very useful as Spingo beers are unusually strong, and Helston


has unusually deep gutters! Until a few years back, the weakest beer was "middle" at 5.3 per cent, with two others at 6.7 per cent and 7.6 per cent. Jubilee has now been added at 4.6 per cent. I have visited on three occasions – my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday and last November. More by accident than design, it coincided with the rugby World Cup Final! All three occasions, not surprisingly, ended in a somewhat inebriated evening, and it is the "craic" that really makes this pub – it is brimming with character and characters of all sorts. Strangers are welcome and the mood is always warm and jolly. I will never forget watching the final at nine o'clock in the morning with a pint of Spingo and a free bacon sarnie in such great company. It became a very long, tipsy day, finishing back in the pub where a rock band had struck up in the small skittle alley, yet thanks to the thick walls could not be heard twenty yards away in the pub! I swear that the staff were having an even better time than us.

*Open all day.*

## CLOCKWORK BEER COMPANY

153-155 Cathcart Road Glasgow  
0141 6490184

I only recently discovered this outstanding establishment but have contrived to visit it twice this year. It is situated in an unpromising drab suburb of Glasgow, very near



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<b>Molennium</b> 4.5%alc Deep amber coloured premium ale	<b>Molegrip</b> 4.3%alc Rich ruby red, malty Autumn brew
<b>Landlord's Choice</b> 4.5%alc Dark, strong and smooth happy bitter	<b>Moel Moel</b> 6.0%alc Wonderfully warming Winter ale
<b>Molecatcher</b> 5.0%alc Copper coloured ale with spicy hop aroma	

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Hampden Park football ground (see picture elsewhere in this issue). It is on my list for a number of reasons, but primarily because it offers the most impressive all-round list of beer and other beverages that I have yet come across. Six ever-changing guest beers from small brewers are complemented by up to nine beers brewed on the premises – including stouts, old ales and an American-style IPA. Their real speciality lies in making fruit beers – on our last visit a raspberry wheat, banana beer and the most gingery ginger beer you will ever experience. I care little that some of the home brews are not technically “real ale” as I enjoy the taste anyway. As if this were not enough, they have quite a few quality foreign beers on draught; 75 Belgian beers in bottles, including many rarities and fruit beers; and odd beers from elsewhere. If you like single malt whiskey you will also be impressed with the huge, high quality range. Belgian Jenevers and Polish fruit vodkas also feature. The pub has ample seating on two levels, a large no-smoking family area, and does food all day. It really does come close to having something for everybody. The other striking thing is that everything seems exceedingly fairly priced and much cheaper than elsewhere – maximum choice without the premium charge – wonderful!

*Open all day.*

#### FATCAT

**49 West End Street, Norwich, Norfolk**  
**01603 624364 [www.fatcatpub.co.uk](http://www.fatcatpub.co.uk)**

Whilst the Clockwork has the greatest overall range of beverages, the Fat Cat has the best range of British real ales that I have discovered. On my last two visits, no less than 28 beers have been on offer at a time – most on hand pump, but others straight from the cask. This pub, in a quiet residential street about half a mile from Norwich city centre,

deservedly won the CAMRA National Pub of the Year award in 1998. It features beers from all over and is very strong on supporting local small brewers, of which there are many in East Anglia. Quality foreign beers, including fruit beers, are available on both draught and in the bottle. Food is limited to very good value rolls and tremendous home-made pork pies. We have always been made to feel very welcome and amazingly I have yet to try a single beer that has been in anything other than top condition. How they achieve this when other pubs struggle to keep two beers going is one of life's great mysteries. It is even more amazing when you consider that Norwich has probably the greatest concentration of genuine free houses offering big ranges of beers in the UK.

*Open all day.*

#### OLD CROWN

**Hesket Newmarket, Cumbria**  
**01697 478288**

I only visited this famous pub, at the very Northern end of the Lake District, for the first time in September this year, but I will be going back as soon as possible – especially having noticed a nice looking B&B a few doors away! It is the tap for the village brewery, situated behind the pub since 1988. I had tried the beers, without being especially impressed, at a number of beer festivals in the 1990s. I then read that a co-operative of local people had bought the pub and brewery to prevent it from possible closure in 1998. Whilst on holiday in Cumbria, my lovely wife volunteered to drive me there – and what a revelation it was! All seven of the brewery's regular beers were on sale and each was superb – ranging from *Great Cock up Porter* at 3 per cent to *Old Carrock* at 6 per cent. This is a very small and cosy pub with three tiny rooms and the welcome we felt there was amongst the best we have experienced. We asked about dinner and were

quickly accommodated, even though they were obviously struggling to cope with demand (best to book next time!) and the simple menu included some inventive home-made curry dishes – very tasty. We found ourselves chatting to any number of strangers and the friendly landlord. Three hours passed very quickly.

*This is the only one of my six not open all day. Closed Monday and Tuesday lunch, open 12 to 3 others. Open 5.30 (7 Sunday) to 11 evenings. No food Monday and Tuesday.*

#### WATERMILLINN

**Ings, Cumbria (off A591 just east of Windermere)**

**01539 821309 [www.watermillinn.co.uk](http://www.watermillinn.co.uk)**

This pub lies at the opposite end of the Lake District in a tiny rural hamlet, served by buses and close to Windermere. We have visited on four occasions and stayed at the pub twice – and staying is what I would recommend that you do. The rooms are reasonably priced and very comfortable. The food is varied and very good. Both bars have no-smoking areas – one welcomes families, the other is OK for dogs. However, what really catches the eye is the bewildering array of 16 hand pumps on the bar, offering a mix of regular beers and ever-changing guests from micros all over the UK. Blackboards above the bar list the full range. Milds, porters and stouts all often feature. Amazing to think, especially given the huge number of awards displayed on the walls, that it was only converted from a guest house to a pub in 1990! Another unusual feature is that one of the permanent beers is the very rarely spotted *Lees Moonraker* from Manchester – a wonderful dark creation not to be messed with at 7.5 per cent ABV. Indeed, I recommend that you do as I do – stay at the Watermill, and order a Moonraker at bedtime to take to your room – you won't need the sleeping pills. Sweet dreams!

