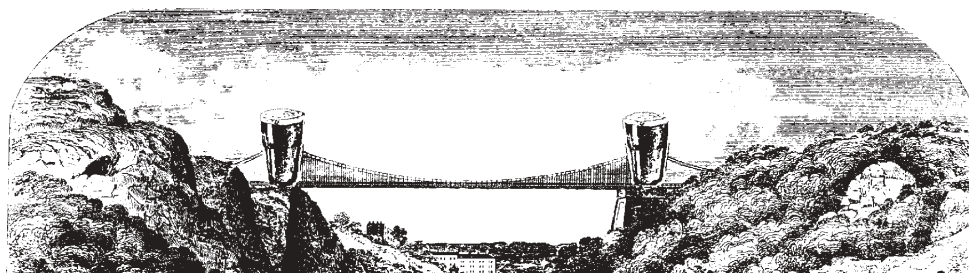




CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

AWARD-WINNING



www.camrabristol.org.uk

No. 68
Winter
2005/2006

CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

PINTS WEST

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

Announcing the arrival of the 9th Bristol Beer Festival



THE next arrival at the Brunel Passenger Shed at Temple Meads will be the ninth annual Bristol Beer Festival scheduled for the end of March 2006.

The ever-popular festival is all set to take place on Friday the 24th and Saturday the 25th of March, with tickets going on sale in time for Christmas. Details of how to get yours can be found inside on page 2.

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

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

See you at the festival!

Under threat? Will this festival beer survive?



Fuller's have just taken over Gale's Brewery, makers of this Festival Best Mild as well as many other excellent beers. Is the Gale's brewery, its beers and pubs safe in Fuller's hands? Turn to page 3 to find out more.

Bristol Beer Festival tickets

Beer from Timsbury ... and the Dance of the Severn Vales



The ninth annual Bristol Beer Festival will take place at the Brunel Passenger Shed, Temple Meads, Bristol, on Friday 24 March and Saturday 25 March 2005.

There will be more than 110 real ales and around 40 ciders and perries. Food will be available at all sessions. The ticket price includes admission, programme and a commemorative glass. Card-carrying CAMRA members will receive a voucher for a free half-pint of beer, cider or perry. Admission is by advance ticket only:

Fri 24 th March: 11.30am - 3.00pm	£3.50
Fri 24 th March: 6.00pm - 11.00pm	£5.00
Sat 25 th March: 11.30am - 4.00pm	£4.50
Sat 25 th March: 7.00pm - 11.00pm	£4.00

Tickets go on sale from **19 December 2005** in Bristol at the **Bridge Inn**, Passage Street, the **Hare on the Hill**, Kingsdown and the **Inn on the Green**, Horfield; and in Weston-super-Mare at **Off The Rails**.

Postal ticket applications (no personal callers) **with a stamped, addressed envelope**, to:

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

Cheques should be made payable to **Bristol & District CAMRA**. Please ensure that you provide a contact email address or phone number with your application in case of any queries. Also, note that tickets are strictly non-refundable. The event sells out every year and we need to ensure that the tickets go to people who will actually turn up.

THE launch of a brewery based just outside Bath was the occasion for another West Country brewery to bring its wares to the city for the first time. On 14 November, drinkers at Bath's Royal Oak pub had the chance not only to try beers from Matthews Brewery at Timsbury for the first time, but also to sample beers from the Severn Vale Brewery at Cam. Reports had already been filtering through from Gloucestershire of the quality of Severn Vale beers, but this was the first time they had appeared in Bath. And, if that was not enough, Somerdale Gold from Keynsham Brewery, established just three months ago, was also on tap.

Timsbury is a former mining village eight miles south-west of Bath. Coal mined there was shipped along the Somersetshire Coal Canal to its junction with the Kennet & Avon Canal at Brassknocker Basin. This was named after a nearby coaching inn with an elaborate doorknocker – so it is appropriate that Matthews Brewery's first beer, a hoppy, golden brew weighing in at 3.8 per cent alcohol – should be called Brassknocker as well.

Brassknocker went down so well at the launch that the first firkin disappeared within an hour and a half – a new record for the Royal Oak. Also on offer was a trial brew dubbed MBC2 – not a chemical formula, but short for Matthew's Brewing Company 2. An amber brew, weighing in at 4 per cent, and just as quaffable, this was the prototype for a beer whose name has yet to be decided, which will have an ABV of 4.2 per cent.

The five-barrel brewing plant at Timsbury has been set up by Stuart Matthews, a former software engineer, who decided to turn his interest and experience in home brewing into a full-time business. He was as pleased with his beers' reception as the punters at the Royal Oak were with this new addition to the local real ale scene. He is currently drawing up plans for a couple of seasonal brews, the first to be called Pit Pony, a dry 5.5 per cent stout, and hopefully a Christmas special as well. On the basis of what was on offer at the Royal Oak, they should be well worth looking out for.

The Severn Vale Brewing Company, another five-barrel plant, was opened this July by Steve McDonald. Like Matthews, Severn Vale is based on a former farm (perhaps, given the trend to convert agricultural buildings to breweries, someone should suggest this as a storyline for the Archers). Vale Ale, at 4 per cent, a crisp, full-bodied amber beer, was joined by a new brew – the straw-coloured, and whimsically titled, Dance of the Severn Vale (4.5 per cent).

For those lucky enough to get to the launch, it was a night to remember. In addition to Stuart Matthews and Steve McDonald, there were representatives from Blindman's Brewery, as well as Gill White, CAMRA



John Whinnerah, landlord of the Royal Oak, and Stuart Matthews, with beers from Matthews' Brewery.

(Not sure why the landlord chose to sport a Guinness shirt – they don't even sell it.)

Brewery Liaison Co-ordinator for the South West, whose portfolio now includes over 75 breweries.

John Firth, from Keynsham Brewery, had also hoped to be at the launch, but was unable to do so due to illness. Keynsham Pixash (4.1 per cent) had already featured (and quickly disappeared) at the Bath Beer Festival. Somerdale Gold (4.5 per cent), new to many of those at the launch, was equally well received.

With three such promising local breweries springing up within a few weeks of each other, the future for great beer in Bath – and of course Bristol – looks better than ever. And with landlords like John Whinnerah of the Royal Oak committed to promoting real ale, it seems set to reach an ever-wider audience.

Andrew Swift

Matthews Brewing Co. (Stuart Matthews)
Unit 7, Timsbury Workshop Estate,
Hayeswood Road, Timsbury, Bath BA2 0HQ
Phone: 01761 432094 or 07919 916397
Email: srmatthews@matthewsbrewing.co.uk

Severn Vale Brewing Co. (Steve McDonald)
Woodend Lane, Cam, Dursley,
Gloucestershire GL11 5HS
Phone: 01453 547550 or 07971 640244
Email: steve@severnvalbrewing.co.uk
Polypins (20 & 40 pints) are available directly from the brewery – for details see www.severnvalbrewing.co.uk.

Keynsham Brewing Co. (John Firth)
Brookleaze, Stockwood Vale,
Keynsham, Bristol BS31 2AL.
Phone: 0117 9867889 or 07711 131203.
Email: jonfirth@blueyonder.co.uk.

Gale's brewery, beers and pubs under threat

IT has been announced that London brewers Fuller, Smith & Turner (brewers of London Pride) have agreed a deal to take over Hampshire's oldest and most traditional brewers, George Gale. This immediately poses the questions of what will happen to the brewery, its beers, its pubs and its workers.

The local branches of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, have reacted with dismay at the devastating news for pub users, real ale drinkers and the brewery's staff.

CAMRA is calling on Fuller's to maintain brewing the full range of Gale's beers at the Horndean brewery in Hampshire, and to provide a commitment to retain the full Gale's pub estate and workforce.

Please support our campaign by signing our online petition. Visit www.camra.org.uk where you will find a link to the petition to save Gale's Brewery and beers, which states:

"We the undersigned express concern at the takeover of Hampshire's most traditional brewer Gale's, by London brewer Fuller's. We request that Fuller's maintain brewing the full range of Gale's beers at the Horndean brewery in Hampshire, and provide a commitment to the retention of the full Gale's pub estate."



THE STAR INN



Worth a Visit!

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

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

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

23 THE VINEYARDS, PARAGON, BATH Tel 01225 425072

Freshers' Fair 2005

Each year there is a growing influx of students into the branch area. Rather than leave them to cheap lager, keg cider and the latest brand of alcopop, the Bristol & District branch took the CAMRA message to the Freshers' Fair for the new intake of students at the UWE (University of the West of England).

Quality support was provided by the Bristol Beer Factory and Bath Ales, who not only donated some beer but also both provided assistance on the day to help us deal with the thirsty students.

As well as preaching the gospel of real ale we did manage to sign up some new members, and Bath Ales kindly donated some merchandise for a prize draw at the end.

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

Richard Brooks (words and pictures)



Chorister

Chorister, the latest occasional guest beer from Bath's own micro-brewery Abbey Ales, is now available to Bath's top real ale pubs having been launched in mid-November.

The 4.5 per cent ABV brown, malty ale, brewed with local Wiltshire Maris Otter malt and finished with Fuggles hops, proved very popular with drinkers and visitors to Bath the last time it was released.

Managing Director Alan Morgan commented, "We always try to brew a range of different beers to complement our best selling Bellringer but the need to meet the demand for our flagship ale Bellringer takes up nearly all of our production. Head brewer Martin Langham has to fit in brewing occasional beers when possible and he has slotted Chorister in before Christmas and our special Christmas brew Twelfth Night. Our regular customers are aware how quickly the guests sell and, fortunately for us, order early."

Abbey Ales started brewing in Bath in 1997 and have regularly won awards for Bellringer, a golden 4.2 per cent best bitter. Delivery is strictly within a twenty-mile radius of Bath's famous Abbey.

The first pubs to order Chorister were the Star, the Old Green Tree and the Volunteer Rifleman's Arms.

Twelfth Night

Whilst many people are still facing up to the fact that Christmas is coming but are still listening out for the first sound of carols and sleigh bells, the brewing team at Bath's brewery probably feel that Christmas has already arrived!

Staff at Abbey Ales brewery based at Camden Row are already taking advance orders for Twelfth Night, the brewery's annual Christmas Ale. Brewed by Head Brewer Martin Langham to give drinkers a glass of winter warmth, Twelfth Night is a dark strong bitter brewed to an ABV of 5.0 per cent.

Managing Director Alan Morgan said "We regard it as being an ideal winter warmer, ideal for supping whilst sitting around a real log fire in your local pub, eating hot chestnuts, and guaranteed to make the pub's own carol singers sound, if not good, perfectly acceptable!"

Limited supplies of Twelfth Night, which features an unusual flashing pump clip, will be available from Abbey Ales from the first week of December. Alan Morgan added, "Twelfth Night has proved very popular over previous Christmases and we have been continually told it's a pity that your Christmas beer is only available once a year!"

It will also be available in 18-pint and 36-pint boxes from www.abbeyales.co.uk.

2005 – another year of change

A look back at how the local real ale scene has changed and evolved in the year just ending.

IN common with most recent years, we have witnessed a considerable amount of change in the local pub and brewery scene during 2005. Whilst there have been a number of very sad events, there have also been many positive changes too. It all seems a very far cry from as recently as seven or eight years ago when very little seemed to change year on year. It is now a rarity for landlords and landladies to stay at the same pub for more than a few years, or even for pubs to stay under the same ownership for long. At least the craze of a few years back for renaming historic pubs with daft "comic" names seems to have burnt itself out with a few even reverting to their original name. The arrival of the "superpub" and the rise and rise of massive pub-owning companies seem to have been the triggers that set off the constant cycle of change in the industry.

There isn't space here to list all the changes of 2005, but I will try to highlight some of the most significant ones.

The year started on a very upsetting and worrying note after the sudden closure in late 2004 of the 325-year-old **Rose and Crown** in Iron Acton. A genuine free house, specialising in top quality real ale, including from local

independent brewers, the Rose and Crown was much loved by locals and real ale lovers from far and wide. An action group of CAMRA members and a few locals was formed. Despite a public meeting attended by over 100 people, no less than 83 letters of objection to the council, and considerable press coverage, the landlord was granted permission to turn the pub into a private house. Although the council openly admitted that the landlord had failed to show that the pub was unviable, it said that the existence of two other pubs nearby meant that there were "adequate alternative facilities". In the strange world that South Gloucestershire Council inhabit, that is apparently all you have to prove if you wish to close down a popular and historic pub to make a quick buck! The implications for other villages or communities in South Gloucestershire do not bear thinking about. A number of other pubs have closed for good in the last year, including the **Albert Inn** in Bedminster, famous for its live music and great atmosphere. The **Don John's Cross** and the **Three Horseshoes**, near neighbours in St. George, are no longer either. Together with the **Old Fox** in Eastville, which went in 2004, a lot of local history has disappeared in a very short space of time.

The saddest occurrence of all though was the tragic death of Bob Todd, who ran both the Good Beer Guide regular **Star Inn** in Pucklechurch and nearby **Bridge** in Shortwood. Bob

intervened in some trouble outside the Star and was run down by a car. Bob was known as a gentleman and very hospitable landlord, who worked tirelessly for charity and good causes. As well as being justly famous for the draught ciders he served, he also kept the best pint of Bass for many a mile – served direct from the cask via jugs. He will be sorely missed.

The Bristol and District branch of CAMRA conducted our usual Pub of the Year competition and most unusually we ended up with a tie for the winner. The 2004 winner, the **Wellington** in Horfield, tied with the **Port of Call** in Clifton. The **Wellington** is well known for

its top quality beers from **Bath Ales**, whilst the Port of Call takes full advantage of the Unique Pub Company's relaxed approach to guest beers. The pub offers ten or more changing beers, of all styles, excellent food and a very friendly atmosphere in a traditional pub setting. Not long after the award, Paul and Dee left the **Wellington** to take over the **Hare on the Hill** in Kingsdown – Bath Ales' first pub. Bath Ales also acquired the **Swan** at Swineford, another beer guide regular, during 2005. Not to be outdone, rivals Butcombe acquired the **Prince of Wales** in Stoke Lane, Westbury-on-Trym. A recent visit suggested that they are well on the way to restoring that pub's reputation for excellence and popularity. In another interesting move Cyril has moved from the **Plume of Feathers** in Hotwells to the **Mayors Arms** in Redcliffe where he has introduced guest beers. The pub has been greatly refurbished and the challenge is on to entice drinkers to a less fashionable part of the city.

On the brewery front we lost the historic **Smiles** brewery, which had been on the cards for some time, but gained two new contenders. The first was the **Cottage Spring** brewery based in Dodington Ash, a tiny hamlet near Tormarton and about 100 yards inside our branch area. Their three beers have started to pop up on the guest beer circuit and at festivals and have been well received. Then, to our surprise, one of our members, John Firth, opened the **Keynsham** brewery on the old site of the defunct Nursery brewery. Early tastings have been promising and John has struggled to keep up with demand. Unfortunately a recent bout of ill health has meant production had to be suspended, but hopefully not for long. "Smiles" beer is now brewed at the Highgate brewery in Walsall, so is not really a Bristol beer any more. There is talk of a micro-brewery being reopened on the old Colston Yard site but as yet nothing definite. Another minor piece of history occurred when the **Highbury Vaults** on St. Michael's Hill served its last pint of Smiles and introduced more guest beers instead. This was of course the

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THE HILLGROVE Mon-Sat 4pm-11pm, Sun 12-10.30pm
Dove St, Kingsdown, Bristol. 0117 9444780 hillgrove@hawkins-taverns.co.uk QUIZ SUN 9pm
CAMRA GOOD BEER GUIDE 2006 LISTED: NEW, EARLIER OPENING TIMES

THE MINERS ARMS Mon-Thu 4-11, Fri & Sat 12-11, Sun 12-10.30
Mina Rd, St Werburghs, Bristol. 0117 9445192 miners@hawkins-taverns.co.uk QUIZ THURS 8pm

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flagship pub of the Smiles estate for years. Only the **Brewery Tap** now remains. Across the street the **Zerodegrees** brew pub and restaurant (opened in 2004) continues to impress with its own range of beers. Another 2004 newcomer to the brewing scene, the **Bristol Beer Factory** also seems to be doing well and gaining outlets. **Bath Ales**, **RCH**, **Butcombe** and **Newman's** are all seemingly thriving still.

The launch of the 2006 Good Beer Guide (published in September 2005 but written in March) really highlighted just how much change has occurred. Of the 64 pubs selected by the branch, an amazing 24 were new entries (i.e. not in the 2005 guide). We have certainly never experienced a level of turnover on anything like that scale. Of course it means that quite a few old favourites have been left out this time, for a variety of reasons. These can range from indifferent beer quality to change of landlord, or sadly pub closure – or simply because there are not enough spaces in the guide to accommodate them all. Some of the pubs left out are already putting up a strong case for inclusion again next time round – the current list of contenders is around 100 pubs for the 64 slots in the 2007 book!

The 24 new entries are a wide and interesting selection, spread across the whole of our region (the former county of Avon more or less). In central Bristol they are the **Adam and Eve** in Hotwells (free house with up to five changing beers and a cider), the **Bell** in Hillgrove Street (Butcombe's full range), **Horts City Tavern** (Young's, with guest ales and cider), **Zerodegrees**, and the **Orchard Inn** in Hanover Place (freehouse with three beers plus cider). Up in Totterdown the **Shakespeare Tavern** (five beers) becomes the first beer guide pub in the area for some time. Kingsdown now has five beer guide pubs with both the **Cotham Porter Stores** (freehouse with two beers and three ciders), and the **Hillgrove Porter Stores** (freehouse with five or six beers) gaining entry. Westbury-on-Trym

has a change with the **Black Swan** (four beers) replacing its neighbour the Prince of Wales which was changing hands as we voted.

To the Northeast of Bristol three new entries appear – the **Cross House** in Doynton (four beers), the **White Harte** in Bridgegate (five beers) and the **Rose and Crown** in Wick (four beers). Over in Keynsham the **Ship** returns to the book, but still seems to suffer more than most from licensee changes. Across to the North West of our area we welcome the **New Inn** at Mayshill near Frampton Cottrell which offers four beers including three guests – Scottish beers often appear reflecting the landlord's origins. This is another of the Unique Pub Company's houses. In Horfield the Wellington has a major new rival in the **Inn on the Green**, which now sells around a dozen beers, most of them changing guests.

Down into Somerset and the new entries keep coming. The **Crown** at Regil, near Winford is an excellent Wadworth's house and only hard to find the first three times! Another **Crown** – at Axbridge – is back, now specialising in Sharp's beers. The **Queen's Arms** at Bleadon has benefited from Butcombe's stewardship and is back. New in the Weston-super-Mare area are the **Raglan Arms** (freehouse, six beers), the **Castle** at Kewstoke (Newman's) and the **Old Inn** at Hutton (Greene King and guests). Over to the East Mendips and welcome returns for the unspoilt **Queen Victoria** at Priddy (Butcombe range) and the much more modern **Wookey**

Hole Inn (freehouse, four changing guests). Finally a big welcome to the **Claverham Village Hall**, run by local volunteers and serving Butcombe and a changing guest.

In addition to those mentioned above, a walk around central Bristol will give you the chance to sample almost the full ranges of numerous breweries – Wickwar at the **White Lion**, Fuller's at the ever-improving **Fish Market**, Young's at **Horts**, Bath Ales at the **Bridge** or **Hare on The Hill**, **Zerodegrees**, Sharp's at the **King's Head** and numerous guests at the likes of the **Cornubia**, **Bunch of Grapes**, **Bag O'Nails** or **Hope and Anchor**. We can hardly say that we are short of choice in Bristol – whilst the changes have often seemed bewildering and alarming, the number and quality of beers available

to us seems over the last few years to have expanded greatly. And this is without counting the seven Wetherspoon's pubs in the city!

The signs are that change will continue to happen at a similar rate and who knows what I may be writing about in twelve months time? A couple of exciting developments are already afoot. The people behind the Inn on the Green and the Adam and Eve have now acquired the **Robin Hood's Retreat** in Gloucester Road which was hugely impressive on a recent visit – about six or seven beers including many guests and the food looked good too. The people running the Hillgrove Porter Stores now also have the **Miner's Arms** in St. Werburgh's which has also impressed with its beer range and quality. Perhaps we are entering a new era of small, truly independent pub companies? I hope so, as they are the next best thing to owner-run freehouses. Another exciting development is the **Ebdon Arms**, a brand-new-build pub at Ebdon, near Worle in Somerset – owned by Celtic Inns and serving five or six beers including two from the local RCH brewery. This proves that new estate pubs do not have to be standard format Beefeaters or Hungry Horses serving Bass or Courage Best only, and is surely the way forward. We have also come across a couple of promising pubs in areas such as Clevedon and Pilning where we have struggled to find great beer in the past – more on that another time.

