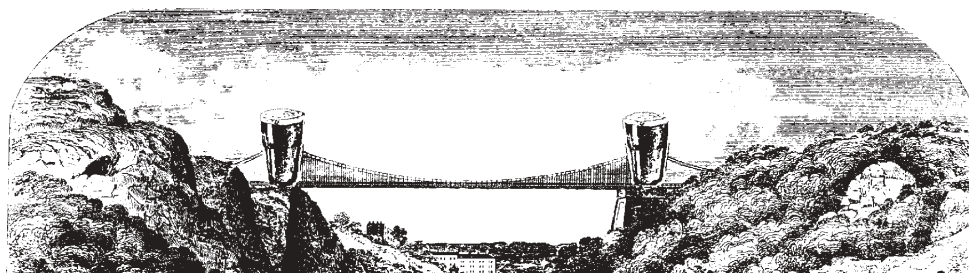




CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

AWARD-WINNING



www.camrabristol.org.uk

No. 67
Autumn
2005

CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

PINTS WEST

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

New brewery opens in Keynsham



THE town of Keynsham, between Bristol and Bath, is once again to have its own real ale micro-brewery.

Situated in a small trading estate off the Bristol Road, the 10-barrel brewery uses equipment that lay unused for three years after the previous business ceased trading.

Head brewer and director John Firth says he will concentrate on providing flavour from his beers, the first of which is the 4.5% ABV *Somerdale Gold*, one of the new 'Golden Ale' category recently recognised by CAMRA. It is a pale coloured hoppy ale, with a floral citrus taste and spicy aroma.

More regular beers will follow, including a lower-gravity bitter and something 'dark and tasty' for the autumn, plus an Xmas Ale and later some seasonal specials.

John is an experienced Craft Brewer, long-term CAMRA member and currently Chairman of the Bristol and District Tasting Panel, so he knows a thing or two about how beers should taste. John says he especially loves the amazing variety of flavours that can be extracted from fresh hops of differing species, by combining them with the highest quality floor-malted barley and true brewers' yeast.

He says, "When I heard that Colin Brook, the landlord of the Old Bank Inn on the High Street in Keynsham, was looking to re-open the brewery, I leapt at the chance to turn my hobby into a business – every full-mash home brewer dreams of having his own micro-brewery. I've spent the summer thoroughly cleaning and preparing the plant, conducting test brewing, and organising supplies; now I'm ready to go, and the new beer will be available at the Old Bank before the August Bank Holiday, and at the Mayor's Arms festival in Redcliffe'.



**Strewth, it's hot work setting up
your own brewery**

And so the Keynsham Brewing Company is born.

If you wish to find out more, perhaps to give the beer a try in your own pub, you can contact John Firth by phone on 01179867889 or 07711 131203; by emailing jonfirth@blueyonder.co.uk; or at the following address:
Keynsham Brewing Co. Ltd., Brookleaze, Stockwood Vale,
Keynsham, Bristol BS31 2AL.

Beer festival round-up

Redcliffe 25-29 August

A beer festival is being organised for the the **Mayor's Arms** in Redcliffe, Bristol to run from Thursday 25th August through to the bank holiday Monday on the 29th. Hopefully this issue of *Pints West* will be out just in time for some readers to catch this event.

This will be an important event for the pub as it will formally declare the pub as a real ale establishment, not something it was particularly renowned for in the past – until Cyril Standbridge took the place on recently. Cyril has a good track record, having previously worked at the Plume of Feathers and the Merchants Arms in Hotwells.

It is expected that there will be up to two dozen beers on offer over the weekend, featuring a wide variety of beer styles and strengths. It will also feature some of the first supplies of Somerdale Gold from the new Keynsham brewery.

Give this pub your support if you can, and maybe we can get Redcliffe featuring more prominently on the real ale map.

Cleeve 27-28 August

The second **Cleeve Rugby Football Club Beer Festival** is on Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th August 2005. Tickets are normally £6 but, if you're in time, can be bought in advance by CAMRA members at the discounted price of £4 from Cleve RFC, Cossham Street, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9EN. Telephone

0117 9575775 for information.

This year they are supporting PROPS. This is a charity raising funds and Providing Opportunities and Support for disabled children.

Shirehampton 10 September

For the sixth year in a row, the **Lamplighters** in Shirehampton will be holding their Real Ale & Music Festival in their spacious garden during the afternoon and evening of Saturday, the 10th of September.

The Lamplighters is a pleasantly located riverside pub, dating from the 18th century, overlooking Pill on the other side of the River Avon. The pub normally has four beers, typically from Bath Ales, Butcombe, Fuller's and others, but one day every September sees the erection of stillage in the garden and a great selection of beers from far and wide, often featuring current or past Champion Beer of Britain finalists.

The pub is only a couple of minutes' walk from the Shirehampton railway station on the Severn Beach line so not difficult to get to. Entry is by advance ticket at £6 (programme, glass and entertainment included), so pop in for yours or give them a call on 0117 9823549.

Bristol city centre 16-18 September

Building on the success of their previous festivals, the **White Lion** in Bristol's city

centre will be holding another event they dub "Bristol's smallest beerfest". The small Wickwar pub will be offering 16 or so beers from around the country between the 16th and 18th of September, some from

handpumps, some directly from casks stillaged in the corner of the pub.

Wedmore 23-25 September

From 23rd to 25th September there is the **"5 & Live" Wedmore real ale festival**, once again to be held in the Wedmore Village Hall. There will be a selection of 32 beers from around the UK, including medal winners from the Great British Beer Festival. For more information on this fund-raising event check their web site at www.wedmorealeale.com.

Bedminster 30 September to 3 October

Just like its relation, the White Lion in the city centre, Wickwar's second pub, the **Princess of Wales** in Bedminster, is getting into the beer festival scene. Following the resounding success of the first one in June it will be holding its second festival from Friday 30th September through to Monday 3rd October. The previous festival featured "beers from the north" – this time it will be "beers from the south". Once again there will be music and food and to accompany the beer – from handpump and stillage – plus "guess the mystery ale".

Winscombe 30 September to 2 October

Wrighton Vale Rotary Club will be holding their fifth Beer and Cider Festival at Winscombe Cricket Club, just off the A38 near Sidcot, where you can enjoy a large and extensive range of beers and ciders in a convivial location.

It takes place from Friday 30th September to lunchtime Sunday 2nd Oct. Opening times and prices are Friday evening 7pm to 12pm, Saturday evening 7pm to 12pm, Sunday lunchtime 12noon to 3pm. Entrance fees are £2 for Friday, £4 for Saturday and £1 for Sunday lunchtime.

Prices include souvenir glass, entertainment, car parking etc. There will be entertainment on both Friday and Saturday evenings. On Friday evening there will be the gentle

The Swan Inn

Tockington

BEER FESTIVAL



7th, 8th & 9th October 2005

Come and join us in our 1st Beer Festival

Tickets on sale now
£5 per ticket

Over 20 real ales available,
Live Entertainment, Hog Roast (Sat)
BBQ's and lots more

Contact Sue Chance for more details.
Tockington Green, Tockington, Bristol BS32 4NJ
01454 614800
3291@greeneking.co.uk

THE ROTARY CLUB OF
WRINGTON VALE
present a
BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL
at Winscombe Recreation
Ground Clubhouse

September 30th
and 1st October

7pm - 12 (both nights)

All profits to Rotary Charities



tones of the Clifton Jazz Band playing traditional tunes, whilst you can savour the varied selection of beers and ciders. On Saturday night you can taste the beers and maybe if you desire dance the evening away to the excellent band the Pocket Rockets, a band who proved to be a great success at last year's festival. To calm down after two nights of excess, Sunday lunchtime will be a gentle affair to have a last chance to polish off any remaining favourites. Please note any beer that remains after the festival will be sold off at discount rates in 5-litre containers.

Tickets may be purchased in advance by post from Wrington Vale Rotary Beer Festival, Highwater, Norville Lane, Cheddar, BS27 3HJ. Send a stamped, addressed envelope and cheque made payable to "Wrington Vale Rotary Club", to arrive before Wednesday 28th September. Any enquiries call Mark on 07702 589617 or directly from Thatcher's Cider Shop, Sandford.

Thornbury 28-29 October

The evenings of Friday 29th and Saturday 30th October see the return of the fifth annual beer festival held at **Christ The King Social Club** in Castle Street, Thornbury.

Friday times are 7.30pm to 11pm, and Saturday's are 5pm to 11.30pm. Entrance is £2 for each session, with twelve real ales to sample at £1.80 a pint – or three pints for £5 – plus hot food and live music.

Hotwells 17-20 November

Thursday 17th to Sunday 20th November are the dates for another of the ever-popular festivals now held twice a year at the **Bag O'Nails** in Hotwells. As in previous years, the pub will be offering forty or more different real ales from all over the country. The pub is not exactly huge, so not all beers can be on at the same time. However, if you popped along on all four days you should get the chance to sample a good proportion of them. The pub will be open all day from noon over the period, with snacks available much of the time. Lovers

of darker beers will be pleased to know that stouts and milds should be featuring.

CAMRA Beer Festivals

Minehead 17-18 September

Don't miss one of the great beer festival venues of the year as September sees the staging of the sixth Somerset Beer Festival on the platform of Minehead Station.

Step off the train straight into the festival. Around 90 beers and ciders from local and country-wide microbreweries will be available, including festival specials. Food will be available all sessions, with entertainment on Saturday evening (singer-songwriter Helena), and Sunday lunchtime (to be arranged).

The festival will be open from 11am to 11pm on the Saturday and 12 noon to 4pm on the Sunday. Admission is free, though purchase of a commemorative glass (£2.50) or hard plastic glass (50p) will be required.

Travel by scenic West Somerset Railway (reduced fare for card-carrying CAMRA members) or by bus from Taunton. Plenty of local B&B accommodation should be available (details from Minehead Tourist Board). For further information call Barrie Childs on 01935 825566.

Bath 14-15 October

In October we can all pop down to the 28th Bath Beer Festival at the Pavilion, North Parade Road, just a five-minute walk from Bath Spa railway station.

The festival is open Friday evening from 6pm to 11pm, Saturday lunchtime from 11am to 3.30pm, and Saturday evening from 6pm to 11pm.

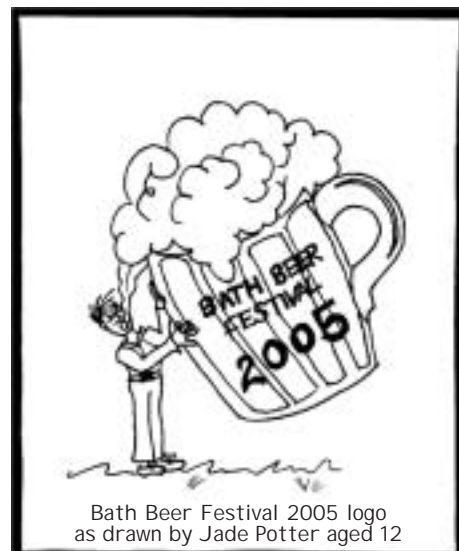
There will be a selection of at least 60 real ales, plus traditional ciders and Belgian beers.

Admission (including programme) is £5 Friday evening, £4 Saturday lunchtime and £4.50 Saturday evening. There will be a £1 discount to card-carrying CAMRA members at each session. Please note though that this discount is claimed on the door – the full price must be paid when ordering tickets in advance.

Advance tickets are available from Steve Hunt, 23 Clearwood, Dilton Marsh, Westbury, Wilts, BA13 4BD. Please state the session(s) required and send your cheque, made payable to Bath & Borders CAMRA, and enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope.

Swindon 13-15 October

Following the success of their 2003 and 2004 festivals, the Swindon branch of CAMRA are to return



Bath Beer Festival 2005 logo as drawn by Jade Potter aged 12

once again to the Old Railway Museum in Faringdon Road for their 2005 festival.

The dates for the Swindon Beer Festival 2005 are Thursday 13th to Saturday 15th October. There will be four sessions: Thursday evening 6pm to 11pm; Friday lunchtime 12 noon to 3.30pm; Friday evening 6pm to 11pm; and Saturday from 12 noon to 8pm. Admission to each session is £2, except for Friday evening which is £3. Friday evening is also advance ticket only.

Please note there will be a restricted choice of beers from Saturday lunchtime onwards, so go early to avoid disappointment!

The admission fee includes a souvenir glass and there will be a free pint for CAMRA members. All sessions will have food available and there will be a T-shirt and memorabilia stand.

For Friday evening only tickets are available in advance; all other sessions are payment on the door. Tickets go on sale Friday 23rd September 2005.

Postal applications for beer festival tickets can be made to Richard James, 6 Ripley Road, Swindon, Wilts. SN1 4DE. Please make cheques payable to "CAMRA Swindon & N Wilts branch" and include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

For further information keep an eye on the Swindon CAMRA web site at www.swindoncamra.org.uk.

SP

The Bag O'Nails

141 St. George's Road, Hotwells,
Bristol BS1 5UW Tel: (0117) 9406776

A Real Ale Pub

Bristol & District CAMRA

Pub Of The Year 2000

Host to two beer festivals a year

At least 12 different real ales a week

Imported German wheat beers
English bottle-conditioned beers
Unpasteurised imported bottled lagers

Web : www.bagonails.org.uk
Email : pub@bagonails.org.uk

LAMPLIGHTERS (Riverside Bar)

Station Road, Shirehampton
Bristol BS11 9XA Tel: 0117 9823549
(2 mins Shire station)

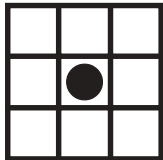
**Sat 10th September
Noon till Dusk
6th Annual**

Real Ale & Music Festival

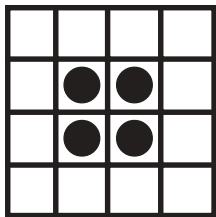
**Entrance by ticket only
£6.00
(includes glass & programme)**

Pint-sized Crosswords

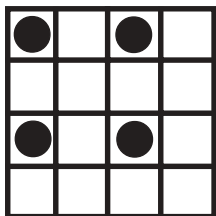
Just for fun. You decide where the answers to the clues go.



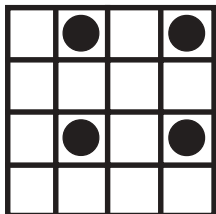
Handled glass
--- Palace
Drip ---
Mash ---
(brewery vessel)



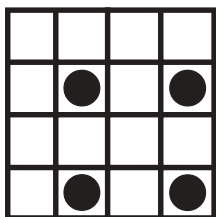
What all ale
should be
Abbey Ales
pub
Quarter pint
Intimate bar



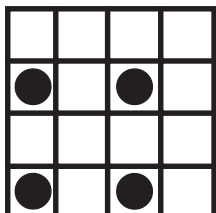
King's ---- (pub
in Kingsdown)
Bath ----
(brewers)
Malt & hops drink
Another pub
in Kingsdown



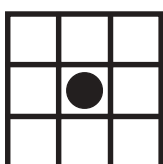
Brewers of Old
Spot & Pig's Ear
Length of ale
White ----
(Wickwar pub)
Dispense from
bottle to glass



Handy beer
volume
Hop ---- (brewery)
Swan ----
Places to drink



India Pale Ales
---- O'Bells
Butcombe ----
Port of ---- (joint
Pub of the Year)



Bittering plant
German beer
style (meaning
"old")
Brewery outlet
--- Vine (defunct
Somerset
brewery)

SP

Smiles to brew in Bristol again

WHEN the brewing of Smiles was moved to Highgate there was a glimmer of hope that a microbrewery might be opened on the site of the Bristol Smiles brewery and that at least some of the Smiles beers would again be brewed in Bristol.

Firm news on this has been scarce, until the following press release was received toward the end of July...



Smiles all round at property deal which sees the return of brewing to the heart of Bristol.

Successful Bristol-based developer, Urban Creation, has celebrated its first year in business by adding yet another intriguing site to the growing list of projects it is working on in the city. Only two months after acquiring the historic Pro-Cathedral, in Clifton, the company has announced that they are to partner the Smiles Pub Company Limited in the redevelopment of the Smiles brewery site in Bristol.

Urban Creation, the Smiles Pub Company Limited and Close Venture Management Limited, have teamed up to work on plans for an exciting sustainable mixed-use scheme at the Upper Maudlin Street site at the top of

Colston Avenue. A Bristol team including architects Narracott Oxford Mills and CSJ Planning, have been appointed to start work on a scheme, which is expected to go forward for planning shortly.

The long term brewing future for Smiles Beer will now be secured with the traditional Smiles pub – The Brewery Tap – being retained and enlarged to include a new micro brewery. Residential accommodation will be provided in the upper parts of the renovated building.

Alistair Mort, Managing Director of Smiles Pub Company, is delighted to be bringing back Smiles to the heart of the city, creating exciting job opportunities and substantially increasing the profile of the Smiles name. "We are committed to investing in and growing our business, and for the customer that equates to quality food, fine ale, and excellent customer service in a relaxed and friendly environment."

Will Fraser Allen of Close Venture Management Limited agrees "We are thrilled to be supporting the return of Smiles brewing to Bristol. The plans for the building enables Smiles to thrive in an environment that respects the integrity of the original pub, and brings the brewing operation into the Twenty First Century."

Darren Sheward, Director of Urban Creation comments: "Our focus in the city is on delivering high quality sustainable developments, and our aim here is to rejuvenate the buildings whilst retaining the character and special quality that is the very essence of the Smiles name. We will certainly look forward to toasting this development in true Smiles style!"

The return of the White Friar



WHITE FRIAR, one of the occasional beers from Bath's Abbey Ales brewery, goes on sale again around the end of August. The beer proved so popular last time it went on sale that Abbey were asking customers to order early to avoid disappointment, as last year it sold out before the beer had even finished brewing.

The 5.0% ABV golden-coloured hoppy ale was originally created as 'Jubilation' to coincide with the Queen's visit to Bath in her Golden Jubilee year. As it was so well received, Abbey Ales re-introduced it – under the name of White Friar – and this year it even comes with a new pump clip design.

Managing Director Alan Morgan commented, "We have always wanted to regularly brew a range of different beers to compliment our best selling Bellringer but the need to meet the demand for our flagship ale takes up nearly

all of our production. Head brewer Martin Langham tries to fit in brewing occasional

beers when he can. Our regular customers are aware how quickly the guests sell and try to order early!"