*Open all day.*

*Vince Murray*



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# Cider Sisters

**NOW that 2004's nearly over, we're finally going to get round to congratulating local heroes Thatcher's on the occasion of their centenary.**

They're one of our real favourites, and 100 years on are doing more than most to bring new drinkers to cider. As a sign of their success, they hosted the first ever cider tasting session at the BBC Good Food Show this year, aided by famous wine critic Oz Clarke.

Apparently, following our lead, Oz Clarke has started writing about cider, but we're not overly worried about the competition – while he might know a lot about wine, its unlikely that Oz is ever going to bring you tales of cider-fuelled carol-singing and mud-sliding in Porlock, which is where this article is heading.

Picture the scene – a frosty Christmas night, a full moon, and the stormy Somerset sea only yards away. Porlock was thronged with Christmas revellers, free mince pies and mulled wine on every corner – not a bad offer, but we were after something else. And we did find plenty of cider, but as usual our notes let us down and the names of the pubs we ended up in are largely lost to history. We had a great session of karaoke carol singing in one of

them (where a man in a very unattractive leather jacket claimed to be the Laird of Taunton, heir to a cider fortune, but his conspicuously short arms and long pockets didn't impress us much and we moved rapidly on).

After some chips that tasted like the potatoes were still covered in earth, we settled in at the wonderful **Ship Inn**, where time seemed to have no meaning and the barman seemed to be responsible for running half of Porlock (caravan rentals, funerals, paper-deliveries and cider-vending seemed to be just the tip of the iceberg). The Ship also has a famous beer engine, which will probably mean more to you Pints West readers than it did to us, but we tried to express some appropriate enthusiasm.

So what were we drinking? Mostly Perry's farmhouse, described somewhat mysteriously in our notes as "medium blend, soft but clearer than Barrow-In-Furness" (eat your heart out, Oz Clarke). It was still, not too sweet but fruity, and making ourselves thoroughly at home in the inglenook, we managed to get through quite a bit of it very happily.

The Ship is a really friendly pub and a good base for exploring Exmoor. We had



started our evening with a moonlit drive over the moors, but scared ourselves by constantly talking about the Beast so had to come back early. We had another go in the cold light of day the following morning, but deciding to take the quick route down a big wet hill as we were feeling a bit seedy and had had enough, sister no. 1 lost her footing, took a nose-dive, and was next seen at the foot of the hill, almost unrecognisable under a head-to-foot coating of mud. This left sister no. 2 back at the top, laughing so hard she was ill. What a festive scene.

So readers – enjoy cider in moderation this Christmas, and a happy new year to all.

*Freya and Erica McLuckie  
("Cider Inspectors")*

## Pubs and post boxes

**On the track of post boxes near Good Beer Guide pubs — well any excuse...**

A COUPLE of months ago I popped a letter into the post box facing the sports field at Old Down and for once looked at it with more attention. I had just assumed in the past that ER stood for Elizabeth Regina, but on this day noticed that the box bore a king's crown, no dimple, and not a queen's crown, and that it was in fact an Edward VII box. Luckily **The Old Fox** is just around the corner, and there I could enjoy a pint of Black Rat cider and think about these things. There is a fine vine on the wall outside and I keep meaning to ask the landlord if he makes wine from the grapes. The food here is good, a bit unusual, and good value.

There is a Queen Victoria box in the wall in Grove Street, Blackboy Hill. Just down the road and up the hill opposite and you are in **The Port of Call**, an oasis of calm and in the right place to prepare for a shopping expedition or recover from one. If after a visit you feel the need, I cannot recommend highly enough the superb Victorian urinal at the top of Blackboy Hill.

For a look at a George V box go to Wellington Hill where you will find one in the wall of the Horfield Rectory. This is a good excuse to visit the excellent **Wellington**, Bristol Pub of the Year 2004. There is always a good pint of Bath Spa here and usually an interesting guest beer. So far I have not had the excitement to tackle the big range of Belgian beers including Delirium Tremens at 9 per cent. This is one of the few pubs in Bristol selling decent crisps and although there is background music it is not mucous and is quite pleasant. Pity about those paintings though.

Edward VIII boxes are very rare and only 271 were manufactured, many of which have now been removed or replaced. Imagine my delight when I found two of these rarities in Clevedon, one in King's Road and the other in St Michael's Avenue. To recover from this excitement it was lucky that **The Plough**, Congresbury is just ten minutes down the road. Here one can sink into one of those semi-collapsed but oh so comfortable armchairs and start to work one's way through the fine range of ales. I have noticed the cribbage table. The only one I have seen but I suppose they are quite common.

Before retiring to **The Lamplighters** have a look at the George VI box in Nibley Road, Shirehampton. The last time I was there they had Deuchars champion ale on and what more pleasant place to spend a sunny summer evening admiring the boats across the river? The food's good value as well.