I think that's enough change for one year!

Vince Murray

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End January with Scottish Beers confirmed from Harvestoun, Inverlismond & Caledonian
All Guest Ales £1.75 a Pint on Mondays to

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Cider Sisters

OCTOBER, as everybody knows, is Cider Month (OK, Apple Month, but let's face it, who's interested in apples?). And for once, we actually managed to attend an event to celebrate this happy occasion. Better than that, we were there on official Cider Sisters business, having been invited by the National Trust to lead the cider tasting for their Glastonbury Apple Day festivities.

We headed down to Glastonbury in the pouring rain, not knowing what to expect as the brief had been very vague (either that or we just said, "Of course we'll do it ... no need for any more information"), but feeling excited nonetheless.

As we entered the legendary Vale of Avalon, the Arthurian mists lifted to bring us a beautiful sunny afternoon for our setting tucked in a field at the bottom of the Tor. The ciders were provided by Hecks of Street, a favourite producer of ours, so we were very happy to get the chance to meet John and Chris, the father and son team who have inherited a cider dynasty dating back as far as the 1840s.

The skills and knowledge of six generations shine through all the many ciders in their extensive range. In fact, Chris told us that they produce more single-varietal ciders than any other producer. (As usual, we failed to

take proper notes, so though at the time we hung on their every word, we can't provide much detail and have roundly forgotten most of what we learned.) Anyway, they had a range of single-varietals and blends available on the day, for tasting and for sale: a sweet and a dry plus Vilberie (chip dry), Kingston Black (medium, and their best seller) and Morgan Sweet.

We led an enthusiastic crowd through the tasting (a bargain £1 for a generous measure of each), admittedly with more enthusiasm than technical knowledge. We'd carefully familiarised ourselves with the product first, naturally, and were pleasantly surprised (actually astonished) to have identified the Morgan Sweet as a dry, despite its tricky name. Who says we don't know what we're talking about?

After the tasting, and several shout-outs to *Pints West*, the rush to the bar for off-sales was clear proof that if you give it a go (or preferably several), you're going to find something you like. We were very happy to watch people stumbling up the path to the Tor clutching flagons of Hecks throughout the afternoon, and we're hoping to pay a visit to John and Chris soon to further this very happy acquaintance. Thanks to Richie from the National Trust for his bold move in inviting us.



And it seems the National Trust aren't the only ones following us down a cidery path – our favourite drink seems to have been everywhere over the last month. There have been Apple Day events across the South West, with cider featuring prominently in many. CAMRA nationally gave several pages of its *Beer* publication over to cider-related articles, and is currently calling for nominations for the national cider and perry champion for 2006 (here's a coded suggestion: H.E.C.K.S.). Even in the traditional cider-desert north of the border, sales are booming as Scots get a taste for Addlestones instead of Strongbow (a tripling of sales was reported by one landlord after making the switch). And in England, as was recently reported in the *Independent*, "cider's 'trendy' new image has sent sales soaring by 20%". They claim that improved packaging is the key to this image turnaround, but we think our readers will agree that a certain column may have something to do with it...

Erica and Freya McLuckie



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 in cask and bottle are now available in the Bristol area. Phone the brewery for details.

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 amaran 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

Pub news



ST★RK

Bohemia at the top of Blackboy Hill has had yet another change of name. Having been known for years as the King's Arms, and briefly as Babushka, it now has the name of **ST★RK**. Sadly, there are still no real ales, and one can't help wondering how long this incarnation of what was once a lovely historic old pub will last.

Still no sign of the **Cross Keys** at Fishponds reopening. It is currently closed with those metallic panels across all the windows. Is there a more ugly sight?

The news doesn't get any better, with the **Palace** in Old Market currently closed and up for sale.

In Broadmead, The **Mailcoach** has closed ready for demolition to make way for the new Broadmead development to be called the Merchant's Quarter.

Much happier news is the rejuvenation of the Fox Inn in St. Philips, which is now the **Guardsman** and, on my visit, was actually frequented by a number of people who used to be in the Grenadier Guards. Although there were no real ales, there was a very nice pint of Thatcher's Traditional Dry Cider on offer.

The **Elephant** in St. Nicholas Market is currently closed, with the leasehold up for sale. **Condell's Old Ale House** has been



The Guardsman

closed for ages on the same street, and shows no sign of reopening.

The **Happy Cocks** (formerly the Fighting Cocks) in Hengrove, which Greene King closed in August and which has been subject to a series of vandalism attacks since, is now being sold through property agents in Bath. It is not clear what will become of the building, but it doesn't look good for its future as a pub.

Another pub to have risen from the ashes is the **Mason's Arms** in Stapleton. This pub closed as we went to press last time, but has quickly reopened, complete with lovely Fromside garden and a back room that really does look like someone's living room. Courage Best and Butcombe Gold are both on hand pump, as is a really good pint of Thatcher's Traditional Cider. Thanks to Ian Holtam for this update.

There has been a refurbishment of the **Royal Oak** in Clifton, but landlord Simon Dauncey wishes to point out the pub is remaining fiercely traditional in response to the modernisation and gentrification of several other pubs in the village.

Also in Clifton Village, the **Albion** ("public house and dining rooms") in Boyces Avenue was recently declared national pub of the year by *Class* magazine. Now, while I wonder whether that sets expectations a mini-smidgin too high, anywhere that you can wash down your quails' eggs with a pint of traditional cider is all right by me!



The Albion

Congratulations too to the **Brewery Tap** at the top of Colston Street. Still selling some Smiles brands, the pub has expanded its range, adding beers from Otter Brewery (and others) and Mole's Black Rat Traditional Cider to its portfolio, and is on fantastic form. Expect a refurbishment/expansion in the not too distant future.

In the last *Pints West*, we mentioned that the **Star** in Pucklechurch and the **Bridge** in Shortwood were closed following the tragic death of popular landlord Bob Todd. While these are obviously very difficult times in these pubs, we are delighted that both have reopened, with the local communities rallying round to support Diane and the team in both pubs.

Duncan Shine

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.

WARNING
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Bass boozer beats Broadmead bulldozers *Phoenix rises from ashes of Broadmead*

AS the demolition gathers pace turning Broadmead into Merchants Quarter, much of what has been familiar will disappear in the central Bristol area. Included in the demolition will be pubs such as The Coach House.

Many people will, no doubt, have been concerned regarding the future of The Phoenix, a great little pub situated in Wellington Road, St Judes. Would this local favourite be converted into just so much rubble to be replaced by one of the many "bars" that will

no doubt appear as the new development takes shape? Instead of the locals drinking their favourite Draught Bass in their friendly local, would they be left with the option of a new bar, full of chrome selling frothy coffee and some overpriced lager?

Well no. For once, a pub that many feared would be lost forever will survive. The Phoenix, together with the row of 4 terrace houses that adjoin the pub will remain. It seems that the Georgian houses will be

converted into modern flats.

So at a time when we seem to be hearing about pub closures on an all too regular basis, there appears to be some good news. The regulars and occasional visitors can continue to visit and drink Bass that is still served straight from the cask. Perhaps in time the changes will bring more customers to the pub and The Phoenix could look to increase the range of real ales if there is enough demand. Why not nip along there and help create it!

Pete Bridle



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Robin Hood's Retreat returns with Real Ale

THE Robin Hood's Retreat recently reopened following a major refurbishment.

Situated on the Gloucester Road in Bishopston, Bristol, the pub is almost opposite the old Bristol North swimming baths. In recent years, the pub has been a fairly basic two-roomed pub that did not often pack in the punters. Not so long ago, it underwent a make-over but after a period of trading, the pub closed down. In fact, it closed down and stayed closed for a considerable period. There were many who thought the pub would never reopen although a number of parties looked at its potential.

The really good news is the pub has now reopened following a refurbishment that has cost in the region of £150,000. The first thing you notice as you approach the pub is new signage and a redesign of the windows. At night, the pub is bathed in subtle lighting. The entrance to the pub is a large porch and you then enter through a glass door. What was a two-roomed local has been transformed. A tasteful interior awaits with contemporary design colours, wooden and tiled flooring, and unusual curtains – they appear to only cover half the windows. Here is lots of seating and a no-smoking area. The smart walls are partly covered with pictures of wine bottles and glasses (how about some beer pics?) and doors to the rear lead to what I am sure will become a very popular beer garden next spring and summer.

It is just as well there is plenty of seating. The Robin Hood's Retreat has proved to be very popular in its first weeks since reopening. Given that the people behind it also run the hugely popular Inn on the Green in Horfield, perhaps this comes as no surprise.

In recent years, the pub has never had an extensive range of beers. Quite a change has occurred to alter that. Seven handpumps have been installed, usually dispensing ales from independent breweries. Recent offerings have included Caledonian Deuchar's IPA, Taylor Landlord, Palmer's Copper, Hop Back Summer Lightning, Ringwood, and Bristol Beer Factory Gold. The beer range is frequently changing and is proving very popular indeed. Top-of-the-range pub food is also on offer.

The Robin Hood is certainly adding quality and choice to the Bishopston area of Bristol. It is quite rare in this area to find a pub serving such an extensive range of beers with no pool table, TVs, games machines or loud music. The Gloucester Road is very well served with regular buses such as the 73, 75, 76 and 77, all of which stop near to the pub.

It's one to check out for sure.

Pete Bridle

Farewell Eric

IT was with great sadness that we learned of the death on the 28th July of one of our longest-serving members, Eric Ford. Eric was a long-standing active member of the local CAMRA branch, having been involved from its conception. Over the years he carried out many duties associated with the Good Beer Guide, Pub of the Year and our beer festivals, and until recently he was distributing Pints West to a large number of local pubs, far more than most people half his age.

It was Eric's son, David, who informed us of his death. He told us: "I attended one of your meetings a few years ago when I was working down in Bristol and whilst my father did not contribute to the meeting verbally he walked away with a box-load of magazines to be delivered. On talking to other groups my father was a member of, the following quotes were given: 'Quietly got on with the task without a lot of fuss' and 'Eric was always a doer as opposed to a talker'.

"My father's funeral was held in Cleeve on Friday 5th August and his love of real ale and the work he did on behalf of CAMRA was discussed by the vicar on the day. After the service we retired to Claverham Village Club where his grandsons (predominately lager drinkers) drank some real ale in honour of their grandfather."

We'll miss you, Eric.

Wickwar Brewing

SET OFF from the A4174 ring road. Out on the Badminton road, through Mayhill, Coalpit Heath and Nibley, skirting round Yate and into Chipping Sodbury. Then, half way down Broad Street, turn left. Continue for a few miles and you hit Wickwar. Here you will find one of the success stories of local independent brewing in the past twenty years.

On my visit, I park outside the brewery shop (a full range of Wickwar's brews available to take home) and am directed across the road to the imposing former bonded warehouse that, in 2003, was converted back to its original use as a brewery. There I am greeted by Managing Director Ray Penny, who has agreed to show me around.

The first thing that strikes you is the magnificence of the building. An impressive oak-panelled lobby with a massive bacchanalian tapestry on the wall gives way to Wickwar's office. Here, there is a cornucopia of brewery memorabilia; a panoply of pump clips, posters and all manner of beer-related knick-knacks.

Ray starts my tour with a bit of history. This building was home to Arnold, Perrett & Company Brewers – founded in the High Street in 1800 as Arnold & Co. Soon the new brewery was built, and the name was changed in 1887 when H & A Perrett of Wotton-Under-Edge was purchased (along with 325 tied houses). In 1924, the Cheltenham Original Brewery acquired Arnold, Perrett & Company, and the Wickwar site was given over entirely to cider making.

Trading continued under the name of the Wickwar Cider Company until 1931, when it became the Gloucestershire Cider Company. Then, in 1959 Bulmer's of Hereford acquired the company and, in 1975, production was ceased altogether and the building became a bonded warehouse.

Some fourteen years later, the Wickwar Brewing Company was founded just across the road in what had been Arnold, Perrett and Co's cooperage (*barrel-making plant to the uninitiated*). Ray's dream had always been to return brewing to the original site, but the vagaries of the planning process had made it hard. It was only in 2003 that permission was finally secured and work could begin.

The 21st century brewery uses equipment from the Oakhill and Mansfield breweries, with Oakhill's old wooden mash tun having been given a complete overhaul. Now a 50-barrel plant, the brewery can send out 300 barrels a week, which are delivered direct to pubs and clubs within a 50-mile radius, and further afield through deals with national distributors.

Now to the beers.

The flagship brew, which hasn't changed since the brewery was founded in 1989, is **BOB** (short for Brand Oak Bitter). Coming in at 4 per cent ABV, it's a nice mix of malt, hops and citrus, which starts out sweet but has a dry, classically bitter aftertaste.



The session bitter is **Coopers'**, which started life as Victory Ale in support of the Veterans' Association, and is now a straw-coloured, light session bitter at 3.5 per cent ABV.

Next is the 4.2 per cent **Cotswold Way**, which is a surprisingly hoppy amber ale designed to sustain walkers along the Cotswolds.

IKB (4.5 per cent) was first brewed to celebrate the re-opening of the original brewery site in November 2004. Named after the great engineer, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, whose railway tunnel runs close by, this is a substantial darker ale. Now, I've not done the CAMRA beer-tasting training, but is that damson I can taste? Whatever, it's a good ale for a sudden cold snap in the weather.

As well as the ales above, Wickwar produces a stout (Mr. Perrett's, 5.9 per cent) and a porter (Station Porter, 6.1 per cent). Both are very popular bottled as well as in draught form. The stout has that warm chocolaty taste often found in cask-conditioned stouts, while the porter has a hint of roasted coffee about it. Yummy.

The regulars are augmented by five seasonal ales. Ray eschews the gimmick of producing a new ale every three weeks, and just sticks to the four seasons: Spring Ale (3.8 per cent), Sunny Daze (4.2 per cent), Autumnale (4.6 per cent) and Christmas Cracker (4.2 per cent). The fifth occasional is Rite Flanker, which appears to coincide with major rugby tournaments.

Regular Wickwar drinkers will have noticed that Olde Merryford is no longer on the list. I tell Ray

this is a real shame is the old 5.2 per cent version was one of my favourite brews in the early 90's. Ray reassures me that he is considering bringing it back, but under the name Old Arnold to reflect the brewery's original founder back in the 19th century.

All of these brews are now in the expert care of Phillip Downes, who has hot-footed it into the Cotswold's from the wreckage of Ridley's in Essex that was left by Greene King.

My tour of the building, which takes in several floors and hidden passageways, is like a tiny peep into the history and heritage of brewing from the industrial revolution. Ray organises regular brewery tours and I can heartily recommend a trip round a lovely old building which, thankfully, continues to be used for the purpose for which it was designed; namely, making damn good local beer. There are plans to turn the old cooperage into a Brewery Tap as well as a shop, but that depends upon permission from South Gloucestershire.

The brewery also runs two pubs, the fabulously historic and beautifully positioned **White Lion** in Bristol City Centre (with the scariest stairs to any toilet in Christendom!), and the **Princess of Wales** in Bedminster, which battles manfully with a whole host of other pubs in the area.

You can also buy Wickwar Beers on-line at www.wickwarbrewing.co.uk, from the shop across the road, or in bottles from supermarkets and off-licences such as Humper's in Staple Hill.

Duncan Shine

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Your local guide to cider

CAMRA has recently launched a new edition of the Good Cider Guide, the guide for real cider-loving connoisseurs. It is packed with information on the cider producers in the UK and highlights the best places in which to buy and sample the nation's best ciders.

But ... for reasons we won't bore you with here, the new guide is sadly lacking any entries for our area. To put the record straight, the area covered by the Bristol & District branch is awash with superb cider outlets, and some were recently featured in Roy Bailey's excellent spread in *What's Brewing*. Not only that, I was recently asked to contribute to a feature for the Evening Post's weekend *Seven* supplement, which had a really interesting set of articles on the subject of our beloved apple juice – and things made from it – and also featured seven outlets for cider in the city of Bristol.

I thought I would therefore take this opportunity to list some of the recommended outlets for cider in the area covered by our branch, places where you can get a great drop of the apple beverage. Details are given of the ciders on offer plus a brief description of the pub. They are not in any specific order of merit, but if you've got a taste for the stuff, it's unlikely you'll be disappointed in any of these outlets.

●APPLETREE

Philip Street, Bedminster (0117 9667097). Taunton Traditional (H). Excellent, traditional one-bar outlet, possibly the smallest pub in Bristol. Full of character (and characters). Cider is drunk from handled glass mugs.

●AVONPACKET

Coronation Road (0117 9872431). Thatchers Dry (H). Unmissable! Note the key rings above the bar; in the summer, don't miss the 'bear' pit outside (once used for bear baiting apparently), the ducks, and the play area for the kids. Extremely economically priced food all day.

●CORONATION

Dean Lane, Southville (0117 9409044). West Croft Janet's Jungle Juice (H). Hop Back brewery-tied house, Good Beer Guide 2006 listed, the only regular outlet for the award-winning JJJ in Bristol.

●ORCHARDINN

Hanover Place, Cumberland Road, Bristol (0117 9262678). Thatcher's Dry, Cheddar Valley, Moles Black Rat (H). Superb one-bar free house near the SS Great Britain and Matthew. Good Beer Guide 2006 listed. Excellent lunches Monday to Friday. Perry also available sometimes.

●COTHAMPORTER STORES

15 Cotham Road South, Bristol. Thatcher's

Dry, Cheddar Valley (H). Outstanding traditional cider house. Good Beer Guide listed 2006. Many of the locals have their own cider mugs. It's big on cricket (screen available) and note the cider frieze painted by locals 30 to 40 years ago. The character on the pub sign is a customer called Gypsy John.

●BEAUFORT ARMS

High Street, Clifton (0117 9735906). Thatcher's Dry and Heritage, Taunton Traditional (H). Excellent, welcoming cider house. Once you have visited here, you tend to become a local!

●HORTSCITY TAVERN

Broad Street, Bristol (0117 9252520). Thatcher's Dry, Cheddar Valley (H). Young's tied house, Good Beer Guide 2006 listed. Sky TV for sport. Good food.

●ESSEX ARMS

Kingswood, Bristol (0117 9674161). Taunton Traditional (H), Moles Black Rat (G). Classic, unpretentious, two-bar establishment. Sky TV, and a crib night Thursdays. Economically priced.

●STAR INN

Castle Street, Pucklechurch (0117 9372391). Taunton Traditional, Thatcher's Dry, Cheddar Valley (H). A real focus of the local community. Yearly beer festival in conjunction with the 'Revels'. Good Beer Guide listed 2006. Good food.



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

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● BRIDGE

Shortwood (0117 9372328). Taunton Traditional, Thatcher's Cheddar Valley (H). Two-bar community pub with interesting frontage. The Avon cycle path runs nearby.

● WHITE SWAN

North Road, Downend (0117 9570888). Taunton Traditional, Thatcher's Dry (G), Cheddar Valley (H). Characterful main-road cider house close to Downend cricket club. Outside-drinking area to rear.

● CORONATION TAP

Sion Hill, Clifton (0117 9739617). Thatcher's Dry, Cheddar Valley, Taunton Traditional, Addlestone's Cloudy, Exhibition. Famous old cider house often frequented by students and sometimes well-known personalities. Exhibition (8.4%), brewed exclusively for this pub, is only sold in half-pint measures.

● HUMPER'S OFF-LICENCE

Soundwell Road, Staple Hill (0117 9565525). Thatcher's Dry, Medium, Cheddar Valley, Weston's, occasional guest cider (G). Popular, roadside off-licence selling cider at extremely competitive prices (under a pound a pint as I write). West Croft Janet's Jungle Juice occasionally appears as a guest cider.

● TROUT

Temple Street, Keynsham (0117 9862754). Taunton Traditional (H). Two bars, with live sport on TV. Disappointingly, the Thatcher's Dry is no longer served via handpump.

● BIRD IN HAND

High Street, Saltford (01225 873335). Thatcher's Dry (H). Good Beer Guide 2006 listed, with excellent food and a nice drop at the right temperature.

● BLACK HORSE

Clevedon Lane, Clapton In Gordano (01275 842105). Thatcher's Dry (H). Good Beer Guide 2006 listed. Superb 14th-century stone-built hostelry with flagstone floors.

● BLUE FLAME

West End, Nailsea (01275 856910). Thatcher's Dry (G). Good Beer Guide 2006 listed. Charming, rustic free house which is over 200 years old. Lovely garden in summer.

● CORNUBIA

Temple Street, Bristol (0117 9254415). Guest cider (H). Good Beer Guide listed 2006. Excellent all-rounder. A pub for conversation. Good food sold lunch times.

● SUGAR LOAF

St. Mark's Road, Easton, Bristol (0117 9394498). Thatcher's Dry, Addlestone's Cloudy (H). Superb free house with a vibrant atmosphere. Near some of the best spice shops in Bristol. Good juke box.

