



CAMPAIGN  
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REAL ALE

# AWARD-WINNING



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CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

# PINTS WEST

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

## Brewery Tap gutted, Cornubia closed: The end for Bristol Smiles?

JULY saw the shock closure of two of Bristol's best known real ale pubs, both linked to the continuing problems of companies associated with the Smiles brand.

In the National Design awards for work completed during 1991, CAMRA proclaimed the Smiles Brewery Tap to be the best new pub in Britain. The judges praised the interesting design and different choice of materials – ash wood and hop sacks around the walls, a slate bar and tiled floor. This gave the small but perfectly formed Tap the feeling of a warm and welcoming pub without resulting to fake Victoriana.

In July 2006 the Brewery Tap was closed without warning and the charming, award-winning pub was rapidly and completely gutted. The only justification offered for this has been a feeble excuse about the interior needing updating. In fact the timeless interior was made of



A gutted Brewery Tap Photo by Richard Brooks



Photo from What's Brewing February 1992

quality, long-lasting materials and was not in some terrible state of repair. As the *Bristol Evening Post* pointed out in their editorial, the pub was opened in 1991, not 1891. If some work was needed, a sympathetic renovation including consultation with the local CAMRA branch would have been a positive move and caused less concern than the total destruction that took place.

The wiping out of the Smiles Brewery Tap also represents the last demise of any real link between Bristol and the Smiles name, which now appears to exist only as part of a portfolio of products produced

by Highgate Brewery. A while back plans were approved for a micro-brewery on the Colston Yard site, however as yet there is no sign of this. The rest of the building is to be converted into nine flats and the ground floor and basement (including the area that was until recently the Brewery Tap) are currently advertised as for rent.

Putting to one side our extreme disappointment at the brutal demise of the Smiles Brewery Tap, we hope that the micro-brewery plan does come to fruition and would welcome a real return to Bristol for Smiles beers.

Richard Brooks

# Butcombe's new pubs

BUTCOMBE Brewery has added two more pubs to its estate, both with some age and history to them, but different in character. One is the **Queen Victoria Inn** in Priddy, the other being the **Woolpack Inn** in St Georges near Weston-super-Mare.

The small village of Priddy has somehow managed to remain unspoilt, a rare achievement these days, with its annual village traditions such as the sheep fair and folk festival bringing in people from far and wide.



The Queen Victoria Inn

The Queen Vic has passed into Butcombe's charge after only a few years in the hands of the previous owner. It is a traditional stone-built building with stone floors and wooden ceilings. It could be described as an example of a "quintessentially English pub". On a winter visit, during a very cold evening, when the car park opposite was white underfoot, it was difficult to drag ourselves away from the log fire in one of the three wonderful



The Woolpack Inn

open stone fireplaces. Butcombe's only plan for change is to create some extra space by incorporating a room currently being used for storage. The cask beers, which are all gravity fed, remain the same with Butcombe Bitter, Butcombe Gold and Wadsworth 6X on offer. Alongside these is Cheddar Valley cider. The pub is open all day and has a selection of food.

The Woolpack is a large, multi-roomed, 17th-century pub used originally, as its name indicates, as a wool packing station. In the main building there are three rooms, two with bars, one of which leads out into a conservatory. The walls are decorated with plates, pictures and knick-knacks. A fourth separate spacious room, which was previously used as a function room, will reopen after refurbishment with a new bar and carvery. At the time of visiting, a kitchen update and the subsequent implementation of a new extensive evening menu was awaiting the services of British Gas. I do hope they have attended by the time this goes to press.

There are four hand pumps, with Butcombe Bitter and Gold, and Bath Ales Gem (which may be rotated with another Bath Ales beer) available. The new manager, Chris, has a free hand in his choice for the fourth pump, so regulars may be able to lobby for their favourites! The pub is open all day from 11.30.

One further piece of Butcombe news is that a new attractive patio courtyard seating area has been completed at the **Queen's Arms** in Bleadon, enabling customers to make the most of the remaining summer.

*Margaret Evett*



## As fresh as they come

In 1992, Malt 'n' Hops was the first harvest beer produced using undried hops and was unique to Wadworth. Since then, the idea has spawned many imitators.