Abbey Ales started brewing in Bath in 1997 and have won a number of awards for Bellringer, their golden 4.2% best bitter. Delivery is strictly within a twenty-mile radius of Bath's famous Abbey, although Bellringer is available nationally via beer wholesalers.

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

Alan says that White Friar will only be sold locally to pubs in the Bath and Bristol area.

The Rose & Crown is no more



"The Law is an Ass"

AFTER 300 years as a public house, the Rose & Crown at Iron Acton will be converted into a private one. Planning permission was granted by the South Gloucester Development Control Committee on 21 July 2005.

The Campaign for Real Ale and many from the Iron Acton community campaigned long and hard to save the pub – as you may have seen from the previous two issues of Pints West – but ultimately to no avail.

There are apparently two criteria for allowing conversion a pub. One is that it is not a viable business. Locals and CAMRA members had demonstrated that this was not the case. Indeed, there were people interested in buying it and running it as a business, although the licensee would not sell.

The second is that there are similar facilities nearby. This was the killer, as there are two other pubs in Iron Acton. No account was taken of the style of those pubs or the clientele they attract.

So there you have it. Any unscrupulous licensee who wants to cash in on the value of their public house as a private residence (regardless of the history of the pub or its place in the local community) can do so as long as there is another pub nearby.

Expect more rural pub closures soon!

Richard Brooks

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

The Albert Inn closed

WHAT A SURPRISE. Another day, another pub closure, as the Albert Inn faces imminent redevelopment into flats. Famed for its top-class jazz and folk music the pub was sometimes known as the Albert Hole. In addition to the likes of Andy Sheppard and Ronnie Scott, the pub had also been a venue for Bristol & District CAMRA branch meetings in years gone by.

After 25 years at the Albert, landlord Ian Storrer is not at all happy about the way things have worked out. The pub has had a succession of owners who have been reluctant to spend any money on its upkeep in return for the substantial rent he has had to pay. And now the current owners (believed to be a property company) appear to have decided to cash in on its value as housing rather than as a viable business.

Something must be done to stop companies from getting planning permission to change the use of public houses, or there won't be any local or individual ones left!

The Albert Inn closed on Friday, 5th August. The pub has always had plenty of memorabilia, much of it musical, and they are selling this off.

*Richard Brooks
(who took the photos too)*



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**
or collect direct from the brewery
Camden Row, Bath, BA1 5LB
01225 444437

Just £55
(including VAT and delivery)

Delivered to straight your door, anywhere in England and Wales

Shine on the Hill

EVERY issue we ask *Pints West* readers to let us know if there is a part of Bristol (& District) that you would like to see featured in this column. Well, we have been absolutely inundated with an email from Helen Key of the Cotham Porter Stores suggesting we have a little look around 'The Hill'. Well Helen, only too happy to oblige.

Full details and photographs of all the pubs mentioned can be found on the www.britishpubguide.com web site. Landlords and regulars in these pubs are welcome to update the information on the website whenever they like.

PICTURE THE SCENE: your six-year-old son has spent the last two hours dragging you up and down Christmas Steps because he thinks it's Diagon Alley from the Harry Potter stories, and is rather hoping you'll buy him something from *Quality Quidditch Supplies*. Exasperated, you decide you need a drink. But where to go? You can't visit the Three Sugar Loaves because your son keeps calling it the *Leaky Cauldron* and anyway, you covered it in the last issue of *Pints West*.

A shambling, slightly jaded looking figure appears next to you, and clears his throat. "Well, if you head further up the hill, there are plenty of pubs to try". "But Dad," says your son "we can't go to loads of pubs, that's really boring and some of them probably don't allow kids".

"There there," you reassure him "there's no need to worry. You're a fictitious child so I can dispose of you in any way I see fit and the social services won't be able to do a thing about it". So, having sold the little chap to a passing tradesman, you head on up St. Michael's Hill.



The Scotchman and his Pack

The first pub you reach is *The Scotchman And His Pack*, a charming little pub with a suntrap terrace and upstairs pool table. Sadly, at the time of your visit, the pub is closed, but your guide remembers that it has been selling Adnams Bitter, Flowers I.P.A., and Wells Bombardier Best Bitter in the past. You make a note to check it out in time for the next issue and move on.

Almost immediately you come across *Micawber's Ale House*. This is the pub where



Micawber's Ale House

– according to local legend – condemned men used to sup their final pint before being hanged at the top of the hill. Of course it was the Colston Arms in those days, but someone saw fit to change the name to try and lend a fake Victorian ambience to a genuinely historic pub. The beers here are Butcombe Bitter and Brain's S.A.



The Robin Hood

Next, you move up to the *Robin Hood*. A lovely one-bar pub with ornate arches at the front and, inside, stripped floorboards and dark wood furnishings. The beers on offer are from the Wadworth stable, plus guests, with the 6X on particularly good form alongside Summersault.

At the top of the hill you reach *The White Bear*. An old coaching inn complete with a large statue of, erm, a white bear, and a cobbled courtyard. This is a rambling old pub with pool table at the front and a myriad little nooks – but oddly no crannies – in which to sit. An occasional Black Rat cider can be



The White Bear

quaffed here, as well as the London Pride and Courage Best Bitter.

Which sets you thinking... If that is Courage's *Best Bitter*, what must the other stuff have been like? Did John Courage organise some sort of blind tasting all those years ago? You picture the committee saying "Well, Beer A is full-bodied with an inviting, golden tone and a pleasant, slightly fruity flavour; on the other hand, Beer B is a lovely crisp, refreshing ale with a lovely balance of English hops... but I think we'll go with the one that tastes like last week's dishwasher". (Tut tut, you are in a mischievous mood - Ed.)

Your guide tuts slightly, pointing out you shouldn't scoff, and that an awful lot of people drink and enjoy Courage Best Bitter. You tell him that an awful lot of people drink lager too, and actually pay ten pence extra if the word 'cold' appears on the dispenser. "An awful lot of people", you add, warming to the theme, "drink a half-pint of stale chemicals topped up with shaving foam just because it says 'smooth' somewhere on the pump clip".

With a percipience that verges on the uncanny, your guide guesses that you're going to give the Courage Best a miss, and you both enjoy the London Pride tremendously.

Time is pressing, so you hurry past *Bar 155*, the pub that has had more name changes than Liz Taylor, but you notice that London Pride is available on hand pump.



The Highbury Vaults

Next to the *Highbury Vaults*, with its heated rear garden and a myriad crannies – but nary a nook in sight – to sit and sup the selection of Young's beers. There is Young's Bitter, Young's Special and a particularly scrumptious pint of Young's Golden Zest alongside St. Austell Tribute, Bath Gem and Brain's S.A. The Highbury Vaults is still one of the best real ale pubs in Bristol, and you're delighted it hasn't changed in all the years you've known it.

Having completed the St. Michael's Hill section of your walk, your Guide tells you that next is Little Paul Street (behind the houses opposite the White Bear). Here is something of an undiscovered gem. *The Kings Arms* isn't on the way to or from anywhere really, so unless you know about it, you're unlikely to find it by accident. It's been there since 1862, but has a modern feel, and looks over a small green. Bass is on tap, but you plump for a pint of Sharp's Doom Bar while your guide tries the Bath Gem. Both beers are in fine fettle (is 'fettle' ever anything other



The King's Arms

than 'fine'?).

From the Kings Arms you stroll down to *The Bell* in Alfred Place. The Bell is a charming, old-fashioned boozer, which eschews [bless you! – Ed] the trendy, lager-fuelled crowd for a quiet dignity where conversation is king. The beer here is superb, with Abbey Bellringer and RCH Pitchfork on when you visit.

The next pub is the *Kingsdown Vaults*, on the junction between Clevedon Terrace and Kingsdown Parade. Here, you are pleasantly surprised to find that they serve Thatcher's Cheddar Valley and Thatcher's Traditional Cider on handpump. The Cheddar Valley is thoroughly gorgeous, while your guide very much enjoys another pint of Bath Gem.

Acutely aware that this pub crawl is taking up an awful lot of space, you pick your way down to Fremantle Square, and past the barriers into Hillgrove Street North and the *Hillgrove Porter Stores*. Now this is a stonking pub, and much improved over the last



The Bell

few years. Everard's Sunchaser, Butcombe, and St. Austell Tribute are all resident, while Everard's Tiger and the award-winning Caledonian Deuchar's I.P.A. are the guests. The Sunchaser is *to die for*, and the Butcombe is as good here as anywhere in the City.

Penultimate pub is the *Hare On The Hill*, the excellent, flagship pub of Bath Ales, selling the full range of their beers, including Wild Hare. Your guide points out that this is Bath's new Organic beer. It's a citrusy, golden beer with a clean, crisp aftertaste. If you haven't tried it yet, then you need to.

The quest ends back on Cotham Road, in the *Cotham Porter Stores*. Now, the Cotham Porter Stores has long been a favourite pub of yours, with its eclectic mix of locals, workers and even the occasional businessman. Known for selling considerably more traditional cider than beer, the Cotham Porter Stores is a narrow, one-bar pub with an extended drinking area to the rear. Live sport is shown on the telly, with Test Match Cricket always



Cotham Porter Stores

popular. The ciders on handpump are Thatcher's Cheddar Valley and Thatcher's Dry, which the regulars often augment with a slice of lemon. However, as well as the cider there is Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Sharp's Eden Ale, which is a far superior beer to the ubiquitous 'Doom Bar' from the same brewery.

You like the atmosphere at the C.P.S. so much, you decide to stay for a second pint of Cheddar Valley. The next thing you know, you are waking up to discover you have been turned into a mouse. You can just make out your son walking away with a huge, hairy giant of a man who's saying, "That'll teach the stupid Muggle not to sell his children!"

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 the next issue? If so, send an email to Duncan.shine@britishpubguide.com and we'll see what we can do.



The Princess of Wales

Westbourne Grove, Bedminster
presents its second

Mini Beer Festival

FRIDAY 30TH SEPT through to MONDAY 3RD OCT

"RARE" BEERS FROM THE SOUTH
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Featuring
"PAST CHAMPIONS"

No entrance fee, No door fee.

'???? GUESS THE MYSTERY ALE ????'

A very warm welcome from your hosts
Les & Carol
SEE YOU THERE !!

Cotleigh Brewery Awarded 'Best Drinks Producer of the Year'

AT the Royal Bath and West Show on Friday 3rd June, Cotleigh Brewery was awarded **Best Drinks Producer** at a presentation of the Somerset Life, Food and Drink Awards. Somerset Life magazine asked its readers to vote for their favourite pubs, products, restaurants, food producer, farm shop, chef and drinks producer. A distinguished panel of judges then interviewed all the finalists.

At the award ceremony Partner Fred Domellof said, "This is a fantastic award and reflects the passion and dedication of all the staff at Cotleigh. It also shows our commitment to brewing excellence to which our customers and consumers aspire in the South West. We will continue to purchase the best local ingredients and we look forward to developing new and exciting initiatives within the local community. We would like to thank the judges, the staff and all the readers of Somerset Life Magazine".

Cotleigh Brewery has just celebrated its 25th anniversary year and has been producing Tawny for almost 26 years. The company delivers Tawny, Barn Owl, Cotleigh 25 and Golden Eagle to more than 300 pubs and stores in the South West. Distribution to the rest of the country is through selected wholesalers. The company is owned by Stephen Heptinstall and Fred Domellof.

Smiles all round at the Naval Volunteer

IT IS now well known that the Highgate Brewery in Walsall has taken over the brewing of Smiles beer following the demise of Smiles Brewery. It was therefore fitting that Hannah Dunkerley, the Free Trade Area Manager for Smiles, and Neil Bain, the Head Brewer at Highgate, should come to Bristol to explain the reasons behind the decision to brew Smiles beer.

It was also appropriate that the venue should be the Naval Volunteer on King Street as this pub was serving a number of Smiles beers in very good condition.

Neil gave a 30-minute presentation on Highgate brewery and the techniques involved in the brewing of the various Smiles beers (accompanied by samples of the malt and hops and samples of each beer in the range for the audience to try – very generous!). The presentation was well attended and most of the audience came away learning a lot about the brewing process judging by the conversation afterwards.

At the end of the presentation there was a quiz about beer, which was won by the bar

staff at the Naval Volunteer – good to see such knowledgeable bar staff (shame they didn't share the prize of eight pints of Smiles beer around though!).

The beers themselves were in fine condition. I particularly enjoyed the Smiles Best and the Heritage though I must say neither tasted as I remember them (though that is probably a good thing).

Neil mentioned that he is very keen on opening a micro-brewery at the Brewery Tap on Park Row and brew at least one of the Smiles beers on the premises.

Overall it was a great night. I was impressed by Highgate's plans for Smiles and I would like to thank Hannah, Neil and the Naval Volunteer for their very generous hospitality.

As for the pub itself, the Naval Volunteer is a great traditional pub and was recently (August 12th) stocking two Smiles beers (Blonde and Best) and two guest beers (from Jennings and Gales) and all four were in good condition. I would urge people who have not tried the pub for a while to give it a go.

Dr. David Jane



Brewing excellence from the Heart of Somerset since 1979

It has been 26 years since Cotleigh Brewery started trading from its first home, the Cotleigh Farmhouse in Washfield near Tiverton in Devon. Immediate success forced the brewer to move to larger premises, and in 1980 the company relocated to Wiveliscombe, 11 miles west of Taunton. Last year the business celebrated its Jubilee 25th Anniversary. Cotleigh Brewery supplies 300 Freehouses in the South West and is available in the rest of the UK through selected wholesalers. Cotleigh Beers will now be available to the Bristol area.

Tawny Bitter 3.8% abv

A West Country classic, a subtle hop palate which blends with the sweetness of the malt, to give a beautiful and balanced flavour.

Barn Owl Premium Ale 4.5% abv

Copper coloured with hints of toffee and nut with a smooth malty bitter sweet finish. Champion Beer of the Maltings Festival 1995.

Buzzard Dark Ale 4.8% abv

Traditional old ale, deep copper red in colour. The chocolate malt gives a dry nutty flavour with hints of amarone biscuit.

Cotleigh 25 4.0% abv

An explosion of flavours originating from the American Cascade hops gives this brilliant pale golden beer a fresh aroma and a fruit filled finish.

Golden Eagle Best Bitter 4.2% abv

Smooth and malty with a background of honey flavours offering a refreshing and citrus finish.

Harrier Lite 3.5% abv

A light golden low alcohol beer with delicate floral and fruity aroma leading to a smooth, almost sweet finish.

Cotleigh Brewery, Ford Road, Wiveliscombe, Somerset TA4 2RE

Tel: 01984 624086 Fax: 01984 624365 Email: sales@cotleighbrewery.com www.cotleighbrewery.com

Swanning around with Genial John

AFTER suffering numerous frustrations in finding a suitable pub to add to their portfolio, Bath Ales have now taken over The Swan at Swineford.

Situated half way between Bristol and Bath on the A431, The Swan is well known to lovers real ale and genuine country pubs. The village of Swineford developed near the point where a small tributary of the Avon crosses the old Roman road. According to legend the river mud has miraculous properties. Celtic Prince Bladud, the legendary founder of Bath, and his pigs were cured of leprosy when fording the river here.

The pub is at the heart of the village on the Bath road and is converted from three cottages in a row of six, opposite an old flax mill on the north bank of the Avon and now a traditional village inn (circa 1846).

The main bar has a log fire and serves up some fine ales now including all the Bath Ales favourites, and the curving wood and leather bar is popular with the locals. There is a no-smoking area in the pub and a restaurant area; each having a distinct atmosphere. Good, home-prepared food is served daily, and booking for Sunday lunch is advisable. If you are just in the area visiting then you'll love the local nearby walks. One excellent circular walk can be started at the pub, details on the Bristol City Council website at www.bristol-city.gov.uk/tourism/pdf/7map.pdf.

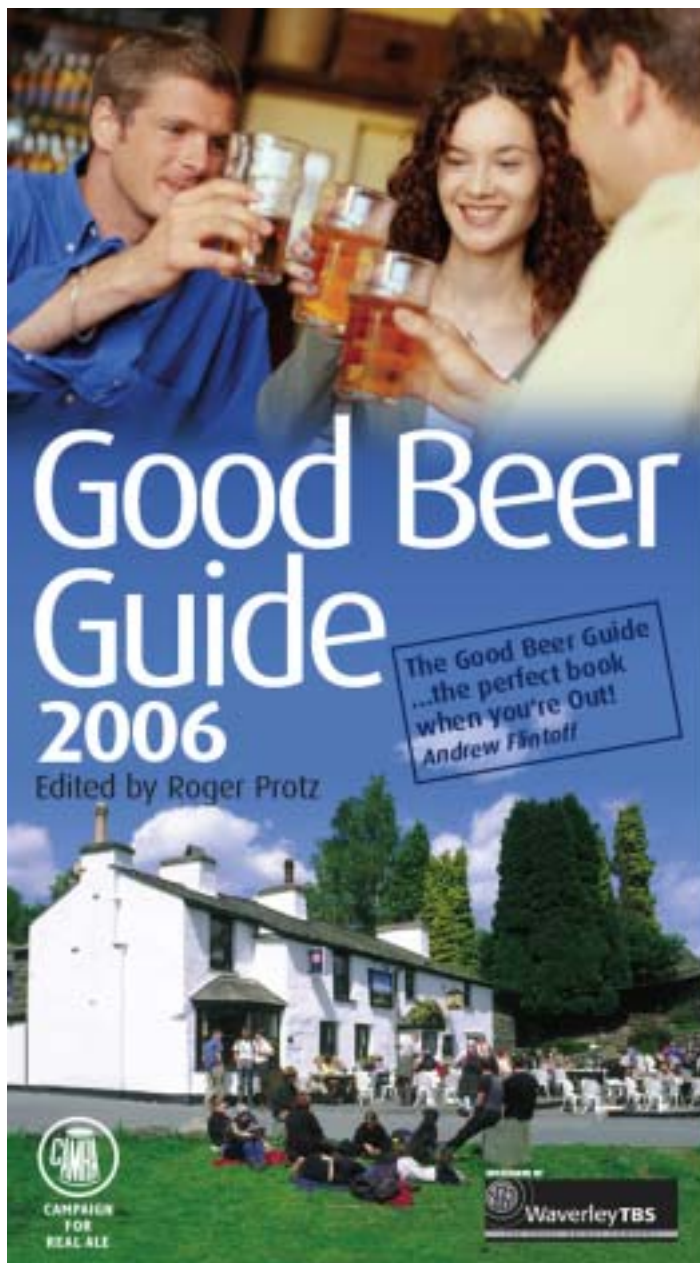
For the time being The Swan will be looked after by cellar meister genial John Lansdale, the well-known Bath Ales character, so you're sure to get a warm welcome and good advice on the beers available for you to try.