● SWAN WITH TWO NECKS

Little Ann Street, Bristol. Thatcher's Dry (G/H). Community-focused pub, with newly built conservatory. Though there is a handpump, the Thatcher's is more often than not served straight from the barrel.

● HUNTER'S LODGE

Priddy (01749 672275). Wilkin's (G). Outstanding free house located a mile from Priddy village on a remote crossroads. Don't miss the atmosphere and rustic charm in this classic establishment. Excellent, competitively priced food. Good Beer Guide 2006 listed.

● NEW INN

Priddy Green, Priddy (01749 676465). Wilkin's (G). Formerly a farmhouse (15th century) with a flagged bar floor. Good food.

● QUEEN VICTORIA

Pelting Drove, Priddy (01749 676385). Cheddar Valley (G). Good Beer Guide 2006 listed. Classic, creeper-clad, stone-built free house, with noted food.

● FOX

Inner Down, Old Down (01454 412507). Moles Black Rat (G). Good Beer Guide 2006 listed. Pleasant, 18th-century village pub with low ceilings. The 'Rat' is served from a barrel above the bar.

● GLOBE

Church Road, Frampton Cotterell (01454 778286). Moles Black Rat (G). Good Beer Guide 2006 listed. Food-oriented, with the Frome Valley walkway nearby. Large garden.

● CROSS HANDS

Down Road, Winterbourne Down (01454 850077). Taunton Traditional (H), Moles Black Rat (H). Good Beer Guide 2006 listed. Street-corner free house with a strong local following.

● PLOUGH

High Street, Congresbury (01934 832475). Thatcher's Dry (H). Dog-friendly free house. A focus of the local community. Good Beer Guide 2006 listed.

● OLD BARN

Bristol Road, Wraxall (01275 819011). Thatcher's Dry (H). 16th-century country pub with a rustic bar and a pleasant outside drinking area.

● SWAN

Tockington Green, Tockington (01454 614800). Moles Black Rat (G). Pleasant village local with a boules pitch.

● WETHERSPOON'S

I would recommend Wetherspoon's outlets in the Bristol & District area, as there seems to be a resurgence of cider availability in all these outlets. Sheppy's apparently went very well when it recently appeared on the bar, and more recently Weston's is proving very popular.

● LONG BAR

Old Market Street, Old Market, Bristol (0117 9276785). This pub has handpumps for Cheddar Valley, but recent visits have seen the cider being poured from a keg font, which is a shame. At the time of writing there is confusion over the nature of the cider. The pub is excellent though, and is full of character, so is worth a visit nevertheless.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. There seems to be a general, and welcome, resurgence of real, traditional cider in pubs at the moment, and you may well be able to name your own favourites. (Feel free to give us your thoughts.)

You will note that I haven't mentioned opening hours for any of the above pubs; with the impending licensing hours changes I felt this would not be appropriate. I suggest you ring the pubs (where I've managed to attain numbers) to confirm when they are open.

Finally, I hope that I have illustrated that cider in the Bristol & District area thrives as it

always has done. The local branch continues to have regular visits to cider producers, takes an active part in CAMRA's cider month in October, does cider crawls of many of the aforementioned pubs which are always well attended, and has a minimum of 40 ciders at its beer festival. Once again – cider I up landlord!

Richard Walters

Key: H means cider dispensed through handpumps on the bar; G means dispense by gravity, straight from cask to glass.

Milky beer

A French dairy farmer has invented a beer made from fermented milk. He did it by combining 75 per cent milk and 25 per cent malt with the culture used to make kefir, which is a traditional milk from the Caucasus mountains.

Marcel Besnard said that his idea shocked everybody at first but he believes that at a time when dairy farmers are protesting against a fall in milk prices, this could help breathe new life into the industry (dairy, that is, not brewing!).

Besnard thinks that kefir is one of the best probiotic drinks available, as an enzyme-rich food containing beneficial micro-organisms, and he argues that the health aspect could become a major selling point for his "beer".

If this new drink is to qualify as a "real ale", we suppose it will have to be available in an unpasteurised format. Beer flavoured milk shake, anyone?

Norman Spalding



Heat sensitive

THE Belgian brewing giant InBev (previously Interbrew) became the first brewer to introduce a heat-sensitive back label on a bottled beer in September.

The label reacts to the temperature of the bottle and shows the brand of the beer only when the beer is at the optimal temperature for consumption.

This very good idea was applied first to 25-centilitre bottles of the Jupiler brand of lager, which is a very big seller in Belgium. We look forward to the day when it is used in the UK, on bottle-conditioned real ales such as Worthington White Shield. Then purchasers will be able to see at a glance when they are being offered a product which is too cold to taste properly, and to ask before it is poured out for one that is not so cold.

And how long before it is applied to glasses of draught beer too?

Norman Spalding

Bedminster: Spooky North Street

IT was Monday 31st October – Hallowe'en – when we set off to sample the beers of North Street. This saunter had originally been planned for the previous Thursday but was postponed because it clashed with the 'Southville Cider Saunter'. As it turned out, this was a good thing as it enabled us to try a range of different ciders (we had always shied away from cider in the past and gone for the real ale option). We also met Ben, who had recently moved into Bedminster and was keen to try out the local pubs, so we quickly invited him to join us for tonight's saunter.



Tobacco Factory

We agreed to meet at the **Tobacco Factory** as it was quite central for all of us, and the beer at its festival the previous week had been very good. The torrential rain had stopped as Pennie and I set off up the Chessell's towards North Street on our broomsticks. It was early and the way was fraught with young "trick-or-treaters" being ushered from door to door by their doting parents.

When we reached the Tobacco factory, Ben was already there drinking the Bristol Beer Factory's Red, and our friend Dave Jane arrived to join us as we were ordering the No.7 and Sunrise (also from the Beer Factory) and all three beers were good. This large café-bar occupies the ground floor of the old Will's cigar factory. There is a theatre above and performing arts schools that attract people from miles around to its shows. Visit the www.tobaccofactory.com web site for further information.

This is the brewery tap for the Bristol Beer Factory, which started brewing last year in the original building of the old Ashton Brewery just across the road. We noticed its



Ship & Castle

No.7 was also on sale at the Avon Packet and Orchard on our cider trip the previous Thursday.

We decided to start from the **Ship & Castle** down by the City ground over the railway lines in the whitening yard. Although this large pub stands alone in the middle of Ashton Vale's industrial area on the edge of busy Winterstoke Road, there were quite a few drinkers in. The Courage Best was good and they had Taunton Traditional cider on hand pump.



Wedlock's

The four of us left the Ship & Castle behind and cut through Marsh Road to Ashton Road where the **Wedlock's** has been boarded up for the last few months. This was originally called the Star, but changed its name a few years ago to be named after the City's 1920 goalkeeper, Billy Wedlock, who was also landlord of the Star from 1917 to 1953. This pub sits on the corner of Greville Smyth Park where amateur football teams play on the weekend, whereas across the road the big boys play; arriving here in March 1904 from their ground in St John's Lane, Bristol City took over the ground which Bedminster FC played on.



Rising Sun

Walking up Ashton Road towards the **Rising Sun** pub, we pass Al's Tikka Grill where the staff are outside hosing down the aftermath of a trick-or-treat egg attack. In the evenings this is a popular Indian restaurant (recommend you book and bring your own booze), while during the day it is a greasy-spoon café.

The Rising Sun is a pub with large front and rear bars, and a function room upstairs. The Courage Best is drinkable. The old building at the back of this pub used to be a malt house, but is now used by Bristol Beds.

Just up the road is the **Cooper's Arms**,



Cooper's Arms

and worth a visit, with three ales on. Courage Best, Butcombe Bitter and Well's Bombardier were all good. Incidentally, the Bombardier was introduced a few months ago to replace the Bass (which seems to have been going through a rough patch since moving breweries) and has proved so popular that the landlord thinks it may remain as a regular.

Heading on up Ashton Road we pass the old toll house on the left that marks the beginning of North Street and it's here, in 1748, that local farmers smashed up the toll gates to protest at the increase in the turnpike charges (it's believed that some Millwall fans can trace their ancestry back to these farmers). When apprehended, some were hanged on Bedminster Down, others perished of small-pox in Bridewell and 18 men were sent to Wiltshire (surely a fate worse than death). The gates were removed in 1868 but the area is still known as Ashton Gate.



Try Again

Carrying on into North Street, past the red brick Victorian building with its ornate stone work above the windows that is the Bristol Beer Factory brewery, we turn left into Greenway Bush Lane to check out the **Try Again** pub that Ben has heard is getting popular. This small two-roomed pub is packed with many locals watching the football on big-screen TVs. The Bass was slightly better than the Courage Best, so we head back onto North Street and pass Teoh's restaurant in the Tobacco Factory, which looks a lot busier now.

This area of Bedminster has become a lot



Hen & Chicken

more popular, with its café-bars, shops and food markets. We pass the Lounge Bar serving Hoegaarden wheat beer and Cuba Ice selling bottled Bath Ales Gem to reach the **Hen & Chicken** pub. This pub first became famous in the 1990s as Bristol's first theatre pub when it hosted the Show Of Strength theatre company (which later moved to the Tobacco Factory). It is now known for its comedy performances and further details can be found at www.thecomedybox.co.uk. Regrettably this sports-screen pub had no real ales, so we moved along to **139° North** – which was closed. This pub sits on the corner of the



139° North

junction with South Street. There are no pubs in South Street, and the only one ever was the up-market Brewer's Arms that took a direct hit from the Luftwaffe when it destroyed an area of South Street between Gladstone Street and British Road (which now forms South Street School playing field).

Next up was the **Masonic**, which was much bigger inside than it looks from the outside. This brightly-lit pub with its raised skittle alley was very busy as it was skittles night and the Courage Best was drinkable.



Masonic



Full Moon

We cross over the road and continue our descent of North Street to the **Full Moon**. We enter the door into the small hallway before climbing the half dozen stairs to the long bar of this unusual one-roomed pub. Built in 1822 it seems to have maintained some of its character, although in 1976 it consisted of three small rooms. There is a stained glass skylight window over the pool table and this boozer definitely has a strange character of its own, supported in part by the locals. There is a guest ale: tonight it is Butcombe Bitter. It's OK, and at only £1.80 pint was our cheapest beer so far.

Next to the Full Moon are the padlocked gates leading up a long path to Ebenezer chapel, which tonight looks very spooky in the dark, and just behind here is the Hebron Church burial ground with the unmarked grave of Princess Caribou. In 1817 this con woman turned up at the Squire's house in Almondsbury speaking gibberish (she'd probably been on a Bedminster pub crawl). No one knew who she was until a foreigner told the tale of how a Bristol sea captain had kidnapped her from Sumatra, and she escaped when the ship docked. Having become famous by this pretence, she was feted by the rich and famous, until eventually someone recognised her and the truth was out. She was in fact Mary Baker, a domestic servant, so was sent to America – only to return in 1834. She died a pauper in 1864 having lived in Princess Street, Bedminster where she sold leeches to the General Hospital.

Crossing the road again we continue down North Street to **Bar Salt**. Originally called the Bull in the 18th century, it was renamed the Star around 1900, but since 2000 it has been known as the Florikan & Firkin, the Aurora, and now Bar Salt. In 1827 the publican, Mr. Martin, bought a tiger from some sailors at Bristol City Docks and put it on show inside a cage. This attracted many people until the novelty wore off, so to attract more people he paid a man, Joseph Kiddle, to get inside the



Bar Salt

cage with the tiger, which then mauled Joseph to death! Tonight though, there are no man-eaters, but the pub is packed, every table and chair is occupied – it's pub quiz night. We pick our way through the tables to the shiny bar, only to find it does not sell real ale.

Wetherspoon's autumn beer festival has just started so we dash the twenty metres to the **Robert Fitzharding** pub as the heavens open up again. We try the Smiles Brigstowe specially brewed for the festival (named after Bristol's original name meaning "place of the bridge"), Marston's Wicked Witch (4.6 per cent ABV), Ringwood Old Thumper (5 per cent), Hopback Red Devil (4.5 per cent), and all priced at £1.59 a pint!

We sit in the window and gaze out at the large furniture shop opposite that used to be Bedminster Town Hall before Bristol took over Bedminster five years later in 1897 (it was then used as a concert hall and cinema until 1954) and decide what to try next. The Old Thumper and Red Devil are beautifully crafted ales and full of flavour, so we have some more of these and try the Belgian Anker Gouden's Carolus Ambrio romping home at 8 per cent. The Carolus Ambrio is an excellent amber ale, well balanced, full of fruit and caramel flavours and nothing like the continental beers I normally associate with Belgium. This was the perfect end to another interesting evening of discovery.



Robert Fitzharding

Postscript: On Sunday 13th November we visited the wooden-floored **139° North**, which had Courage Best. The **Full Moon** had Bath Ales Barnstormer that was drinkable, and a previous guest ale had been Sharp's Doom Bar. The **Robert Fitzharding** will be open until midnight from 24th November, except weekends when it stay open until one o'clock in the morning.

Colin & Pennie Postlethwaite

SHINE on Chipping Sodbury

AS regular readers – both of them – will know, we have asked readers to send us requests for areas within the Bristol & District CAMRA Branch to be featured in these puerile ramblings. Well, this time around our mailbox has been overflowing with an email from Nick Gillett in Chipping Sodbury, who has suggested we look at, er, Chipping Sodbury. Happy to oblige, Nick. *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. It's early winter-time. Brass monkeys throughout the City are clutching their nether regions anxiously, hordes of people are flocking to the Mall to buy presents for the kids: *Harry Potter Top Trumps*, *Harry Potter DVDs*, *Harry Potter Magic Wands*, *Harry Potter Drain Unblocker*, even *Ron Weasley's Scabbers-Be-Gone Rat Poison*. You, on the other hand, are feeling smug. You have bought all the presents. You had a stroke of genius. Everyone in your family is getting a box of local beer. Even your six-month-old niece Hermione. The only thing that worries you is that you ordered the beer on-line, and you think you might – completely inadvertently of course – have accidentally used your own house as the delivery address. Worse than that is the nagging feeling that, purely by accident you understand, you keyed in delivery dates at one-week intervals for all the boxes (except the third week in January, when you're on a skiing holiday). Still, it's the thought that counts.

So, with Christmas shopping all done, you decide to head to Chipping Sodbury for a celebratory drink. You've heard rumours that Chipping Sodbury has been cashing in on being the birthplace of *Harry Potter* author JK Rowling [Wasn't she born in Yate? – Ed], and you want to check it out for yourself. But where to go to get a really good pint?

All of sudden, there is a 'popping' sound, and a shambling, slightly jaded looking figure apparates next to you and clears his throat.

"Chipping Sodbury is pretty well-served for good pubs actually, so let's start at **The Boot**." The Boot sits set back from Horse Street, with a magnificent dual-sided pub sign. On one side is an old Boot, while on the other is a recreation of the famous 'dancing bread' scene from the Charlie Chaplin classic *Goldrush*. Inside, the lounge bar stretches back and to the left, where there is a pool table. For summer's evenings, there is also a large children's play area in the garden. Greene King IPA is the only real ale, but it is well kept. You notice that a new addition to the



The Boot

drinks selection is Madame Rosmerta's Finest Oak-Matured Mead.

"The next pub to visit is **The Tern Inn**," says your guide. He points out to you that there is no truth to the rumour that the pub is soon to be renamed The Shrieking Shack. So, you arrive at the popular 1960s estate pub, which has become quite a centre of the



The Tern Inn

community. Sadly, this is the only pub in which the beer is not quite up to scratch. The one beer, Bass, is tired today and verging on the vinegary. You have to return it, though it is replaced without argument (with a Guinness).

The next pub is **The Grapes Hotel**, at the top of Broad Street. Since this is a good long way from the Tern Inn, your guide flags down a passing Knight Bus, and you soon arrive outside the attractive stone-built hotel, which



The Grapes Hotel

stands a little way removed from the main concentration of town-centre pubs. However, the pub is well worth seeking out. To be honest, this is your first ever visit to this pub, and you are delighted to find that, alongside the Butcombe Bitter (crisp and fresh, beautiful) and the Courage Best Bitter (which you generally compare unfavourably to the taste of Polyjuice Potion, and so give a miss), is a changing guest ale. On your visit it is a pint of *Kent's Best*, from an unnamed brewery. It is a light but flavoursome session bitter that slips down more smoothly than Bristol City in League One.

From the Grapes you head down Broad Street (apparently the widest town-centre street in Britain) past a sign pointing left to "Witchwar" and "Chipping Sodbury Quidditch Club (Formerly the Rugby Club)" – where, your guide tells you – you can get an excellent pint of BOB or Wickwar's Screech Medium Cider. Not far further on your left is **The George Hotel**. The George is also made



The George Hotel

of stone, with a really cool archway suggesting a former life as a coaching inn. Inside, the main drinking area is to the left of the archway, where you sample a pint of Codrington Codger (really improved since the Cotwold brewery introduced it in the Spring) while your guide checks out the Smiles Best (a shadow of its former self, but well enough kept) and you both give the Greene King IPA a miss.

A couple of doors further down is **The Squire**. This is one of those main street pubs



The Squire

that seems quite small from the outside, but when you get inside you find it seems to go back for a long long way. There is an covered alleyway down the left hand side (renamed Knockturn Alley for the purposes of this article) and the bar area, with its low ceilings and stone partition, is split into two. There is live sport on the television, and an extensive children's menu. This pub is a real surprise and, with Wickwar BOB, Wadworth 6X in tip-top condition, well worth exploring if you're ever in Chipping Sodbury. (They also sell Fuller's London Pride, but you are currently boycotting it in protest at that brewery's takeover of George Gale and Co in Hampshire).

As you cross the road to **The Beaufort Hunt**, your guide points out a fantastic Tudor style archway built into this lovely old coach house. The beers on offer here are Fuller's London Pride and Greene King IPA, two



The Beaufort Hunt

brews from breweries that seem to have taken to pillaging smaller competitors of late. The ongoing 'consolidation' of the brewing industry is something you abhor, so you move straight to the next pub. (Not a reflection on the pub itself, of course, and you promise yourself you'll visit again when you're feeling better.)

The Royal Oak is another unexpected but genuine delight. A delightful Cotswold stone gabled building, very much in keeping with the architectural beauty of this town (recently renamed Hogsmeade, albeit only by a delusional and inspirationally challenged free-sheet contributor). This delightful pub not only sells Courage Best Bitter and Fuller's London Pride, but is also stocking two less



The Royal Oak

well-recognised brews from the increasingly ubiquitous Sharp's Brewery of Cornwall. Will's Resolve is a stronger (4.6 per cent ABV) brew which is nonetheless golden in hue with a dry, hoppy taste; while Eden Ale, named in support of the Eden Project, has a really crisp, clipped, refreshing bite to it. Both brews are in tip-top condition and, if there weren't one more pub to visit, you would gladly have settled in here for the rest of the evening.

That final pub, however, is **The Portcullis Hotel**. A hotel as much as a pub, the Portcullis is about as welcoming as it is possible to get without breaking several indecency laws. There is room for a pool table off the central alleyway, as well as two bars and a dining area to the left. At the front of the pub, is a gorgeous little snug area, where there is a roaring fire, pictures of recent parties on the walls and Courage Best and Codrington



The Portcullis Hotel

Codger on draught. Both are in fine fettle, but you and your guide are naturally drawn to Chipping Sodbury town centre's only draught traditional ciders, Mole's Black Rat and Thatcher's Cheddar Valley.

The Black Rat goes down so smoothly, you decide to have a pint of Cheddar Valley as well. The next thing you know you are in a terrible state in the garden, having been petrified *and* turned into a gerbil. A mysterious stranger is disappearing from view muttering "That'll teach him to call Voldemort a shandy-drinking charlatan who's not fit to polish Paul Daniels' wand".

[Note to both readers. Please note that, while the descriptions of the pubs and their beers are, as I found them, as accurate as possible, the references to any character or building from the Harry Potter series of books by JK Rowling are completely false. Though on my visit I did see someone who looked very much like Hagrid. I didn't catch her name...]

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 (or write to the editor) and we'll see what we can do.

Final Bell



ANNA LUKE is retiring. In fact she will have done so by the time you read this.

Anna has been the landlady at the Bell in Alfred Place, Kingsdown for almost 16 years and Thursday 1st December is her last day.

The Bell is a charming, old-fashioned boozier, eschewing the trendy, lager-fuelled crowd for a quiet dignity where conversation is king. The beer here is always from small, local breweries. Those supported in the past have included Wickwar and Uley. The recent beers stocked have been Abbey Ales Bellringer and RCH Pitchfork.

We wish Anna all the best for her retirement, and welcome the new people taking over.