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# Cornubia - lease available?

ON Thursday 13 July – and coinciding exactly with the closure of the Brewery Tap – the Cornubia, a former Bristol & District Branch Pub Of The Year, also closed. Certain fixtures and fittings were quickly cleared out and a full skip now sits outside, but fortunately the wreckers have not moved in.

The lease of the Cornubia was believed to be owned by the Smiles Pub Company (along with the Brewery Tap) although the situation has been less than crystal clear since Smiles Brewery itself went into receivership in 2004, holding companies were involved and the brewing of Smiles beer was shifted to Highgate Brewery. It is now believed that it was the receivers who made the decisions to close the two Smiles pubs.

The lease on the Cornubia now appears to be up for sale. From a business point of view it may seem odd to close a pub and so send all the trade elsewhere before finding a buyer for the lease, but that is what appears to have happened.

It's fairly common knowledge that the Cornubia does need some work, particularly in the areas that customers don't get to see. As the building is Grade II listed there are also restrictions on how work can be done. So despite the recent appearance of a long overdue new carpet in the bar and some other decorating, potential investors may be



Photo by Richard Brooks

concerned about the other costs of taking it on. Apparently a discount is being offered on the lease to take some account of these high costs for anyone who wants to take over the pub.

We certainly hope that a pub that has built its trade and reputation on a changing range of

guest beers will not become some pale shadow of its former self, for example abandoning real ale or ending up as a restaurant (as one rumour would have it).

Richard Brooks

# On borrowed time?

THE fate of the former **Ashley Court Hotel** at 63 Ashley Hill hangs in the balance. This lovely Gothic Victorian building dating to 1878 and with spectacular views over Ashley Vale and the St Werburghs allotments is still in danger of being demolished.

Since the last planning application (reported in the Spring edition of Pints West) to flatten the building and replace it with 22 flats was withdrawn, the developer has reapplied with plans to build 21 flats this time (06/01236/F). This application has also been vigorously opposed for exactly the same reasons as before: namely that the proposed development aims to demolish a valuable part of our townscape and remove a much loved public bar – known as **The Ship Aground** – from the area for ever. All other sites between the Gloucester Road and St Werburghs are bound by a restrictive covenant which prevents them being public houses, so this would be a real blow to the local community if the proposal is approved.

The situation came to a head in early July when the developer, Bristol based Birakos Enterprises Ltd, started to demolish the building before any decision on the application had even been reached by the Development Control Committee. This inflamed local residents who have been campaigning to save the building and the pub since last year. About 50 people took to the streets and held a rally

outside the site to show how much support there is to save the old Hotel.

A local consortium called '**Community Spirit 2006**' has come up with enough money to buy and refurbish the existing building and wants to re-open the public bar and use the hotel as a backpackers' hostel. They are contesting the assertion made by the developer that a pub / backpackers would not be a viable business on that site.

A twist – it turned out that the developer hadn't had a bat survey done prior to demolition and the police were called in to shut down the site until the survey was commissioned. This delayed work for a week by which time Stephen Williams, MP for Bristol West, had got involved. After strong letters from the MP, local Councilors and Bristol's head of Planning were sent to the developer they finally decided to halt the demolition, at least until the fate of the site is decided at a public meeting. Barring more delays, this should now take place on September 6<sup>th</sup>.

Well done everyone who has been involved with keeping up the support to KEEP OUR PUB. We don't want this building to be demolished and we need to let the developer and the Council know that *regardless* of whether the building is standing or not, we will not back down on our fight to keep the use of that site as a public house / hotel / community space. This pub was the only one in the area



Photo by Duncan Shine www.britishpubguide.com

and the community has lost a valuable public amenity in an area barren of community spaces. We'd like to see it re-open as a place for the community to be proud of – '**Community Spirit 2006**'

## What you can do now

○ Tell Bristol City Council that you object to this development. You can do this by emailing the planning officer directly ([jenny\\_offord@bristol-city.gov.uk](mailto:jenny_offord@bristol-city.gov.uk)) and telling her that you don't want to lose the building or the pub. You must include your name and address in the email. The more they receive the better our claim.