Wild Hare

Demand for the brewery's new organic beer, Wild Hare, has been huge, and the brewers are struggling to make enough of this delightful pale hoppy beer.

More information about the brewery is available at their newly revamped website, www.bathales.com. This now includes an on-line shop and gives details of brewery tours.

Steve O'Shea





bath ales

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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

The Bridge Inn
Passage Street, Bristol

The Swan
Bath Road, Swineford

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

Look out for the 2006 edition of the Good Beer Guide – coming soon to a bookshop near you.

Bedminster – East Street Circle

IT was a balmy night towards the end of June when we set off on our tour of East Street, Bedminster. The Glastonbury Music Festival had just finished, but the most music we got that weekend was listening to the massed Irish fiddlers at the Princess of Wales Beer Festival, as we worked our way through the beers on offer and tried to guess the mystery ale's identity.

We had decided to start our exploration at the Bedminster Bridge end of East Street and work our way back to the London Inn, so if Terry Goodfield's experience still remained true, we wouldn't have so far to get home! We got off the 77 bus outside of Asda and waited for our friend Dave to join us, but alas he was tied up.



Little Grosvenor

Walking through Asda's car park towards the **Little Grosvenor** on Coronation road, we found a very friendly pub serving an acceptable pint of Bass (it's what the landlord drinks). The darts team were getting ready for a match in this small pub, and as the tables were taken outside to the small patio at the rear, we made use of them because it was cooler outside.

We leave this pub and head along the cut (that was dug in 1804 by navvies to keep Bristolians out of Bedminster) where the often smelly, grey mud banks are covered by the tide. There are about 15 ducks having fun splashing across the water, which I guess is an indicator that the water quality is improving. Turning into Bedminster Parade, the **Rope Walk** is a large Young's pub serving Young's Bitter, Special and Waggle Dance. The



Rope Walk

enclosed courtyard at the rear was very welcoming, and as the early evening sun caught the well-tended hanging baskets, we drank our way through the beer range. This end of Bedminster has recently seen a lot of new apartments being built – we stroll past the latest project, which is the conversion of the library and the old police station with its fire lookout tower, into flats and a new modern library.



White Hart

Across the road is the **White Hart**, an eighteenth-century inn that has a large function room at the rear, where we have been to many great birthday and engagement parties over the years. The front bar is looking a bit tatty and the Courage Best was warm, so we say goodbye to the life-size cardboard statue of Elvis stood in the corner, and turn into Philip Street.

This street marks the end of Bedminster Parade and the beginning of East Street. It began life as a "Rope Walk" in 1840 but was soon tightly covered in back to back housing, festering small courts and alleyways to house the rapidly increasing population that worked in the tanneries and mines. In 1883 there were 93 houses and five pubs in the street; today there are just five houses and one pub: the **Apple Tree**. No real ales here, this is a cider house with the likes of Taunton Traditional on draught. Not being cider drinkers ourselves we had to rely on the characters outside for testimony to its quality. This pub used to be called the Maltster's Arms and was probably named after the large Malt House around the corner (part of which is now Fiddlers Night Club). Windmill Hill City Farm is a few yards



Apple Tree



Barley Mow

further on down Philip Street, with Bedminster Station even further over by Windmill Hill.

We retrace our footsteps back to Bedminster Parade where the **Barley Mow** sits on the corner of East Street and still, remarkably, retains its green and brown exterior tiling (once a common marker for a pub). Taunton Traditional cider was on offer, but no cask ales. It's hard to believe when it's so hot tonight, that on 10th July 1968, to the crash of thunder and the flash of lightning, nearly seven inches of rain fell on Bristol. It was closing time when the floods hit the Barley Mow; a tidal wave came down Philip Street, and with the bar five feet under water, the regulars fled up stairs.

It's a ten-minute walk along East Street, past the old WD & HO Wills cigarette factory that was built in 1886 on the ancient ruins of St. Catherine's Hospital. This factory quickly expanded over the Brightbow slum area that had grown up around this end of the Malago stream. The Malago had once been the life blood of Bedminster, but by this time it had been turned into a cess pool, polluted by the closely packed houses, tanneries and heavy metals of Victorian industry. This tobacco factory was a major local employer until 1988, when it closed and Asda converted part of the buildings to a supermarket. Our next stop is in the pedestrianised area of East Street, which during the day is a busy shopping centre, but at this time of evening it's quiet and the shop fronts are all shuttered.

We pass the **General Elliot** pub that has



General Elliot



Globe

been boarded up since April, and finally reach the **Globe** with its decorative Victorian frontage. The Courage Best is OK and there is a script on the wall inside that claims in 1847 the landlord used to hold Magistrates Courts here, so in July when the new “ban on street drinking” comes into effect for the East Street/Bedminster Parade area, he may need to start holding them again!

It's hard to imagine, but in the 1800's East Street was lined with slag heaps from the many mines surrounding it.



Bell Inn

The **Bell** was closed on this Monday night, as was the new casino in the old Lloyds Bank building next door, but they don't have a drinks licence. Cameron Balloons is just behind here giving new life to the old ES & A Robinson paper bag factory.

We had reached the end of East Street!

It was still quite early, and we felt that East Street was not as challenging as we had



Robert Fitzharding

hoped, so we nipped into the **Robert Fitzharding** where the guest ales were Rev James from Brain's Cardiff Brewery, and Summer Sizzler from the Summer Brewery (a brewery we hadn't heard of before). We debated doing North Street, but thought that might prove too big to complete tonight, and probably contained enough pubs to form a tour of its own.



Tap & Barrel

We remembered the **Tap & Barrel** should have reopened by now (following a refit over the last couple of months), so leaving by the back entrance we wander around the corner into Dean Lane to find out. We pass the alleyway that 15 years ago was the entrance to Hardington's Brewery (until it went out of business), and avoid the temptation to pop into the award-winning Magnet fish bar, opposite Bristol South swimming baths, and stroll through the doors of the Tap & Barrel. Inside this large corner pub it looked like the refit wasn't quite finished, but there were a few people drinking at the square bar in the centre of the room, and no sign of any real ales. The new landlord said he hopes to have some cask ales in several weeks' time, once he has the equipment in place. He told us the locals said it used to sell real ales, and he would like to sell a few as trade picks up. We tell him that when it was first converted from the Clarence Hotel, about 25 years ago, it was packed solid nearly every night, because we spent many of our courting evenings here. We wish him luck, and promise to return in a few weeks to see if he has any real ales installed in this Scottish Courage-owned pub.

We continue along Dean Lane past the Dame Emily playground that now covers the site of Bedminster's largest coalmine – the Dean Lane Colliery that had a shaft of over



Holy Cross & Southville Social Club

1,000 feet – the sound of pit head engines long gone and now replaced by skateboarders performing on the many ramps and slopes of the park. Two hundred yards on where the road makes a dogleg turn, is the **Holy Cross & Southville Social Club**, which allows free entry to CAMRA members. This large club is packed, with skittle teams playing on the alleys, and performers and their supporters gathering for the “Talent Night”. The Courage Best had just run out, the Bass was OK, but the Otter Ale was excellent and possibly the best pint of Otter we have ever had. This is another favourite venue of ours, for the friendly staff, parties and celebrations we have attended in these large function rooms over the years.



Coronation

From here it is a short distance to the **Coronation**, a Hop Back Brewery-owned pub, and strangely, one we have never been in before, although it is highly recommended by many local CAMRA members. The décor inside gives this pub a light, airy and relaxed atmosphere, but Monday night is quiz night, and it was packed to the doors, with many people stood outside to catch some cool breeze on this hot night. A good range of beers from this Salisbury-based brewer was on offer, so we opted for Crop Circle and the heavier Odyssey. Both were very good and there was also the famous Summer Lightning along with GFB beer, with Janet's Jungle Juice for the cider drinkers. This is a pub we shall definitely visit again.

With 30-minutes' drinking time left, we feel there is time to visit the **Imp** (previously the Southville) and set off along Southville Street. This area of Southville seems very quiet

(continued overleaf)



Imp

(continued from previous page)

and tranquil after walking along the busy streets of Bedminster. The Imp is a large-roomed pub and had a drinkable Courage Best to offer.

Heading along Southville Place and across Asda car park we fleetingly entertain the idea of crossing Bedminster Bridge and going in the **Mayor's Arms**, which has recently reopened as a real ale pub. We've already had a few, so decide to save it for another day (incidentally – there is a beer festival over the August Bank Holiday to mark the official opening of this pub). We jump on the number 52 bus opposite Asda and hope we'll be fit enough for tomorrow night, when we have a Good Beer Guide survey trip over the Mendips.



Mayor's Arms

Postscript

The Bell was open again on the Tuesday night but it didn't have any real ales anyway.

When we revisited the Tap & Barrel on July 22nd there were still no real ales, but the

landlord expected to have Courage Best and Greene King IPA on in about a week's time.

We also made it to the Mayor's Arms; it was Cyril's night off (retired cellarmen from the Plume of Feathers, Hotwells) so Rob showed us around this deceptively large, newly decorated pub while we had a couple of pints of Titanic.

He showed us the beer list for the festival with over 20 ales, so we shall definitely be making several visits that weekend!

The large rooms offer great opportunities to hire for parties, and combined with the ability to serve those who like a real pint, this pub's future is looking up, and well worth keeping an eye on.

Colin & Pennie Postlethwaite

Smiles leaves the Highbury Vaults

WEDNESDAY 13th July saw the end of an era at the Highbury Vaults on St Michael's Hill when the last Smiles beers were sold.

Although it ceased to be owned by the brewery a few years ago when Young's bought most of the Smiles estate, Best, Heritage and, occasionally, Bristol IPA continued to be available and indeed many customers thought that it was still a Smiles pub with the Young's being guest beers. With the passing of Smiles, Bradd will now have the chance to stock two guest ales from a list provided by Young's. The first two were St. Austell's Tribute and Everard's Tiger, which was then replaced with the newly elected Champion Beer of Britain, Brewer's Gold from Crouch Vale.

Pete Tanner

Prices for halves

A BIT of a personal gripe of mine is the now common practice of charging more relatively for a half a pint than for a pint. I will (reluctantly) accept that if a beer is £2.25 for a pint then I will be charged £1.15 for a half "due to rounding". What I find hard to accept is what happened a few months ago in a recently refurbished pub in Bristol. Initially I ordered a pint of Banks's Bitter and was charged £2.40. On my next trip to the bar I was armed with £1.20 for a half, to be told that it would cost £1.30, more than an 8% premium.

Whilst pubs can legally do this if their price list shows the rates for both pints and halves, this pub didn't even have a price list to back them up, so I declined the half pint, left and contacted Bristol City Council Trading Standards. (Details of how to contact your local Trading Standards department on this or any other matter can be found at the back of this issue of Pints West.)

Pete Tanner



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Cornish Cream at the Star

AT last it was Friday: we had finished work for the start of our holidays, and the twins had finished school and were looking forward to making our life hell for the next six weeks!

We needed to do something special to mark the start of our holidays. The Bristol Harbour Regatta was starting tonight but the waterfront bars have a limited choice of real ales. However, we had been emailed about a weekend of Cornish Ales at the Star in Bath – that sounded interesting.

As we were off to Kusadasi on Monday, we thought we had better fill up on real ale now, because there wouldn't be much in Turkey. Last week the Kurds bombed Kusadasi, yesterday suicide bombers had failed to blow up London, tonight Parkway Station is closed due to a terror alert. The train from Bristol only takes 15 minutes to reach Bath, so with the twins packed off to Cineworld with their school friends, and the teenagers lined up for a spot of child minding, we headed for Temple Meads station.

There were a few delays with the trains, but we made Bath by 7:30pm and set off on the 20-minute walk to the Star through the main shopping area and past the Roman Baths. The pubs are starting to fill up as we walk past the numerous street musicians and

thirstily anticipate our first pint.

We are not disappointed. Being a Cornish Beer Festival, the pub is adorned with the black and white crossed flags of Cornwall and £3.50 will get you a pint and a pasty. We order two pints of Heligan Honey from Skinner's which lubricates our dry throats, and a couple of Cornish pasties of course.

The Star is a very friendly pub, and one family quickly makes room for us at their table. The Cornish pasties are hot and taste great. This is effectively the brewery tap for Abbey Ales and is full of character with the unspoilt interior of dark wood panelling that divides the pub into many smaller rooms

remaining unchanged since 1928. This pub is deservedly on the CAMRA National Inventory of Heritage Pubs.

Sharp's Cornish Coaster (3.6%) has run out and while we wait for their Doom Bar to be put on, I opt for a pint of St Austell HSD (5.0%) while Pennie sticks with the Heligan Honey (4.0%). A plate of fresh crab pate on crackers is handed round while manager Paul Waters draws off the Doom Bar. There are three pumps dispensing Cornish beers, while the fourth serves Abbey Ales Bellringer.

The Doom Bar is dry and bitter after the sweeter HSD and Honey beers, but tastes good. Paul hands round another plate of Cornish fayre – this time some type of currant Bun – and we switch back to the Heligan Honey for a last pint (the Spingo Middle was next up but it wasn't going to appear tonight) before catching the train home to Bristol.

The air is close in this packed pub and one thinks

of a Cornish tin mine, although with the amount of beer being sunk there may well be a few dead canaries at the bottom of the cage come morning. This is an excellent pub: we had a great night out, all the beers were good, and it is well worth a visit at any time.





THE STAR INN



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Serving traditional English ales including:
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Paul pulls a Doom Bar

Postscript:

Regrettably the Star ran out of Cornish beer and pasties later on Saturday – so much was the success of this festival. I'm jealous of those that got to try the Spingo Middle on Saturday though, as I hear it was very good.

Paul had got eight barrels of Cornish ale in for Thursday's start, and in hindsight it seems he could easily have sold sixteen over the four days. With the growing popularity of this event, even sixteen might not be sufficient for next year.

Colin & Pennie Postlethwaite

Bob Todd R.I.P.

IT was with great sadness that we learned of the tragic death on August 6th of Bob Todd, the landlord of the Star in Pucklechurch and also of the Bridge Inn at Shortwood.

I have been a semi-regular visitor to the Star and the Bridge since I moved to Emersons Green in 1998. Although I cannot claim to have been a personal

friend of Bob's, he always greeted me as if I was. Never surly, never overly effusive, Bob had a rare kind of easy charm about him. First time visitors to his pubs found themselves feeling instantly at home.

Sometimes, when I visited during the afternoon, Bob would be sat with some regulars, watching the horse racing on the telly. He always paused to say hello, and showed remarkable restraint when his horse trailed in last. A few times, I was there when he won. He was always gracious, but his beaming smile was infectious, and you couldn't help sharing his delight.

A self-confident man and gifted raconteur, Bob would often have regulars, staff and strangers alike chuckling at one of his stories or jokes. You could tell that the staff regarded him with genuine warmth and affection, and it was easy to see why. Some months ago, I went into the Bridge for a quick pint, but upon getting to the bar I realised I had left my wallet at home. I apologised to the lady behind the bar, saying I'd forgotten my wallet, and didn't have enough change for a pint, but before I could turn around to leave, Bob had appeared. "That's OK, you come in quite often, give us what change you've got and pay the rest next time you're in". I was only 30p short, but

Bob's relaxed and helpful attitude made me feel like a regular.

But there was much more to Bob than the genial and affable host. In the Star and the Bridge, he had two very different pubs, but his understanding of the customers' needs shone through in both of them. Both pubs have become favourite haunts for real ale and cider connoisseurs, who know that they can rely on the quality and condition of their favourite tipple. The Bass brought up from the cellar in the Star is divine, and you won't get a better drop of Cheddar Valley anywhere. The Star built a reputation for offering good quality, good value food, while the Bridge's suntrap garden with children's play area was an instant hit.

But running two great pubs – and charming every customer he met – wasn't enough for Bob. He became a central figure in Pucklechurch village life. He was a key figure in the annual Pucklechurch Revel, contributing a delightful beer festival every year, and never seemed to stop organising, promoting and cajoling in support of one charity or another.

We should like to offer our deepest sympathies to Diane and family at this very difficult time. At the time of writing, both pubs are closed until further notice. But as and when they reopen, I'll be back, and I'll raise a pint to a charming, kind and funny man.

Cheers Bob!

Duncan Shine

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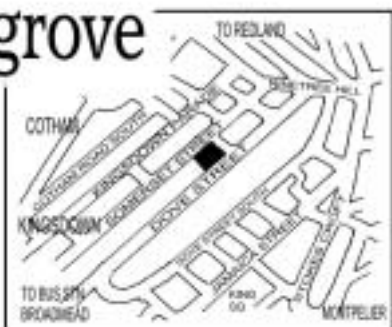
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Champion Beer of Britain: Gold wins Gold!

BREWER'S GOLD, brewed by Crouch Vale of Essex, was recently judged to be the best beer in Britain by a panel of brewers, beer writers and journalists.