There are plenty of Elizabeth II boxes about but I would choose the one at Littleton on Severn because **The White Hart** is just thirty seconds away. No music, no machines and plenty of nooks and crannies. The Young's bitter is always on form and they still sell the four bottles for £5. The food, to me, is a tad expensive but I have always enjoyed it and feel full afterwards. Notice the log baskets. They always bring rapture to my mind.

For something different you may fancy a trip to Holwell, Bishop's Caundle in Dorset where you will find the oldest box (1850s) in the country. Notice the vertical slit. **The Digby Tap** in Sherborne looks a good bet. I have visited neither but hope to put this right this summer.

*Martin Duckworth*

*Well this is perhaps the most unusual excuse for visiting pubs I've heard of. Ed.*



# Cider activities

## What we did in October

**OCTOBER was designated as Cider Month by the Campaign for Real Ale. The Bristol & District branch organised the following local activities to promote real cider.**

### Saturday 9th October

Trip to Much Marcle, including visits to Westons, Lyne Down and Gregg's Pit cider producers. This trip was full (in more ways than one) and everyone had a great day.

### Thursday, 14th October

A pleasant social evening spent in Cotham Porter Stores – drinking their great cider of course.

### Thursday, 28th October

Southville Cider Saunter (arranged in conjunction with North Street Traders). This met at 7pm at the Apple Tree, Philip Street, then on to the Holy Cross, Dean Lane, then up to the Coronation, then over the river to the Orchard, Hanover Place, and back again to finish at the Avon Packet, Coronation Road.

Those who went the full distance were certainly flagging by the time last orders was called! This event was well advertised in the local press and it was good to see people who weren't CAMRA members also joining in at least some of the pubs on the route that night – including the large female group that appeared in the Avon Packet at the end of the night.

As well as the fun side of promoting cider, CAMRA sought to raise some serious issues...

### CAMRA's call for action to protect traditional orchards

As CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, launched its second National Cider & Perry Month, the consumer group called for further action from DEFRA to ensure traditional apple and pear orchards are not grubbed up in response to the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy.

DEFRA has clarified that although land used for permanent crops, including orchards, will not qualify for subsidies under the EU single payment scheme, land in dual use, such as traditional grazed orchards, will be able to claim subsidy under certain circumstances. The general rule of thumb contained in EU guidance

on the scheme states that orchards in dual use with a maximum of 50 trees per hectare will be eligible for the scheme, but DEFRA is considering the possibility of allowing greater flexibility for orchards and plans to publish its findings in the next couple of weeks.

The new Environmental Stewardship Scheme, which will replace the Countryside Stewardship Scheme next year, should offer support for traditional orchards which are of conservation value.

However, CAMRA claims that further action is required to protect traditional orchards. The group is calling for:

- An interpretation by DEFRA of the EU rules which means that all traditional grazed orchards will be eligible for subsidy under the single payment scheme,
- That the forthcoming Environmental Stewardship Scheme ensures support for all eligible orchards of conservation value,
- That DEFRA monitors traditional apple and pear orchards to identify any attempts to grub up old orchards.

CAMRA has been running a petition since March this year calling on DEFRA to ensure traditional orchards are not lost as an unnecessary consequence of the CAP reforms. Nearly 3,500 consumers have signed the petition.

Mike Benner, Chief Executive of CAMRA, said, "We are pleased that DEFRA is responding to our concerns about how CAP reforms could threaten Britain's prized traditional apple and pear orchards, but they need to do more to



prevent unnecessary loss. We believe that all traditional orchards should be supported via the single payment scheme or the Environment Stewardship Scheme. It is important that DEFRA monitors the effects of the CAP reforms on traditional orchards to ensure they are not being grubbed up for the wrong reasons or due to poor information available to growers."

National Cider & Perry Month runs each year throughout October and is CAMRA's annual celebration of traditional real ciders and perries.

Gill Williams, CAMRA's Director of Cider & Perry Campaigning, said, "Real cider & perry, made naturally from traditional apple and pear varieties, is one of the best drinking experiences in the World. Well over 90 per cent of the cider drunk in Britain is big brand pasteurised and fizzy, yet there are approximately 120 traditional producers selling their ciders and perries through hundreds of pubs and bars. National Cider Month is all about convincing people to give this natural and delicious alternative to the usual a try."

## Price lists

A GRIPE of mine is going into a pub or club and not knowing how much a drink will cost. This should never occur because all licensed premises must display an up-to-date price list of drinks (and food) available.

So what constitutes a price list? Well it should contain at least 30 items if more than 30 items are on offer or all items if less than 30 are for sale. But it is not quite as simple as it may seem. If the pub offers more than five items in a category (e.g. beers, wines, spirits, pre-mixed alcopops, soft drinks, etc.) then a sample of five must be listed, but if less than five are

available then all must be listed.

The price list should also state the unit by which the drink is sold (pint or half pint for beer, 125ml or 175ml for wine, and 25ml or 35ml for spirits. Most importantly, in my opinion, the price list must be easy to read and visible from the customer's side of the bar and not obscured by anything.

So if you're in a pub now, take a look around to see if they are complying with the law. If you need to contact Trading Standards there are details for Bristol and surrounding areas on the inside back page, or contact your local council.