○ Watch the website for news at <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/saveAC/>

Joe Joseph

# Beer festival round-up

## Bristol city centre, September 22nd- 24th

Once again building on the success of their previous festivals, the **White Lion** in Bristol's city centre will be holding another event they dub "Bristol's smallest beerfest". This small Wickwar pub will be offering 16 or so beers from around the country between the 22nd and 24th of September. The theme this time is "summer ales".

## Winscombe, October 6th-8th

Wrighton Vale Rotary Club will be holding their sixth Beer and Cider Festival at Winscombe Cricket Club, just off the A38 near Sidcot, where you can enjoy a range of 25 beers and ciders in a convivial location. There are regular bus services operating and stopping at Winscombe, with the 121 between Bristol and Weston-super-Mare and the 126 between Wells and Weston-super-Mare.

The festival takes place from Friday 6th October through to the Sunday afternoon. Opening times are Friday 7pm to midnight (£2), Saturday also 7pm to midnight (£5) and Sunday lunchtime noon to 3pm (free). Any remaining beer will be sold off at rock bottom prices in 5-litre containers at the end of the Sunday session. Prices include souvenir glass, entertainment on Saturday evening (the excellent band Pocket Rockets), car parking, etc.

Tickets may be purchased in advance by post from Wrighton Vale Rotary Beer Festival, Highwater, Norville Lane, Cheddar, BS27 3HJ. Send a stamped, addressed envelope and cheque made payable to "Wrighton Vale Rotary Club", to arrive before Tuesday 3rd October. Any enquiries call Mark on 07702 589617, or enquire at Thatcher's Cider Shop, Sandford, or Ian Studley Cars, Winscombe.

## Hotwells, November 16th-19th

Thursday 16th to Sunday 19th November are the dates for another of the ever-popular festivals now held twice a year at the **Bag**

**O'Nails** in Hotwells. As in previous years, the pub will be offering forty or more different real ales from all over the country. The pub is not exactly huge, so not all beers can be on at the same time. However, if you popped along on all four days you should get the chance to sample a good proportion of them. The pub will be open all day from noon over the period, with rolls available much of the time.

## Portishead, November 24th and 25th

The second Portishead Festival takes place on the nights of Friday, 24th and Saturday, 25th November at Redcliffe Bay Hall. This follows the success of the first festival last year which raised almost £2,000 for the Babe Appeal. Again, emphasis will be on local, independent breweries. Last year's favourite beers included Bath Ales' Festivity, RCH's East Street Cream and Newman's Bite IPA. It is hoped that they will all reappear this year. The aim will be to have up to 30 real ales and a couple of ciders on tap on the main night, Saturday, from over a dozen brewers. To achieve this range, polypins will be used, and the organisers and punters were delighted with the quality of the beers last time.

All the proceeds will go to the Babe Appeal for the new Children's Hospice South West. Tickets for each night will be £5 which will cover entry, a live band (Beats Working) on Friday, tasting notes, a commemorative glass and your first two half pints. Food such as pasties and rolls will be on sale both nights. You can get tickets by phoning Neil Ravenscroft on 01275 849558. No tickets available on the door. CAMRA members will be welcomed and the Hall is on the main Bristol to Portishead bus route.

## Brislington, September 30 & October 1

See the King's Arms letter on the readers letters page.

## CAMRA FESTIVALS

### Weymouth Octoberfest

This unique beer festival started life in 1997 and was intended to be complimentary to the well-known South West Small Independent Brewers Association (SIBA) festival at Newton Abbot in April each year. Run on the same lines as its bigger brother, members of SW SIBA entered their produce to vie for accolades in various categories, e.g. best bitters, porters, etc. An unusual feature of these festivals is that both malt and hop varieties used are declared for each beer.

The original Weymouth event saw over 150 beers in a tented village set up in Hope square, Weymouth, directly outside the former Devenish and Groves brewery buildings. Advertising was poor, attendance suffered and losses were incurred, so much so that SIBA members decided not to pursue the idea the following year.