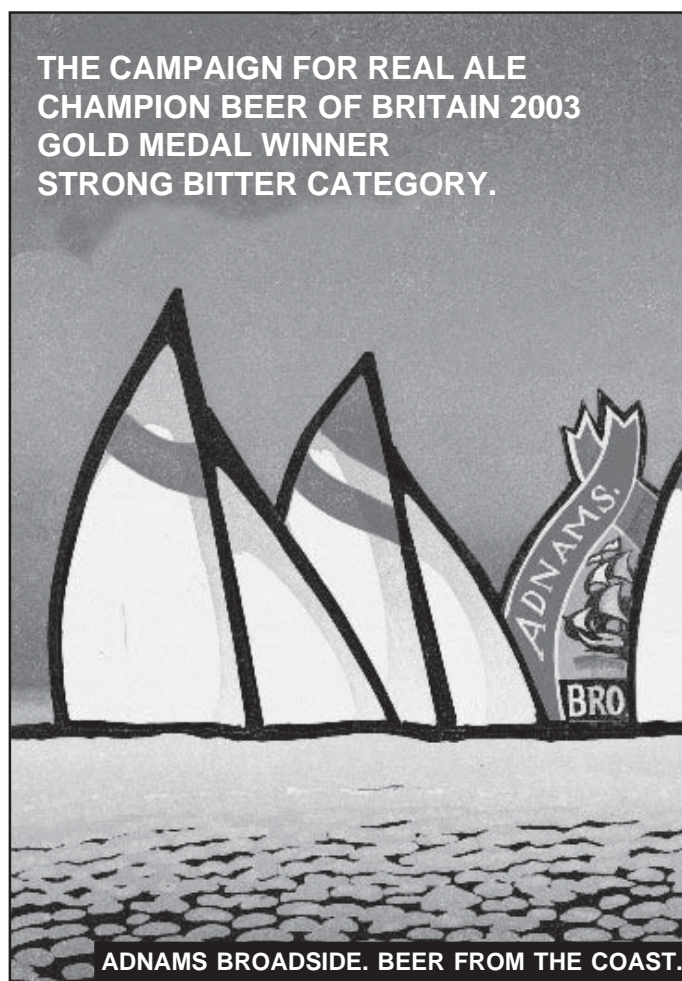
The beer is described in the 2005 edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide thus: "Striking grapefruit nose leads to a beer of generally citrus hoppy character, underpinned by a perfumed sweetness and an aftertaste of orange wine gums."

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

Roger Protz, one of the finalist judges and Editor of the Good Beer Guide said, "Congratulations to Crouch Vale. It is great to see a golden ale win this award. Golden ale is a rapidly growing style of beer and one that will appeal to younger drinkers and women as well as real ale aficionados. It's a wonderfully refreshing beer – the ideal antidote to lager!"

Olly Graham, General Manager of Crouch Vale said, "We have been in the final of the this competition for a few years now, but to have gone one step further this year and be voted the best beer in Britain makes me very proud. I would like to thank everybody at the brewery for all of their hard work. They have all played their part in making Brewer's Gold the best beer in the land."

The Silver award went to Rutland Panther from Grainstore, and the Bronze to Woodforde's Wherry from Norfolk.



OVERALL WINNERS

Champion Beer of Britain: Crouch Vale Brewer's Gold
Second: Grainstore Rutland Panther
Third: Woodforde's Wherry

Category winners:

MILDCATEGORY

Gold: Grainstore Rutland Panther (Rutland)
Silver: Brain's Dark (Cardiff)
Bronze: Elgood's Black Dog (Cambridgeshire)

BITTER CATEGORY

Gold: Woodforde's Wherry (Norfolk)
Silver: Holden's Black Country Bitter (West Midlands)
Bronze: RCH PG Steam (Somerset)
Bronze: Belvoir Star (Leicestershire)

BEST BITTER CATEGORY

Gold: Harvey's Sussex Bitter (East Sussex)
Silver: Mighty Oak Burntwood Bitter (Essex)
Bronze: Timothy Taylor Landlord (Yorkshire)
Bronze: Olde Swan Entire (West Midlands)

GOLDENALES CATEGORY

Gold: Crouch Vale Brewer's Gold (Essex)
Silver: Jarrow Rivet Catcher (Tyne and Wear)
Bronze: Oakham JHB (Cambridgeshire)

STRONGALE CATEGORY

Gold: Hanby Nutcracker (Shropshire)
Silver: Bullmastiff Son of a Bitch (Cardiff)
Bronze: Fuller's ESB (London)

SPECIALITY CATEGORY

Gold: Cairngorm Tradewinds (Inverness-shire)
Silver: Young's Waggledance (London)
Bronze: Daleside Morrocco (North Yorkshire)
Bronze: Ridley's Rumpus (Essex)

REAL ALE IN A BOTTLE CATEGORY

Gold: Durham Evensong (Durham)
Silver: Young's Special London Ale (London)
Bronze: Titanic Stout (Staffordshire)

All change at the Hobgoblin

RECENTLY we have had Irish and English and since June we have had an Australian.

Control of the Hobgoblin in Bath has now moved to Darren Register who has cleaned the place up a bit and started introducing local art into the main bar. The downstairs bar is now called the crypt and has hosted a couple of photographic exhibitions.

The five hand pumps are still in use with two now reserved for Wychwood Hobgoblin and a seasonal beer. The other three pumps currently have offerings from Brakspear, Fuller's and Bath Ales. Darren thinks that, in the future, he will probably rotate the ales offered on these pumps but not for the moment.

On the entertainment front there is still the jukebox but three nights a week live DJs have been introduced from two of the local night clubs.

Phill the Pint

Watering Holes in the Desert

news from Weston-super-Mare

Weston Whispers (pub and beer news)

MY apologies to Celtic Inns and their new pub, **The Ebdon Arms, Wick St. Lawrence**, for smearing their good name in the last edition of Pints West by saying that they were owned by Coors. It is purely a contractual supply relationship that they have.

Happily the early signs of strong local support for the real ales at The Ebdon seems to have been sustained. On a recent visit no less than seven beers were available. Aside from Hewish IPA and East Street Cream from the local RCH brewery, they also had two Welsh beers – Cwrw Haf from the Tomos Watkin brewery and the legendary strong ale, Son Of A Bitch from the Bullmastiff brewery. Both were in excellent condition. They had been part of a three-beer “Welsh Weekend” but the third beer, Reverend James from Brains had “flown out almost as soon as it went on,” according to landlord Steve Beasley.

If you haven’t been out to The Ebdon yet, I suggest you give it a try. All we need to do now is to get First Group to run their buses out to Wick beyond 7 o’clock in the evening!

Another pub on the up-and-up is **The Crown, Axbridge**. This was taken over by Ian and Carolyn at the end of March 2004. The previous owners of this great 15th century free house were strong supporters of real ale, securing a place in the Good Beer Guide, so there was inevitably some concern when the pub changed hands. Happily, The Crown appears to be going from strength to strength under Ian and Carolyn.

Beer-wise, they have two Sharp’s beers as regular offerings and a guest beer, usually from a micro brewery. Ian reports that real ale sales have been growing so much that he is exploring the feasibility of installing a fourth beer.

They have quickly tried to make the pub the focal point of the village and there is a growing wall display of press cuttings

recognizing their efforts. These include charity events for the village school, a piece on a Hungarian Evening held at the pub and an article from *The Mendip Messenger* with the headline “Jewel that is The Crown.” The main thrust of this article is the great value food. The only item on the menu that is over £5 is a £5.95 mixed grill. On my last visit I had a £3.95 steak and chips, which gave my wallet some relief after experiencing a more typical rural pub price of £5.95 for a cheese ploughman’s the previous day. Next time I will go for one of their home-made pies with mash and liquor – Ian betraying his London roots with that one!

Another good rural pub not too far from Weston that I have enjoyed a couple of times recently is the Good Beer Guide-listed **Burcott Inn, Wookey**. At least three ever-changing ales. On my last visit these were Tom Wood’s Bomber Country, Cotleigh 25 and RCH Pitchfork. All in excellent condition.

Closer to home, a recent Weston CAMRA branch social took in **Dauncey’s Hotel** on the seafront. The balcony here is possibly the best place in Weston to sip a pint on a summer’s day or evening. A real ale is always on offer – Red Stag Bitter from Newman’s on our visit. The local press reports that the hotel has recently changed hands, but the new owners, Richard Morris and Andrew Ladd, are promising not to change it much, so hopefully the real ale will be safe.

On the same social, we were also delighted by the range and quality of the beers at the Wadworth-owned **Major From Glengarry** and **The Raglan**. The latter featured Black Prince from the St. Austell brewery – a rare sighting of a mild in Weston. It sold very well I am assured.

More good ale sales, this time at **The Ashcombe** where Pete and June Boyer won a holiday paid for by the Heritage Pub Com-

pany who own(ed) the pub in recognition of the increase in beer sales that had been achieved. This is deserved recognition for the Boyers who have certainly drastically improved The Ashcombe in their time there. Unfortunately (or may be not) Heritage have been taken over and at the time of writing the future real ale situation is an unknown quantity.

In Steve Reed’s “*Reed On...*” column he urges people to visit Sainsbury’s to give the bottled beers from the Rogue Ales beer company of Oregon, USA a try. Whilst there, I would suggest you also grab anything available from the Sierra Nevada Brewing Company. For quite a long time their superb Pale Ale has been available. Happily this has been joined by further beers. First was a wonderful Christmas beer called Celebration Ale, full of fruit and spices and great with the mince pies & Xmas pud. Then saw a porter, followed by a stout that was so thick and creamy I had trouble getting it out of the bottle, and most recently a bottom-fermented lager called Summerfest.

For those weak on geography, Sierra Nevada is also in the USA. If, like me, you used to think that the yanks could only brew stuff like Budweiser, Michelob and Rolling Rock, I can assure you that there are a growing number of American breweries producing marvellous craft beers. Rogue and Sierra Nevada beers would be a good place for you to start.

Finally, I know I am not alone in thinking that nowadays there is a dearth of landlords who could be described as great personalities or characters. Someone who is unarguably a character is Di Bradley, who runs **The Night Jar** on the Mead Vale estate in Weston. She has been featured on more than one occasion in the local press recently for her many and varied attempts to get people in and make sure the pub stays at the heart of the community.

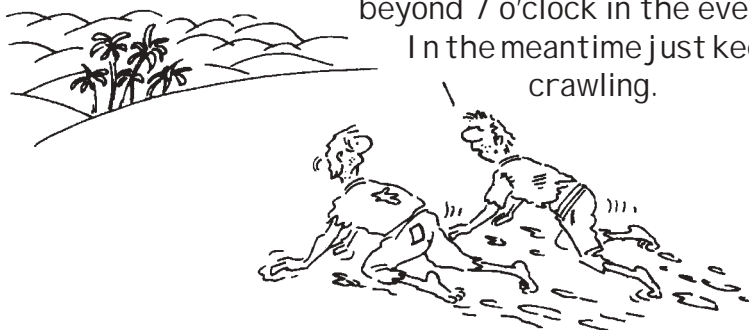
First came a piece publicizing the monthly religious services that are held at The Night Jar. A further article followed advertising a Christmas party at The Night Jar – in July! The basic gist of this was that Di feels that landlords don’t get to enjoy Christmas because it is such a busy time, so she now holds a Christmas party in the summer so that she can have a good time. “Crackers landlady hosts Xmas party” ran the headline in the Mercury.

Another of Di’s interests is Laurel and Hardy and there is a growing display of L&H figurines behind the bar.

The Nightjar is owned by the Badger brewery and two of their beers are normally available – Fursty Ferret and Tanglefoot on my last visit.

Tim Nickolls

“All we need to do now is to get First Group to run their buses beyond 7 o’clock in the evening.”
In the meantime just keep crawling.



A Round with Robin

DESPITE the extremes of weather this summer I have got out and about sampling some of the ales to be had at beer festivals and pubs. Just about the time when the last edition of Pints West hit the streets, I took myself down to the **Bridge Inn at Topsham**, where I spent an hour in the old bar and the rest of lunchtime outside by the river. They had their usual good choice of beers – all served from the barrel, the best being Hidden Fantasy and Exmoor 21st Ale.

The first mention of railways and beers makes a few members of the Weston sub-branch sit up and take notice, and so it was that on June 11th Paul, Graham, Mike and I from Weston-super-Mare took the train to Keynsham and walked the mile and a bit along the River Avon to Bitton Station for the **Avon Valley Railway's 2nd Beer Festival**.

Twenty-five beers and some ciders were on sale at £2 a pint and thirteen breweries were represented, including the Box Steam Brewery and the new Cotswold Spring Brewery, which had a Mystery Ale on offer. The good programme was supplemented by three beers from Archers which proved to be in excellent condition, and despite the RCH PG Steam & the Breconshire Red Dragon vying for supremacy, the Archers Crystal Clear (5%), Summer Ale (3.5%) and Six Hop (4.2%) were in my opinion the best ales there. In fact the Summer Ale was a good example of how a low gravity ale can have as much a complex flavour as has a full bodied strong beer.

On the 28th of June I went down to Portsmouth for the huge fleet review in the Solent, and took the opportunity there of having a selection of George Gale beers in three different pubs. Though not one of my favourite brews, I do try to sample local breweries' beers when away from home, and in Portsmouth and Southsea I had to pass a lot of pubs to find the Gales ales.

The **Canal Inn at Wrantage** (six miles south-east of Taunton), the Somerset CAMRA Pub of the Year, was the setting for a laid back beer festival (their second too) on the 9th of July. Mike, Graham and I from Weston-super-Mare made our way by train and bus and a short but hot uphill walk to Wrantage, where we found to our delight a selection of fourteen beers from the UK and two ciders all on draught, and thirteen Belgian beers, some on draught and others bottled. Food is much recommended here by the Good Beer Guide, (one of the owners is Spanish) and so we were a little disappointed by the food being limited to pig roast or a selection of rolls.

However the beers well made up for that and the afternoon entertainment was provided by Bryher and Heather Simmons who regaled us with a selection of summery songs as diverse as Summertime, Roll Over Beethoven, and a Red Hot Chilli Peppers number. Bryher's CD of her own compositions was on



Entertainment at the Canal Inn

sale and yours truly bought one.

But what about the ales, I hear you say. Yes, a good selection, and though I tended to stick with the UK beers it was difficult to pick a favourite as all were in very good condition: twelve breweries with only St. Austell ales (Admiral's Ale and Black Prince) having more than one showcased. From notes made at the time I see that Bath Ales Wild Hare, Kelham Island Easy Rider, and Blindmans Buff were all highly regarded.

Half way through the afternoon I led my two companions up to the top of Crimson Hill for one of the best views in Somerset, passing many WW2 pillboxes and anti-tank blocks, and the mouth of the now disused Chard Canal tunnel that the pub takes its name from. On our return we set to sampling those ales that we had not had earlier. I was told that the Belgian beers were very good, and that it is most unusual to find some of these on draught in the UK.

With the Chalice Morris Men this summer I was fortunate enough to go on a day tour around the Dunster, Minehead and Porlock area sampling the beers (and dancing outside) excellent pubs, the two best ones being **The Star at Watchet** and the **Ship Inn at Porlock Weir**. At the latter the celebration Exmoor Silver Stallion was on great form, and persuaded me that I liked it more than I had previously thought when trying it at the Dragon Inn at Weston-super-Mare.

Also, staying with Morris dancing, I went for a weekend based near the Long Man of Wilmington in East Sussex. On the Saturday afternoon we had the luck to visit the **Harvey's brewery** in Lewes where the Best Bitter and Armada beers were available free, straight from the barrel! As the Best Bitter is one of my favourite beers I quaffed a few pints of this. When in Lewes, in Cliffe High Street, it's worth a visit to the Harvey's shop as all their bottled ales are available, as well as poly-pins of bright beer and other merchandise. All the great pubs we visited in Alfriston, and elsewhere in East Sussex, all sold the Harvey's

Best Bitter, although I did have a pint of Hopback Summer Lightning just once for a change!

On the last Saturday in July, a rather cloudy and drizzly day, some six of us from the branch went to Stroud in Gloucestershire by train, for a walk to pubs in Slad and Woodchester. Although others may refer to this event (*see Tim Nickolls' article*), I'd like to note that two of the pubs we visited, **The Woolpack in Slad**, and **The Queen Victoria in Stroud**, were both what one would expect from Good Beer Guide pubs. There was a good atmosphere and the selection of beers was wonderful. My favourite in Slad's Woolpack (Laurie Lee's local) was the Uley Laurie Lee Bitter, which was very hoppy and fragrantly so. The Weston's draught perry was also worth a try and the whole range of Uley beers were available on hand pump. A myriad of interesting things were displayed, including an early radio, old Laurie Lee photos and prints, a selection of dusty bottled beers going back to at least the 1953 Coronation, and, bizarrely, a pommel horse.



A good atmosphere at the Woolpack

In the Queen Victoria the five real ales and draught Black Rat cider were almost as good a selection as you could wish for. Although I did sample two other ales there, I had my favourite beer of the day, which was the Dark Star's Sunburst. We also walked to **The Ram in South Woodchester** and **The Royal Oak in North Woodchester**. Despite the rain the walk was worth it for the views and interesting buildings both in Woodchester and on the way there. Both pubs keep real ale, and both have been in the Good Beer Guide in recent years. We really could have done with more time as we passed some likely ale houses worth a visit, in and on the outskirts of Stroud, but then that is true of almost anywhere, isn't it?

Robin E Wild

A day out in Stroud

FOLLOWING a successful "Walking and Drinking" day last summer, when the branch visited Topsham and Exeter, we decided to do something similar this year. After considering several options we decided on a visit to Stroud. The benefits of Stroud are that the town is nestled in a particularly attractive part of the Cotswolds, with some great pubs in and around it. The down side is that despite its relatively close proximity to Weston (about 40 miles), it is rather torturous getting there by public transport. We went by train via Swindon and returned changing at Gloucester and Bristol – both journeys took over two hours.

We left Weston at 10.30 and arrived in Stroud just after 12.30. We headed out of town on the Slad Road, arriving at the Good Beer Guide-listed **Woolpack** at around 1.15. This is an excellent, 16th century inn situated in a great location overlooking the Slad Valley. Upon entering I thought that the pub had perhaps been converted to a cider house, as the three pump clips all offered real ciders and a perry. However, slipping into the second bar provided the reassuring site of four ales from the local Uley brewery – Uley Bitter, Laurie Lee's Bitter, Pig's Ear and Old Spot. The great selection of drinks, accompanied by a mouth-watering menu, provided us with a very satisfactory couple of hours – our planned departure time was extended due to a heavy shower, but what a place to be marooned! The only slightly sour moment occurred when my wife asked if they did coffee. "We don't do hot drinks – we're a traditional pub," was the rather curt and unnecessary reply. "I suppose pubs have traditionally offered their customers stuffed Portobello mushrooms and langoustine prawns," my wife muttered on her return to our table.