*Pete Tanner*

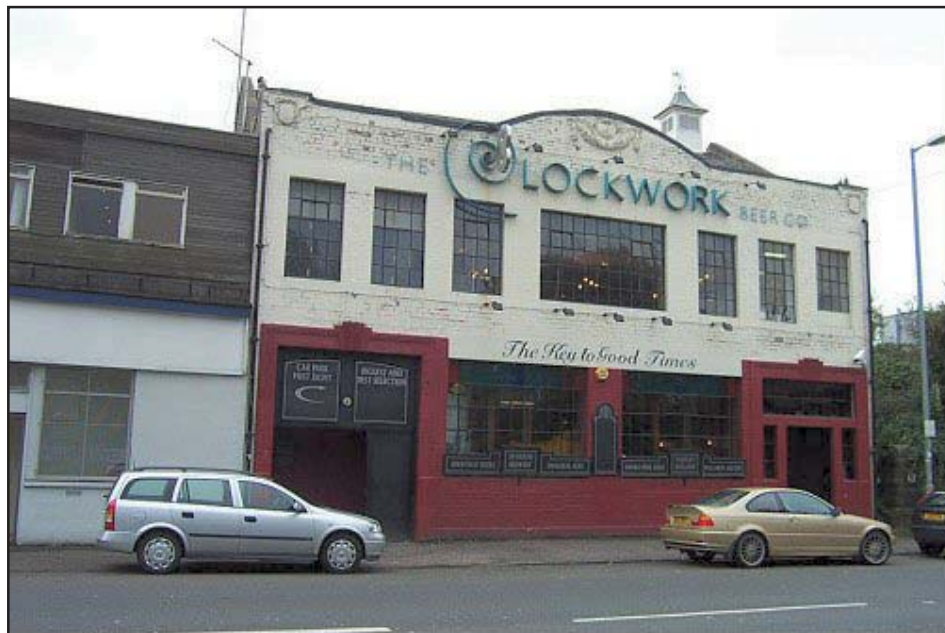
# Like Clockwork in Scotland

THESE are great times for the traveller. With an air fare courtesy of Easy Jet at just £36 for Bristol to Glasgow return, Vince Murray and I ventured north of the border to visit Glasgow and Edinburgh, catch up on some sights (actually very few as it turned out), and visit the cream of the pubs in these two cities.

Our flight leaving Bristol at 7.10 a.m. got us up to Glasgow for 8.15 a.m., and as we were travelling light with only hand luggage – naturally including the CAMRA Good Beer Guide – we soon found ourselves on the City Link bus to Glasgow City centre. From there it was straight to Queen Street station, where we took the next train to Edinburgh Waverley, arriving happily for pub opening time.

Close to the station, the **Guildford Arms** at the east end of Princes Street was our first stop. An Edwardian-style hostelry, it is the only pub I can recall with a revolving door! A thread running through our day was our attempts to find TVs showing the England versus Australia one day cricket game which was taking place at Birmingham on the same day – not an easy task in a country not renowned for its devotion to our summer game. Finding a TV tuned as we desired, and good beer from Atlas brewery, it was not easy to move on, but of course we did, going next to the **Abbotsford**.

This is an interesting historic pub, but which sadly seems to have been turned over to dining, as every seat was laid up for eating. So pausing only for a swift half, we moved on to the equally historic **Oxford Bar** in Young Street, which owes its place in the CAMRA National Inventory of historic pubs more to its unchanged nature than to any spectacular features. Small but welcoming, we enjoyed the Caledonian Deuchars IPA as we took in the atmosphere here, of particular interest to Vince as the pub features in Ian Rankin's detective novels, of which he is a big fan. In fact, the



The Clockwork Beer Co.

landlord, on whom the character of the “professor” is based, was present behind the bar, giving a strange blend of truth and fiction to the proceedings!

Next we visited the trendy **Filmhouse** in Lothian Road, a place similar in concept perhaps to the Watershed Bar in Bristol. Here we were delighted to find Orkney Dark Island, a classic dark beer, and as a contrast, Arran Blonde from Arran brewery. Both were in top condition, if served slightly on the warm side.

A fairly stiff walk took us past the doomed Fountain brewery to the **Golden Rule**, a very well known alehouse. Sadly, it seemed to be living on past glories, so we soon moved on to **Thomson's**, located in Morrison Street, a very pleasant bar featuring a great deal

of carved, light coloured wood, giving an airy feel. Here for the first time on the trip I gave way to one of my other passions, an enjoyment of malt whisky, and sampled the Rosebank, which is sadly no longer distilled, while Vince enjoyed the Belhaven beer.

Pausing only to visit a very useful whisky shop thirty yards up on the same side of the road (Vince is still raving about the 17-year-old miniature bottle of Ardbeg he purchased) we moved on to **Bert's Bar** in William Street, where to our delight we found an Arran brewery beer festival in progress!

With the friendly bar man being happy to switch the Sky Sports to the cricket, time passed pleasantly, but eventually we dragged ourselves off to the **Blue Blazer** in Spittal



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Street, which is nearly behind the famous castle. Here Heather Grozet was available, and it's always a delight to try beer from this most innovative of breweries. By now the cricket was approaching its conclusion, and we were desperate to see its end. Sadly, the only place we could find showing the game was a dismal theme bar in the Grassmarket, where we toasted England's first one-day victory over Australia for five years with whisky in preference to the all-keg beer range, surrounded by completely uninterested locals.

Happy to move on, we walked uphill to the Old Town's West Bow, where we reached the **Bow Bar**, where I again indulged my passion in whisky with a dram of Glenfarclas, while Vince sampled the always excellent beer served here from the traditional Scottish tall fonts.