Four empty years followed until 2003 when some forward-thinking SIBA members decided to revive the festival and asked the local branch of CAMRA for assistance. Set this time inside the Brewer's Quay street complex, it really is a unique venue for a beer festival. Talk about holding a p\*\*\* up in a brewery!

Again the event did not really take off, although attendance was growing each year, and in 2005 SIBA members decided they couldn't continue. Step forward West Dorset CAMRA branch. In conjunction with a few enthusiastic brewers we were invited to take over the festival. Not wishing to lose the momentum of recent years, major changes were made, not least of which a major advertising campaign and a realistic amount of beer for sale. The result was a resounding success. Customers had to be turned away at the door, a profit was made, and a new venue was established on the beer festival calendar.

This year sees over 50 beers together with ciders, perries and soft drinks. Food is available at all sessions with entertainment in the evenings. Usual CAMRA member discounts apply. It would probably be worth going just to get the souvenir glass, which portrays the branch logo of the Cerne Giant (see the branch website at [www.camrawdorset.org.uk](http://www.camrawdorset.org.uk)).

The Octoberfest this year is on Friday 6th and Saturday 7th of October at Brewer's Quay, Weymouth.

THE ROTARY CLUB OF WRINGTON VALE  
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Opening times each day are 11am to 3pm (£2), and 6pm to 11pm (£3, with live music). To avoid disappointment book your tickets – call 01305 269 260 – and find out for yourself just what makes this the perfect location for a beer festival.

*Tony Egerton*

## Bath Beer Festival: Oct 20-21

In October we can all pop down to the 29th Bath Beer Festival at the Pavilion, North Parade Road, just a five-minute walk from Bath Spa railway station. The festival is open Friday evening from 6pm to 11pm, Saturday lunchtime from 11am to 3.30pm, and Saturday evening from 6pm to 11pm. There will be a selection of around eighty beers, around ten ciders and perries, a range of German beers from a single small scale brewer, and selection of continental bottled beers.

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

Advance tickets are available from Steve Hunt, 23 Clearwood, Dilton Marsh, Westbury, Wilts, BA13 4BD. Please state the session(s) required and send your cheque, made payable to Bath & Borders CAMRA, and enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope. Advance tickets will be limited by quota – some being reserved for sale on the door – so book early to disappointment.

## Free of tie and own beer to boot

THE PORTCULLIS in Clifton, just a couple of minutes' walk down from the suspension bridge, has gone free of tie.

What does that mean? Well, it means that, though it remains one of the Pubfolio pub company's pubs, the landlord is now completely free in his choice of beers to stock: he is now in full control.

The Portcullis is a small traditional pub on Wellington Terrace dating back to 1824. It's had a number of ups and downs recently, with numerous ownership transfers and short-lived tenancies, but things are thankfully looking stable now. The current landlord, Lucien Croft, has been there for a year now and is definitely making his mark.

With his newly-negotiated lease agreement he is now able to improve the range of real ales on offer. There will now be up to four hand-pumps dispensing Courage Best (permanently as it has a loyal following), Bath Ales Gem (perhaps on 95 per cent of the time), and one or two changing beers which will include customer favourites such as Butcombe Bitter, Branscombe Vale Best, Hook Norton Gold, Sharp's Will's Resolve, Greene King Abbot Ale, and various beers from RCH. (He also intends to stock bottled beers from RCH and others.) RCH will also act as suppliers for a number of different breweries' beers he gets in.

On top of that, an extra hand-pump will dispense his own special beer. A permanent member of the range will be the house beer called "Portcullis Bitter", brewed to the landlord's own

specification. Lucien knew exactly what he wanted from his beer, and after looking round for a suitable brewer, opted for the Woodlands Brewing Company based in Cheshire after having seen their advert in CAMRA's *What's Brewing* supplement, *Beer*. One of the attractions of this brewery was their use of high-quality mineral spring water exclusive to them – and not least of all their very positive attitude towards the project.

The result of the collaboration between Lucien and the brewery is a 4.5 per cent ABV beer with a reddish colour. It has a taste reminiscent of roasted hazelnuts with a hint of chocolate malt and acacia honey (some acacia honey is actually added to the brew giving it a distinctive taste but not too much sweetness). Some tweaks may yet be made to the recipe – partly at the customers' recommendations – such as to give it a little extra hoppiness.