We retraced our steps, heading back into Stroud town centre. We stopped off at **The Queen Victoria** on Gloucester Street. The 2005 Good Beer Guide entry for this pub rather undersells it beer-wise, merely stating that it has Smiles Best and guest beers. In fact there was

no Smiles (possibly due to the Smiles turmoil of recent months) but it had five excellent ales and a real cider. The beers were Fortitude from the St. George's brewery, Worcester, Golden Valley from the Breconshire brewery (Welsh CAMRA Champion Beer of the Year), Hophead and Sunburst from the great Dark Star brewery based in West Sussex, and Otter Bright from Honiton, Devon. All the beers were tried and all were in top-notch condition – the Sunburst, Golden Valley and Fortitude being particularly noteworthy beers. Not surprisingly this large, one-room pub was busy with people recovering from (or avoiding) Saturday afternoon shopping. Some people were watching rugby on a large screen, others watching horse-racing on a smaller one, others idling their time away reading or chatting. We could have stayed a lot longer than time permitted.

We headed out of Stroud in a south-westerly direction along the Bath Road to Woodchester. First stop was **The Ram**. Unfortunately, it started raining again when we arrived, so we could not enjoy the splendid views from the pub garden. However, the beers inside cheered us up. Six on offer – Archers Village and Golden, Uley Old Spot, Wickwar BOB, Butcombe Bitter and Otter Bitter. We had noted that this once perennial Good Beer Guide entry was not featured in the 2005 edition, but we certainly had no complaints about the beer quality.



Greetings from the Royal Oak

A 10-minute stroll took us to **The Royal Oak Inn**. As with all the village pubs visited on the day, this one dates back to the 16th century. The beers here were Adnam's Broadside, Sharp's Doom Bar and Greene King IPA. The beer quality was okay and they were served in lined glasses, thereby ensuring that the customer gets the amount of beer that he or she has paid for. However, it was disappointing to see that the pub is happy to clobber people who prefer to drink halves instead of pints, by charging them significantly more than half the price of a pint. Regular readers of Pints West may know that the issue of "over-charging" for halves is something that regular contributors Vince Murray and Pete Tanner feel very strongly about. Usually, it is 10p that is involved, e.g. £2.20 for a pint, £1.15 for a half (or £2.30 for two halves). At the Royal Oak, this policy was applied to two of the beers. For the third, the Greene King IPA, it was a whopping 15p differential – £2.35 for a pint, £1.25 for a half! We had visions of Vince and Pete having to be peeled off the ceiling with steam coming out of their ears if they encountered this particular piece of product pricing.

Sadly, this was all we had time for and had to forego the delights of numerous other appealing pubs in the Stroud area. However, a good day was had by all. We walked about eight miles and sampled some excellent beers. A day out in this area is highly recommended.

Tim Nickolls



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Reed writes ...

... on 'Rogues'

Don't know if anyone has tried the specialist bottled beers on sale at Sainsbury's supermarket in the last couple of months, but if not you may be forgiven for missing some fantastic bargains in certain stores. Having taken over from Safeway as the "fireside ale drinker's bestest friend", many of Sainsbury's largest local outlets seemed to be hiding some hidden gems from the discerning bottled beer fraternity. Often displayed away from the pack, and in some instances even near the soft drinks, a fantastic selection of Rogue Ales from Oregon, USA have been sitting quietly, begging for attention.

Always distinguishable by the clever "glass-painted" style of label, in a 650cl bottle, the range on offer this summer convinced me that this brewery offers perhaps the best and most diverse portfolio of beers currently available in a bottle. What's more, because no one seems to know they're on sale, they aren't selling and subsequently Sainsbury's has gradually been reducing them. For

example their Imperial Stout was on offer at 79p (though in a smaller than usual bottle). A strong and rich stout, unfiltered and full of body. Hmmm, nice! Also, Mocha Porter at £1.99 is chocolaty tasting and ruddy brown in colour, a bittersweet balance of malt and hops with a light cream finish. Lovely.

My personal favourite is Rogue Smoke, a German style Rauchbier ("smoke beer"), apparently inspired by the fall of the Berlin Wall. Most rauch brews are bottom-fermented, however Rogue Smoke, is top-fermented. It is orange-amber in hue with a delicate smoke aroma and flavour with an intense hop finish. This beer is absolute nectar and at the beginning of August was being sold for an incredible 99p a bottle. Younger's Special Bitter (no relation to the UK Younger) also £1.99 is a classic rich and flavoursome English Special Bitter full of caramel and malt flavours, fruity and hoppy in aroma. It has been described as one of the "top five ales brewed in the US". I loved this as a summer beer. Other than at the Great British Beer Festival, Rogue Ales have only previously been available (to my

knowledge) in the old and much lamented Safeway stores and at a minimum price of £2.99. Who remembers the wonderful "Dead Guy Ale"? Hopefully at least some of the beers I've mentioned are still available by the time you read this.

... on Newman's Brewery

Works are progressing steadily at the new brewery site (Yatton). The first floor has now been strengthened by steels and the gas and electricity supplies should be installed by the time you read this newsletter. Commissioning of the equipment is anticipated in October. Westonians keep your ears to the ground...

... on smoking in pubs

Decided to hold on this one for the time being. Plenty of coverage in previous issues probably sufficient for now, but hey, try a Rogue Smoke whichever side of the fence you're on!

Steve Reed

Weston Diary

○ **Saturday 17 September – Somerset Beer Festival, Minehead Railway Station.** A party will be going from Weston. Please contact Mike Coleman on 01934 631441 if you wish to join us (and hopefully take advantage of group travel rates for the return journey to Taunton).

○ **Wednesday 28 September – Bristol & District Branch Meeting, The Ebdon Arms.** 8.00 start. Bus route 7 from town stops in Ebdon Road, then it is approx 15-minute walk along Ebdon Road. Venue TBC, so confirm first with Tim Nickolls on number below if planning to attend. This will be an excellent opportunity to find out what local Camra branches get up to, so please come along.

○ **Wednesday 19 October – The Raglan.** 8.30 onwards.

○ **Friday 4 November – Minibus outing, visiting 5 or 6 current or potential Good Beer Guide village pubs.** Cost £5 – Book via Mike Coleman on 01934 631441. Bus will leave Off The Rails at 7.15.

○ **Wednesday 16 November – Crawl of Kingsdown area of Bristol city center.** Catch 1835 route 353 bus from Weston, stops at Homebase, Worle at 1845. We will be visiting The Hare On The Hill, Hillgrove Porter Stores, The Bell, Highbury Vaults and Zerodegrees.

Non-members welcome at all of the above events.

Contact

Tim Nickolls - 01934 628996 (evenings)
or email tim.nickolls@virgin.net



The Rise of The Raglan

THERE are a large number of pubs in Weston that, if you meet people of a certain age, they will fondly reminisce about how good they used to be. In most cases the fortunes of the pubs slumped at some point and never recovered, often ending up closed, ruined, taken over or struggling along with a dwindling band of customers. The Raglan is a good case in point.

During my first five years in Weston (1998 to 2003) I only visited it twice. On both occasions the beer and ambience were dull, with customers practically non-existent. Sometime around the middle of 2003 steel shutters were put over the doors and windows and it seemed odds-on that it would end up being converted to flats. However, a rare good news story began to unfold.....

Gary Havard re-opened The Raglan on New Year's Day 2004. He had no previous experience of running a pub. He felt that there was a dearth of traditional pubs in Weston and his ambition was to create the kind of pub that he regularly heard the locals reminiscing about. He was very clear that he didn't want to attract the "lager lout" type of clientele and quickly took the view that focusing on real ale was the way that he wanted to go.

He began with just Bass, then added the local Wolver's Ale from his friend Tom Newman's brewery based in Banwell. Gary was pleased that the real ales seemed to attract, in his words, "an interesting range of people... the right type of people." These included a range of musicians who began to congregate on a Friday evening with their guitars, harmonicas, mandolins, accordions, fiddles and a



Six of the best at the Raglan

variety of other instruments.

Encouraged by the early interest being shown, Gary increased the number of ales on offer, usually from local breweries. In the early days polypins (beer boxes) were used, which occasionally meant problems with beer temperature. There were also some people who felt that striving to offer a lot of beers was meaning that quality was being sacrificed. Those days are now long gone. The polypins have disappeared and Gary phases his beers across the week to match demand. Early in the

week you may only find one or two beers on, with this figure increasing to anything from four to six around the weekend.

Gary doesn't deal with wholesalers for his ales, only dealing direct with the breweries. One reason for this is that, according to Gary, you can pay as much as £30 a cask extra from going through a wholesaler, as opposed to dealing direct. Given that keeping prices down has always been an important

issue for Gary, dealing direct can make a lot of difference.

The breweries regularly featured at The Raglan include Butcombe, Newman's, RCH and Bath Ales, and in recent times St. Austell beers have been introduced and been very popular. A typical week will see seven to nine casks being sold, with this increasing to twelve or thirteen when there is a busy weekend.

Gary still has many ambitions for the pub and his number two, Jo, has recently been playing a greater role in the running of the pub to enable Gary to get on with his transformation plans. A major refurbishment of the lounge bar is almost complete. This has included the installation of a piano (all that's needed now is the installation of a pianist – enquiries to Gary). Gary would like to convert the basement into a dedicated music room, but this is one for the future.

The Friday night musicians are still there and make for a great evening, particularly on cold winter evenings with the fire blazing away.

An attraction for some time has been the fact that all real ales are sold for £2, regardless of strength. Gary is keen to sustain this and has swallowed two duty increases to keep the price pegged down. However, for this to be sustained he needs more people using the pub. If you live in Weston, like your ale and haven't given the new-look Raglan a try, get on down and give it a try. You are unlikely to be disappointed.

Tim Nickolls



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Greene King takes over and closes yet another brewery

BURY St. Edmunds based brewer Greene King announced in July that it has taken over Ridley's of Chelmsford for £46m (including £8.8m debt). Greene King says it intends to close the brewery in the autumn, with some beer brands transferred to Bury St. Edmunds.

Ridley's has been family-owned since 1842. The deal includes 73 pubs across Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

Nationally CAMRA is calling for a Competition Commission investigation as this deal threatens consumer choice as Greene King's dominance in the East of England grows.

This acquisition appears to be GK's response to rival brewery Wolverhampton & Dudley's takeover of Jennings in June. A new generation of national brewers has been created and is a threat to consumer choice. Takeovers rarely lead to benefits for consumers and invariably lead to erosion of consumer choice, breweries closing and beers being axed.

Greene King and W&D would have been defined as national brewers (ones with more than 2,000 pubs) under the 1989 Beer Orders legislation, which was revoked in 2002. That legislation forced national brewers to allow their pub tenants a guest beer from a supplier of their choice. Greene King's guest beer offering is to permit those tenants who choose to pay top whack in rent to then choose from GK's list of approved non-GK beers.

CAMRA believes that demand exists for breweries which specialise in short-run craft beers, following renewed consumer interest in local products. Ridley's has been brewing Tolly Original since 2002, brews Greene King XX Mild under contract and brews Pale Island for Kelham Island Brewery, who won the

Champion Beer of Britain Award in 2004 for Pale Rider.

It's surprising that GK are rushing to transfer production to their Bury St. Edmunds brewery as they have been saying production there is almost at capacity.

Locally CAMRA is particularly concerned about the loss of the popular Greene King XX Dark Mild. GK decided it could not make it economically any more in 2003 and contracted it out to Ridley's, who had recently stopped making their own Mild in favour of recreating Tolly Mild.

What will happen to popular beers such as Greene King XX Mild, Tolly Original and the top Ridley's beer, Old Bob? Greene King has already announced it will cease brewing Ridley's IPA as it clashes with its own award-winning IPA. Initial plans are to brew at least four Ridley's brands on a rotational basis.

Surprisingly, GK says it will resume brewing XX Dark Mild, as volumes have risen since GK acquired many Laurel pubs around Christmas 2004. We hope they will be as good as their word.

Greene King closed Rayment's brewery at Furneux Pelham in 1987, Biggleswade in 1997 and Morland's in 2000. Now it's likely to sell Ridley's remarkable Victorian brewery site for housing development, rather than at least attempt to sell it to someone as a going concern.

About Ridley's

The 163-year-old family brewery is at Hartford end, near Chelmsford.

Ridley's acquired and closed the Tolly Cobbold Brewery in Ipswich in 2002, transferring some of the beer brands to its



brewery.

CAMRA has criticised comments from Ridley's Managing Director, Bob Wales, who was appointed in April 2005. Following his appointment, Mr. Wales said, "The Board and I are delighted with this announcement and look forward to the Ridley's business growing and developing. Ridley's is a good business with some excellent and dedicated people at the Hartford End Brewery site..." CAMRA wonders what has changed in a couple of months?

Apparently a Ridley's spokesman blamed "the national decline in cask sales" – that old chestnut, based on inaccurate statistics and including the poorly-supported beers from the international breweries.

In a letter to Ridley's Free Trade customers, Greene King explained that Ridley's approached GK about a possible takeover, assuming closure of the brewery due to it being loss-making.

*Submitted by Norman Spalding
With thanks to Cambridge CAMRA*

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Island in the sea

By your Nailsea correspondent
Laurie Gibney

Boarded up

On Tuesday 12 July 2005 the **Moorend Spout** public house at Kingshill, Nailsea was boarded up. Punch Taverns plc who took it over when they acquired the Innspired group last year have been asked by your local CAMRA correspondent what the future holds for the pub, but no reply had been received when *Pints West* went to press three weeks later.

Punch Taverns, in the absence of a licensee, have re-applied for a license under new legislation now in force, with opening hours until the early hours of the morning to provide a late night music venue, in an otherwise quiet residential area!

The local newspapers reported objections by a number of local residents voicing their concern about loud music and inconsiderate, unruly customers leaving the premises late at night in the past causing disturbance and damage to property. A compromise must be reached to keep this historic inn open, if it is not to join the 25 pubs per month closing across the country. An up-market licensed inn

(maybe called the Butchers Arms Inn?) providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation, a restaurant and conference facility would be most suitable for the location.

It would be very sad to lose the Moorend Spout, which was previously called the Butchers Arms, and is still known affectionately as "The Butchers" in the locality. The inn is believed to have been licensed for hundreds of years and certainly before any other existing licensed premises in Nailsea.

If you wish to show your support for keeping the pub open, contact your local councillor for support to prevent a change of use to anything other than licensed premises, and to support the provision maybe of B&B accommodation which is in short supply in the town; write to your local MP because the law needs strengthening to protect historic hostelleries from a change of use; also contact Punch Taverns plc at Jubilee House, Second Avenue Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire, DE14 2WF (tel: 01283 501600, fax 01283 501601).

Lorraine Flower, the licensee for the past 18 months, has relinquished her lease and she held a final-night party for customers on Sunday evening, 10th July, with a live band, buffet, and ale at £1.50 per pint. She had the Monday to clear her personal possessions out of the pub, and handed over the keys early on the Tuesday when it was boarded up.

The pub comprises a bar with three indoor sitting areas, restaurant, upstairs function room, two large patios, grassed garden with seating and barbecue, and a boules court. The non-public areas include kitchen, cellar, storage rooms, and staff accommodation, plus a private garden.

Lorraine had plans drawn up to build, at her own expense, a three-storey guest accommodation block on the existing boules court and toilets for bed and breakfast which, together with converting part of the staff accommodation, would have provided eleven rooms for guests including some suitable for disabled customers. This was turned down by North Somerset Council despite being separated from the main listed buildings by a glazed walkway. It is understood that a two-storey extension using part of the private garden and the area previously planned may find favour with the planners.

The pub is a substantial building and needs a considerable cash flow to keep it going, it is not on a main highway and therefore needs considerable local support, advertising or additional facilities to provide an adequate customer base. The provision of B&B accommodation, of which there is inadequate provision in Nailsea, appears to be vital to provide an adequate cash flow.

After about six months Lorraine realised that the costs of operating the pub were more than the business could bear despite considerable marketing. When Innspired sold out to Punch the rent increased to about £34,000 per year (£680 per week) *plus* a turnover rent on all ales and soft drinks, which had to be bought through the pub company, of about 35p per pint! Local Authority business and accommodation rates or taxes soaked up another £11,000 per year or £220 per week.

Punch Taverns also require their licensees to sign full repairing leases to fund repairs including windows, doors, roof tiles and guttering as well as internal repairs on this, a listed building. The rent was clearly unrealistic for a "local pub" which was off the beaten track.

Lorraine bravely took action against the might of the all-domineering pub company, most of which in the experience of CAMRA appear to be acting with more of an interest in property values than pubs. Six months of attempting to get the pub co to see reason came to nothing so Lorraine stopped buying ales and soft drinks through the pub co and bought them direct from suppliers herself. Even with this brave move, which could have ended up with her being evicted, the books would not balance and she was still losing money, so before she lost the value of her home elsewhere she gave two weeks' notice to quit.



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who also brew Chimera Gold, Chimera Red,
Chimera Quadhop and Chimera Raspberry Wheat

B&B now available

It is pleasing to see that the same Punch Taverns have invested in the **Friendship** pub in Nailsea, which has resulted in them being able to provide B&B accommodation, something in short supply in the town.

Cath and Dave at the Friendship have three rooms available: a double, a twin and a family room with a double bed and two singles, at the bargain price of £20 per night per adult with children free and airport parking available. They also dispense Courage Best at £2.10 and Thatcher's Traditional dry cider at £1.90 per pint, and provide home-cooked food. You can contact them by email at thefriendship.nailsea@blueyonder.co.uk or by phone on 01275 541313.

2005 Nailsea Beer and Cider Festival a big success!

Nailsea & Backwell Rugby Club held its second annual beer festival in aid of the Children's Hospice South West (often known as Babe's Big Appeal) and to raise funds for developing rugby in the area. The event took place over the weekend of 15th to 17th July. Live music was sponsored by Courage, and all beers and ciders were kindly sponsored by local businesses. The first two days were particularly busy, and extra beer, cider and glasses had to be bought in. The amount raised last year of £2,500 must have been considerably exceeded – a sizeable and fitting tribute to all involved.

Nick Williams speaking for the festival team said, "I am absolutely delighted with the support we received for this event from festival goers, sponsors and the hard working volunteers. We also have to thank the police for ensuring that there were no traffic and parking problems and also to thank our neighbours for their tolerance and support for this charity event."

This year's event featured live music from local Bristol rock bands and a local folk band The Acorns and singer Lenny Savage. The event also had lots of children's entertainment including a junior rugby tournament, coconut shy, bouncy castle, barbecue and several other side-shows. Those not partaking of the real ales and ciders gained free entry and could use the clubhouse bar, which is

available at all time for the use of the public. The Real Ale & Cider tent was available to those that paid £4 in advance and £5 on the door for a glass, programme and free half pint, after which real ale and cider cost a good-value 80p per half pint.