Our final stop was **Doctor's** in Forrest Road, a smart modern pub, before we took the return train to Glasgow. My apologies for not giving more details on the range of beer available in some of the pubs, but my memory is rather hazy on some of them!

By the time we returned to Glasgow time was pressing on, and we were anxious to get to what Vince assured me was the *piece de resistance* of our trip, the **Clockwork Beer Co.** in Cathcart Road, Mount Florida. Having dropped our bags off at our hotel, the Premier Lodge located next to Charing Cross station, we went to Glasgow Central station and then on to Mount Florida, which takes you to within a ten-minute walk (passing Hampden Park stadium on the way) of this marvellous pub. Located in a fairly drab suburb, Clockwork has something for everyone. Entering the pub you will see the brewing equipment off to your right, and ahead of you on the left is a long bar, featuring on our visit nine beers brewed on the premises. These were Lager, Bitter, Red Ale beer, Oatmeal Stout, Special Stout (6.2 per cent ABV!), Wheat beer, a Raspberry Wheat beer, and two special beers, on this occasion Banana and Ginger (these do change periodically).

We sampled all nine over the course of our two visits and found them all to be excellent. Added to this, there were six guest beers, including on our visit the superb Lia Fail from Inveralmond brewery. Additionally, there was a good range of draught foreign beers, including a Belgian Kriek, and a very good list of foreign bottled beers. As if this is not enough, an excellent whisky list was also present, with prices farcically low by English pub standards. I felt I had no choice but to sample the 25-year-old Highland Park, sadly the only pricey one! Decent pub food is served all day until 8.45 p.m., 9.45 p.m. from Friday to Sunday. On our evening visit, jazz was being played in the top room, but we stayed downstairs in the comfortable raised area to the opposite the bar. The service was swift and excellent.

Catching the last train back, we found on returning to our hotel that despite being on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor, our room commanded spectacular views of, and more annoyingly, the sounds of the M8 motorway! It was indeed fortunate that we had imbibed freely during the day, or sleep might never have come to us!

After breakfast we headed to the underground line, the "Clockwork Orange", this nickname coming from its amusing orange coloured train carriages. We alighted at Ibrox and visited the stadium of the famous Rangers football club. From here we headed to the **Three Judges** in Dumbarton Road, easily reached from Kelvinhall metro station. The pub seemed to be in the throes of a mainly Yorkshire beer festival. Of the nine beers on, none were Scottish, but as they featured breweries such as Roosters and Daleside we weren't complaining!

Next it was back on to the metro to Hillhead we went to **Tennents** in Byres Road, where Orkney Dark Island and Broughton Old Jock (a superb rare Scottish heavy beer at 6.7 per

cent ABV) featured. The pub has an interesting history, including the "Invasion" of 1971, when the pub was besieged by placard-carrying ladies protesting at the then policy of serving men only!

Now we headed back to town to the **Bon Accord** in North Street, which is near the well-known Mitchell library. Ten beers were on, including Tryst from Falkirk, and Broughton Old Ghillie. Then on to the busy **State Bar** in Holland Street, where we sampled the Rooster's Cream and the Houston Killeen. At this point we returned to Clockwork Beer Co. for a late lunch, and this left us time to take in two more pubs before our flight back.

The first of these was **Blackfriars** in Bell Street, Merchant City. In a smart area, this interesting pub has an imaginative menu, and a welcome sight was Belgian Leffe and Leffe Bruin on the bar. We tried the beer from Williams Bros. and from Houston brewery.

Our final stop was the nearby **Babbity Bowster** in Blackfriars Street. This proved to be a posh gastro-pub/restaurant serving good beer, on our visit Belhaven Fruit Beer and Harviestoun Late Harvest.

We allowed ourselves a final, final stop at the **Counting House**, a typical Wetherspoon pub handy for the Airport Bus stop, where I had the traditional Scottish Caledonian 80/- to finish with.

So it was back to the airport, in the air for 9.15, and back in Bristol shortly after 10 p.m. Nearly two days away for just over £60 plus beer money. You can't go wrong really. But where to next?....

*Phil Cummings*



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# Brilliant Brum

**MEETING up with friends for a day and need a central location that's easy to get to? Then why not try Birmingham?**

This may surprise some readers who do not regard Birmingham as a "sexy" city in beer drinking terms. However, the city does possess three absolute classics, and a range of pubs of differing styles and types, different from our own in Bristol.

And so it was, on a Saturday in August, that we assembled at the **Anchor** in Bradford Street, Digbeth, a ten-minute walk through the new Bull Ring shopping centre from New Street station.

Listed in the CAMRA National Inventory as being of outstanding historical interest, the Anchor is a classic multi-roomed beer drinkers' pub with usually as many as ten beers on, with draught German and Belgian beer also being available. Over the next hour we were able to try some of the beers in the "Olympic" beer festival which was taking place, which featured twenty-five beers!

Gradually we assembled in this splendid hostelry: Rich coming from Bristol; Vince and I from Kidderminster (following on from our visit to the outstanding Worcester CAMRA Beer Festival the previous day); Clive from Farnborough; Rob from Barrow-in-Furness; and Paul from Market Harborough.

Getting over the shock of all our respective trains being on time, and eschewing the day's special offer on burgers as it was only 11.30am, regretfully we moved on, crossing over into the adjacent Barford Street, where a five-minute walk led us to the **Lamp Tavern**, a pleasant small pub whose main curiosity is that it is a rare outlet for Stanways Stanney Bitter. This was one of several pubs we visited of the sort rarely seen in Bristol, its main purpose being to serve the workers engaged in the local light industry. Although of the no-frills type, it's clean and tidy and possesses amusing 70's décor. On our visit it was also serving two Everards Beers.