The Portcullis will be the only pub in this part of the country to stock "Portcullis Bitter". The brewery will actually brew larger quantities than the pub can take, so excess will be rebadged and sold only in the local Cheshire area. It should be emphasised though that the specification for the beer remains very much Lucien's; it is not a case of him selecting an existing beer and having it rebadged as his house beer – "Portcullis Bitter" came first.

Future plans are to have bottle-conditioned "Portcullis Bitter" available for take-away. Perhaps even local off-licenses will be able to stock it if interested.

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# Good Beer Guide Germany

PUBLISHED in the nick of time for this summer's world cup, the Good Beer Guide Germany is a ground-breaking and truly impressive volume; author Steve Thomas has produced the first complete survey of German breweries and beers. Want to know where to try the amazing Rauchbier (smoke beer)? Off to Munich and fancy visiting some brew pubs there? Want to know how to ask in a bar which seasonal beers are on? Then this is the book for you.

There are helpful sections on defining German beer styles, getting around Germany, useful phrases for the beer tourist, German drinking practises, Cologne carnival, the Oktoberfest, the Reinheitsgebot (German beer purity laws); the list of useful information is exhaustive. The most bizarre fact I found was the brewing style called Zoigl, which still exists in five towns. It originates from a medieval practise when people were given the right to brew in a communal brew house. Today, their descendants still practise this. After brewing, the beer is taken to the brewer's house, lagered for several weeks then sold! In general, each Zoigl houses opens about ten weekends per year, and usually only one Zoigl house will be open each

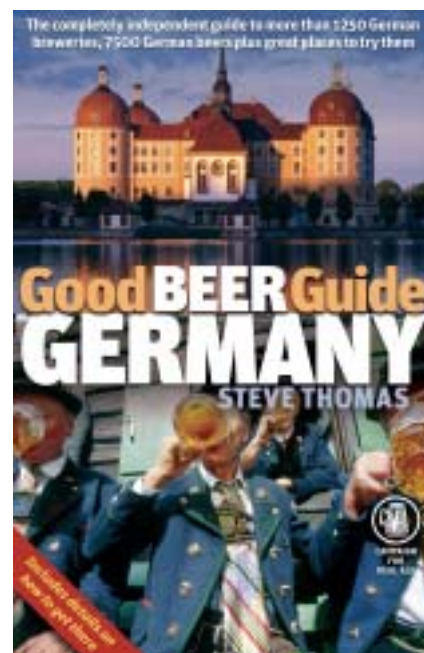
day in the town!

The heart of the book is the listing of over 1,250 breweries and over 7,500 beers, a truly mind-boggling achievement. Bavaria alone has 618 breweries, one for every 19,500 of its population! For every brewery, however big or small, you are provided with the address, contact details, output, list of beers produced (lack of space precludes any tasting notes), a brief piece of information on the brewery, and the address, opening times and public transport details of the brewery tap. Maps of each state show the brewery locations.

Additionally, the major beer centres and notable cities have chapters of their own, listing the best pubs to visit rather in the style of own CAMRA Good Beer Guide. These are backed up by useful maps. Occasional full page photos add to the interest. This is a book not only for the beer connoisseur but for anyone with an interest in one of the world's top beer nations. Needless to say, it shall be the first thing this author packs on a forthcoming trip to Berlin!

For those on-line, a dedicated website means you can keep up to speed with updates for the guide.

Attractively typeset and in full colour, the



guide is published by CAMRA Books. It should be available at all good bookshops and directly through CAMRA on 01727 867201, or [www.camra.org.uk/books](http://www.camra.org.uk/books).