With over 50 different beers and ciders from places as far away as Cumbria and Manchester, and some brought down from the north by local member Norman Selwood, the weekend of superb weather saw big crowds enjoying the excellent ales and events. Breweries with ales at the festival included Badger, Bateman, Berrow, Black Sheep, Butcombe, Caledonian, Scottish Courage, Elgood's, Everard's, Gale's, Hampshire, Hawkshead, Holt, Hook Norton, Hyde's, Inverlaldmond, Jennings's, O'Hanlon's, Osset, Ridley's, Robinson's, Skinner's, Theakston, Wadworth, Wickwar, and Yates. Cider-makers providing eleven ciders were Long Ashton Cider Co, Orchards, Thatcher's and Wilkin's, with two perries from Orchards.

CAMRA would like to congratulate the organisers of this very successful Beer & Cider Festival, which must have done much to promote the wide variety of beers, ciders and perries on the market, but not necessarily available locally. I have received very favourable reports from CAMRA members, with there seeming to be a few members on site throughout the event.



Claverham "Slurd" Beer Festival – bigger and better than ever

Now in its third ("slurd") year, Claverham Beer Festival, held over the first weekend of July, was organised by Yeo Valley Lions and Claverham Village Enterprises. The festival raised £4,000 for local charities, thanks to the major sponsor Stowell Concrete and also to Heritage Estate Agency, Euro Building Services Ltd, and over thirty other private individuals and local business sponsors who made the event possible.

There were over 30 beers from Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire, five ciders and several wines, which just lasted until the Sunday afternoon. Hot dogs and

burgers were cooked in the garden. The permanent bar, which is open to the public, was also open during the weekend, where Butcombe Bitter sells at £1.80 and a changing guest ale at £1.90 per pint.

Live entertainment was provided by The Shenanigans (an Irish band) on the Friday evening. Saturday afternoon featured folk music with Fougere Rouge and the Willbees (a close harmony duo) and the Acorns, who are a Ceilidh band made up of fine young musicians from Nailsea, with the Mendip Morris and the Applejacks, an Appalachian dance troupe, bringing colour and variety. Saturday evening saw a change of tempo with the Bristol Comets playing a wide range of music from the rock and roll era. A sunny Sunday mellowed with the New Delta Jazz Band.

Subject to confirmation, next year's festival, the "Froth" one, will be from 30th June to 2nd July, and will feature beers from the north of England.



Cider-making returns to Nailsea

A group of young people have formed "**Hannah More Zider**" with the aim of bringing cider-making back to Nailsea, and help bring proper cider-drinking back to the world! Further information may be found on their excellent web site at www.hannahmorezider.co.uk which contains many web links including one to the Apple group of CAMRA.

Their web site states: "Nailsea, a Somerset town that sits just ten miles from Bristol, spent most of the last century as home to Britain's second largest cider-works: Coates Cider. As Nailsea's biggest employer until its sad closure in 1975, Coates both established cider-making as the heart of Nailsea life, and put Nailsea on the map as the cider-making capital of the world! Starting with very little cash, no apples, equipment or land – but with a love of scrumpy and a small book – we set out in 2003 to bring cider-making back to Nailsea and produce the finest pint of cider ever tasted. And have fun doing it along the way." CAMRA wishes them well.

Martin Howell reports ...

Tony Fey at the **Old Barn** in Wraxall has replaced Bass with Fuller's London Pride at £2.20 a pint until, he says, the quality of the present offering from the brewery of "mud-like" Bass improves. Also at £2.20 Tony had St Austell Tribute, Moles Best and Landlord's Choice, plus RCH Double Header at £2.40 per pint – all on gravity dispense.

Alan Sibley reports ...

The **Blue Flame** at West End, Nailsea – also with gravity dispense and the only pub in our area to win an entry in the 2005 CAMRA Good Beer Guide – dispenses Bass and London Pride at £2.30 and RCH East Street Cream at £2.40 per pint.

The **Ring of Bells** offers Courage Best at £2.30 and changing guest beers at £2.40 per pint, and at the time of this report these were Sharp's Doom Bar from Cornwall and Caledonian Deuchars IPA from Scotland. Bass is also available at the guest beer price, on gravity from the adjacent cellar!

Foody pubs – where food is the dominant service provided

There was a time when the only beer you found in a restaurant or foody pub was bottled or keg, but not now it seems. Customers at pubs which appear to rely more on the sale of food than drink cannot get enough copies of *Pints West* and real ale.

The **New Battle Axe** at Wraxall dispenses Courage Best and a guest ale at £2.30 per pint, and manager Andy Charlock recently decided to change from Newman's Wolver's Ale to Butcombe Bitter. His customers protested so much that he has had to reinstate Wolver's Ale. Maybe it is time for a third pump for a changing guest ale Andy!

Kim and Hugh Dash told me that they and their loyal staff recently served over 200 meals in two and a half hours at **The Star** in Tickenham. The conservatory area of the bar has been transformed with two

coloured table cloths and matching napkins in glasses as well as candles on the tables making this positively a restaurant area. The centre bar which may be refurbished with more lounge-style seating is the real ale bar, with Wickwar Bob at £2.20 per pint, Courage Best and Butcombe Bitter at £2.25 (£1.15 per half), Bass at £2.30 and Speckled Hen at £2.35 (£1.20 per half).

The **George Inn** on the A370 at Backwell has four cask-conditioned ales: Bass at £2.40, Butcombe Bitter and Ushers Best at £2.30 and Wychwood Hobgoblin at £2.40 per pint. Their comprehensive menu keeps the kitchen very busy, but they no longer offer a Chinese takeaway service.

All change at the **Dew Drop Inn** at the top of the Long Ashton by-pass on the A370. This is now probably the most attractive looking pub both inside and out in this area, and judging by the car park it is becoming very popular again. The garden has just been improved with a new children's play facility featuring climbing walls, slide and monkey bars and rope, which makes me want to be a child again! At the front a new large "umbrella" – with heaters for the evenings – shades tables.

The pub has a very full menu and unfortunately delivery of the food service recently has not been acceptable to customers or the pub owners. After little more than three months the managers and some kitchen staff of the Dew Drop Inn have "left", and a new temporary general manager, Tim Sawtell, arrived in mid July to get things running correctly, ably assisted by assistant manager, Stuart Jenkins. New management will be appointed and trained to take over early in the autumn. Tim also manages the Inn On The Green opposite the pier at Paignton where his wife and children live and will be pleased to have him back!

I am pleased to report that real ale has maintained its good standard at the Dew Drop Inn: Courage Best at £2.35 per pint and £1.20 per half is the mainstay and changing guests at £2.50 per pint have recently included Butcombe Gold, Otter Bitter and Smiles Best.

Price of beer

Readers may have noticed mention of prices of pints of beer throughout this article with half pint prices where they are other than half the pint price. This is in response to some people questioning me on the subject of real ale prices. The price you pay not only pays for the ale, it pays for the ambience of the pub or club, live music, children's play facilities, staffing, even for peace and quiet, and a host of other things.

The club scene

Clubs generally have a membership fee, but not the **Nailsea & Backwell Rugby Club** which is open to the public with Courage Best at £2.20 per pint.

The **Backwell Village Club** has Courage Best and a changing guest ale at £1.80 per pint. One notable recent guest ale was Slaters Best from Eccleshall Brewery. Their membership fee is £15 per year plus a £10 joining fee.

The **Grove Sports & Social Club** sells Courage Best at £2 per pint. Their membership fee is £5 per year plus a £2 joining fee.

The **Mizzymeade Recreation Centre & Social Club** has a good turnover of real ales, with Courage Best at £1.70, Butcombe Bitter at £1.75, and a changing guest ale between £1.80 and £2.10 per pint depending on strength. The guest ales are from the S&N Cellarman's Reserve range and change about twice a week. Their membership fee is £9 per year with no joining fee.

The **Grove Sports & Social Club** at St Mary's Grove opposite the **Ring of Bells** is to host its first **mini beer festival** over the 26-29 August Bank Holiday weekend, with about ten real ales sourced from S&N, plus a few ciders and wines. Admission will be free of charge, with a horse race on screen, barbecue, children's play facilities and an umpah band planned. See elsewhere in this *Pints West* for more details or phone the club on 01275 856892.

Elsewhere in Nailsea

The **White Lion** dispenses Courage Best and Butcombe Bitter at £2.20 per pint and has recently introduced a third changing guest ale at £2.30 per pint. They tried Newman's Wolver's Ale from Banwell which "went a bomb". The first firkin (72 pints) disappeared in twenty-four hours. Four more firkins were hurried in and they went almost as quickly. The food is good too at the White Lion, my family having tried it recently.

The **Sawyers Arms** was the first pub in Nailsea to introduce Newman's Wolver's Ale, which they sell at £2.20 per pint, the same price as Courage Best and Butcombe Bitter.

The **Courtyard Wine Bar** has Bass and Marston's Pedigree at £2.40 per pint, and the **Olde Farmhouse**, being owned by Badger Brewery, dispenses their own Tanglefoot at £2.55 (£1.35 per half), Badger Best at £2.40, and Sussex Ale at £2.20 per pint.

Away from Nailsea & District

A couple of trips to Bath recently found Abbey Ales Bellringer, Bass, Courage Best and Otter Bitter at the **Ram**, Widcombe, from where it is a pleasant canal-side walk to a couple of pubs in Bathwick. The **Barley** with Bass, Butcombe Bitter and a guest, which at the time was Adnams Bitter, and the **Pulteney Arms** with Bath Ales Gem, Fuller's London Pride, Wadworth 6X and Young's Bitter.

A short walk beside Henrietta Park, the Fire Station and across the river on the grand Cleveland Bridge to the **Curfew**, a Wadworth house with Henry's IPA, 6X and Summersault, and on to the **Star Inn** on the Paragon found Helston's Slingo Special, Springhead's Moaning Meg, and Bass on gravity and by jug, as well as Abbey Ales Bellringer and Salvation.

The **Raven** has become a real ale lovers' must-do pub, which has a changing range including Blindman's Dark, Raven Ale, Speckled Hen and on a recent visit Hartley's Cumbria Way that I found to be just my cup of tea. This also applied to Abbey Ales dark Mild at The **Volunteer Rifleman** which also had

Abbey Bellringer, Bass and Dorset Gold.

The **Old Bank** in Keynsham is worth a visit. While waiting for a train a pint of City of Cambridge Darwin's Downfall (5% ABV) at £1.50 almost made me miss my train! Other cask ales were Butcombe Gold, RCH PG Steam, and Wickwar's BOB and IKB. Also, there was Thatcher's Traditional Cider.

Closer to home in Long Ashton I paid my first visit to the **Bird in Hand** which has recently been refurbished by Mentor Inns providing a light and airy ambience. I was greeted by tenants Matthew and Gabrielle West who had recently taken charge. They had Courage Best and Courage Directors in cask, but hoped to be able to offer a more varied range of real ale in the future.

And finally in Italy

Real ales appear impossible to find in our holiday area. The best tippie in Venice was Ceres Strong Export Ale from Denmark at 7.7% although Chinese Tsing Tao beer, Birra Moretti and Sans Souci slaked the thirst.

On Lake Garda at the delightful medieval town of Malcesne, Crystall Beer (5.6%) and a Poretta (5%) were OK, but I settled for Hefe Weizens from Germany in the end. The Paulaner, Erdinger, Steigell, Schneider and Hafferoder Franiskaner were very acceptable but top marks went to the Marke Weltenburger Hefe – Weisbier Hell at 4.7% ABV, it was a dark wheat beer and slipped down too easily.

Globetrotting

HELLO to all fellow readers of Pints West. My name is Mark Ashman and I help my uncle, Laurie Gibney (*Island in the Sea* correspondent) distribute Pints West and taste the beer in the local pubs in Nailsea.

Here is an article I have written that I hope will enlighten you all on the different beers from around the world in different continents, North America and South-Eastern Europe. Together with my mum, we went to these very different countries for two different holidays of a lifetime.

Canada

Back in February 2005 I went to Canada for a 10-day skiing holiday. We started off in Toronto, Ontario for three nights and while we were there I had a few local beers, one of which was Canadian Dark. The name says it all – Canadian Dark is a typical mild with an ABV of 4.3%, a lovely taste, no bitterness, and a beer that you could drink all night.

Next stop was Mont Tremblant in the French Province of Quebec. In the hotel, or shall I say 'La Grand Lodge' as it was called, we had a very well-known beer called Leffe, which was served on draught, a lovely way to serve such a beer in my opinion. Another beer which I was able to try was one called La Tremblant, a 5% beer which is brewed in St. Jovite, a little picturesque village in Tremblant. It is a lovely dark amber colour and very smooth, with a lovely long lingering aftertaste which is not too dry – it makes you want another just to keep the taste lingering forever. Another beer I bought home was Blanche des Anges at 4%, again brewed in Tremblant using natural spring water.

Cyprus

Another trip, this time to the resort of Paphos in Cyprus for a two-week relaxing holiday in the sun in June and July. Sun, sea, sand and beer is perhaps all you can ask for on a holiday like this. There are two beers (though not real ales) brewed on the island of Cyprus, from Keo and Leon, both of which I had at Cypria Maris Hotel.

The beer Keo at 4.5% is something like an English lager. When I first tried Keo I didn't particularly rate it, and thought it tasted more like Kaliber (a non-alcoholic beer), but after a while it started to grow on me and I considered it more a drinkable session beer.

The beer Leon is a very basic, boring beer, and another like an English lager, but this time it gets worse and worse as you drink it, and ends with a very dry aftertaste. Definitely not one I'd recommend.

While I was in Cyprus we went to a little place called the Irish Pub about a ten-minute walk towards the harbour. Hoping for some quality beers when we walked in, having seen ten draught beers on the sign, we only found one decent one which was Hoegaarden, very refreshing in the hot evenings. The pleasant surroundings and the friendly staff made it worth the wait for the best drink of the holiday. All glasses were chilled so you did have the perfect pint.

Apart from the beer the two countries we went to are very highly recommended for anybody wanting a holiday to remember.

From your globetrotting Nailsea Correspondent...
Mark Ashman



THE WINDMILL INN

PORTISHEAD ~ GENUINE FREEHOUSE

6

Real Ales in excellent condition including Courage Best, Bass, Butcombe Gold, RCH Pitchfork and 2 other guest ales.

In fact if you are not completely satisfied with the quality of the beer served, we will exchange it immediately for any other no questions asked.

The Windmill Inn is situated next to the Portishead Approach Golf Course on Nore Road. To contact us please ring 01275 843677.



READERS' LETTERS

Froth Off



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

Dear Steve,

I live in Cardiff and am fortunate that my two children are in Bristol, one working and one at university, which gives me access not only to a very large selection of real ale pubs in and around Bristol but access to your fantastic Pints West magazine continuously advising what's where and what's on. This is something that seems lacking across here in Cardiff. Real ale festivals that are held by pubs

may go unheard of until it is too late and then, because of lack of support, beer gets sold off cheap the following week or is thrown.

I am constantly trawling for beer served straight from the barrel. Can you tell me, are there any straight-from-barrel serving pubs in Bristol? I don't mind the beers, the more variety the better. My regular when visiting Bristol is either the Wellington in Horfield which did well in the 2005 Pub of the Year awards, or the Hare on the Hill (I am partial to a Barnstormer or two). I prefer to support the smaller breweries that get it right: Brain's is who we have across here and I don't agree with their opinion that it is real ale! (I can think of one or two people who might not feel the same as you here: fans of Brain's SA as served at the Highbury Vaults and Micawber's Ale House on St. Michael's Hill for instance – Ed.)

Keep up the excellent informative Pints West so that we (or me – but I do pass any information on in my local watering holes) can continue to enjoy the best.

Many thanks,
Lewis J Roberts
Cardiff (by email).

For pubs in Bristol dispensing straight from the cask, I can think of the following which offer one or more of their beers served that way:

- Myrtle Tree, Hotwells.
- White Horse, Westbury-on-Trym.
- Swan With Two Necks, St Jude's.
- Phoenix, Old Market.
- Rose of Denmark, Hotwells.
- Humpers Off Licence, Stapleton Road.
- And further afield:*
- Crown, Churchill (multi-award-winning pub).

- Barn, Wraxall.
 - Queen's Arms, Bleadon.
 - Black Horse, Clapton-in-Gordano.
 - Hunter's Lodge, Priddy.
 - Star, Pucklechurch.
 - Bell, Walcot Street, Bath.
 - Star Inn, Paragon, Bath.
 - Plough, Congresbury.
 - Blue Flame, Nailsea.
 - Prince of Waterloo, Winford.
- What might I have missed?*
Most of the pubs will serve such beers in excellent condition. Ed.

New Inn's first quenches thirst

Congratulations must go to Steve and Emma at the New Inn, Cross, for their inaugural beer festival held over the May Bank Holiday weekend. The pub is already gaining a reputation for friendly welcoming service, and offers a good range of well kept real ales and cider, along with a wide selection of reasonably priced food available all day.

Based around a West Country theme, there was a selection of over 20 ales on offer, from 14 breweries, plus ciders. From traditional favourites such as Hop Back Summer Lightning, Otter Ale, and Bath Gem, through to a few more unusual offerings such as Country Life Lacey's New Ale and Exmoor Silver Stallion.

Beer quality was good, as all ales were gravity dispensed from a suitably cool stone outbuilding, and particularly enjoyable were RCH Old Slug Porter, Exmoor Beast and Cottage Norman's Conquest. As for the ciders, Moles Black Rat was extremely popular, and rapidly sold out.

We hear that another festival is being planned for some time in August, and hope that details will be available to CAMRA well in advance.

Marianne Rake & Justin Bailey
(by email).

Malt, Hops, Yeast & Water!



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CAMRA membership

NATIONAL membership of the Campaign for Real Ale currently stands at 76,666 (writing just before the Great British Beer Festival) and in the Bristol and District branch we have over 1,200 members, making it one of the top ten for numbers.

We are an active branch, with members contributing to the selection of pubs that we put forward to the top selling Good Beer Guide, campaigning to save pubs and to protect the consumer, and of course organising the hugely successful and sell-out Bristol Beer Festival.

Did you know that members get advance notice of when the tickets go on sale, so they can avoid that agonising last minute panic trying to get hold of a ticket? To join please use the form at the back of Pints West, fill in the Direct Debit Mandate (or cheque payable to CAMRA) and send it to the membership secretary.