Next we headed back to the city centre and caught a bus out to the fabulous **Barton Arms** in Aston (taking buses 33, 34, 51 or 52 from Dale End, get off at Newtown Swimming Baths and the pub is opposite). National Inventory-listed, this tremendous Victorian palace features astounding fixtures and fittings (not too many pubs have a stained glass window of the last supper, or a 5ft by 4ft tiled hunting scene!). Built as the Mitchells & Butlers flagship, the "Bartons" fell on hard times before being rescued by Peterborough-based Oakham Brewery. It serves Oakham's own range of excellent, mostly hoppy bitters, complemented by a guest, an Oldershaw beer on our visit. The beer washed down very easily the excellent Thai food, which is promptly served, and if you fancy a change



The magnificent Barton Arms

there is a most excellent range of bottled beers, including a major rarity, the mighty Westvleteren from Belgium.

Catching a bus back to town, and wistfully reflecting on the vastly superior public transport Birmingham enjoys compared to Bristol, we alighted near the Millennium Point complex to visit the **Woodman** in Albert Street, another National Inventory pub. We were however dumbfounded to find the pub closed, by order of Environmental Health Officers, as a danger to public health!

Faced with this situation, the Good Beer Guide was consulted, and we decided to settle on **Horan's Tavern** in Floodgate Street, Digbeth as a substitute. As it turned out we were the only customers, but it would have been a very different story if Birmingham City had been playing at home (the same applies to all Digbeth pubs). An excellent pint of Ansells Mild was served, rather belying the somewhat dilapidated appearance of the pub, which is in need of prompt investment from its owners. The pleasant landlady, a native of Galway in Ireland, also had available for us Ruddles County (shamefully Stella was sampled by one member of our party, who will remain nameless).

Now moving back into the city we visited the **Prince Of Wales**, which lies two minutes walk behind the ICC/NIA/Symphony Hall complex, and has the advantage of being well priced compared to almost all of the nearby Broad Street hostleries. Formerly two rooms knocked into one, this friendly pub features eight regular beers drawn from well-known regional breweries, usually including Ansells, Brains, Timothy Taylor, Adnams, Greene King and Marstons.

Moving past the imposing civic buildings at Victoria Square (sadly lacking the time to visit the German wine festival which was taking place in the square) we visited the third gem of the city, Fuller's **Old Joint Stock** in Temple Row West. A conversion of a splendid, imposing 1860's bank, the pub is a serial award-winner within Fuller's estate. It's easy to see why, as the full range of Fuller's beers is served in absolutely top condition, the guest beer usually coming from Beowulf Brewery. Only one minor objection – why does this marvellous pub need banal piped music?

A visit to the **Old Fox** in Hurst Street, in the Chinese quarter and opposite the Birmingham Hippodrome, which featured Everard's beers and Marston's Pedigree, was our final staging post before we did the five-minute walk to New Street (Moor Street in my case) for our trains home, reflecting on a great day out in an under-rated city.

*Phil Cummings*

## Pub news

The **Anchor Made Forever** at Kingswood has new management and is selling Bass and 6X.

There is a new brewery – the **Westbury Brewery** – located at the **Horse & Groom** in Westbury, Wiltshire. The first brew, Early Daze (4.1 per cent ABV) went on sale on 23rd October.

*Norman Spalding*



# The Richmond Spring

THERE is a new man at the helm of the Richmond Spring in Clifton who has great ambitions for it in terms of its real ales and ciders.

Ron Kirk took over the pub just a few months ago, back in August. He inherited a Scottish Courage pub that sold Courage Best on hand pump plus a vast array of fizzy keg products.

Despite much resistance from Scottish Courage, he persisted in his efforts to bring quality real ale to the place. And it is paying off.

On the bar now are four hand pumps dispensing Courage Best (still popular), Theakston's XB (the landlord's favourite beer from the area he grew up in), and two changing guest beers. Chalk boards give details of the current and forthcoming beers you can look forward to.

Recent beers have included Deuchars IPA (champion beer of Britain a couple of

years back), Reverend James, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, and Marston's Old Empire.

For the period leading up to Christmas and the New Year, the chalkboard promises Directors Winter Warmer, Gale's Robin's Revenge, Bateman's Rosey Nosey, Wells Winter Cheer, Marston's Christmas Ale, and Theakston's Old Peculier.

If sales continue the way they've been going, Ron may even introduce a third hand pump for guest beers – if Scottish Courage let him clear out some of the obtrusive keg fonts to make way for one, that is.

The pub itself comprises three bars. The one on the left has a big screen which shows Sky sports and other programmes. The one on the right may be used for occasional functions, perhaps music, comedy or open mic nights. Squeezed between the two is the cosy middle bar



Photo from Duncan Shine's web site at [www.britishpubguide.com](http://www.britishpubguide.com)

dubbed the "Cider Press". Here are located traditional cask and keg ciders. There is of course no restriction – you are at liberty to enjoy any drink in any bar.

The pub opens all permitted hours, and serves food between 11 and 3, and 6 and 10.30. Evening meals are authentic Thai cuisine.

SP

# A Brummie checks out Bristol

I WAS tired of celebrating my birthday in pubs in Birmingham so I decided to go somewhere different, to the only large city in England I'd never visited, Bristol.