SP

In the Bag



ALAN DEAN celebrates another successful beer festival in his pub, the Bag O'Nails in Hotwells. For a period of four days in November the handpumps were dispensing over 40 different beers – with a variety of styles – from all over the country. The customers were very happy too.

SP - photos by Richard Brooks



Watering Holes in the Desert

news from Weston-super-Mare

Weston Whispers (pub and beer news)

The Red Admiral on Alexander Parade has made the smart move of stocking a beer with the same name as the pub. Red Admiral is brewed by Archers of Swindon, who are churning out a huge number of different beers these days – some of which have been very good indeed.

The Waverley on Severn Road is always worth a visit. It is the only pub in the area that stocks Wychwood's 5 per cent ABV Hobgoblin. This is a really nice, warming beer, particularly suited to cold winter evenings. There are usually three other ales available. These always include Bass. The other two on my last visit were Young's Bitter and Greene King Abbot Ale. A local CAMRA member who has moved to that part of town reports the Abbot as always being in very good condition.

It is pleasing to give first-ever mentions in Pints West to the **Pig and Truffle** and the

Town Crier, near-neighbours in the town centre. The former does a very good pint of Butcombe Bitter. It also stocks Bass and offers good value lunches. The Town Crier usually has two real ales, although on my visit there was just the one – Wolver's Ale. Not many years ago it would have been unthinkable for these pubs to be showing much interest in real ale, let alone local ones. It seems to be becoming the norm for pubs to look for something local to offer, which is an indication of a new awareness in the pub trade (particularly among some of the pub companies that own many of our pubs) that it makes sense to offer something with a local flavour rather than dragging a nondescript national product

halfway across the country. Hope for the future!

The price of my Wolver's Ale at the Town Crier was £1.50, which was the cheapest pint that I have had in recent months. The dearest was on a recent visit to London, where I paid a mind-boggling £3.20 for a pint of Charles Wells Bombardier in the famous Coach and Horses in Soho. Great pub, but I couldn't afford to stay long.

Tim Nickolls

Pig and Truffle. Town Crier.
Pig and Truffle. Town Crier.
Pig and Truffle. Town Crier.
There, don't say they never
get a mention out here!



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The Bridge Inn

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A Round with Robin

STREET-CORNER pubs are possibly in decline in Weston-super-Mare, as you can see by the fact the Elm Tree (corner of Orchard and Meadow Street) is boarded up and the Clarendon Arms, also known as Ebenezer's Front Room, the Penny-Farthing, etc. (corner of Oxford and St. James Street) has become a 21st century version of a plastic bar.

Those that remain have to try very hard to keep in business, devising new ways of attracting customers. The **Raglan Arms** (corner of Greenfield Place and Upper Church Road), having just entered the Good Beer Guide for 2006, has a special offer on real ales at £1.70 a pint on Wednesdays. With its wonderful real fire, this is a real tempter on those cold winter nights. Look out too for the music festival to be held on Saturday 18th December there; five bands are already booked.

Recently at a CAMRA social held there, six real ales were on including: O'Hanlons Dry Stout (4.2%), Milk Street's Beer from Frome, Warrior Geronimo from Exeter, and Golden Spring from the Blindman's brewery. Landlord Gary told me he would also like to make it clear that although he regularly has a brew-up (electric kettle) he is not a brew pub! Also on the menu for around the 1st December is the launch of the new Hoppy Gristmas Ale from the Newman's brewery, which is a strong, ruby, winter beer.

The **White Hart** on the corner of Palmer Row and Hopkins Street has had a summer of pub games and settling down to the big screen footie season. It always manages to delight with the one real ale on (never the same one) at any time. Beware though the nibbles on the bar, they can be very spicy!

This has reminded me of something a few Sundays ago at the **Regency** pub (opposite the Technical College). When enjoying the usual well kept ales, we were "treated" to an additional gourmet dish with the other nibbles on the bar, which was allegedly wild boars' testicles in jelly, just the thing to help the Bass, Courage, and Butcombe down. The Flowers IPA is still £2 a pint, as incidentally is the beer in the White Hart and at the Raglan.

The **Town Crier** (TC's) at the corner of Oxford Street and Walliscote Road has had a make-over and is now selling Newman's beers on hand pumps.

I have been to three beer festivals this autumn: Minehead Railway Station, Wedmore Froth, and the 28th Bath festival.

The Somerset CAMRA branch beer festival at Minehead was more popular than ever. Fortunately there were more beers than ever in the programme, with some cancellations and replacements chalked up on a board. Some 85 beers were available, plus six ciders and perries. Despite this huge choice there wasn't, for me, that many beers I'd not tried before. But of those, my favourite previously-untried beer was the RCH Ashes Returned (5.4 percent ABV), one of three festival

exclusive ales. The two runners-up in my opinion were the Box Steam Blind House (4.5 per cent) and Earl Soham Empress (4.7 per cent), both replacement beers for others from the same brewery.

The Wedmore Froth festival (held in the Village Hall on the Isle of Wedmore) had some excellent beers on and was so popular that once again they ran out of beer by late Saturday night. A minibus took 14 of the Weston sub-branch there on Friday evening, and after queuing for 20 minutes to get in we faced a choice of 32 ales and some ciders. My favourite were the ever brilliant Harvey's Best Bitter which replaced the South Down Harvest Ale in the programme. Also excellent were the prize-winning Woodeforde's Wherry, and the Fire Bellied Toad from Frog Island.



Happy drinkers at Bath beer festival

At the Bath CAMRA beer festival, 73 beers were racked up, with one of the replacement beers close to being the best beer this year for my peculiar taste buds. This was the Arundel ASB (4.5 per cent), and I'd guess someone in the brewery has been taking lessons from Harvey's of Lewes. There were four German beers on draught and a host of bottled Belgian beers on sale. Of some note were two fantastic beers: Oakleaf Bitter (3.8 per cent) with many complex bitter flavours, and Umble Magna (5.0 per cent) from Nethergate in Suffolk. But after due consideration Andy Burt – Andy and me being there Saturday lunchtime – voted the best beer to be the wonderful, dark Old Engine Oil from Harviestoun, in Clackmannanshire.

Closer to home, on Tim Nickolls' recommendation, I walked to the new pub, the **Ebdon Arms** near Wick St. Lawrence, which had five beers at £2.50 and Bass at £2.40 a



Lining them up at Minehead station – a great beer festival venue

pint. I had halves of RCH East Street Cream, and Fuller's Discovery, and thanks to the sunshine I was able to sit in the garden.

On my way home I passed the **Old Manor Inn** on Queensway near Worle, and as I hadn't been in there for many years, was unexpectedly delighted with the friendly atmosphere, and the high quality and reasonably priced Wadworth 6X and Marston's Pedigree. They have a garden here too and the food looked good.

On a wet evening this autumn some of the Chalice Morris Men accompanied the Mendip Morris Men in dancing at the new **Butcombe Brewery's** open evening. As well as guided tours of the brewery, there was a marquee set up (to keep us dry) and free drinks for all present. The whole range of Butcombe beers – Bitter, Gold and Blond – were available along with a cider and soft drinks. I have to say that I think that the Blond and Bitter have improved in flavour since the move to Wrington. (Mind you, I also prefer Old Speckled Hen now that Greene King brews it – I never cared for the flavour when it was a Morland's brew.)

This summer, after being dropped off in Bath and walking to Keynsham on the railway path, I called into the **Lock Keeper's**, a Young's pub with a good range of their beers on. I settled for a pint of Waggle Dance followed by a pint of Special. Very pleasant garden and terraces, but the pub is good inside too with some interesting old fishing prints in frames on the walls.

I would close this years "Round" by wishing all my readers best wishes for the Christmas Season and the New Year, and awarding an accolade to the **Archer's Brewery** as the most improved brewer in 2005. Their excellent range of beers, from the dark and smoky Ghost Train (drank on a Tuesday's quiz night at **Off The Rails**, at Weston station), to the fruity Seaside Special (quaffed at the **Farmer's Tavern** in the Isle of Man) and the full-flavoured Summer Ale at an unbelievable 3.6 per cent, savoured at the **Bitton Beer Festival**. And well done too, to **RCH Brewery** for their 21st Anniversary Ale and celebrations.

Robin E Wild

Beer stories from two islands

LET me start by introducing the islands: the Isle of Wight, which I visited early in August this year specifically to research the military remains in the area between Yarmouth and Freshwater, and the Isle of Man, which I went to visit at the end of August with a view to trying some of the island's Good Beer Guide (GBG) pubs. I was originally going to include the Isle of Wedmore, but the article would have been too long. No, seriously, I am not joking; from the ordnance survey map and historically speaking, the Borough of Wedmore is on the Isle of Wedmore, although these days it's rarely cut off by the sea (see *A Round with Robin*).

I only had three days staying at Totland, near Freshwater, but the Isle of Wight has so many things which I'm interested in, I hardly wasted a moment there. But this article is concerned with beer, so I will not digress. Although I visited the island at the same time that a week-long beer festival was taking place at the **Volunteer** in Ventnor, I restricted myself to pubs I could visit on foot. My nearest pub in Totland was the **Broadway Inn** which normally has three beers on hand pump, but when I was there had Highgate Special Best Bitter (3.8%) and a locally produced Goddard's Special (4%). Though rather basic, the pub is friendly enough and frequent buses stop outside. The Goddard's beer was excellent.

Just down the road (about two miles) in

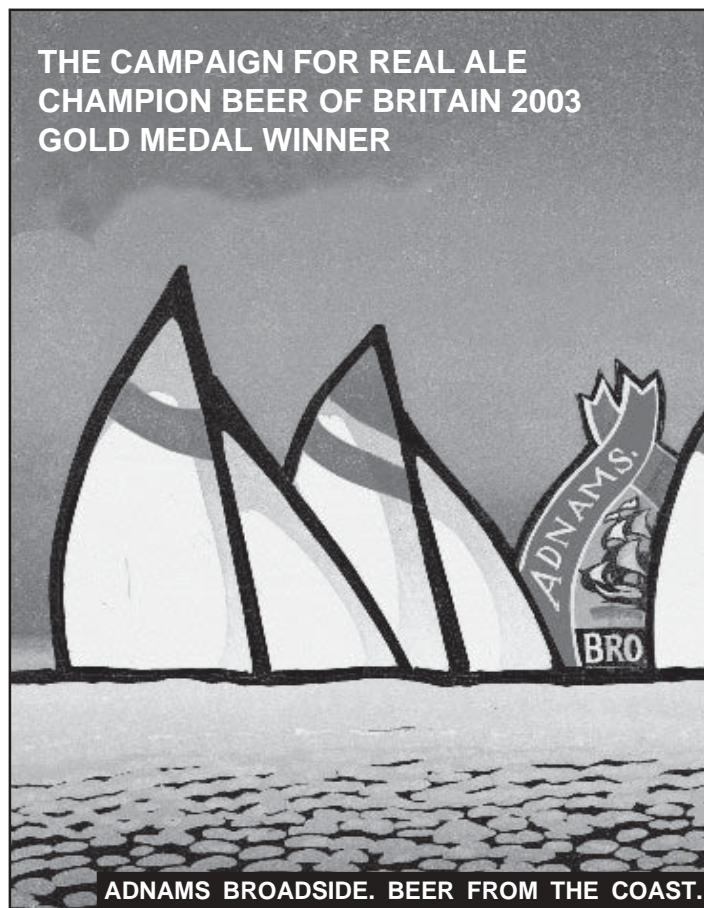
Freshwater Bay, is to be found the **Fat Cat Bar** in the Sandpipers Hotel. I like the GBG entry's statement, "Beer range varies," as it couldn't be truer. There are three rooms off the bar as well as a big restaurant, and in the snug the walls are covered with pump clips from the varying range of beers. When I visited they had Ventnor Bestival Ale (4%), Ridley's Spectacular (4.6%) and Young's Bitter. I'd just missed out on the marvellously named Ventnor Pistol Night (4.4%). They have beer festivals, the food is very well thought of, and there is a huge wine list.

In Yarmouth, where my ferry came ashore from Lymington, I visited the **Wheatshaf Inn**, an old coaching inn regrettably modernised in bright pine. However, here I had a favourite ale, the Goddard's Fuggle-dee-dum (4.8%). Also being sold (presumably for those travellers wishing they were back on the mainland) were Greene King's Old Speckled Hen, Wadworth 6X, Young's Bitter and Fuller's London Pride.

I have left my best two pubs on this visit to last, both to be found in the small town of Freshwater, which has some surprising variation in architecture. The GBG pub, the **Prince of Wales** has had a rather chequered history. It was for many years owned by the IOW brewers Mew's, and in fact was the last pub to carry their name (it is still above the front door). In the 1960s a lot of medium-sized brewers thought that by buying up small brewers for their tied houses, they could put

their beer in them. Strong's bought up Mew's, and pretty much gave the Mew's tenants a free hand and even allowed the Mew's name to be kept on. However a few years later Strong's were themselves the subject of a take-over by Whitbread, who had plans to close many of the smaller pubs and sell the land for housing (haven't I heard something similar recently?). The Prince of Wales was one such pub but the landlord wanted to keep the pub going (as did his regulars) so he bought the pub (at residential prices) and has run it as a free house ever since. He always has a dark ale and other beers on hand pump, he doesn't sell lager or keg, and has a changing beer range. I was delighted to drink Archer's Dark Mild and Best Bitter, and for the sake of testing the quality had half pints of Wadworth 6X, Boddington's, Greene King Abbot Ale and Ringwood Fortyniner, and all were in top condition.

Just down the road from there, in the middle of Freshwater, lies a large Victorian pub in a big garden well filled with families, and serving interesting food. I have to say the **Vine** didn't look my sort of pub, but I ventured in and was very pleased to sample all three of their ales, HSB, Best Bitter and Summer Hog, all from Hampshire brewers Gale's. The Isle of Wight branch of CAMRA has a good newsletter titled *Wightwash*, and in it I was able to read about their Beer Point awards to pubs which go further than GBG or Casque Mark recommendations, and you can find out more about this on their web site at



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www.wightwash.org.uk. I'm glad to say that out of the seven pubs given the Beer Point award I went to two of them.

At Peel where I stayed on the Isle of Man, I visited two good pubs, both in the current GBG. The **White House** is not easy to find but does have three doors and many small rooms off the central bar, wherein are 116 Scottish single-malt whiskies, as well as a selection of Irish and other whiskies from around the world. It also stocks two of the island's beers, namely Bushy's Bitter and Okell's Mild, and from the mainland it had Timothy Taylor Landlord, Barrow Bitter (from Barrow in Furness), Cropton Wild Blonde and Honey Gold. Beer prices in the Isle of Man are very reasonable, and they still make proper use of pence, that is to say they don't round up to nearest 5p or 10p. The White House has local acoustic Gaelic music evenings, Poetry & Pint nights, and a veritable history of the town in photographs and old prints adorning the walls. This is a real gem of a pub, to quote the GBG.

The other pub I liked in Peel was the **Peveril** which had just got in the 2005 GBG. It had a good atmosphere within and a marvellous yard from where to view Peel Castle, and sup your Okell's Bitter at £1.96 a pint. This was the only beer on when I was there but there are two hand pumps and the bar staff intimated that Moorhouse beer was a favourite there.

The only place on the Island that I was able to drink the Moorhouse ale was at the **Sidings**, a long, low building set in the car park of the Isle of Man Steam Railway Station of Castletown. Another large pub is on the other side of the car park, but no real ale is available there. The GBG pub, the Sidings, has seven beers on at any one time, and is popular with the local CAMRA members. As well as the Moorhouse Premium beer, they had Robinson's Old Stockport, Robinson's Lighthouse, Marston's Pedigree, John Smith Cask, and three local beers from Bushy's, Ruby Mild, Manx Bitter and Castletown Bitter. This last named beer is brewed using the same recipe that was used at the Castletown Brewery until a few years ago when the brewery was converted into housing. The pub also sells real draught cider; when I was there they had Weston's Bond Brandover.

There are two other GBG pubs in Castletown, the **Union Hotel** and the **Castle Arms Hotel**. I did not have time to visit both, but as I had to go past the Castle to get to where I was going it seemed silly not to pop in for a jar. This small pub, also known as the **Gluepot**, is situated right under the Castle Rushen walls. It gets its name from when glue was made in the pub cellars to repair the boats in the harbour which runs along the other side of the pub. Normally I was led to believe that any pub with the name the Gluepot is one that it is very difficult to leave as you get stuck in it! Cain's Bitter (not on) and Okell's Bitter are normally on sale here. I contented myself with the island's Okell's which is very palatable though with no surprises.

The best Bushy's beer I had on the IOM was at a new pub built on a recently developed housing site on the east side of Peel, called the **Highwayman**. Despite its name it doesn't go out of its way to rob you. The excellent beer quality is matched by the friendly staff serving a range of beers from Okell's, those being Bitter, IPA and wheat beer, Summer Storm. I tried all three but none matched Bushy's Old Bushy Tail, a chocolately dark beer with a slightly marshmallow-textured head. The pub is cleverly divided into eating and drinking areas and the games bar has four TV screens! There's seating outside and a small playground too.

Ramsey is a pleasant town with a market, where the **Trafalgar Inn** is on the quay. This is a tiny, dark pub, with a reputation for good food (see GBG) but had a notice up saying no food. The beer range was good enough with Cain's Bitter, Bushy's Bitter and Bass all on hand pump, but as I was with company who wanted food I only had time for a swift pint of the Cain's, which we don't see often in Weston-super-Mare on draught. Almost next door is the **Mitre Hotel's Schooner Bar** with superb views over the quay, and with the cheapest real ale I had on the IOM. They had the Okell's Bitter, IPA and Mild, and so I had the Mild at £1.82p a pint to complement my meal. There is another GBG pub in Ramsey, the **Ellen Vannin**, but that was full to capacity and so I didn't have the chance to enter it.

My pilgrimage on the Isle of Man was to the **Shore Hotel** in Old Laxey, not to be confused with where the Laxey Wheel is. The Shore Hotel is the only brew pub on the island. It really is a hotel too and I can vouch that the food is excellent, and that the views – sea on one side and river on another – make up for the fact this is the only pub in Old Laxey. No other beer is sold but their Bosun's Bitter is well worth trying – maybe two pints to be

sure. There are some quaint things – ships models, etc. – in the bar and a very strange picture of a lighthouse in a storm; I was at a loss to know if it's a photo or painting or both. The small brewery is at the back of the hotel and can be viewed by appointment.

Other pubs visited on the IOM include the **Ginger Hall** near Sulby on the TT course. The food is nothing to write home about but the quality of the Okell's Bitter was beyond doubt. This is a real biker's pub and the walls of the bar are covered with Manx motorcycle racing history. In the restaurant is an old gramophone with tin horn and a pile of old 1940s jazz records. It was tempting to crank it up. Its fair sized garden is a suntrap.

In St. John's there are two pubs, neither in the GBG. The obvious one for tourists visiting the ancient Tynwald is the **Tynwald Inn** on the main Peel to Douglas Road. Do bother to look in, as you won't find a stranger pub anywhere; I was tempted to stay for a pint of Okell's Best but couldn't get served as the bar staff were not to be seen. The two customers in the bar where shouting obscenities at each other as I left. However, in contrast to this, the **Farmer's Tavern** on the Foxdale Road, next to the long distance Manx Railway footpath, is another real gem of a pub. Open all day, as most are on the island in summer, it allegedly stopped doing food at 2pm. When buying my beer at about 2.20pm I asked about food and they were happy to serve me a very full prawn sandwich for £2. The beers were Okell's and Bushy's Bitters and a great pint of Archer's Seaside Special (4.5%).

The contrast between the two pubs couldn't have been greater. I didn't go to Douglas at all on this visit where another eight GBG pubs are situated, and missed out on a few others, but I can say that Manx ale is alive and waiting to be drunk.

Robin E Wild

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Looking back to.....1991

DURING a recent visit with my wife to a charity shop on Whiteladies Road in Bristol to refresh our wardrobes (don't laugh – this is an area where rich people ditch their clothes after two wearings), I spotted a copy of the 1991 Good Beer Guide on a bookshelf.

A quick flick through gave me some big surprises. Fourteen years doesn't sound like a long time but, boy, how the real ale world has changed during that time. After ten minutes reading I decided I had better do my bit for charity and buy it.

Initially I had a problem finding Weston-super-Mare. Having only moved to the area in 1998 I had forgotten that back in 1991 Weston, along with Bristol and the area now classified as South Gloucestershire, were in the county of Avon.

As far as Good Beer Guide entries go, Weston's sole representative was the Major From Glangarry on Upper Church Road. Then, as now, owned by Wadworth. Interestingly, Worle had an entry – the Nut Tree on Ebdon Road. Brains SA, Theakston's Best Bitter, Wadworth 6X, Younger Scotch and home-made ice cream were among the listed attractions.