Pete Tanner

Silver Stallion loose on Exmoor

Exmoor Ales celebrates 25 years of brewing

IF someone tells you that they've just seen a Silver Stallion in their local pub, don't worry, the landlord hasn't suddenly set up a riding school amongst his handpumps and bags of crisps. Silver Stallion is actually the name of a brilliant new beer created by Exmoor Ales to celebrate 25 years of brewing in Wiveliscombe, a period which has seen them become one of the the biggest and best-loved brewers of cask ales in Somerset. The new beer joins a robust and well-maintained stable of Exmoor Ales' other superb beers, including Exmoor Ale, Fox, Gold, Hart and Stag. These are ales available throughout a grateful nation of beer-lovers, either through direct delivery in the southwest from Cornwall right up to Bristol, or nationwide through wholesalers such as Waverley TBS (formerly the Beer Seller), Small Beer and Brewers Wholesale.

As well as celebrating 25 years with a new beer, Exmoor Ales have launched a beautiful new set of pumpclips, which reflect the unique heritage and environment on Exmoor National Park. "We decided to introduce a new range of attractive pump-clips to celebrate our 25th anniversary and Exmoor's glorious countryside," says the brewery's Managing Director Peter Turner. "We are delighted with the enthusiastic reception of our new images by both the public and the trade."

Exmoor Ales started in 1980, when the idea of micro-breweries was in its infancy. It was originally called Golden Hill Brewery, after its hill-top location in Wiveliscombe, and its creation brought brewing back to the town for the first time since the closure of Arnold & Hancock's in the late 1950s. Almost immediately, Golden Hill made its mark on the beer world when the 13th brew of Exmoor Ale was voted Best Bitter at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival in 1980. Since then countless other brewing awards have

come their way, while bottled versions of the cask beers, Gold and Beast, have also scooped up plaudits and accolades. Early summer also saw the start of direct deliveries of bottled Gold and Beast to Co-op stores throughout the southwest, where they will be sold under the rousing banner of "local produce".

In 1986 Exmoor Ales started a new trend with their single-malt Exmoor Gold, arguably the very first golden ale, a style of beer which has tempted and tantalised ale-lovers. This has also been a multi-award winner and a great favourite throughout southwest pubs and beyond. In August 1988 Exmoor Ales became the official name of the company. The brewery has grown steadily since, both in and out of the county, becoming one of the UK's most successful craft breweries, not always an easy task given the might and power of the big breweries.

Gorgeous beers such as Stag, Fox and Beast have confirmed the brewery's place in the front ranks of West Country brewing. Peter Turner and head brewer Adrian Newman (he joined in 1992 after spending several years at Belhaven in Scotland) are currently the sole directors of the company. The beers Adrian

Newman has nurtured and developed reflect his belief that a well-balanced beer is what drinkers want.

"The secret of our success is the drinkability of the beers," he says. Silver Stallion is Newman's latest innovation; a lipsmackingly delicious bitter with a crisp and complex taste, malty with citrus and spice overtones, using four English hops and a blend of pale and chocolate malts. It is a true thoroughbred which has galloped straight out of the stalls and onto the bars of Exmoor's satisfied customers.

"We were looking for a rather special session beer," adds Peter Turner, "not too strong and with a



mid-brown colour. We're really pleased with it and the fact that it's gone down so well with the trade just confirms that our head brewer Adrian knows how to craft a great beer.

"We hope people will enjoy a pint to celebrate our anniversary and here's to the next 25 years."

Adrian Tierney-Jones

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Royal Oak opened

SO many times we hear of pub closures in the local press, *Pints West* and *What's Brewing* that it comes as a breath of fresh air to hear of a former pub, long closed, coming back to life, particularly when opening as a genuine freehouse.

August 5th saw the grand opening of Bath's newest pub, the **Royal Oak**. This is located at the traffic signal junction of the Lower Bristol Road with the New Windsor Bridge Road.

With Becky and John Whinnerah at the helm, real ale was confidently predicted to feature significantly, but I was not quite prepared for just how. Though I arrived a mere half hour after opening, I found punters two deep along the bar and the magical scene of ten beer engines in use.

John had made sure that the pub's name featured here as well, with O'Hanlon's Royal Oak on sale. Others including Codrington Royal, Isle of Purbeck Solar Power, Fraoch, Cotleigh Barn Owl, Blindman's Icarus, Juward's Pale Ale and "Test Brew" from Otley also featured. Shortly after I arrived the crew wheeled out plates of nibbles for the increasingly merry crowd and later Fiddler John & Friends entertained with music.

However, the opening has not been all plain sailing. John and Becky and family have had to live in a caravan beside the pub while building work was in progress, and with John's enthusiasm to get beer rolling it was a real struggle to get enough done to open on the publicized date. I saw for myself that the pub sign only went up the day before and John told me that the bar was only installed a few days earlier. And work is still in progress. A beer garden is planned; Becky was most distressed that there was insufficient time to complete this for opening even though they had all been working all hours. There will also be a no-smoking room but again there was insufficient time to complete this for opening.

Two other minor glitches (minor for the real ale drinker anyway) were that there was



no wine bottle opener and that there was no lager. In the latter case this was a problem arising from success. It is John's intention only to stock Bath Ales' organic lager and apparently the good citizens of Bath and environs had drunk every drop.

As well as a grand, changing selection of ten real ales, John and Becky also intend to feature a changing real cider or perry. To help in deciding what to stock they contacted *Pints West's* very own Cider Sisters for advice. The first cider to be featured at the Royal Oak was one from Rich's (*Rich's Farmhouse Cider, Mill Farm, Watchfield, Highbridge, Somerset*), and indeed future ciders will be labelled "as

recommended by the Cider Sisters", which puts our Freya and Erica in the spotlight somewhat.

It seems that this establishment is quickly going to become very well and widely known. During my fairly short visit there I encountered folk from as far afield as Bristol, Weston-super-Mare, Reading, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Holland. While the river tow path is my obvious way home from work on the bike it will now be abandoned in favour of the Lower Bristol Road, just to monitor progress you understand.

Phill the Pint
Photos by Andrew Swift

Rave on

AT the Raven in Bath the new hierarchy have done well enough to have the confidence to fit a fifth hand pump. The other four pumps have a good rotation of beers but this fifth pump is now reserved for an interesting innovation: the introduction of a house bitter.

Many pubs do this by re-badging an existing brew but Tim at the Raven has not done this. He has contacted the Blindman's Brewery and asked them to produce a specific and original ale as follows: "A dark ruby beer with a bitter first taste, slightly sweet as it rolls across the tongue, with a dry smooth finish, looking like a porter but tasting lighter."

While it did go on sale during July the official launch for the beer was the 4th of August. Tim has just received the second batch

of the first brew run, and the second brew run is now being planned. I certainly enjoyed my pint (half actually – it was lunchtime and I had work to do) and feel that Blindman's has produced a good representation of the specified style. Try it yourself to verify. Apparently you can obtain it to take away in 18- and 36-pint containers.

For those that like this sort of information, the brew contains Maris Otter, Crystal and Amber malts, and a selected blend of Challenger, Styrian Goldings and Chinook hops.

The Raven is also having the beer specially mixed to produce Raven sausages. Or should it be Raven Ale sausages? That would sound more appetising. These complement the recently introduced specialist pies that are now on sale there... something else for me to try.

Phill the Pint



History of the Royal Oak

(From *Bath's Lost Pubs*, to be published later this year)

THE Royal Oak dates from the mid-1790s. Part of the building sits over a brook, which suggests it may have been built as a mill or even a brewery. However, it does not seem to have been a pub at the start, and the first record of it being a beerhouse comes from 1839. Although it may have opened some time earlier, it could not have opened as a beerhouse before 1830, when the Beerhouse Act came into force. One of its earliest landlords was a cooper called Thomas Strange.

In 1874, the Somerset & Dorset Railway, swinging down from Devonshire Tunnel to join the Midland line into Green Park station, crossed the Lower Bristol Road so close to the Royal Oak that part of the building had to be set back. A detailed inventory of the Royal Oak was prepared that same year. There was a bar (with a five-motion beer engine, four pewter beer engines, a porter pull, partition and serving counter), bar parlour, back parlour (with chess table, ottoman, decanters and candlesticks), taproom, parlour, four bedrooms, workshop, brewery, skittle alley and club room.

Apart from its Somerset & Dorset connection, the Royal Oak was also famous for having one of the longest serving landladies in Bath. Alfred Beard had been at the Royal Oak for less than five years when he died in 1874. His widow, Eliza Beard, took over the pub and ran it until around 1930.

The building was badly damaged by bombing in 1942, with a large crack running right across the front of the building. The front wall was hastily rebuilt – unfortunately marring the appearance of the building in the process – and the pub reopened a few weeks later.

In 1976, when Fred Pearce wrote his *Critical Guide to Bath Pubs*, he described it as: “an intimate and exceptionally pleasant well-kept house. The public (Oak Room) has black and white TV, matching wood panelling and tables, darts and shove ha’penny. Small compact lounge has flowering plants in the window.”

In 1993 Courage's sold the Royal Oak to Moles' Brewery (who also owned the Hop Pole on the Upper Bristol Road and the Old Crown in Twerton), but it closed in 1999. In 2002, it survived plans to demolish it and build a Jehovah's Witness Hall. Since then, extensive – and extremely sympathetic – renovations have since been carried out. The front wall, in particular, now looks as good – if not better – than it did before the Luftwaffe left their calling card. In August 2005, it finally reopened, and looks set to be one of the top real ale pubs in the area.

The Royal Oak conforms pretty closely to most real-ale drinkers' idea of the perfect pub. Ten hand pumps – and no lager, except in bottles (although Bath Ales' organic lager is likely to come on line in the next few weeks). The range of beer will change regularly, and there's almost certain to be something even the most assiduous beer festival enthusiast won't have tried before. A recent visit found Blindman's Icarus, RCH Old Slug Porter and Cotleigh Barn Owl from Somerset, Triple FFF Moondance Bitter from Hampshire, Heather Grozat from Lanarkshire, Country Life Golden Pig from Devon, and Butt's Barbus Barbus from Berkshire. Cider is currently represented by Rich's Farmhouse from near Highbridge. Card-carrying CAMRA members get 10% discount off pints, and the pub is open every day from noon to eleven (10.30 on Sundays). Food will be available as soon as the kitchen is up and running, sometime in the next couple of months.

Andrew Swift

Abbey Ales joins SIBA's Direct Delivery Scheme



The organisation:

SIBA, the Society of Small Independent Brewers.

The scheme:

DDS, the Direct Distribution Scheme.

The objective:

To enable retailers within multiple groups to directly source local brewers' products in response to the fast growing interest in locally brewed beer.

Abbey Ales in Bath is one of the latest brewing companies to join SIBA's Direct Delivery Scheme.

Managing Director Alan Morgan said: “We are late joining the scheme but after calls from local Enterprise Inns licensees in Bath and Bristol we felt we would be silly not to join. So far it has proved extremely successful and it works very well for us and the licensees we are supplying. We are now hoping to build on what we have started.”

The scheme, launched a year and a half ago, has benefited not only the UK's small brewers, but also pub groups, retailers and customers alike in outlets run by Avebury Taverns, New Century Inns, Enterprise Inns, Edinburgh Woollen Mill and ASDA supermarkets.

The overall objective of SIBA DDS is to facilitate commerce between micro-suppliers and macro-customers. It enables local delivery and local consumption of local beers. Local pubs can build partnerships with their local breweries and, through co-operation and marketing, increase trade to their mutual benefit.

SIBA DDS is an electronic, internet-based administration system. The key to the success of the scheme is that SIBA DDS facilitates direct trade with local pubs, but provides a single point of contact for the pubcos' headquarters. Effectively a 'one-stop-shop' for retailers, SIBA DDS maximizes commercial benefits and minimizes administrative burdens.

SIBA DDS is responsible for sourcing the beers, consolidating orders, processing payments to its members and managing deliveries to retailers. Orders can be transmitted as simple electronic files to SIBA on a daily basis. These orders are processed into 'Delivery Notes' and transmitted to the brewers. Working within a strict 'Delivery Charter', brewers are trained to receive such documentation and deliver the products. By using customer-specific paperwork, all deliveries can be reconciled with 'Proof of Delivery' and, on confirmation of delivery, files are transmitted back to the customer.

In the time it has been running, the scheme has proven that where retailers and pubco lessees have been given the chance to stock local beers from small brewers, they have taken advantage of it and enhanced their businesses and cask beer volumes by offering their own customers a wider and more attractive product range.

Nick Stafford, SIBA's Commercial Director, has said of the scheme: “The DDS has been so beneficial to hundreds of pubs in the UK since its launch that I am confident we will have scores more eager to join. All these developments are in line with the resurgence in real ale which SIBA has been long been publicising.”

Wot, no Cider Sisters?

We're very sorry, but we're afraid we're not going to be able to do a 'Cider Sisters' article for this issue. Many apologies, we'll be back next time... Cheers, Freya and Erica McLuckie.

Pub news from the Bath area

FROM 30 July, the **Royal Oak in Corsham** High Street, just over the border in Wiltshire, has closed at 6pm on Saturday evenings. The landlord, Nick Taylor, says he took the step because of problems caused by Saturday-night drinkers. To compensate, he is opening at 9.30am on Saturdays to serve breakfasts.

Wetherspoon's, which opened its first outlet in Bath only last year, introduced a no-smoking rule on 9 March. Plans by the local council to introduce a smoking ban in pubs in advance of a national ban are reported to be at an advanced stage, with proposals only needing Mr Prescott's rubber stamp before they come into effect. So far, pubs in Bath (apart from Wetherspoon's) which have tried to introduce a ban have backed down after a downturn in takings. A blanket ban, although opposed by many, is unlikely to have the same effect – as the jargon-mongers would put it, a level-playing-field scenario will become operational.



King of Wessex Wetherspoon

Meanwhile, Wetherspoon's in Bath may be feeling slightly short-changed. Having moved into the Kingsmead Leisure Complex near Green Park Station at the same time as the Odeon multiplex cinema, they've been catching the punters not only as they go in, but also as they go out, parched by buckets of salty popcorn. Now, Odeon have applied for a licence to sell beer themselves, so punters can guzzle away as they watch movies. It won't be real ale, and the potential for low-level yobbishness and the disruption caused by frequent visits to the facilities have left most cinema-goers distinctly lukewarm as to the proposals. Just another unanticipated angle to the government's liberalisation of the licensing laws.

The **Garrick's Head** in St John's Place, next to the Theatre Royal, closed early in 2005, a few months short of its bicentenary. Built around 1720 for Beau Nash, the "King of Bath," it opened as a pub in October 1805, when the Theatre Royal moved to its present site. Although known as the Garrick's Head from the start, after one of England's most famous eighteenth-century actor-managers, the bust above the entrance was only placed there in 1831. It had its own brewery until around 1890.



The Garrick's Head

Two years ago, it was taken over by the landlord of the King's Arms at Didmarton, a former Gloucestershire CAMRA Pub of the Year, who had plans to transform it into one of Bath's top real ale pubs. Sadly, the management (who also run the theatre) decided that its future would be brighter as a wine bar. That is what it will become when it reopens in 2006.

Nearby, on Upper Borough Walls, **Sam Weller's** closed in March 2005, with metal shutters going up a few days later. Strangely enough, the passing of a pub which has been there since at least 1739 was marked by not a word of protest or lamentation. It did not even make it to the pages of the *Bath Chronicle*. The closure may only be temporary, but, given what has happened elsewhere in Bath, the chances of it becoming another wine bar must be alarmingly high. In the early 1960s, Sam Weller's – then known as the Full Moon – had a traditional wood-panelled interior. Then it was gutted and



Sam Weller's as the Full Moon c1910

revamped in the name of progress. If it had been left alone – as the Star and the Old Green Tree were – its closure would have sparked protests not just in Bath but across the region.



Sam Weller's shut summer 2005

Out of town, the **Viaduct Inn at Monkton Combe** closed in June. Opened in the 1830s when the turnpike road (now the A36) was opened along the Limpley Stoke valley, its name refers to the road viaduct across Midford Brook. The lease has been sold to Amec Developments, a



The boarded-up Viaduct Inn

London-based property company. Although close to a canal marina, it stood at a very busy crossroads, with little provision for pedestrians. It was also hampered by lack of parking space. If the pub is converted to flats, as now seems likely, the old three-storey brewery which stood next door, and looks much as it did when operational, will be transformed out of all recognition. Railway enthusiasts may like to note that the GWR branch from Limpley Stoke to Camerton branch, which ran next to the pub, featured in the film *The Titfield Thunderbolt*.

Readers with the odd £1.3 million to spare and a yearning to live in an old country pub may be interested in the **Packhorse Farm at Southstoke**, just south of Bath. Until the early nineteenth century, this was the Packhorse Inn, supposedly dating back to medieval times. When Midford Road was rerouted, to give coaches an easier climb out of Midford to Combe Down, the inn closed, and its name and licence were transferred to a farmhouse in Southstoke village. The new Packhorse is still in business, one of the most unchanged and characterful country pubs in the Bath area, with a superb location and gardens to front and rear.



The Hat and Feather

One closure that did spark vigorous debate was that of the **Hat & Feather** at the top of Walcot Street. Almost certainly dating from the 1660s, and taking its name from the distinctive headgear of Royalists during the Civil War, it was rebuilt around 1900.

The Hat was a Bath institution, famed not for the quality of its beer, but as "Bath's original underground hangout – not a style bar, more a way of life – the

kind of pub legends are made of – or at least tall stories."

That's a quote from its website, which, sadly, is no longer on line. Following a dramatic rent hike by the pubco, the leaseholder, the Hat shut last year. It went out on a high, with a spectacular firework display. A few weeks later, when the pubco put in a temporary manager, it reopened, but then, on a miserable night at the end of November 2004, it closed for good.

The lease was taken by Richard Fenton, who owns the Firehouse Rotisserie in John Street and the Grappa Bar (formerly the Beehive pub) on Belvedere. After an extensive revamp it opened in April 2005 as the Hudson Bar and Grill. Although real ale (Sharp's Doom Bar) is on offer, the move sparked a heated, and at times vituperative, exchange of views in the letters page of the *Bath Chronicle*, much of it condemning the loss of a name that had lasted almost 350 years. In a poll organised by the *Chronicle*, 66% of respondents said the name should not have been changed; 29% were in favour.