Phil Cummings

## Champion Beer of Britain: Gold wins Gold again!

### OVERALL WINNERS

**Champion Beer of Britain:** Crouch Vale Brewer's Gold  
**Second:** Harvey's Sussex Best  
**Third:** Tripple fff Moondance

### Category winners:

#### Milds

Gold: **Mighty Oak - Oscar Wilde Mild** (Essex)  
 Silver: **Elgood's - Black Dog** (Cambridgeshire)  
 Bronze: **Grainstore - Rutland Panther** (Rutland)

#### Bitters

Gold: **Elgood's - Cambridge Bitter** (Cambridgeshire)  
 Silver: **Acorn - Barnsley Bitter** (South Yorkshire)  
 Bronze: **Sharp's - Doom Bar Bitter** (Cornwall)  
 Bronze: **Woodforde's - Wherry** (Norfolk)

#### Best Bitters

Gold: **Harvey's - Sussex Best Bitter** (East Sussex)  
 Silver: **Triple fff - Moon Dance** (Hampshire)  
 Bronze: **Kelburn - Red Smiddy** (East Renfrewshire)  
 Bronze: **Surrey Hills - Shere Drop** (Surrey)

#### Strong Bitters

Gold: **York Brewery Centurions Ghost Ale** (Yorkshire)  
 Silver: **Thornbridge Jaipur IPA** (Derbyshire)  
 Bronze: **Weetwood - Oasthouse Gold** (Cheshire)

#### Speciality Beers

Gold: **Cairngorm - Trade Winds** (Highlands)  
 Silver: **Wolf - Straw Dog** (Norfolk)  
 Bronze: **William Brothers - Fraoch Heather Ale** (Alloa)

#### Golden Ales

Gold: **Crouch Vale - Brewers Gold** (Essex)  
 Silver: **Hop Back - Summer Lightning** (Wiltshire)  
 Bronze: **Holden's - Golden Glow** (West Midlands)

In CAMRA's Good Bottled Beer Competition, sponsored by The Guardian newspaper, the awards went to:

Gold: **White Shield Brewery - White Shield** (Staffordshire)  
 Silver: **Greene King - Hen's Tooth** (Suffolk)  
 Bronze: **Titanic - Titanic Stout** (Staffordshire)

Brewers Gold brewed by Crouch Vale of Essex was recently judged to be the best beer in Britain for an incredible second consecutive year by a panel of brewers, beer writers and journalists at the Great British Beer Festival at Earls Court.

The beer is described in the 2006 edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide as: "Honey-toned golden ale, with grapefruit sharpness offset by suggestions of melon and pineapple."

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

Roger Protz, one of the finalist judges and Editor of the Good Beer Guide, said: "It's a tremendous victory for a brewery committed to its cask beer and richly deserved for this marvelous hoppy and fruity beer."

Colin Bocking, Managing Director of Crouch Vale brewery, said, "I am speechless. It was enough of a surprise to have won Champion Beer of Britain in 2005, but to have been voted Britain's best beer for a second year in a row is truly unbelievable."

"Thanks to all the people who have supported the brewery over the years, especially those that have enjoyed this remarkable beer. This great news could not have come at a better time for us as we are in the middle of expanding the brewery."

The Silver award went to Harvey's brewery in Sussex for their Sussex Best Bitter. The Bronze was awarded to Tripple fff brewery in Hampshire for Moondance.

*Judging at the Champion Beer of Britain finals is done on the morning of the first day of the Great British Beer Festival. Judging is carried out by panels of six tasters drawn from CAMRA trained tasters, brewers, licensees, beer writers, and a smattering of personalities, MPs, etc, who are beer drinkers. All tasting is done blind, in so far as the judges know which class of beer they are judging but do not know which are the particular beers.*

*Each panel judges about six or seven beers from a class such as Bitter, Speciality Beers and Golden Ales, and chooses a first, second and third. The winners of all the classes go on to the final judging panel where a new panel of judges taste the beers to judge the Champion Beer of Britain. The winner is then announced later in the day during the Trade Session at the Great British Beer Festival.*



# Theakston's in the South West

I HAD the pleasure of visiting the Theakston's brewery in Masham, North Yorkshire in 2005. Two of the brewery's senior management, Colin Wood and Simon Theakston, kindly took time out to show me and some other CAMRA members around the wonderful brewery site. Founded in 1827, and on the present site since 1875, Theakston's produce a range of beers from mild ale, bitter, XB, Old Peculier and seasonal beers.