Moving on to Bristol, there were 22 entries across the city, of which exactly half offered just Courage beers. There are no such pubs in the current Guide and I think I can safely say that nowadays a pub only offering Courage beers would not even be considered.

I feel that there are two reasons for this. Firstly, I believe there has been a big decline in the quality of Courage beers. Secondly, the real ale market has changed drastically in recent years and we have a far greater choice of beers than back in 1991. As an example, we did not then have pubs owned by the likes of Bath Ales and Hop Back and it would appear that the Wetherspoon's explosion had not yet reached Bristol in 1991.

A check of the Courage entry in the breweries section makes for interesting and rather sad reading. The beer was then brewed

in Bristol and the entry states that "growing demand for cask beer has resulted in expansion at this plant in recent years with Best and Directors very well promoted nationally." Less than a decade later, marketing of the beers had ceased and the Bristol brewery was closed.

The Guide welcomes the birth of the Wickwar brewery, which began operating in May 1990, with only two beers being brewed at the time – Brand Oak Bitter (BOB) and Olde Merryford Ale. The brewery is still going strong 15 years later, owning pubs and having added some great beers to their portfolio, such as the mighty Mr. Perrett's Traditional Stout and Station Porter.

Mention is also given to Ross Brewing Company, 36 Gloucester Road, Bishopston. Three bottle-conditioned beers were being produced in 1991 by this now-defunct company – Brewers Droop Organic Bitter, Clifton Dark Ale and Hartcliffe Bitter.

Our local RCH brewery has clearly grown beyond all expectations. In the Guide the entry for the brewery, then listed as "Royal Clarence," simply lists one beer – Clarence Pride – advising us that this beer has recently been re-named from Clarence Bitter. Nowadays they produce over 20 real ales a year.

The independent breweries section has more than quadrupled in content since 1991 which is testament to the number of people who have entered the brewing world, replacing the bland with more interesting and exciting products.

I have to confess that back in 1991 I was still in the latter stages of a mis-spent youth largely stuck in a lager and Guinness rut ("there is no greater joy in heaven.....") and therefore was not fully aware of happenings in the real ale world. However, it would appear that since 1991, although real ale's overall share of the beer market may have decreased, the quality and range available is massively superior.

Cheers!

Tim ("nice shirt for £2.25") Nickolls

Reed writes... on Newman's progress



FOLLOWING reports in the last edition I can confirm that Newman's new brewery is now in operation at Yatton, and apparently four times the size of the Banwell plant.

As well as increasing production – and reducing the time spent brewing in the process – owner Tom Newman is also planning on using existing outbuildings at the new premises to create an area to host brewery tours. He plans to include photo stories of the plant under construction and facilities to cater for beer tasting and food for tour parties. Should be good for pubs, wholesalers and the general public alike.

The beginning of December also sees the launch of Hoppy Gristmas, a brand new Christmas mas beer at 5 per cent ABV. I understand it is a deep ruby beer with a delicate fruity aroma and a hoppy presence. The **Raglan Arms** in Weston-super-Mare is likely to be the first pub to showcase it.

As the pumpclip points out, the brewery will be donating 5p of every pint sold to 'Contact the Elderly.' This charity organises volunteers to take house-bound elderly people to hosts' homes for company, reducing the isolation in their lives.

Newman's Brewery is situated at the west end of Yatton (behind Stowells Concrete) at 107 Wemberham Lane.

Steve Reed

Weston Diary

○ **Friday 2 December – Trip to Clevedon and Portishead.** Over the course of the evening we will be visiting at least five pubs in the Clevedon and Portishead area. Bus departs from Off The Rails at 7.15. Cost £5. Please contact Mike Coleman on 01934 631441 to book a place.

○ **Wednesday 21 December – 7th Annual Seasonal Ales Crawl.** Always one of the most popular events of the year. We will be visiting all pubs in the town centre offering a Christmas or Winter beer. The itinerary will not be known until the night, when we will know which pubs are offering a seasonal beer. If last year is anything to go by, expect five or six pubs to be on the route. We will meet at **The Raglan**, Upper Church Road, departing

from there at around 8.00.

**** Message to town centre landlords: If you are stocking a Christmas beer, let us know!**

○ **Friday 23 December – Christmas Social.** We will be having a curry at the Bengal Raj on The Boulevard. The meal will commence at 7.30. It will be preceded by optional aperitifs at The White Hart and followed by fines ales and music at The Raglan. If you would like to join us for this social, please note that advance booking is essential – contact Tim Nickolls for further information.

○ **Wednesday 18 January – The Ebdon Arms,** Wick St. Lawrence, 8.30.

○ **Friday 3 February – Good Beer Guide Survey Trip.** Visiting five or six current or potential Good Beer Guide pubs. Bus leaves Off The Rails at 7.15. Contact Mike Coleman on 01934 631441 to book a place.

○ **Wednesday 15 February – Two-venue social.** Weston-super-Mare Cricket Club, Devonshire Road, 8.30; The Waverley, Severn Road, 9.45.

Non-members welcome at all of the above events.

Contact

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



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)

Hannah More Zider

Hello Steve,

Just wanted to say thanks for the mention of our cider-making website in the Nailsea section of your latest edition of Pints West. It was an honour to be featured in our favourite magazine! We will be braving the rain to make another batch of Hannah More Zider this weekend, which may even be on sell at a couple of your beer and cider festivals this year. Keep up the good work, and if the Cider Sisters are unable to write an article for any

future editions of Pints West then us "Cider Brothers" will happily contribute something – we seem to do something cider-related most weekends!

Cheers, Gents, Hannah More Zider,
www.hannahmorezider.co.uk.

Real Ale Experiences

Steve,

I thought I might share with your readers my "real ale" experiences on a recent trip I made to the North-East.

Whilst staying near Spennymoor I came across a super pub called The Ship Inn in Middlestone village. The Ship boasts an excellent range of beers which included Quartermaster Quaff, Roosters Special, Durham Brewery's Sunstroke, Ridley's IPA, Hyde's 1863 Classic Bitter and Outlaw. Not surprisingly the Ship Inn has been voted Wear Valley CAMRA Pub of the Year for the last four years together many other awards. My wife and I spent two most convivial evenings in this charming pub, enjoying both the company of the locals and the friendly staff so I can certainly recommend a visit if in the area.

Other points of real interest I encountered on my journey included visits to two delightful villages – Kirkby Stephen (on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales) and Howarth, home of the Bronte family (on the Yorkshire Moors), both of which had retail outlets selling a wide variety of bottled real ales (the Howarth store to be found in the Edinburgh Woollen Mill shop – honestly!).

Travelling back to Bristol through the Derbyshire Dales I

stopped off at the George in Waterhouses (between Leek and Ashbourne) where I sampled the Everard's Tiger and noted the excellent menu which specialised in fish dishes. The next and last port of call before returning home was to Smith's Tavern, a pleasant little pub in the centre of Ashbourne (Cask Ale Pub of the Year 2004/5) where I tasted the Bellhaven Fruit Beer (very palatable) and I also noticed a plaque suspended over the bar showing the following letters: I I T Y W Y B M A D. What does it mean??

I hope that these notes are of interest and perhaps of some use to CAMRA members planning to venture up North.

Regards, Douglas Jones (by email)

P.S. The answer to the conundrum on the plaque (if you want to be kind and inform your readers) is: If I Tell You Will You Buy Me A Drink.

Birds and Beers

Dear Steve,

Myself introduced to real ales many years ago while visiting my own sister over in Suffolk, given a pint of Admans. Sorry came back home and drank some old bottled stuff!!

It took me quite a while to discover real ales with the closure of Courages in Bristol and Butcombe starting up in 1978. Back in those old Suffolk days I was bird watching just down the road from Southwold, home of Adnams. Still bird watching today for a pint of Cotleigh Barn Owl while the barn owl bird very difficult to find.

Yours again, Dennis Richards,
Stoke Gifford, South Glos.

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PRIDE IN EVERYTHING WE BREW

Island in the sea

By your Nailsea correspondent
Laurie Gibney

Un-boarded

IN the last *Pints West* I reported that in July 2005 the **Moorend Spout** public house at Kingshill, Nailsea was "boarded up". I am now very pleased to report that Punch Taverns plc reopened the Moorend Spout at the end of September.

The new licensee and tenant is Terry Beardshaw who has spent twelve thousand pounds refurbishing the historic inn. His brother Andrew runs the **Drum and Monkey** at Kenn and another brother Andrew (*does he really have two brothers called Andrew?* Ed) runs the **George** at Backwell so he will have some local friendly competition ... all in the family! All three pubs are ex-Usher's Brewery pubs which went through a period of ownership by the Innspired pub company and are now part of Punch Taverns.

Terry intends to develop the Moorend Spout as a family-friendly, food-led pub. On Monday to Friday lunchtimes Terry offers a two course lunch for £6.45, with the main menu ranging from £6.95 to £12.95 for a main course, and starters or deserts at about £3.50. A special children's menu has main courses at

£3.50 and deserts at £1.50. The garden and fish pond are to be restored to provide an attraction for families and others. The new phone number for table bookings and other queries is 01275 855336.

After five years in the trade, coming to Nailsea from the smaller **Queen Adelaide** at Blagdon, the real ales Terry has chosen to re-open the Moorend Spout with were Bass at £2.30, Butcombe Bitter at £2.20 and Marston's Pedigree at £2.40 a pint. A polykeg of Thatcher's Traditional Dry, at £2 per pint, was available for cider drinkers.

Foody Pubs – where food is the dominant service provided

The **Star** at Tickenham during the summer reduced its real ales from five to four to maintain good quality. Bass was the one to go and after the summer Archer's ales from Swindon were on trial.

Andy Charlock, the now ex-manager at the **New Battle Axe** at Wraxall, has moved on to the **Imperial** at Weston-super-Mare. We welcome the new manager Des Orman

who took over from 12 September. Des was Andy's assistant manager and previously head chef serving customers in one way or another at the New Battle Axe for seven years. Des was previously with the Army Catering Corps, and at the White Swan, Shawell, Leicestershire, between the M1, M6 and A5 north of Rugby.

Real ale is going so well with the real food at the New Battle Axe that Des is planning a third handpump in addition to Courage Best and Newman's Wolver's Ale, possibly dispensing Adnam's Bitter (at 3.6 per cent ABV) which sold well recently, and other guest ales. But don't expect any ale or food during the evenings of Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day when the staff will be taking a well-earned rest.


Also, after Christmas the New Battle Axe will be closed on occasions for refurbishment which will include decorating and restoring the woodwork to a light oak finish. Phone 01275 852645 to find out when it will be closed or to book a seat in the mainly non-smoking restaurant – essential on Saturday evenings and Sunday lunchtimes, also over the festive period.

In the last *Pints West* I reported that the



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

Dew Drop Inn on the A370 at Flax Bourton had a temporary general manager. His replacement took up her position in October she is Emma Leach, assisted by her husband Richard. *Pints West* welcomes them. Emma tells me that Michael Cannon's mother still lives in the village, which will keep her on her toes. Michael took over Eldridge Pope (EP) pub company a year or so ago.

Emma has been in licenced premises management for about five years, starting at a Hogshead in West Sussex which attracted up to 800 young people on Friday and Saturday nights, so she was determined to move on from there! Next she moved to the Narrowboat at Whitehouse Wharf on the A4, east of Newbury, which is a Pioneer Pub Company/Millhouse Inns river-side "foody pub" benefiting from the reopening of the Kennet & Avon Canal in 1990. On my 1975 chart of the canal it is shown as the White House Inn offering B&B and restaurant, and in my 1988 guide to K&A pubs by Niall Allsop and Millstream Books it was a Chef & Brewer carvery named the White House.

The next move was to the Firestone opposite the Castle Hotel in Taunton town centre which was a gastro-pub in need of an uplift and a change of the balance of clientele from mostly young town-centre heavy drinkers. Shortly after that Emma was head-hunted to manage the Dew Drop Inn, which she was reluctant to do as she had only just accepted the challenge of reviving the Firestone, but one visit to the Dew Drop Inn and she fell in love with it, gave three month's notice in Taunton, and has eventually arrived in the village of Flax Bourton.

Richard is very keen on real ales and dispensing them in good quality: the cellar is very much his domain. The pub is tied to having either Courage Best or Directors because the premises are owned by Enterprise Inns and leased to EP. Emma and Richard are determined, however, to stock a changing selection of locally brewed real ales on the other two handpumps and welcome suggestions from customers. Butcombe and Otter ales have featured since Emma and Richard have arrived, along with some of the new "nationals" such as Greene King's Old Speckled Hen.

Two gazebos and a wishing-well have joined the children's climbing facility and burger shack in the garden, ready for better weather. The extensive menu remains unchanged, but the food service promises to be much improved under the new management. To contact the Dew Drop Inn phone 01275 462741 or email dewdrop@ep-ltd.com.

The Club Scene

Nailsea & Backwell Rugby Club donated £3,500 to the Children's Hospice South West (often known as Babe's Big Appeal), which was part of the £9,000 raised at its second annual Beer & Cider Festival held in July. This was almost four times the sum raised in the first year, which shows that

practice (with help from good weather) makes perfect! The club, whose bar is open to members of the public, has added Wickwar BOB to its other real ale, Courage Best.

Following their successful first beer and cider festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend, the **Grove Sports & Social Club** (membership required) has added a second real ale and occasionally a third to its bar to compliment Courage Best. On a recent visit the guest ale was Charles Wells Bombardier, and Thatcher's Cheddar Valley cider was also available, dispensed by gravity from a poly drum at the back of the bar.

The **Clarence House Club** in the High Street at Portishead is managed by Richard Cole, assisted by David Unwin: they held similar positions at the Mizzymeade Club in Nailsea. The Clarence House Club offers membership at £16 for adults and £8 for pensioners which, if you join before 31st December, will be reduced to the special offer prices of £8 and £4 respectively. The club offers two bars, a beer garden, a games room with pool and darts, three skittle alleys and a function suite. Real ale is £2.10 per pint and features Courage Best and Butcombe Bitter plus two rotating guest ales, which on a recent visit were Caledonian Deuchars IPA and Marston's Pedigree.

And finally, where in the centre of Bristol can you buy Thatcher's Traditional Dry cider for £1.20 per pint, Bass and Bath Ales Gem for £1.60 per pint, and an occasional guest ale for £1.40 per pint. These 1960s prices are available at the **Bristol Cruising Club** thanks to a dedicated team of volunteer bar staff and other helpers. Associated membership will set you back £5 per year and the club room and bar is on the barge *Sabrina 6* beside Redcliffe Bridge, between the Bristol Centre and Temple Meads railway station. The real ales are all kept in good condition by CAMRA member Dave Meachin who is the club's volunteer bar manager. The club is open every Sunday and Friday evening from 8.00 to 10.30 (11.00 Friday) and on other nights if a function is organised by members. On Sunday evenings enjoy live trad jazz at this friendly club.

Elsewhere in Nailsea & District

Congratulations to Mick Davidson at the **Blue Flame**, Nailsea West End, for gaining an entry again in the CAMRA Good Beer Guide, and also to Kevin Mildon at the **Ring O'Bells**, Nailsea, and Adrian Boone and Michael Baxter at the **Old Farmhouse**, Nailsea, for gaining a Cask Marque which is the industry's recognition of quality.

The **White Lion**, which dispenses Courage Best and Butcombe Bitter, has a third changing guest ale. Recently these have all been from the Newman's micro-brewery at Yatton,

such as Wolver's Ale, Bite and Red Stag.

The **Sawyers Arms** has replaced Newman's Wolver's Ale as its rotating guest ale with Bath Ales Gem, in addition to its regulars Courage Best and Butcombe Bitter, but needs more support from real ale drinkers if it is to be able to keep three real ales.

The **Blue Flame** had Wickwar Autumn Ale and Butcombe Bitter as guests alongside their regular Fuller's London Pride.

The **Black Horse** at Clapton in Gordano has replaced Bass with Wadworth's 6X on hand pull from their cellar along with Webster's Green Label. On gravity they have Courage Best, Butcombe Bitter and Shepherd Neame Spitfire.

Away from Nailsea & District

In September, Mary and I went "up north" for our first ever holiday in the English Lake District. The sheer beauty of the area was stunning: why Brits want to go abroad I don't know!

We stayed in a mobile home at Fallbarrow Park, five-minutes' walk from the centre of Bowness on Windermere and a short stroll from Windermere; we cruised the lakes, enjoyed train trips, visited relatives in Formby, did the Blackpool Trams, and visited Kendal Hospital after I found at first-hand the literal meaning of "fell walking"!

Mary enjoyed her first visit to a beer festival – there being one at Ulverston run by the CAMRA Furness Branch – where she said to me, "Now I understand why you spend so long at these festivals." There was a good selection of ales and food, and a good, friendly crowd.

When she saw the ale selection at Booth's supermarket beside the railway station at Windermere she said, "You had better stock up" – an offer too good to refuse. One of the ales I took home was a bottle-conditioned Cropton Brewery's Monkman's Slaughter Strong Bitter at 6 per cent ABV, which was excellent.

On our way up the M5 on Sunday before the bank holiday it was very busy with cars, but few lorries. We turned off before Sandbach services and drove through Middlewich toward Northwich, stopping for lunch at the canal-side pub, the Old Broken Cross in Broken Cross, near Northwich, familiar to us as canal boaters. Walking into the Old Broken Cross, a Spirit Group pub which even served sandwiches on a Sunday, I found the real ales were Tetley Bitter (perhaps the Northern equivalent of Courage Best – it gets everywhere!) and Butcombe Gold. I chose a pint of the latter at £2.15 – the Tetley was £1.84 and the Marston's Pedigree was £2.11 but that had run out the night before. Note they still use multiples of 1p "up north" not 5p as in the South! We took a supply of *Pints West* with

us to give to the licensees along the way, a bit like taking beads to give to the natives in days gone by. The landlord at the Old Broken Cross said he would enjoy reading his because his Butcombe Gold featured in an article on the back.

When away from home, the CAMRA Good Beer Guide (GBG) is always useful. At Bowness there were two (GBG) pubs – a small and crowded Royal Oak where Coniston Bluebird was just drinkable and Hopback Summer Lightening was better, and the Village Inn which is a “foody pub” where Jennings’s Cumberland Ale and Hawkshead Best Bitter were very drinkable.

The nearest pub to our mobile home park was Hole Int Wall, an ex-Hartley’s Robinson’s house. Their Robinson’s Unicorn was just drinkable and Hartley’s XB was a little better, but at the nearby Albert Hotel it was just drinkable. While shopping in Windermere we popped into the Queen’s Hotel where the Tirrell Old Faithful was good.

Before the beer festival in Ulverston we ate at the Rose and Crown in the town centre, where we enjoyed an excellent Cumberland sausage meal in a smoke-free area plus a very good pint of Hartley’s Cumbria Way. On a recommendation by Doug and Judith Jones of Nailsea we booked a table and enjoyed an excellent meal at the Kings Arms at Burton in Kendal where I almost scored the Jennings’s Dark Mild “excellent”!

Another excellent eating pub was the Eagle and Child at Staveley between Kendal and Windermere where the Heskett Newmarket Scafell Blonde was good and the Yates Bitter was very good. On the way home in a “Cumbria mist” we called at the Watermill Inn

just to sample one of their dozen real ales, although it was busy with diners. The cellar was being moved and only five real ales were available to choose from. The Coniston Bluebird was good but the Theakston’s Old Peculiar at 5.6 per cent ABV was excellent

A quick turnaround on the Old Ratty railway at Boot, Eskdale included a visit to the Boot Inn where Eccleshall Slater’s Top Totty was good but the Jennings’s Fish King was decidedly fishy! At Grassmere the Tweedies Bar of the Dale Lodge Hotel offered bowls of excellent olives as well as Theakston’s Old Peculiar which was just “good” and Yates Bitter which was very good. After my “fell walking” at the Fish Hotel at Buttermere, both the Heskett Newmarket Haystacks and Jennings’s Sneek Lifter were very good. And at the King’s Arms in the quaint village of Hawkshead what else to drink than Hawkshead Gold, which was good, and the Hawkshead Brodie’s Prime at 5 per cent ABV, which was good with hints of chocolate and liquorice.

The runner-up for our “pub of the holiday” was the Freshfield Hotel in Formby where we enjoyed a very reasonably priced meal with my cousin Tony Francis and his wife Kath. There were about ten real ales available: Storm Ale Force, Caledonian Deuchars IPA, Coachhouse Honey Pot Best Bitter and Cain’s Bitter were very good and Mordue Five Bridges Bitter was good.

Our “pub of the holiday” was the Angler’s Arms at Haverthwaite, with ten real ales and two Weston’s ciders, which we visited one lunchtime for an enormous baguette and another day for an evening meal. The ales tasted were Bryson’s Shifting Sands from

Heysham which was good, Weobley Wild Blonde and Copper Dragon Black Gold which were very good, and Moorhouses Black Cat (Mild) which was excellent. The Angler’s collected a Pub of the Year award at the Furness Beer Festival.