After leaving the splendour of Temple Meads station, designed by the city's most famous son, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, we first of all visited the **Portwall Tavern**, which could be described as a back-street boozer if it wasn't on a main road. The pub was basically furnished and intimate and the beer of choice was the seasonal *Gale's Trafalgar*. So impressed was I with it that I took the unusual step on big pub crawls of having two pints of the same beer.

Suitably refreshed, and after indulging in some hill climbing via the quaintly named Christmas Steps, we arrived at **Zerodegrees**, Bristol's newest brewpub and the second in this chain. The pub is spacious, light, comfortable and fitted out with chrome furniture, leather settees and several very large Sky TV screens showing Sky Sports. Not only is it an acceptable place to entertain business colleagues or your partner the beers are pretty good too.

There is a range of four regulars: a wheat ale, a black lager, a pilsner and a pale ale (actually the same colour as a standard bitter), plus a changing special (mango wheat on my visit). We went through the complete range and I found the wheat ale and the black lager outstanding and the mango wheat a bit tasteless. The pub is to be congratulated for etching a diagram of the brewing process on the wall.

We continued gaining altitude and adjourned to **Smiles Brewery Tap**, which is in the same street, so no chance to sober up after

all that beer and no food. This is an intimate pub adjoining the brewery and is probably the only pub in Bristol to serve the full range of Smiles' beers. The pub is friendly, if slightly crowded on the occasion of our visit.

We then had a brief break to check into our hotel and got a taxi back to the Hotwells area to savour the **Bag O'Nails** (Bristol's equivalent of our Anchor only smaller), a free house serving a large range of beers mainly from South West micro-breweries. This pub isn't in the current Good Beer Guide due to change of licensee, but no doubt will be a strong contender for inclusion next year.

It was then up yet another hill to the **Hope & Anchor**. This is a slightly different pub to the **Bag O'Nails**, much more studenty and New Age, but still with an impressive array of real ale, and by the looks of it serving quite decent and reasonably priced food.

There were only two more pubs to be visited on the Saturday night, both of which were near the hotel in the eclectic suburb of Montpellier, which reminded me of my old stamping ground when I lived in Brighton. We visited the **Olde England**, which promised much to me as a cricket fan because allegedly WG Grace used to drink there. A standard Wadworth's tied house is the impression we came away with.

And so to the final pub of the evening the extremely alternative **Cadbury House** which isn't in the Good Beer Guide but as it was near our hotel we thought we'd give it a try. This pub has three handpumps dispensing Pedigree, Old Speckled Hen and a guest ale, which my mate Dave unfortunately snaffled the last pint of. The pub was OK and the bar staff were quite friendly.

I emerged from our accommodation the next morning very tired, but was fortified by a very agreeable cooked breakfast and ready for the leisurely walk back into town, along the way getting seduced by the goodies in the Italian deli in Picton Street, and resisting the temptation of both the local massage parlours, especially the one that actually gave directions to the discreet entrance! We went for a walk along the wharf and visited the Bristol Industrial Museum until the pubs opened.

Most of Sunday was spent revisiting pubs we went to the previous day. The only new pub was a little gem, the Wickwar-owned pub near the Hippodrome, the **White Lion**. This is a very small pub which had four Wickwar beers on sale, of which my favourite was the *Cotswold Way*. It looked like it would only accommodate about twenty or so drinkers, and our advice is not to get too light headed because the gents is down a very tight spiral staircase. It does, however, have a few tables outside for al fresco drinking (not necessarily to be recommended in mid-October). We did have one pint outside, though this did somewhat inhibit my tendency for repeat trips to the bar to partake of the gorgeous cheese chunks provided for their Sunday lunchtime drinkers.

Bristol has a lot to recommend it: large enough to be lively but not too large to be impersonal; nice architecture and a well appointed city centre; it felt safe to be on the streets; and a commendably high density of real ale pubs. The only downside was I never found a fridge magnet worth buying to add to my collection. For that reason, and because I never looked round the Industrial Museum completely, I'll need to make a return visit!

Clive Walder

# Get three months membership for free – join CAMRA by direct debit



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Pints West 64

Bristol & District (AVN)

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## Membership matters

I AM pleased to say that as 2004 draws to a close membership for the Bristol and District branch of CAMRA has gone through the 1,150 barrier and, at the time of writing, stands at 1,157.

Membership rates will be going up in the new year to £18 single and £21 joint, so if you are thinking of joining, then send your forms in before the end of the year to enjoy the benefits of membership at the old rates of £16 single and £19 joint. Why not make membership a Christmas present for a loved one?

Alternatively you can opt to join by direct debit by filling in the mandate opposite to take advantage of three months' free membership, albeit at the increased rates of £18 single and £21 joint – still a great bargain though. This is the first increase in membership rates for several years.

Members are reminded that there is a members-only section on the national CAMRA website ([www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk)). To access it, go to the "members log in" link – use your membership number without any leading zeros as your user name, and your postcode (upper-case) without a gap as your password.

I am frequently asked which pubs generate the most applications to join CAMRA and I can track them if people fill in the box on the membership form. At the moment I can say that no pub stands out as being the winner and that applications have been coming from all over.