In the *Bath Chronicle* on 11 June 2005, Richard Fenton was quoted as saying: "The days of a husband going straight to the pub after a hard day's work and going home to his long-suffering wife at closing time are over. The wife wants to go out too – and she wants some grilled shrimps and a cocktail ... The Hat and Feather was a traditional pub with a Bohemian edge. We have maintained the edge and all the Victorian features, but it has been smartened up." The old Hat & Feather sign now adorns a wall inside the pub.



The King William

A little further out of town, the **King William** on the corner of Thomas Street and London Road, goes from strength to strength. A street-corner beerhouse, opened in the 1830s, there was once a pub called the Queen Adelaide (after William's

wife) on the opposite corner. When it closed in 2003, after a somewhat chequered recent career, its future looked bleak. With no car park and virtually no on-street parking, it was surely too far out of town, too small, too run down, to ever be viable again. But, against all the odds, Charlie and Amanda Digney took on challenge and spent months revamping the place, before reopening it – without a change of name – early in 2004. Real ale, real wine, an adventurous and upmarket food policy, and an object lesson in how an unloved back-street boozer can be brought bang up to date without compromising its essential character – or getting rid of many time-worn fittings – has ensured that the King William has been popular right from the start. It's also managed what is no easy conjuring trick, managing to attract upmarket diners while still hanging on to regulars from the old King William.



The Raven

The **Raven** on Queen Street, also in line for an early return to the *Good Beer Guide*, has commissioned its own ale from Blindman's Brewery at Leighton near Frome. A strong dark ale with an ABV of 4.7, it has already proved a firm favourite, alongside Bellringer and a constantly-changing range of three guest beers. As well as local ales, beers from further afield, including regular appearances from award-winning breweries north of the border, can be found at the Raven. Foodwise, its lunchtime pies are proving popular, while the upstairs room, so long underused, is now a stylish no-smoking bar with some of the best views in the city. If you've not visited the pub since it was Hatchett's, its high time to see what's happened to it in the last twelve months.

Andrew Swift



Oldfield Park pub crawl

BATH'S newest free house, the Royal Oak, is on the Lower Bristol Road, about 25 minutes west of the city centre. However, the good news is that there are not only lots of buses passing the door; it is also less than a quarter of a mile from Oldfield Park station.

There are trains to Oldfield Park from Temple Meads on Mondays to Fridays every hour from 09.40 to 19.40 (with extra services at 17.08, 17.22, 18.07, 20.50 and 21.56). The journey takes about 15 minutes. Saturday and Sunday trains are less frequent – also be warned that buses will replace trains between Bristol, Bath and Westbury at weekends from 17 September to 6 November because of engineering work.

Trains back to Temple Meads on weekdays run hourly from 14.12 to 18.12, then at 19.20, 20.14, 21.12, 22.11, and 22.51.

Once ensconced in the Royal Oak, you may decide to stay put until it's time to catch the train back. You could, however, use it as the starting point for a pub crawl into Bath, before catching a train back from Bath Spa station. One suggested crawl from Oldfield Park to Bath could look like this:

Turn left on leaving the train at Oldfield Park station, climb the ramp and turn right down Brook Road (named after the brook that runs under the Royal Oak). Near the bottom you'll see the **Charmbury Arms** on the left, a



The Charmbury Arms

Wadworth's pub, opened as a beerhouse around 1880. Its internal partitions have been ripped out, but otherwise it is little changed from when it was a cider house, owned by Courage's, in the 1960s.

The **Royal Oak** is a few yards further on, on the corner of the Lower Bristol Road. (More on this pub in other articles elsewhere.)

After leaving the Royal Oak, cross the Lower Bristol Road, and walk up Windsor



The former Royal Oak, Upper Bristol Road

Bridge Road to the traffic lights on the Upper Bristol Road. On the left-hand corner stands the old Windsor Castle Inn, now converted into flats and offices, with only the front wall of the pub still standing as a façade to the new development. Turn right here and walk down as far as Park Lane on the left. A few yards up Park Lane is the Park Tavern, originally known as the Blue Lodge and dating from the mid-eighteenth century. A recent visit found only one of the three handpumps working, with Courage Best on offer.

A little way along the Upper Bristol Road is the **New Westhall**, another Wadworth's pub. A little way beyond that is the **Hop Pole**, once, like the Royal Oak, a Moles' house, but now Bath Ales' first pub in Bath. It dates from the 1820s and is not only a past Bath CAMRA Pub of the Year, but was also named by the Bristol Evening Post in 2003 as having the best pub food in Bath – and it's up against some pretty stiff competition. The patio at the back here is a particularly pleasant spot to spend a couple of hours on an autumn evening. The Hop Pole is now, like the Royal Oak, open all day.

Walking on into town, you'll pass Mr D's burger bar, once a pub called the Robin Hood. A little way past that – if you look carefully – you'll come across the signboard for another Royal Oak. It's pretty faded and weather-beaten – not surprising seeing that the pub closed in 1961, and, after being saved from demolition, was converted to a private house. The surprising thing is that it's still there.

Just past the Royal Oak, on Monmouth Place, is a pub that's more noted for its live music – on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights – than its beer, although a recent visit found Wickwar Cotswold Way alongside the regular offerings of Courage Best and Bass.



The King's Arms sign

The **King's Arms** is also interesting because it's the closest thing Bath has to a traditional coaching inn, with a tiny courtyard and a couple of well-preserved signboards.

Another Wadworth's house, the **New Inn**, opened as a beerhouse around 1837, can be found further down Monmouth Place. After that, a left turn at the traffic lights into Chapel Row takes you up into Queen Square. Carry on past the Francis Hotel along the south side of the square, and head on along Wood Street to its junction with John Street and Queen Street. Here you are spoilt for choice. A few yards up John Street is the **Salamander**, Bath Ales' second pub in Bath; a few yards down Queen Street is the **Raven**, formerly Hatchett's, a free house with five handpumps, an adventurous guest beer policy, and its own brew – called Raven – from Blindman's Brewery. Carry straight on along Quiet Street and down Green Street and you'll come to the current CAMRA Pub of the Year, the **Old Green Tree**. The choice is so difficult, in fact, that there's really nothing else for it but to visit all three – after which, a 10-minute walk will take you down to Bath Spa station, with several trains an hour to Bristol throughout the day, and late services at 22.49, 23.21, and 23.58.

Andrew Swift



The Hop Pole

Pub news

Two Bristol bars, not I confess known for their real ale, have been among the first to apply for 24-hour licences under the new government rules. *All In One* in Park Street and *Sukoshi* in Frogmore Street have both put their names down for round the clock boozing.

On a similar theme, *The Riverside Inn* in Saltford has obtained permission to stay open until 1am, despite opposition from local residents.

The *Happy Cocks* in Hengrove has been closed down by Greene King. Originally, it had been thought that the pub was just closing for refurbishment, but there now seems to be some doubt as to whether it is planned to reopen at all. We'll keep an eye on it for the next *Pints West*.

The *Palace Hotel* (also known as the *Gin Palace*) has been put up for sale. We hope it will continue to be a pub.

Word has reached us that – after years of neglect – *The Rummer* at one end of St. Nicholas Market is now undergoing a 'sympathetic refurbishment' with a view to opening later in the year. More on this next time.



The Queen Vic

The *Queen Victoria* on Gloucester Road has undergone a refurbishment, with a fetching black and gold livery now apparent. Courage Best appears to be the only real ale here. Fans of Scottish football will be pleased to hear that games shown on satellite/cable channel *Setanta* are shown here as well as the usual Sky games.



The Golden Lion

A bit further down Gloucester Road, the *Golden Lion* (for a while Finnegan's Wake) has now lost its mock Irish theming, inside and out. Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Morland Old Speckled Hen and Courage Best available here.

Still further down, we come to the



The Bishop's Tavern

Bishop's Tavern. Originally a Hogshead pub, but sold off to the Laurel Pub Company. The real ale selection appears to have been reduced, with just Greene King beers available on my last visit.

Meanwhile, back in Old Market, the oriental bar and café known as *T.A.T.U.*, has had to close because of a lack of trade. Hopefully it will reopen soon and, with any luck, back under its original name of 'The Eagle'.



The Albion

The Albion in Boyces Avenue in Clifton has undergone a complete transformation. No longer a dark, dare I say slightly dingy student bar. A total refurbishment inside and out has taken place. It now describes itself as a "Pub and Dining Rooms". A very nice pint of Cotleigh Tawny was on offer when I tried it out, with Butcombe Bitter also available. A third handpump sometimes dispenses Butcombe Blond. I've yet to spot all three available at the same time though. Not sure about the clientele here yet: while I was there a chap came in, order half a dozen "River Yelm Oysters", which he washed down with Thatchers Traditional Cider! Addlestons cloudy cider is also available, and the food is not all as posh as the Oysters (and Quails Eggs) would lead you to believe.

Also refurbished after a long wait is the nearby *Clifton* in Regent Street. They have wisely retained the charming little front bar, as well as the larger one at the back. Interesting selection of beers too: as well as London Pride, Bass, Butcombe Blond, Bath Ales Barnstormer or Gem, and a "Clifton Ale" also from Bath Ales, they offer Leffe Blonde and – I believe almost a first for Bristol (second only to the *Mall* in Clifton) – Draught Früli from the Van Diest Brewery in Belgium. It is apparently "a new high quality Belgian white beer blended with pure fruit juice". Curiouser



The Clifton

and curiouser, said Alice.

The *Quadrant* in Clifton, mentioned in the last *Pints West*, now only offers Butcombe Blond for the real ale enthusiast. They do now stock a variety of lagers – is that an oxymoron? – including Cruzcampo, San Miguel and Amstel on draught...

Good luck to the *Portcullis* round the corner in Wellington Terrace, which has just reopened to have another crack at making some money. This pub – with its *living room* drinking area upstairs, has had a tough time of it in recent years. Let's hope the Butcombe Bitter proves popular.

The *Lamb Inn* in Iron Acton is fast taking the mantle of being that village's Real Ale and Cider Champion after the demise of the Rose & Crown. They now have up to eight real ales, with Courage Best Bitter, Sharp's Doom Bar Bitter, Morland Old Speckled Hen, Uley Pig's Ear, Bass and Taylor Landlord all available as I write. They also offer three traditional ciders (currently Thatcher's Cheddar Valley, Moles Black Rat and Weston's Old Rosie). For the technophiles among you, there is also free wi-fi access, whatever that may be.

Duncan Shine

Other news from Clifton: The *Lansdown* continues to serve a very decent pint of real ale: three at the time of writing, in the form of Sharp's Doom Bar, Otter Bitter, and Barnstormer from Bath Ales. The landlord is considering making use of a fourth handpump but was not sure whether it should be for another real ale or a traditional cider. What do you think he should do? Two pubs making the most of the popularity of Sharp's beers are the *Royal Oak* and the *Greyhound*. The *Royal Oak* offers Doom Bar and Cornish Coaster and now has an official-looking Sharp's Royal Oak sign on the wall outside. The *Greyhound* has also been selling Doom Bar and also a special IPA from Sharp's in support of the RNLI. The *Grapes Tavern* has now doubled the number of real ale handpumps to four. Three Wadsworth beers were available recently, with hopes for guests beer in the pipeline. SP

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

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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 23 Aug – Branch meeting, Horts, Broad Street, Bristol at 8pm.

Tues 6 Sept – Clevedon explorer trip. Depart from Cornubia, Bristol at 6.45pm.

Wed 14 Sept – Branch committee meeting at Zero Degrees (venue provisional – to be confirmed) at 8pm.

Tues 20 Sept – West Mendip GBG survey trip. Depart from Cornubia at 6.45pm.

Wed 28 Sept – Branch Meeting, Ebdon Arms, Worle (venue provisional – to be confirmed) at 8pm.

Tues 4 Oct – GBG survey trip. Depart from Cornubia at 6.45pm.

Sat 8 Oct – Trip to cider works in Somerset. Depart from Cornubia at 9am. (Start time to be confirmed – ring 0117 9678177 or 07946 414129).

Wed 12 Oct – Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia at 8pm.

Tues 18 Oct – Explorer trip. Depart from Cornubia at 6.45pm.

Wed 26 Oct – Branch meeting, Horts City Tavern, Broad Street, Bristol at 8pm.

Thurs 27 Oct – Cider Saunter. Start Apple Tree, Southville at 7pm.

Tues 1 Nov – GBG survey trip. Depart from Cornubia at 6.45pm.

Wed 9 Nov – Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia at 8pm.

Tues 15 Nov – GBG survey trip. Depart from Cornubia at 6.45pm.

Wed 23 Nov – Branch meeting (venue to be confirmed) at 8pm.

Tues 29 Nov – GBG Survey trip. Depart from Cornubia at 6.45pm.

For more information on local events either attend our branch meetings or check the diary section on our web site at www.camrabristol.org.uk



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PINTS WEST

on-line and in colour

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

This contains information on the local branch and the Campaign for Real Ale generally, as well as details of forth-coming meetings, socials and other activities. The web site is regularly updated and so is the best place to find out about any last minute changes to arrangements as well as some of the latest real ale related stories. It is also the place where you can find past editions of Pints West, from edition 50 onwards. Number 50 also contains a potted history of Pints West from the very first edition in 1989, when it was then known as Avon Drinker. Recent editions are in colour.

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

Advertising: contact Steve Plumridge (details above). Current rates are:

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Full back page £375			

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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).

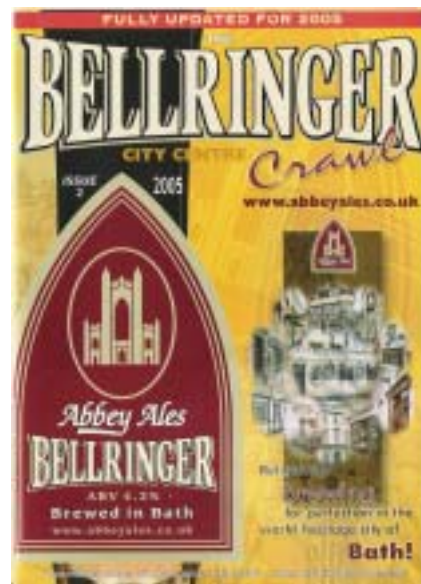
Further information on all aspects of CAMRA can be had from Ray Holmes on (0117) 9605357 (h).

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

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Bellringer pub crawl



Pick up your free copy of the second issue of *The Bellringer Crawl* publication – fully updated for 2005 – from any of these Bath pubs:

Ye Old Farmhouse, The Star Inn, The Bell, the Pig & Fiddle, the Old Green Tree, the Porter, the Volunteer Rifleman's Arms, the Raven, the Crystal Palace, the Huntsman Inn, or Lambretta's Bar.

THANKS TO THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

Adrian Tierney-Jones
Pennie Postlethwaite
Colin Postlethwaite
Norman Spalding
Richard Brooks
Phil Luddington
Mark Ashman
Duncan Shine
Laurie Gibney
Andrew Swift
Steve O'Shea
Phill the Pint
Robin E Wild
Pete Tanner
Tim Nickolls
Jade Potter
Steve Reed
Dave Jane
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.

New Butcombe Brewery Tour

Readers of the summer edition of *Pints West* may recall that beer production transferred to Butcombe's new brewery in Wroughton in March this year. On 5th July Bristol CAMRA members were given the first opportunity to tour the new brewery with everything up and running. And we were very impressed.

Guy Newell, successor to Simon Whitmoor and Butcombe's new owner, explained that beer production has increased steadily since the transfer and is now at a record 22,000 barrels a year. The brewery has expansion capacity to 45,000 barrels per year and, if achieved, would elevate Butcombe to one of the largest real ale brewers in the south-west.

Great care had been taken to ensure consistency of beer taste and quality during the transfer. This had certainly been achieved with many regular Butcombe drinkers commenting on a clearly detectable improvement in beer condition. Guy said this had been achieved by being able to rack the beers directly from the fermentation vessels. At the old site beer had to be transferred via racking tanks to the casks which caused some loss of condition, an old Butcombe characteristic few of us will miss.

It was heartwarming to see that no expense



was spared in the design and specification of top quality brewing equipment and brand new brewery premises. While Guy was understandably coy about revealing actual figures, we estimate that not far short of one million pounds has been spent on new kit and a



similar amount on buildings. Investment of this magnitude has to be for the long term and, as Guy confirmed that Butcombe will remain 100 per cent committed to real ale brewing, what better testimony could anyone find for CAMRA's case that real ale is popular and profitable.

Phil Luddington

Photos by Richard Brooks

Out and about with the Bristol Beer Factory

THE BRISTOL BEER FACTORY provided the real ale tent at the recent Keynsham Music Festival. Simon Bartlett and Jemma Walsh (which is actually two-thirds of the BBF's total staff!) both went to school in Keynsham so this was a proud moment for them to have their beers at the festival.

The beer could not have gone down any better with the very last pint from the very last cask being sold at 9 o'clock in the evening. Gold, the Beer Factory's 5% golden ale, became Keynsham's favourite with this selling out before the 4.2% No.7.

The Bristol Beer Factory decided to provide beer engines on the bar as opposed to serving their ales straight from the barrel so giving the tent



Bristol Beer Factory at the Keynsham Music Festival



From left to right: Andy Hepworth (Hepworth & Co, The Beer Station), Adam (Bath Ales), Simon Bartlett & Chris Thurgeson (Bristol Beer Factory) at the Shambala music festival.

a more of a friendly pub feel as opposed to just a long serving hatch. Keeping the beers cool could have been a problem but bringing them out of the cold store at the very last minute and also making sure there were plenty of cold wet towels in place certainly did the trick.

On another story, the Bristol Beer Factory, Hepworth & Co, and the Pipe & Slippers all joined forces to provide all of the beer at this year's Shambala music festival in Plympton, Plymouth on 12th to 14th August. Bristol Beer Factory brewed a 4.4% Shambala Golden festival ale especially for the event and Hepworth's provided a 5.0% organic lager called Shambolic. The festival-goers couldn't believe their luck to have such great products and when it was time to take the bar down at 8 o'clock on the Monday morning there was still a party going on in the beer tent.

Adam from Bath Ales gave a welcome hand making the bar and probably gave a hand in finishing off all of the beer as well!