Martin Howell reports...

Tony Fey at the **Old Barn** in Wraxall had replaced Bass with Fullers London Pride when the last *Pints West* went to press, but has re-introduced Bass due to popular demand from his customers.

By the time *Pints West* is published, the Backwell Village Club will have arranged and run a “Village Pump” charity beer and cider festival in support of Backwell Medical Centre, aiming to buy the district nurses a heart monitor costing about £1,600 (“Village Pump” doing some good for the village’s circulation you might say!). Many breweries, businesses and individuals have given support to this charity event, for which many thanks.

Expected at the event were beers (at 75p per half) from the likes of Archer’s, Badger, Bath Ales (providing the stillage), Berrow, Bristol Beer Factory, Cotleigh, Downton, Eccleshall, Goff’s, Hook Norton, Hopback, Isle of Purbeck, Moles, Newman’s, Palmer’s, Sharp’s, Wadworth and Wickwar. Also five ciders (at 60p per half) provided by Moles, Thatcher’s and Weston’s, with a perry from Weston’s, wines from Avery’s, plus fresh unfiltered apple juice from a Cheltenham farm, provided by Burchill’s Fruit & Veg of Nailsea. Festival Doom Bar/Backwell Village Club souvenir polo shirts and half pint souvenir glasses were also available.

Watch this space for next year’s event!

The Amsterdam run

A RECENT trip to Amsterdam to take part in the ING Half Marathon gave me the chance to revisit a few bars that I last went to some five years ago.

Arriving on the Saturday afternoon gave me time to go in search of the **Maximillian** brewpub at 6-8 Kloveniersburgwal. I walked past it twice before realising that it is exactly where I remembered but has changed its name to **Bekeerde Suster**. This is a multi-levelled, dimly-lit, wood-panelled pub with a selection of some eight or nine beers on tap, including three of their own. As the race was the next day I restricted myself to a half of their own 5% Witte Ros, a tasty, cloudy wheat beer, before returning to my hotel.

Sunday evening gave me a few hours to stretch my legs and to cross town to find the **Ij Brewery** at 7 Funenkade, next to a working windmill that I had run past earlier in the day. The bar was packed and it took me a while to realise that there was an orderly queue at one end of the bar that I had by-passed in my rush to see what beers were available. As I had

arrived near to closing time I only had time for a half of the Ij Bock (5% from memory) whilst admiring a row of 1960’s scooters and motorbikes parked outside.

After spending Monday morning in the Rijksmuseum it was time to have a few more beers so heading south from the Central Station I found my way to the **In de Wildeman** at 3 Kolksteeg. They had a selection of about ten beers on tap available, plus Guinness and Strongbow for the less adventurous, together with approximately 200 bottled beers in case the draught list is too small. I noticed that everyone in the pub was English and it became apparent from the way they were walking they had also done the full or half marathon the day before! I stuck to the draught offerings and had a half of Andechs Weisse, a cloudy 5.5% wheat beer, followed by a Ebbeschank Schwarzbier, a 5.2% black porter/stout, and rounded it off with a 5% de Koninck Bollecke.

I was tempted to pop into the **Belgique** at 2 Gravenstraat en-route to the **Bekeerde**

Suster but decided to leave that one for another trip, as I wanted to try their other two beers and get some food. This time I had their pale 6% Blond Ros whilst admiring the highly polished copper brewing equipment in the back corner of the downstairs bar, followed by a 6.5% Bock Ros brown beer to accompany a tasty Irish stew. I then wandered about six doors up to the **’T Loosje** at 32 Nieuwmarkt, a lively, somewhat smoky bar with lovely tiled walls, where I finished off the evening with another de Koninck.

Getting to Amsterdam is easy and, if you book far enough in advance, cheap, with both KLM and Easy Jet flying from Bristol International to Schiphol in just over an hour. Quick and frequent trains take you into Central Station for about £2.40 each way and once there, there is an excellent tram service to get you around. Beers cost about •2.40 for 25cl (about £3.75 per pint).

Oh, in case you were wondering, I managed to do the half marathon in 2 hours, 6 minutes and 31 seconds.

Pete Tanner

The Lost Pubs of Bath

WE may think Bath well supplied with pubs, but our ancestors would be appalled at the lack of choice. In 1750, despite being a fraction of its present size, Bath had more pubs than it has today. With one pub for every 67 people, it was a distinct case of over-provision. They've been closing ever since. A third have gone since the Second World War and the number is dwindling all the time.

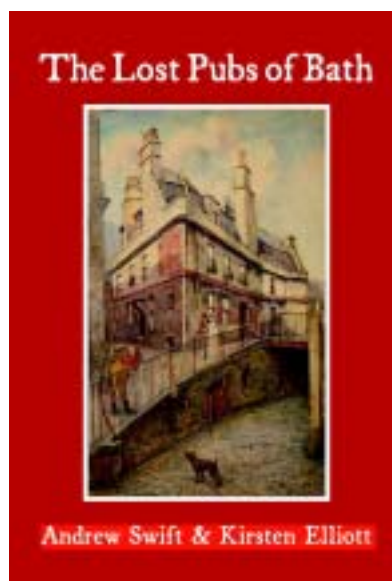
In a follow-up to *Bath Pubs* and *Awash With Ale*, Andrew Swift and Kirsten Elliott undertake a series of excursions in search of Bath's lost pubs, from humble alehouse to grand coaching inn, and from long-gone hostels such as the Retreat and the Folly to recent casualties such as the Garrick's Head and the Hat & Feather.

With over 500 illustrations, *The Lost Pubs of Bath* is the essential guide to over 500 lost pubs. It costs £15 from all good bookshops or direct from Akeman Press, 58 Minster Way, Bath BA2 6RL (telephone: 01225 310364; email: info@akemanpress.com). Postage and packing is free within the UK.

Pints West has two copies of the book to give away. To win one, jot down the answers to the following five questions, designed to test your knowledge of the current Bath pub scene in Bath, and send them (with your address and telephone number) to Lost Pubs of Bath Competition, Pints West, Garden Flat, 6 Royal York Villas, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4JR, to arrive no later than 15 January.

1. Which county's ales are regularly featured in festivals at the Star Inn?
2. If you overhear one of Bath's landlords talking about bad news, who or what are they likely to be referring to?
3. The signboard of which Bath pub (listed in the *Good Beer Guide*) is a witty take on Botticelli's Birth of Venus?
4. Which Bath pub opened in August after being shut for six years?
5. Blindman's Brewery from Leighton near Frome brew a special beer for which Bath pub?

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Bath times

CHATTING to Jamie Matthews from the Bell in Walcot Street I discovered that a recent publication called *The Real Ale Pub Guide* (not to be confused with the original and superior CAMRA *Good Beer Guide*) proclaims Bath to be one of the finest cities in the country for good beer. Who am I to argue since I have been conscious of improvements in the quality, availability and range of beers in Bath over the last few years?

The Bell is of course mentioned in this guide and rightly so. This is a pub that does not change much, thank goodness, apart from the ever-changing list of bands that play at the pub. However, they have recently refurbished a back room and equipped it for cine projection. Cinema and poetry groups now meet there as does the Playgroup. This is not a crèche but is a regular open-mic night held on Thursdays. It would take far too much time and space to inform everybody of the eclectic range of music at the Bell, so if that takes your fancy make sure that you check out the website at www.walcotstreet.com.

Also featured is the **Old Green Tree**. This pub is the current CAMRA Bath and Borders pub of the year and I am told came third in the regional championship. The Old Green Tree organises mini-bus trips to breweries around four or five times a year. The November trip is (or was) to Palmer's Brewery in Dorset. Others have not yet been fixed up. I was interested to hear that the Old

Green Tree has a firkin of Wickwar's Mr. Perrett's Traditional Stout and another of their Station Porter that were laid down last December (2004). The intention is to broach these somewhere around the second Thursday in December 2005. This should be an interesting experience.

Also coming in for praise is the **Star Inn**, at The Vineyards, described as "a timeless local, built around 1760, with a friendly atmosphere within the wonderful old interior".

○ Having recently purchased my copy of the CAMRA *Good Beer Guide* I have noted that **Lambrettas**, **Couer de Lion** and the **Rummer** have (for the moment anyway) disappeared from the pages. However, they are all still trading real ales. In the case of the Rummer, a small pub group called Game Bird Inns has recently taken over the establishment. I gather that this is their first town pub. Alistair Bartlett is the new licensee and he took over on the 5th of September. The pub has reopened following a sympathetic refurbishment. Their 'mission statement' for want of a better term is to create a country pub atmosphere in a town pub location. There is traditional pub food and the three hand pumps are all still in use. The ale policy is to stock two standards (currently Gem and Butcombe bitter) plus one guest supplied by a smaller brewery.

Upstairs, two rooms are being refurbished and are near completion. One provides a comfortable lounge setting with easy chairs, etc., and the second has a function room feel with long tables.

○ Elsewhere in the city the **Hobgoblin**

has found its way in to the pages of the Good Beer Guide. This probably arises from the earlier efforts of John and Becky Whinnerah who have since moved on to open the Royal Oak on the Lower Bristol Road as reported in the last issue of Pints West.

○ The **Royal Oak** is a pub that is very much up and running though work is still in progress to reconstruct the second bar and kitchens. John Whinnerah prepared a flyer for any punters unlucky enough to be unable to get in to the Bath Beer Festival in October. I was particularly taken by the wording: "Some people thought that we were crazy when they found out that we would install nine hand-pumps. So we installed ten."

The Royal Oak in unwavering in its commitment to sourcing real ales from micro-breweries and generally the beer list is one that cannot be found elsewhere in the city. The new brewery from Timsbury, Matthews, chose the Royal Oak to launch its first beers on 14th November.

Music has also been featuring at the Royal Oak. In addition to the regular Wednesday Irish sessions, jazz and traditional French dance music sessions have found their way through the doors. Finally, for those that like unusual-beer-themed events, here are two Royal Oak dates for your diary. The first is 12th to 18th December when they intend to hold an organic beer week and the second is 23rd to 26th February when there will be a winter beer festival. (*Thinks: before they left the Hobgoblin they were planning a fruit beer festival. I wonder what happened to that plan?*)

Phill The Pint

News from Bath

IF you're quick, you'll just be in time to catch Chorister, November's seasonal brew from Abbey Ales. A rich, malty beer with an ABV of 4.5 per cent, this comes hard on the heels of Steeplejack (4.7 per cent), a hoppy, premium bitter brewed especially for the Bath Beer Festival. And, as anyone familiar with Abbey Ales will know, it will soon be time for the annual return of Twelfth Night (5 per cent), their eagerly-awaited strong, dark Christmas bitter.

○ The old **Seven Stars** on the Lower Bristol Road at Twerton (latterly the New Trams Social Club) has been taken over by a firm of property agents specialising in ... licensed premises. Chartered surveyors James A Baker took over the Seven Stars after the New Trams Social Club moved to its new home at Twerton Park. Opened as a beerhouse in the 1850s, the Seven Stars was rebuilt in the late nineteenth century and gained a full licence in 1951. During Bristol Rovers' residency at Twerton Park (c1986-96), it was a popular venue for pre- and post-match drinking. On one occasion in January 1990, what the *Bath Chronicle* described as a "Western-style brawl" between Rovers' fans and Bolton Wanderers' supporters put paid to most of the glass in the downstairs windows. Its future is likely to be somewhat quieter.



The Seven Stars is now home to a pub property company

○ Simon Wynne, landlord of the GBG-listed **Ram** in Widcombe, has put the lease up for sale and is planning a round-the-world trip. After 14 years at the Ram, initially as manager, but since 1993 as leaseholder, he's decided on a change of scene. One of Bath's most popular pubs – for lunches, sporting events, or just a few beers – the Ram is the archetypal community local. At this summer's victory-themed street party, Widcombe Rising, there was a carousel right outside the door, and stalls



The GBG-listed Ram in Widcombe

selling paella, crepes and burgers to go with the beer. For anyone not familiar with Widcombe, you turn right out of Bath Spa station, go through the tunnel under the railway, cross the footbridge, cross the road, turn left, and the Ram's about 50 yards along on the left. Enquiries about the lease should be made to James A Baker (see above) on 01225 789343.



The Chequers in Rivers Street, built in the 1770s for Bath's sedan-chairmen

○ The **Chequers** in Rivers Street (off Julian Road), opened in the 1770s as the New Inn, and initially patronised by the sedan chairmen who carried the great and good to their homes in the mansions nearby, has been closed for several weeks for an extensive refurbishment. The outside of the building has been covered in scaffolding, while the interior has been given a complete make-over which nevertheless appears to have retained many original features. Work now appears to be nearing completion. Built by John Wood the Younger (who also designed the Assembly



Steve Fisher pulls a pint of his Golden Eagle at the Salutation in Ham

Rooms), this looks like one to check out when it finally reopens.

○ Hold the Front Page: The **Old Green Tree** in Bath made it to the front page of the October *Beer* magazine, distributed to all CAMRA members. It occupied most of the back page as well, as part of a series covering pubs on the National Inventory (with interiors that haven't changed for over 50 years). Not only is the Old Green Tree part of this elite band, it is also the local CAMRA branch's Pub of the Year. The article was accompanied by a superb series of colour photos, showing it as you or I are never likely to see it – that is, empty. The publicity generated by coverage in *Beer* magazine means that it is now busier than ever.



The Beaufort Arms in Hakesbury Upton, a former Gloucestershire pub of the year

○ The December issue of the *Bristol Magazine* will feature a country walk starting – and ending – at the **Beaufort Arms** in Hakesbury Upton. This was Gloucestershire CAMRA Pub of the Year last year and does cracking food at very reasonable prices – although it's wise to book. So if you've not been out to the Beaufort Arms and fancy working up a bit of an appetite – or a thirst – before your visit, get your hands on a copy of the *Bristol Magazine*, which is distributed free to homes and businesses throughout the city.

○ Now in the shops: **Gloucestershire Pubs and Breweries** by Tim Edgell & Geoff Sandles. Geoff, the editor of *The Tippler* (the CAMRA newsletter for Gloucestershire) and Tim, a collector of Gloucestershire breweriana, have put together a fascinating collection of over 200 photographs, adverts and memorabilia from the nineteenth century to the present day. Wistful views of long-lost pubs and long-gone breweries are matched by more recent images – Ray Penny christening the mash tun at the new Wickwar Brewery in 2004 and the Bishop of Gloucester paying a "getting to know you" visit to Chas Wright at Uley Brewery are two of the most memorable. It's nice as well to see a book on brewing

Awash with ale at the 28th Bath Beer Festival

THE success of 28th Bath Beer Festival, held in the Pavilion on 14th and 15th October, shows that people can spend an evening drinking, listening to music, and meeting friends without any of the problems associated with binge drinking.

On Friday night, the hall was filled to capacity with beer enthusiasts of all ages – and when you looked at the range of beers, you could see why. While the four big breweries jostle one another in the battle for customers, microbreweries, with their camaraderie and co-operation, are booming. New ones are opening up almost every day. Some of the names were well-established, sought-after, favourites – I finally managed, after failures in previous years, to get my hands on a half pint of Cheriton Brewery's *Village Elder*, a light beer with a fresh, clean taste and just the merest

history that isn't just a nostalgic look at a golden age, but also celebrates the renaissance of small breweries. Published at £12.99 by Tempus of Stroud, it's an essential read for anyone interested in the history – and the future – of brewing in Gloucestershire.

○ Talking of Gloucestershire breweries, another one's just opened at Ham, just south of Berkeley. The only thing is that, if you want to see what it's like, you'll have to go there. Not that that's too much of a hardship. The **Salutation Inn** is a splendid country pub, and Steve Fisher, the landlord, not only brews his own beer, he loves brewing, and, as long as the pub's not too busy, he'll willingly chat about his craft – and how he came to be running a home-brew pub.

Two years ago, Steve was living in Berkeley with a fully-operational tower brewery in a purpose-built shed in the back garden. He decided it was time to realise a lifetime ambition and bought a pub in Neath. Within a few months, he had transformed the Borough Arms from a rundown boozer selling canned lager to one of the top brew pubs in South Wales and the local CAMRA pub of the year. Then came an opportunity to take over a pub back home, so, two months ago, he put a manager into the Borough Arms and moved the brewery to the Salutation at Ham.

Since then, the fame of the **Eagles Bush Brewery** (the name refers to a former colliery, now a country park, near the pub at Neath) has been spreading through the Gloucestershire bush telegraph. On a recent visit, Golden Eagle, a classic IPA at 4.2 per cent, was on offer, while pump clips behind the bar indicated other beers in the Eagles Bush aviary, such as Merlin (3.6 per cent), Kestrel Bitter (3.7 per cent), and Osprey Dark (3.9 per cent). With 22 gallons of a particular beer being brewed twice a week, only one Eagles Bush beer is generally available at any one time (a good excuse for a series of return visits), but a regularly changing selection of three other real ales (and an enticing menu) make a detour off the A38 a very attractive proposition.

Andrew Swift

smidgeon of elderflower. Other visitors were much newer. Downton Brewery, for example, has only been up and running for two years, and although they were only scheduled to have one beer on, they actually managed two, of which I particularly liked their *Chimera Red*. Keynsham Brewery is so new, they didn't make it to the programme – but they did to the festival. Sadly, not all the beers did. I was disappointed that Springhead Brewery's seventeenth-century style beer, *Goodrich Castle*, brewed with rosemary, didn't make it – trying it would have been entirely in the interests of historical research, of course.

Some surprising ingredients turn up in beers these days. I was persuaded to taste one described as having "a blackcurrant nose". To me, it tasted like Ribena. "I like Ribena," said its supporter. Fair enough, I suppose. I wasn't too keen on the vanilla flavour some beers sported – I think vanilla belongs in ice cream and proper homemade custard. But I did enjoy, somewhat to my own surprise, *Heligan Honey*, from Skinner's Brewery in Truro, made with the honey from the famous lost gardens. This wasn't the only brewery from the far southwest. There was also Blue Anchor from Helston, with their famous *Spingo*, while from the far north came the Orkney Brewery, based in the wonderfully named town of Quoydoo. There was also a selection of German and Belgian beers, not to mention a few ciders, all of which will probably cause heated discussion among some CAMRA members.

One of the delightful things about real ale is the choice of name sported by some of the beers. Box Steam Brewery seems to be in cahoots with their local history society, with names like Tunnel Vision and Blind House,



while Bath's own Abbey Ales is keeping up its ecclesiastical theme for most of its beers. If you've ever wondered why RCH Brewery named its porter Old Slug, the answer was in the programme. Apparently they were having a slug problem at the time – but none made it into the beer, we are assured.

As well as the wonderful choice of beers, there was great entertainment by local blues band **Soul Commotion** on Friday night. It would have been nice to have had some suitable lunchtime music on Saturday. To say the festival was successful is an understatement. Over 900 people were there on Friday night, with a further 600 or so during Saturday lunchtime. It certainly seemed to be on course to beat the target of 2,300, though how much beer was left for the Saturday evening crowds is a moot point, despite several barrels being kept back. The presence of Bath and Gloucester rugby fans at Saturday lunchtime certainly increased consumption. This was a beer festival that looked set to be drunk dry – and not a sign of trouble anywhere.

Kirsten Elliot

Photograph by Andrew Swift

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Proposed smoking legislation in England – will consumer choice be the real loser?

THE ongoing debate regarding smoking in pubs has certainly created a lot of hot air.

Broadly speaking, the government is proposing to ban smoking in enclosed public places and places of work with exemptions for clubs and pubs that do not serve food.

Not surprisingly, this has caused a lot of people to speak out about these proposals. In recent weeks there has been strong comment from the medical profession, health charities, trade unions, the licensing trade and political parties.

The British Medical Association has said that the proposals are “an utter disappointment and wasted opportunity”. Trade union leaders believe that the move will result in ill health and worse for many workers within the trade. Ministers were under pressure to introduce a total ban not only from the health professions and trade unions, but also from their own back benches and members of opposition parties. Blanket bans are already proposed in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

The comments and objections to the proposals are, of course, very powerful. As a non-smoker, I would prefer to drink my beer in a smoke-free environment. However, I have been visiting pubs for a while now and, in the main, the smoke does not bother me. That there are serious health issues surrounding smoking for the smoker, non-smoker and staff who may or may not smoke cannot be denied. However, smoking is not illegal and people are aware of the risks.

Recent research undertaken by CAMRA revealed that approximately 26 pubs are closing each month in the UK. The overwhelming majority of these closures are community pubs – not the huge city-centre bars full of people drinking themselves silly on sugary-flavoured pap out of a bottle. Many of the community pubs are not making vast profits. What would happen if they had to ban smoking throughout these pubs? I believe that, instead of seeing 26 pubs close per month, that figure would increase to more than one a day.