I met up again with both Colin and Simon at their brewery bar stand in August at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival at Earl's Court. Following a couple of their beers and an informative chat, I persuaded Simon to put a few words together regarding the brewery and the long-standing connection with the Bristol & District CAMRA area....

FROM my office in our brewery in Masham, in the foothills of the Yorkshire Dales, I've been pondering with great affection lately, the close, long-established links between Theakston's Brewery and traditional ale drinkers of Bristol, Bath and the south west of England. A chance conversation in a well known hostelry close to Bristol in the mid-1970s was the catalyst that helped create an unbroken and much cherished trading tradition ever since.

It was in the bar at the famous Anchor Inn in Oldbury on Severn when in a conversation with the legendary owner and licensee, Mike Dowdeswell, a freight company-owning customer was wondering how he could improve efficiency of his business by gaining return loads for his heavy goods vehicles that were routinely delivering local goods to Yorkshire. In a eureka moment, Mike offered the solution by suggesting that if he picked up some good Yorkshire ale on the return trip, he would sell it in the Anchor.

The phone call duly came through to our offices in Masham and so from a very small acorn a great oak tree of tradition was born.

I recall very clearly as a young recruit to our company in 1981 witnessing weekly deliveries of our own sheeted and roped (no curtain-siders then!) articulated lorries, fully loaded with Theakston beers, mainly Old Peculier and Best Bitter – all in wooden casks – making their way to Mike's depot in Wotton under Edge. Mike and his team spearheaded the availability and distribution of Theakston beers all over the south west and many were the jolly and productive days spent accompanying him to meet so many Theakston customers.

As I'm sure some will be aware, we have recently emerged from a fairly turbulent twenty-year chapter in our 179-year history when from the mid

1980s until three years ago, when we regained our independence, our company was in the hands of other brewing companies. Yet despite all the accompanying distractions, and through all that time, Theakston's has still been widely available in the area and, particularly pleasing, is still available in the Anchor – a continuous presence for almost thirty years, something of which I'm delighted and very proud.

Since we bought back the company in 2003 we have strengthened the ABV of our Best Bitter from 3.6 per cent back to 3.8 per cent where it always used to be and have added new fermenting vessels to give us greater brewing capacity and flexibility.

You may be wondering what brought on this thoughtful pondering and reflection as we move towards the autumn; well the reason is that we have just completed a deal to become the Official Cask Beer Supplier to Bath Rugby. The arrangement will enable our cask beers to be on sale in the club bar from the beginning of the new season, giving us an excellent platform on which to support our presence in the many cask ale pubs and clubs in the south west.

One of the first people on my guest list to join me at a Bath Rugby game will be Mike Dowdeswell, the man responsible for introducing Theakston's to the south west of England all those years ago and to whom we owe a great and lasting debt of gratitude. My big fear is that he may turn down my invitation – as he might possibly be a Bristol fan!

*Simon Theakston*

It's great to see an independent Theakston's brewery thriving again. One of my earliest real ale experiences was Theakston's Old Peculier, a full-bodied, dark, strong ale. Following about 20 years under the control of first, and now defunct regional brewery, Matthew Brown and then national giant, Scottish & Newcastle, real ale fans were delighted to see the brewery return to independent status. It's a reflection of the commitment to real ale that the brewery is showing that extra capacity is being installed at the delightful Masham site to keep up with demand. As well as the Anchor at Oldbury on Severn and Bath Rugby Club, Theakston's beers, particularly Old Peculier can sometimes be found at Enterprise outlets such as the Robin Hood's Retreat on Gloucester Road, and also the Ship in Park Row which also stocks Theakston's Mild.