Pete Tanner

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## Diary

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

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

**Sun 12 Dec** - Christmas party at Holy Cross Social Club, Dean Lane, Southville. Start 7.30pm.

**Thurs 16 Dec** - Clifton crawl. Start Richmond Springs, 7.30pm.

**Sun 2 Jan** - "Westbury Wobble". Start Post Office Tavern, 12.00pm.

**Wed 12 Jan** - Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia, 8pm.

**Tues 18 Jan** - Mendips pub survey trip. Depart from the Cornubia, 6.45pm.

**Wed 26 Jan** - Branch meeting, Horts City Tavern, Broad Street, Bristol, 8pm.

**Tues 1 Feb** - East Bristol pub survey trip. Depart from the Cornubia, 6.45pm.

**Tues 8 Feb** - Hotwells crawl. Start Hope & Anchor, 7.30pm.

**Wed 9 Feb** - Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia, 8PM.

**Tues 15 Feb** - Cross City pub survey trip. Depart from the Cornubia, 6.45pm.

**Wed 23 Feb** - Branch meeting, Horts City Tavern, Broad Street, 8pm.

*There may an extra pub survey trip sometime in January.*

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

### THANKS TO THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

Norman Spalding  
Martin Duckworth  
Freya McLuckie  
Bob Thackwray  
Erica McLuckie  
Phil Cummings  
Richard Brooks  
Laurie Gibney  
Duncan Shine  
Vince Murray  
Robin E Wild  
Lesly Huxley  
Clive Walder  
Pete Tanner  
Mark Steeds  
Tim Nickolls  
Phill Butler  
Pete Bridle

**Editor: Steve Plumridge**

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

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

or by email to [steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk)

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

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**Subscriptions:** to be put on a mailing list (for UK addresses) send a cheque for £2.50 to the editor, *made payable to "Steve Plumridge"* (or some 2nd class stamps up to that value).

**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...

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# Bristol Beer Festival tickets



THE 2005 BRISTOL BEER FESTIVAL will take place at the Brunel Shed, Temple Meads on Friday 4th and Saturday 5th March. The times and ticket prices of the four sessions are:

<b>Friday lunchtime</b>	<b>11.30 - 3.00</b>	<b>£3.50</b>
<b>Friday evening</b>	<b>6.00 - 11.00</b>	<b>£5.00</b>
<b>Saturday lunchtime</b>	<b>11.30 - 4.00</b>	<b>£4.50</b>
<b>Saturday evening</b>	<b>7.00 - 11.00</b>	<b>£4.00</b>

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

<b>Off The Rails</b>	<b>Station Approach, Weston-super-Mare</b> (01934) 415109
<b>Bridge Inn</b>	<b>Passage Street, Bristol</b> (0117) 9499967
<b>Wellington</b>	<b>Gloucester Road, Horfield</b> (0117) 9513022
<b>Plume of Feathers</b>	<b>Hotwell Road, Hotwells</b> (0117) 9298666 <a href="http://www.plumeoffeathers.com">www.plumeoffeathers.com</a>

They will also be available by post from:

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

Please note this is a postal forwarding address only – tickets will not be sold to callers. Do remember to state which session or sessions you want tickets for and enclose a cheque payable to “**Bristol & District CAMRA**”, together with a stamped, addressed envelope. Please also supply a telephone number and/or email address in case of queries.

See you at the festival!

## Bristol Beer Factory update

**IN an issue of Pints West earlier this year, we reported on plans to reopen the old Ashton Gate brewery. Duncan Shine has been back to see how things are going.**

**A quick recap.** The Bristol Beer Factory is a joint venture to reintroduce brewing to South Bristol on the site of the old Ashton Gate Brewery, home of the Sunrise brand until its closure in 1933. Equipment from the Bristol Beer Company was brought in, and Simon Bartlett – who has experience of setting up new breweries all over the world – was charged with the responsibility of getting the operation up and running.

**First the bad news.** Very few people will have had a chance to taste the venture's first beer. Aside from trial runs, the beer, called *No 7*, has so far only been seen at the recent Nova Scotia beer festival (the Nova Scotia in Cumberland Basin, not Canada). And even then you would have to have avoided blinking

not to miss it. It sold out, to much acclaim, in the first session. I was very disappointed to miss it, but fortunately was in the ideal place to drown my sorrows.

**So why the delay?** Well, the main problem has been with the equipment. The fermenter was quite frankly not doing its job as well as it should have been. Now, when it comes to beer, Simon is something of a perfectionist, so he didn't want to release *No 7* to an eager public until he was absolutely satisfied that it had the right taste and consistency for Bristol's discerning drinkers.

So, the fermenter was modified, a new vent was added, and various other changes – some small, some large – were made until Simon had a brew with which he was truly happy. In fact, the barrel that went to the Nova Scotia – as well received as it was – wasn't quite the finished article.

**Which brings us to the good news.** Simon's commitment to quality is now ready to pay dividends. On my visit, he was kind enough to let me have a taste of his latest test batch, and it is delicious. Around the 4.2 per

cent mark, hoppy with the faintest hint of maltiness thrown in, not too bitter, and dangerously moreish. Simon's plan is to have the beer available to the free trade before Christmas, and hopefully it will be on sale by the time you read this piece.

The Tobacco Factory will be an outlet, as owner George Ferguson is a partner in this venture too, but other free houses have expressed an interest in selling Bristol's newest pint.

We will let you know where it is being sold in future editions of Pints West, but for now look out for *No 7*. Pub landlords interested in taking this beer should contact Simon Bartlett on (0117) 902 6317 or (07746) 950070.

*Duncan Shine*

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*The editor would like to thank Keith Warmington for inviting him onto his BBC Radio Bristol 'drivetime' show recently to talk about Pints West. It is very gratifying to know that people take such an interest in Pints West and the efforts all the people involved put into it.*