It is very interesting to note that profits have allegedly fallen at the pub group JD Wetherspoon. Its decision to ban smoking in 36 of its pubs, including the Commercial Rooms in Corn Street, Bristol, has resulted in a reported 7 per cent decline in profit at these pubs. The ban on smoking in the Commercial Rooms was announced with huge publicity in the local press. This has been backed up with large posters inside and outside of the pub proclaiming its no-smoking status. However, to back up the group's trading results, on recent visits to the Commercial Rooms, there appears to be a noticeable downturn in footfall into the pub. As the Commercial Rooms has had all this publicity and is the only pub, to my knowledge, to have a total ban on smoking in central Bristol, where are all these non-

smokers who, we keep being told, will flock to smoke-free pubs? Why the alledged down-turn in profits of 7 per cent in Wetherspoon's non-smoking outlets?

If this can happen with a large pub company like Wetherspoon's, what chance the suburban or rural pub with a large, regular customer base of mainly smokers? If a ban is introduced, will they stay at home with their supermarket takeaways, still smoking (possibly in front of the kids)?

Will the space they leave in the local be taken by equal numbers of non-smokers who do not currently use pubs? Or will these local pubs turn into neo-restaurants, with all tables set with table cloths, salt and pepper mills, and serviettes? Will they still be recognisable as pubs where you can feel comfortable simply going for a beer with a few friends?

So, what does “the trade” think? Like the general public, there is sure to be a division of opinion. In Wales, where a total ban seems certain, the Licensed Victuallers of Wales said that a ban would be “a nail in the coffin for small pubs already struggling to make a profit”. It forecast that many community pubs would go to the wall, lost forever.

The retail director of SA Brain & Co said, “If turnover drops 15 per cent as has happened in Dublin since the ban, or 40 per cent in New York, pubs will face problems and jobs will be lost.”

On a local level, Paul Tanner who runs the Hare on the Hill in Kingsdown with Dee (having moved on from the Wellington) said, on a personal basis, “I think the real victim in this debate will be food, which is very unfortunate as traditional ‘pub grub’ is helping trade in smaller pubs in an industry which is seeing more pub closures every week. There is still a long way to go before this Bill is passed, and let's hope the government sees sense and comes to some sort of compromise that will benefit the people in the trade as well as the consumer.”

Nikki and Martin Hughes, who run the Hope & Anchor on Jacobs Wells Road in Hotwells, even differ in opinion between themselves. Martin, as a non-smoker and who has never smoked a cigarette in his life, has no particular objection to those around him smoking. Martin says, “If I did, I wouldn't have opted for a career in the licensed trade.” Nikki who is a smoker, objects to people smoking while people nearby are eating. Nikki supports the proposed legislation.

Julia, who runs the Cornubia in central Bristol, said, “I wish they hadn't brought in the bloody rule – it will ruin our trade either way!”

So, what will we potentially be left with if the legislation goes ahead as proposed? Pubs that could turn into dedicated smoking dens, others that will be more akin to restaurants than a pub where you and your mates will not

really enjoy nipping into for a quick pint, but worst of all, an acceleration of the already very high level of pub closures. Will your favourite pub be next?

We surely need a pragmatic solution to this issue. It must cater adequately for both smokers and non-smokers. The British pub is envied throughout much of the world. Let's not destroy it with badly-thought-out legislation.

Pete Bridle



24-hour drinking in Bath

SHOCK-HORROR headlines that eighteen 24-hour licences have been granted in Bath & North East Somerset prove, on closer examination, to portend rather less change in drinking habits than might at first be feared.

Two of the licences are for supermarkets, six are bars on the campus of Bath University, five are private clubs, and one is Moles Night Club on George Street, which is open till the early hours already. That leaves four pubs, the Jolly Sailor at Saltford, the Apple Tree at Shoscombe, the Lamb at Clandown and the Ring of Bells at Priston.

All the landlords have indicated that the only reason they applied for 24-hour licences was to give them extra flexibility, so if you turn up at Priston or Shoscombe at five in the morning expecting a pint of the usual you'll almost certainly be disappointed.

If you can hang on till nine o'clock, though, Wetherspoon's in James Street West, near the old Bath Green Park station, will be serving alcohol from nine o'clock every morning. This may seem foreign to most people in this country – as indeed it is. The French and the Portuguese, to name but two, have no problem with people drinking that early. At one time, we didn't have any problem in this country. The right of the working man to enjoy a pint on his way to work was something the Victorians took for granted – at least those who weren't ranged behind the banner of temperance. Nine o'clock may be too early for most of us, but it's nice to see that Wetherspoon's is at least offering us the choice.

Andrew Swift

The Good Beer Guide

'Beer Revolution' in Britain as number of new breweries soars

'The Good Beer Guide ... the perfect book when you're Out!' Andrew Flintoff

CHOICE for British beer drinkers is booming as a record number of new breweries has been recorded by the 2006 edition of the Good Beer Guide, published recently by the Campaign for Real Ale. Editor Roger Protz says the guide lists more than 80 new breweries, almost twice as many as in the previous year.

"The spate of new micro-breweries and the booming regional sector prove there is no 'real ale crisis'", Protz adds. "In spite of the best efforts of the global brewers who dominate British brewing, there is greater choice today than at any time since the Good Beer Guide was first published in the early 1970s."

The guide, which lists 4,500 of Britain's best real ale pubs as well as all the country's breweries, says the dramatic number of new producers as well as the stability in the regional sector has been fuelled in part by the government's introduction of Progressive Beer Duty. PBD enables micros and small regional breweries that produce up to 30,000 barrels to pay less duty.

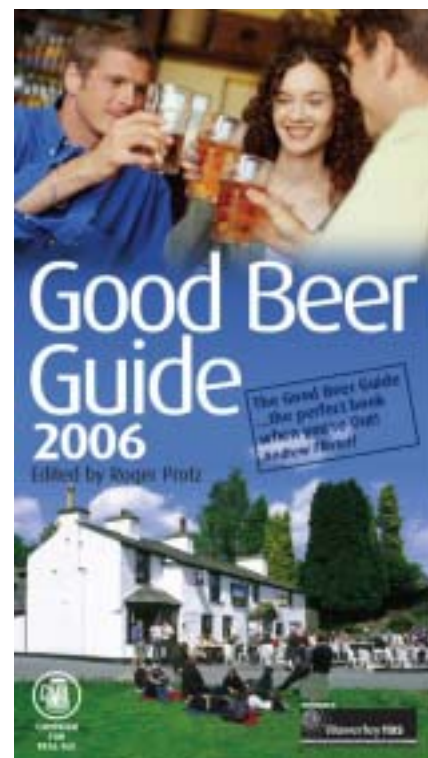
But the main driving force behind the upsurge in new breweries is consumer demand. "Beer lovers are tired of over-hyped national brands and avoid like the plague the bland apologies for lager and the cold, tasteless keg beers produced by the global brewers. Beers with aroma and flavour are back in vogue and smaller brewers are rushing to meet the clamour from consumers. With around 500 micros, 35 family-owned breweries and several bigger regional producers, there is now greater choice than at any time since the Campaign for Real Ale was founded in 1971. Britain has more micros per head than any country in the world."

The 2005 annual report of SIBA – the Society of Independent Brewers, which represents most of Britain's micros and smaller regionals – says sales among its members have grown by an average of 12 per cent a year compared to 2004, with six out of ten SIBA members reporting growth in excess of 10 per cent. The micros' share of the cask beer market has grown to more than 20 per cent, up from 14 per cent in 2003.

Roger Protz comments: "Even the Doubting Thomas of the beer world, the statistical company AC Nielsen, which in recent years has prophesised the virtual obliteration of real ale, reported in July 2005 that the decline in the cask beer sector had bottomed out and there were signs of recovery. Most significantly, Nielsen now supports what CAMRA and the Good Beer Guide have argued for years: that if the cask beer production figures of the four global brewers – Scottish & Newcastle, Interbrew, Coors and Carlsberg – are stripped out, the regionals and micros can be seen to be in growth."

The guide points to the "rude good health" of the regional brewing sector:

- Timothy Taylor in Keighley, West Yorkshire, have invested around £11 million over a decade to enable production to grow from 28,000 barrels a year in 1997 to close to 50,000 today.
- Fuller's in Chiswick, west London, is a now major national force, with London Pride alone accounting for 130,000 barrels a year, making it the biggest-selling cask beer in Britain.
- Adnams in Southwold, Suffolk, has had to add new fermenting capacity three times in recent years to cope with the demand for its beers.
- Everards of Leicester has invested £20 million in its pub estate and has reaped a rich reward. Cask beer accounts for 37 per cent of sales in its pub estate – a high proportion – and between 2004 and 2005 sales of Tiger Best Bitter increased by 40 per cent and Original by 55 per cent.
- Charles Wells of Bedford, the biggest family-owned independent brewery in Britain, has turned its Bombardier premium bitter into a national brand that is now in the top ten biggest sellers.
- Hydes in Manchester has doubled its capacity from 100,000 barrels a year to 200,000, aided by the contract to brew cask Boddington's for Interbrew.
- Daniel Thwaites, a regional giant in the north-west, went down the nitro-keg route in the 1990s but has now returned to the cask fold with enthusiasm. Cricket hero Andrew Flintoff appears in special promotions for the brewery's Lancaster Bomber.
- Ringwood Brewery in Hampshire started in 1978 as a tiny micro brewing just 10 barrels a week. It is now close to 30,000 barrels a year and built a new brewhouse in 1994 and added new fermenters in 2004.
- Sharp's in Wadebridge, Cornwall, started in 1994 in one unit on an industrial estate. It has now spread to most of the estate and vies with the long-established St. Austell Brewery as the biggest producer of cask beer in the county.
- Copper Dragon in Skipton, West Yorkshire, opened in 2003 and has quadrupled production in just three years.
- Hogs Back in Tongham, Surrey, has commissioned new coppers and fermenters to cope with demand, a demand that is met not only by selling to pubs but also by e-commerce.
- The jointly-owned Brakspear and Wychwood breweries in Witney, Oxfordshire, report sales of Hobgoblin up by almost 50 per cent in the year to the end of May 2005, contributing to a tripling in cask sales since the beer was relaunched in 2003. And sales of Brakspear Bitter grew by 20 per cent in the free trade – a figure that excludes sales in the Brakspear pub estate.



The 2006 Good Beer Guide is CAMRA's 33rd anniversary edition of the best guide to British pubs, with descriptions of the top 4,500 pubs in Britain, including over 420 from the South West.

Here are just some of the facts and features that make the Good Beer Guide special:

- Unique to the Guide – a list of every brewery in the country, large and small, with details of all the cask-conditioned and bottle-conditioned beers they brew, with professional tasting notes. This includes over 60 breweries in the South West producing a wide range of excellent real ales, some of which have been able to invest to further increase capacity over the last year, which shows that real ale is still a success story in the region.
- All entries are surveyed on a regular basis by hard-working CAMRA members. Other guides may only send a questionnaire and are never visited. There is no charge for entry into the Good Beer Guide.
- Information about pub facilities for families and the disabled, history, architecture, food, accommodation, local places of interest ... and, of course, the beer: the best pubs serving the finest real ale in the South West.
- Our pub heritage – Geoff Brandwood traces the pioneering work that created CAMRA's National Inventory of Pubs with interiors of historic importance worth of saving, with a fair share from the South West. It lists pubs with interiors of outstanding historic interest – helping to save these pubs for posterity.
- New national brewing giants are a threat to drinkers' choice – Greene King and Wolverhampton & Dudley have emerged as new national brewers that threaten diversity and choice according to the new guide. Greene King has recently closed the Ridley's brewery and bought Belhaven in Dunbar whilst W&D have bought leading Cumbrian brewer Jennings of Cockermouth.

The Good Guide Guide

or One person's great pub is another person's nightmare

BOOKSHOPS nowadays seem to be full of guides on almost anything: hotels that are pet friendly, the worst towns in the country, how to speak "offish" – the dreadful language used by trendy men in suits. And, of course, there are pub guides – an increasing number apparently, as publishers take note of how well the two top pub guides sell. They are, of course, CAMRA's own *Good Beer Guide*, and the *Good Pub Guide*, published by Ebury Press. They tower over the rest. But why should two pub guides sell so well? Is there a difference? And if you could only have one, which should you choose? This is the guide to the two best guides, which will henceforth in this article, be referred to as the GBG and GPG.

The first obvious difference is that the two have very different aims. The GBG does what it says on the label – it guides you to where it thinks the best beers, by which it means real ales, are kept. The GPG is much more concerned with the overall ambience. If the beers are good, so much the better, but a good wine list and good food will equally earn brownie points. It does mean that some pubs that would not be top of my pops get included in the GBG and others where I used quite happily to take my mother are omitted. But the same also applies to the GPG, and it shouldn't. The GPG states in the introduction that each pub has to have "some special quality that would make strangers enjoy visiting it." This seems to be a slightly woolly and subjective target. Their problem lies with their selection system, although the CAMRA selection system is far from flawless.

The GBG, as many readers of *Pints West* will be aware, is the result of research by local CAMRA members. (Now, that's the kind of research I like!) But it does mean that if a local branch is rather small, it may not be able to get round all the pubs. The result is that some very good real ale pubs, which may, it's true, be new on the scene, but around long enough to deserve some attention, are omitted. However, it should mean that no pubs with poor beer get in, although sod's law of publishing dictates that as soon as you put something in print, it will change, and last year's Pub of the Year becomes this year's Champagne Bar of the Month before you've had time to blink. But CAMRA puts corrections in *What's Brewing*, the monthly magazine all members receive, to deal with this.

The GPG's system is more complicated. Members of the public write in with recommendations and then a member of the editorial team goes out to check, anonymously, that all is well. Only the top pubs get into the main listing, although there is also the Lucky Dip. The problem is that although theoretically any member of the public could suggest a pub, they don't. Given the number of pubs covered in the two sections, the number of contributors is frighteningly small, far less than the 77,000 CAMRA members. A dedicated band of

people have clearly made it their life's hobby to go round pubs and write to Ebury Press when they like one. I do not criticise them for that. They could play "hunt the letter-boxes" on Dartmoor; they could be that bane of a genuine ornithologist's life, twitchers; they could go Morris dancing. Instead, they have chosen to do something useful, and more of us should do it. In fairness, Ebury Press tries to encourage more contributions by putting a submission card in the book, but, looking at this wearing my systems analyst's hat, I think the whole thing would collapse if they were swamped with suggestions. They would certainly need a much bigger editorial staff to check out recommendations. The result is that the main selections are pubs that fall into a fairly predictable pattern, because they are the combination of the likes of a small group matched with the aims of the editorial team. They tend to favour up-market country pubs. Poor Bristol and Cardiff haven't a main listing between them. The Lucky Dip section is rather different, and frankly a bit strange. There is quite a long paragraph on how a pub gets into it, but basically it boils down to: "lots of you like it, and where possible we've had a look at it." This means that there are some pubs in there I wouldn't take my worst enemy into. But then, one of the reasons that Andrew Swift and I chose to write pub histories rather than pub guides was because we soon realised that one person's favourite pub is another person's nightmare. However, there are one or two very strange anomalies. I've avoided naming names so far, but since I happen to be friends with both landlords concerned here, I'm going to make this the exception.

The *Cross House* at Doynton, run by Liz and André Large, and the *Beaufort Arms* at Hawkesbury Upton, where Marks Steeds is the landlord, are both in the GBG, and rightly so. The former gets into the main listing of the GPG, where it also deserves to be – in fact Liz and André get a special mention as being particularly friendly. The food is good and despite the diners, it keeps the sense of being a village pub, when too many foody pubs seem to resent those who just want a drink. But the *Beaufort Arms*, CAMRA pub of the year for Gloucestershire on several occasions, and whose staff is unfailingly friendly and helpful, only gets into the Lucky Dip. It too has good food, and a great atmosphere. Its omission from the main listing is bizarre. I suspect the solution lies with its location. Doynton is not far from Dyrham House, a National Trust property. I would put money on many of the recommenders (as the GPG calls them) being NT members, and that's why they've discovered it. Hawkesbury Upton is further off the beaten track. I suspect Mark Steeds is not too worried. One of the reasons that perhaps he hasn't been checked out by the GPG is because they simply couldn't get booked in there – it's too busy.

Despite the dearth of city centre pubs in

the GPG, many well-known pubs appear in both books, and it's here that the GPG wins out. By ruthlessly cutting down the number of pubs, their descriptions of their top pubs are much fuller than those in the GBG.

Compare the description of the *Star* in Bath in the two most recent editions and you'll see what I mean. And sometimes the GPG gets it right when the GBG hasn't. *The Raven*, formerly *Hatchett's*, was not in the GBG, despite having built up a reputation to rival many of the other real ale pubs in Bath, but it made it into the GPG. But both guides fell flat on their faces over the *King William*, on the corner of Thomas Street. It hasn't made it into either publication despite its four well-kept real ales, a reputation for food that has seen a glowing report in the *Guardian*, and its street-corner pub atmosphere which it still retains on the ground floor. The trouble is, when a pub is very good, as the *Beaufort Arms* and the *King William* are, you tend to assume that someone will have notified CAMRA and Ebury Press. Sadly, this isn't always the case. And these are just a couple of examples I know about. This must be happening elsewhere. However, what the guides are good at, is ensuring that you have some way of knowing, when you stand outside a pub, that if it is in the guide, you can expect a certain standard.

Both also have articles on various pub related topics, and while the GBG articles are enjoyable, there is no doubt that the GPG is the winner here. They raise some interesting points about the size of wine glasses, for example. They tell you what to do if a pub asks you to hand over your credit card when you want to set up a tab. (Don't do it, is their advice. If there is credit card fraud on it, you will be held liable by the card company for having handed it over.) Another article is one that should have been in the GBG as well – it's about the £3 pint. However, they only just seem to be getting their heads around the real ale revolution. According to them real ale has "crept back into fashion in the last year or two." Perhaps a little longer, I would suggest. What I find sad about the GPG is that it seems somewhat defensive. It contains numbers of little boxed comments telling us how independent it is, how it takes no money from the brewing industry, how it does not depend on adverts. Nor does the GBG, but it doesn't keep ramming this information down my throat.

So which should you choose? Ideally, I would say, you should have both. Between the two, I don't see how you can go wrong – and you certainly won't need any others. If you only want one, then decide what you want it for. If you want somewhere to take the family and friends for a meal in the country, then probably the GPG is the one. To quote two Wiltshire pubs, both *The Vine* at Norton and *The Pear Tree* at Whitley make it into the GPG but not the GBG. They are indeed excellent pubs for a meal – but for beer? Er, no. For real ale drinkers, there's no question – it's the GBG you want. And in its favour, I have to say we have rarely been disappointed in a GBG pub. The same, sadly, cannot be said of the GPG.

Kirsten Elliott

Taxing problem for veteran micro



TO cynics who say cask beer is dying and the future lies with lager and nitrokeg, I have a few words of advice: visit Butcombe Brewery in Somerset. It's a remarkable success story.

Butcombe started life as a cottage industry and has grown beyond micro status to become a major force in the West Country. In September it opened its new site at Wrington, near its original home, and unveiled a custom-built plant capable of producing 40,000 barrels a year.

The only bar to Butcombe reaching its full potential is, ironically, Progressive Beer Duty.

When the government introduced PBD it was a boom to breweries like Butcombe. It meant it paid less duty on its beer and could invest in new equipment and expand the beer range. But the PBD cut-off is currently set at 30,000 barrels and if Butcombe breaks through the ceiling it will lose its duty advantages. It is, pardon the pun, a taxing problem for the new management team led by Guy Newell. Do they expand or stay still?

These problems were not dreamt of 27 years ago when Simon Whitmore launched Butcombe in the village of the same name 10 miles from Bristol.

Simon had been a top executive with Guinness and then Courage Western. He left Courage with a hefty redundancy cheque and could have settled down to the comfortable life of a country gent. But he wanted to brew and he had a point to prove: that craft breweries could exist and meet consumer demand even as the national combines grew in size and market share.

He bought some kit from Allied Breweries and installed it in outbuildings behind his house. For the next 18 years, he and his small team produced one beer, the 4 per cent ABV Butcombe Bitter. This pale bronze beer, with its distinctive hoppy and citrus aroma and long bitter finish, has become a West Country legend with 600 regular outlets.

In 1999, Simon gave in to customer clamour and launched another beer, Butcombe Gold at 4.7 per cent. A straw-coloured beer with a superb spicy Fuggles hop character, it met with instant approval.

Under Simon's control, Butcombe had expanded twice, from 10 to 20 barrels and then to 85 barrels in 1992. The success of the brewery demanded further expansion, but Simon was nearing 70 and wanted to retire.

He had become close friends with Guy Newell and Paul Horsley, who founded the Beer Seller wholesalers in 1984 with one truck



and turned it into the country's biggest drinks distributor, selling a lot of Butcombe Bitter along the way. They sold the Beer Seller in 2000 to cidemaker Bulner's and started talks with Simon about Buying Butcombe and its six pubs.

The deal was signed in March 2003. Simon agreed to stay on as a consultant for three years while Guy and Paul set about expanding. But they faced problems at Butcombe. There was no mains gas or water drainage, and the villagers were resolutely opposed to expansion. A new site was found at Wrington. The

the plant. It took him a year and is his biggest venture to date.

Guy has a five-strong brewing team with a combined 111 years of service at Butcombe. They use Maris Otter pale malt and pellet hops. The hops in Bitter, which accounts for three-quarters of production, are a "blend of best English varieties". The brewers are more forthcoming about the varieties used in Gold (Fuggles) and Czech Saaz and Styrian Goldings in the latest addition to the range, the fruity, bitter-sweet 4.3 per cent Blond launched in 2003. There is a dash of black malt in Bitter,

crystal in Gold, and malted wheat in Blond. The water supply is moderately hard and is "Burtonised" with brewing salts.

In the spacious boardroom above the offices and shop, Guy outlines his plans. "We're not in a hurry to fill our capacity," he says. "PBD was a bonus. We went through the first threshold set at 18,000 barrels. It would be a killer blow if we lost the duty advantage, so we will stick at 30,000 barrels for now."

"We don't have national aspirations. We'll stick to a 60-mile radius for our own deliveries. And we won't be doing beers for every day of the week."

Butcombe employs 23 people, and I was struck by their good humour and passion for the job. As one of the brewers said to me: "When I get up in the morning, I'm not going to work – I'm going to enjoy myself."

Roger Protz

This article first appeared in What's Brewing supplement 'Beer' in November 2005.

(Photos by Colin Pursey)



locals were friendly, gas and drainage were on hand, and the one-and-a-half-acre site had room for a new brewery with offices, warehouse and shop.

When I walked into the new brewhouse I thought I had wandered into a scaled-down German plant. The stainless steel kit gleams. Floors and walls sparkle and are frequently doused with fresh water. The mash tun and two coppers feed five conical fermenters, with a sixth on order.

In spite of its continental appearance, the brewery is British built. Richard Shardlow of Brewing design Services, who also runs Tring Brewery in Hertfordshire, designed and built

The Rummer refurb

DO you remember 1241? No, I'm not talking about 19 minutes before 1 o'clock. I mean 1241. The year that the Mongol Hordes defeated the Polish and Hungarians at the battles of Liegnitz and Sajo respectively. In that year King Henry III was celebrating his silver jubilee and planning yet another doomed attack on the French (always worth a go, though, eh?). The year was, perhaps more significantly, exactly 754 years before Robbie left *Take That*.

But it was also the year when there was first recorded a pub called the Greene Lattis on the site where now stands the Rummer.

But more of that in a tick. One October morning I knock tentatively on a door in All Saints Lane. I am invited in by Liam and Brett Hirt. Liam is a doctor, Brett a lawyer. More importantly, they are the two brothers who have undertaken the not insignificant task of restoring the near-derelict Rummer to something like its former glory.

Now, with so many pubs closing, being torn down, converted or just sitting derelict, any attempt to rescue one of Bristol's most historic inns has to be worth looking into. But what are a Doctor and a Lawyer doing renovating pubs? Well, it's really Brett's dream. As well as understanding the meaning of Latin phrases like *habeas corpus*, *caveat emptor* and *expecto patronum*, he also has a love of bars, cocktail bars to be more accurate, and wanted to create his own up-market lounge bar. The Rummer seemed like too good an opportunity to miss so here we are.

Brett and Liam have actually bought the rear section of the building (what people of my generation will remember as the Market Tavern, plus a tiny bit of what was the Rummer front bar). The bit that opened on to High Street belongs to the council, and they haven't decided what to do with it yet, though we would encourage them to reopen as a bar too.

We start our tour in the ground floor bar area, where the brothers have imported Argentinian slate, added under-floor heating, put in a mahogany bar top and ranged mirrors along the back wall. There is also a magnificent hand-carved Chinese fireplace which weighs more than a ton and nearly ruined the floor when it was brought in. The bar will have green leather chesterfield sofas and chairs. The plan is to open this area before Christmas, and then concentrate on developing the rest of this four-storey building.

From its thirteenth century origins, the pub went through various incarnations, including being called the Abyndon, the New Inn, and Jonas, before settling to the name the Rummer Tavern in about 1743. Originally, it had a large courtyard and stables, but the courtyard made way for All Saints Lane to be opened up when the Exchange was built. John Wood, designer of the Exchange, was also responsible for another rebuild of the Rummer, and also for giving it entrances on High Street



and All Saints Lane.

We go downstairs into the cellar area, which is essentially three arched areas on each side. The cellar is a fascinating labyrinth of linked passageways and storage areas, used as the toilet, kitchen and storage areas for the club, which was actually under the market. These cellars are reportedly linked all the way down to the docks, though lots of bits have been blocked off. The idea, probably, is to convert this area in to a restaurant in the style of a continental European *cave*.

Various monarchs and dignitaries are reputed to have been put up here, including Elizabeth I and William III, and both Charles I and Oliver Cromwell, though presumably not on the same night, as there would surely have been a fight and ye olde trivia machine would have got damaged.

A few steps up from the ground floor is the old passageway that led between the bars in the old days. Here the first of a number of genuine 1700's fireplaces has been discovered behind tongue-and-groove panelling. The loos have been moved slightly and the whole area given a good spruce up.

The Rummer hosted Freemasons' Lodge meetings as early as 1735, was a coaching inn as early as 1784, and was a regular haunt of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (poet, philosopher and opium addict) who published his literary magazine *The Watchman* from here.

It's stayed as the Rummer ever since, run for the best part of 100 years by the Bailey family, who eventually sold it to the Berni Brothers in 1962, and it became Bristol's first Berni Inn. Visitors in the latter half of the 20th century will remember the magnificent glass 'Rummer', a huge and ornate vessel containing, er, rum.

Upstairs on the first floor is another corridor, another fireplace, and the project's office, where I meet Danny Walker, who is to be the bar manager when they open. The heritage and history of every room screams at you as you wander round, and you can't help but wonder how a site was allowed to get as derelict as it has. We tiptoe around missing floorboards and duck under masonry hanging from walls, past a staircase (completely blocked off when the Hirts moved in) down to what used to be a gents' loo. The area directly above the bar is large and spacious, with two

more ornate fireplaces. (What is it with all these fireplaces? Hadn't these people heard of radiators in 1743?!!). The plan is to convert this whole area into a function room. It offers lovely views across the market, and would certainly be popular among the central Bristol business crowd. The second floor, which also needs a fair bit of work, will be used as private residential accommodation for Brett.

The pub went through various ownerships between the Berni days and 1999, when it closed for the last time. Until now.

The Rummer will be a destination venue, with the emphasis on comfort and style. There will be no draught beers to start (shame!), and the emphasis will be on an extensive wine list, imaginative cocktails and, perhaps of most interest, a large and varied selection of bottle-conditioned real ales. (*Well that sounds promising. As for draught beers, might they be open to persuasion? Ed.*)

Look out for news of the opening any time now (the website is www.therummer.co.uk), and prepare to share in the next chapter of this building's rich and diverse history.

Duncan Shine

Bar @ 155



FOLLOWING on from Duncan Shine's article on pubs in the Kingsdown area in the last edition of Pints West, I thought that I should add a few words about one of the pubs that he didn't have time to visit.

Bar @ 155 at, funnily enough, 155 St. Michael's Hill, has become a busy and popular pub since it was taken over about 18 months ago. It is a light pub, with pale coloured wood flooring and tables and offers, in my opinion, good value food – booking may be required for the popular Sunday lunches.

Initially there were not even any hand-pumps as the previous landlord had removed them so no real ale was available. This soon changed and three pumps were installed initially offering London Pride, Bass and Courage Best. This has now dropped back to just the London Pride as it was the biggest seller and this is usually an excellent pint. On a recent visit they were talking about reintroducing a second beer, hopefully from a local brewery, so watch this space. All in all, it a welcome addition to real ale scene in the St. Michael's Hill area.

Pete Tanner
(Photo by Duncan Shine)

Bristol Beer Factory delivers

THE people at the Bristol Beer Factory have been very busy of late. On 20th October they launched two new beers, "Sunrise" and "Red".

Sunrise is a 4.4 per cent ABV summer ale with a slight biscuit malt balanced with the bitterness and aroma of Pioneer hops. Obviously some intriguing marketing



Beer Factory brewer Simon Bartlett serves owner George Ferguson a glass of Sunrise

research must have gone on to arrive at the decision to launch a summer beer towards the end of October!

Red is a 3.8 per cent ABV darker ale with a ruby tint. It has a roast barley and Munich malt flavour with fruity blackcurrant and cherry notes from Bramling Cross hops.

The launch took place in the Green Room of the Tobacco Factory. From now on you should be able to try all four of the Beer Factory beers in the Cafe Bar of the Tobacco Factory.

On Sunday, 23rd October 2005 the very first "Factoberfest" was held at the Tobacco Factory. The event ran from noon to 6pm and was part of the Southville Local Food Week.

There were 15 or more local real ales from in and around the Bristol and Bath area, including all four brews from the Beer Factory. There was live entertain-



ment and food in the form of soup, bread and hearty homemade sandwiches. The event was very popular, with most of the beer selling out well before closing time. Another larger Southville real ale festival looks quite likely for the future.

Richard Brooks (words and pictures)

Success for the third year for the Chew Valley Beer Festival

DESCRIBED as "a really fantastic event in the Valley", the third annual Chew Valley Beer Festival was yet again a success with hundreds of people attending the event over the two days to sample the selection of real ales on offer.

Held in Ubley Parish Hall on the evening of Friday 9th September and the whole day on Saturday 10th, this year's Chew Valley Beer Festival offered an even wider range of styles of beer than previous years including traditional bitters such as Bath SPA (ABV 3.7%), golden ales including Bristol Beer Factory Sun Rise (4.4%), milds which included Arkells 2B (3.2%), porters such as Moor Peat Porter (4.5%) and a real lager, Zerodegrees Black Lager (4.8%).

Organised by a committee of local real ale lovers, the principle of this successful event is to choose beers from the South West within a 50-mile radius of Ubley. With 28 local beers and a small selection of local ciders, the event enabled people to really broaden their palate with a wide range of excellent beers including memorably named ales such as 'Strip & At It', 'Funky Monkey' and 'Danish Dynamite'.

For just £5 a ticket, including a free half-pint glass, people were certainly impressed by this year's festival, making comments including "definitely coming next year!" and "absolutely brilliant!"

Entertainment was varied and there was certainly something for everyone with live music on both evenings by Out of the Blue and local youth band Deep Cover, both of whom played at last year's event and were back by popular demand. If that didn't appeal, the

Saturday afternoon session was a calmer affair, with people sampling the beers whilst relaxing, reading the paper or catching up with friends. There were also traditional pub games in the quiet room such as shove ha'penny, dominoes, cards and table skittles.

As with previous years, guest were asked to vote for their favourite beer once they had had their fill. Yet again, Zerodegrees came out on top winning both first and third place. The Champion Beer of the Festival was Zerodegrees IPA; a copper coloured ale with a distinctive floral fruity flavour. Joint second place went to a notable bitter pale ale, Uley Pigs Ear and popular Butcombe Gold which was sure to have been a firm favourite. Finally, third place was won by Zerodegrees Black Lager; a deep dark Czech style lager with coffee and chocolate flavours.

The Chew Valley Beer Festival would not have been possible without the generosity of the 48 local sponsors and the assistance of Waverley TSB, and all organisers would like to thank them for their help and support. All profits from the event will go towards further enhancements and maintenance of the facilities at Ubley Parish Hall.

So, if you feel like you've missed out this year, make a note in your diary for next year's Chew Valley Beer Festival which takes place on Friday 8th and Saturday 9th September 2006. One Blagdon couple commented, "We've been to four or five other beer festivals this year and the Chew Valley Beer Festival beats them all by miles", so why not see for yourself in 2006!

Niki Martini



Mash Up

IT'S not every day you find the face of the bloke behind the bar leering out at you from the pump clip as well. But at the King William on Thomas Street in Bath that's exactly what you got if you went in there on Saturday 19 November.

To be fair, there was an excuse, because it was Richard Tring, the bar manager's, 21st birthday. He arranged for Milk Street Brewery in Frome to brew a special beer for the occasion. Mash Up, weighing in at 5%, was a sparkling and eminently quaffable brew, reminiscent of Amarillo (and presumably using Amarillo hops), with spicy overtones and a satisfyingly malty finish. Richard's head was joined on the pump clip by Charlie Digney, the owner of the pub.

Not able to make it to the celebrations on the Saturday, we were well pleased to find some left when we visited on Monday lunchtime, when it was jostling for position with beers from Blindman's, Palmer's and Cottage Brewery. Well worth the trip, especially with the excellent and reasonably priced bar snacks on offer.

The King William, which is open from 12 to 3 and 5 to 11, can be found at on the web at www.kingwilliampub.com.

Andrew Swift

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Diary

Diary of the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale.

See page 20 for the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch diary and contact.

Tuesday, 29th November : GBG survey trip. Depart from Cornubia, Temple Street, Bristol at 6.45pm.

Thursday, 8th December : Hotwells crawl. Meet at the Adam & Eve at 7.30pm.

Wednesday 14th December : Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia, starting at 8pm.

Sunday 18th December : Christmas Social at the Holy Cross, Dean Lane, Southville, from 7.30pm.

Sunday, 8th January : "Westbury Wobble" visiting some of the pubs in Westbury-on-Trym. Start at noon at the Prince of Wales (or Post Office Tavern?).

Wednesday, 11th January : Branch meeting at Horts City Tavern, Broad Street, Bristol, starting at 8pm.

Thursday, 19th January : Keynsham area GBG survey trip. Depart from the Cornubia at 6.45pm.

Saturday, 21st January : Wassail at West Croft cider-makers. Evening event.

Wednesday, 25th January : Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia, starting at 8pm.

Tuesday, 31st January : East of Bristol GBG survey trip. Depart from the Cornubia at 6.45pm.

Tuesday, 7th February : GBG survey trip. Depart from the Cornubia at 6.45pm.

Wednesday, 8th February : Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia, starting at 8pm.

Wednesday, 15th February : GBG survey trip. Depart from the Cornubia at 6.45pm.

Wednesday, 22nd February : Branch meeting at Horts City Tavern, Broad Street, Bristol, starting at 8pm.

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.



The Direct Debit Guarantee

- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change CAMRA will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
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Past editions of 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

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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...

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



Butcombe Brunel

Butcombe has been appointed the official beer for Brunel 200 and a partner in the forthcoming many celebratory events taking place throughout 2006.



A draught version of Butcombe Brunel IPA at 5 per cent ABV should be available in December 2005, followed by the bottled version in early 2006.

THANKS TO THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

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The Big Book of Beer

CAMRA Books, the publishing division of the Campaign for Real Ale, has launched *The Big Book of Beer*, a book temptingly subtitled, 'Everything you Need to Know About the World's Greatest Drink!'

Beer writer, Adrian Tierney-Jones, tells the complete story of beer in a refreshing and accessible manner. It takes you on a journey from humble beginnings in a sun-drenched field of barley, through the brewing process, to reaching the glass in various forms and styles – satisfyingly aromatic and lightly sparkling.

"I hope the book goes some way towards changing people's perceptions about real beer," said author Adrian Tierney-Jones.

"People are often pleasantly shocked when they give it a go, and there's no better place to see drinkers' reactions than at a beer tasting."

At a recent corporate tasting hosted by Adrian Tierney-Jones, two-thirds of the females at the tasting liked English bitter, from a selection of six contrasting beer styles, which flies in the face of orthodox brewing wisdom that the female palate enjoys a sweeter beer. Interestingly, none of the drinkers would have considered drinking bitter before tasting it.

"This is obviously a small sample from one corporate event, but it does demonstrate that an English bitter is one of the great drinks of the beer world, full of flavour and complexity, thirst-quenching and moreish. It's a shame that people seem to have a problem with the word bitter when applied to beer, thinking it old-fashioned and redolent of flat caps and whippets!"



Tierney-Jones continues, "Bitter to many drinkers is a negative word. Yet the same people are happy to drink a double espresso or add Angostura bitters to their slinky cocktails; hardly easy and smooth flavours. If you look beyond the name, you'll discover a world of flavour."

In the same tasting 43 per cent of those taking part said they prefer to be offered a glass which is specific for the beer they are drinking.

Author Tierney Jones said: "Again this idea is nothing new, and something that the industry has talked about for some time, it's

all about changing people's perceptions, as beer is usually served in a standard pint glass. That's why I decided to include a section on 'Beer Curiosities' in the *The Big Book of Beer*. In order to attract different types of drinkers to this wonderful drink, we have to accept that for some people the presentation of the beer is almost as important as the taste."

The Big Book of Beer covers a range of topics and is a great gift title, for both beer novices and aficionados alike.

The book lists everything from:

- Beer Beginnings: what makes beer, beer as a natural and organic product and how it is brewed.
- Beer File: how to identify beer styles, tastes and beers of the world.
- Beer Brewing: craft brewers, family brewers, brewpubs, women and beer.
- Drinking Beer: beer in the pub, at home. Fancy a beer? Which beer to choose.
- Beer and Food: beer as an ingredient, matched with food – is beer the new wine?
- Beer Curiosities: glassware, beer mats, labels, festivals and advertising.

The Big Book of Beer celebrates every aspect of beer and urges the reader with their new-found knowledge to give it a try. Beautifully illustrated in full colour throughout, it is a book destined to make you thirsty. Quite simply it is everything you need to know about the world's greatest drink!

Priced £14.99, it's available to buy from all good bookshops, or direct from CAMRA on 01727 867201, or online at www.camra.org.uk/books.

The last of England

SIX pubs are closing a week, but according to the *Independent* newspaper that's good news. Graham Norwood, in the Property Supplement on 21 September, urged homebuyers to seek out defunct or ailing pubs ripe for conversion.

Pub closures were "relatively rare" in the 1980s, according to Norwood – which will come as news to most CAMRA members – but now, it seems, there are rich pickings to be made by astute property developers. Recruiting the help of Tom Tangye from estate agents Knight Frank, he laments the tendency of some local authorities to refuse change of use where there is likely to be a serious impact on the local community, and advises "sharp developers" to "look for locations where there are several pubs – which normally means one is doing badly and may be happy to sell up."

"The best pub conversions," he explains, "retain unique period features inside. Walnut, oak and brass were the order of the day in most pubs, and the best developers make a feature of them, providing the pub wasn't gutted by some unthinking brewery in the 1970s."

It's not just country pubs that need to keep a look out for *Independent* readers fired

up by the article. He suggests driving through "somewhere like Nottingham. It may have a binge-drinking image in its city centre, where there are trendy bars aimed at young people, but on the outskirts there's a bog standard boozer every 150 yards. It's difficult to imagine many of them making a profit. Some will be for sale soon enough."

It is depressing that a national newspaper display should display such crass opportunism over the threat to a unique national institution. The article does highlight, however, the growing threat to a unique British institution. The number of pubs calling last orders for the last time is on the increase. With residential and commercial values often way in excess of what pubs are worth as pubs, the accountants and asset strippers now in charge of so many licensed premises are, not unnaturally, keen to realise the capital tied up in them – and to hell with the potential or community value of a particular pub. Many landlords and managers, struggling to cope with dwindling profit margins, rising beer prices, and lack of investment in premises that haven't seen a lick of paint for years, while pubco shareholders cream off golden windfalls, now face the final nail in the coffin – the government's determi-

nation to force pubs to choose between smokers and diners.

Most pubs will survive the introduction of the smoking bans; many of those struggling to operate on knife-edge profit margins, facing a downturn in trade of even a few percent, will not. The new, so-called "24-hour-drinking" laws, combined with tough new legislation to combat binge drinking – sending the type of muddled message only a politician could hope to fathom – also have as yet unquantifiable implications for the licensed trade.

It may be that, in a decade or so, we will look back at 2005 as the twilight of a golden age, when there were pubs-a-plenty, a pub crawl was a realistic proposition, and country pubs were not an endangered species. We have much to celebrate – an increasing number of breweries and real-ale free houses, a growing awareness of the importance of pubs to the local community – but, with supposedly responsible papers like the *Independent* drinking to the impending demise of the British pub, we have, it seems, much to worry about. In the 1930s, Hilaire Belloc wrote, "When you have lost your inns, drown your empty selves, for you will have lost the last of England." It's a pity this view does not seem to be shared by those who write the property pages for the *Independent*.

Andrew Swift