*Pete Bridle*



**“The great thing about *Theakstons* is that wind is never a problem.”**

My companion wasn't noted for talking hot air, so I was curious as to his point. The curiously furrowed brow was cue enough for him to explain. *“It's the weather don't you know.”* I nodded, pretending, indeed, to know. He continued nevertheless. *“If you go to Masham, where they brew this GRADLEY ale,”* he paused to savour another taste of the aforementioned, *“every day at four o'clock you'll spot a chap outside the Theakstons' brewery measuring the temperature and the wind direction. Then he goes back inside and adjusts the temperature levels in the fermenting vessels accordingly.”* My ghost was flabbered. *“All that for a pint of beer?”* I asked, stupidly. *“Don't be stupid,”* he answered, *“When it comes to the forecast, I'd rather trust the Theakstons' head brewer than the weatherman anyday.”*



PECULIERLY FINE COMPANY

# Bath Ramblings

ON Friday the 9th of June an intrepid group of engineers set out from the Abbey Ales Brewery in Bath with their entry in the University of Walcot Bellringer Regenerative Braking Challenge.

For those who are not aware of this event it is a competition to design, construct and operate a vehicle that is capable of storing the potential energy generated by a firkin of Bellringer on its way down Lansdown Hill and then use that energy to drive the vehicle and, by then, empty cask up the hill again. The journey is from the Abbey Brewery behind the Olde Farmhouse to the Old Green Tree at the bottom of the hill.

The fine engineering example (pictured) was designed and constructed by Nigel de Grey, Ian Hutton, Matt Macquiban, David Quinn and Richard Stowey. The idea was brilliant: a vehicle driven by knicker elastic. Unfortunately the execution with the resources available was less so, though it did manage ten yards.

It reminds me of the only time I ever won a crossword competition. It was the Bristol CAMRA festival competition and I won assorted beer mats, towels and glasses. The mighty Quinn and his mates won a firkin of Bellringer beer. What did we have in common? We were the only entrants. They drank the lot and the only help asked from me was, "Which end does the tap go in?". They tell me that they enjoyed it.

I am sure that "She Who Must Be Obeyed" has got large quantities of knicker elastic somewhere. So next year I am entering if the reward is a firkin of ale.

Her indoors has something to say:

*I, "She Who Must Be Obeyed" (SWMBO), feel that it would be more appropriate to be called "She Who Always Drives" (SWAD). While on the subject of driving, I would be interested in your readers' thoughts on the beverages available to drivers. I have been with "Sir" to many listed real ale establishments, all in the line of his duties you understand. While he was happily tipping, I was offered the unpleasant choice of chemical lemonade, sickly colas or biliously lurid "fruit" juices. CAMRA, here is another battleground awaiting your attention. Please could you set up a new wing called CAMSOD – the Campaign for Real Soft Drinks!"*

Actually I am always grateful for the lifts to and from a brewery or hostelry. She has done me proud and she is right about the quality of some of the soft drinks. I tried them. Once!

SWMBO popped over to France recently with a couple of friends to the St. Chartier dance and music festival. I did not go because my knees don't like the dance any more and anyway there is no decent beer. They entertained each other on the trip down with

speculations along the lines of "how can we really p\*\*s Phill off for not coming?". The consensus reached, with much laughter, was that I was to be informed that there was a real ale micro-brewery on the camp site with its own handpumps, etc, etc, etc. Ha! As if I would fall for that old leg-pull – no way.

It turned out that the brewery was called Earl de something or other and they had handpumps and all. It seems that they were extremely interested in CAMRA (of whom they had never heard) so SWMBO gave them the address and they resolved to look up the website as soon as the festival finished. All I got was two measly bottles (some excuse about running out of money) and no ticks for my draught list.

But not all was lost because that weekend was the FATO which I enjoyed very much.

FATO was a dual festival at the **Royal Oak** in Bath with a four-day *Folk At The Oak* and beer festival. The Oak organised the festival partly to generate business and partly to support the charity Envolv who shared the profits. It started very pleasantly on Thursday 13 July with fantastic weather, a working garden and the promise of around 40 ales local and foreign (Wales and Scotland). These were to be tapped in rotation through the hand-pumps rather than all on separate stillages with all available at the same time. John had installed an additional handpump for the event and now one is dedicated to a quality cider. This started with a very light-coloured perry (the pear equivalent of apple cider). The beer was good and the music was good.

But on Friday night the place was heaving: surely these can't all be folkies? No, it must be the beer. I was alarmed to find (admittedly quite late in the evening) that the beer and cider had all run out. So I cadged a lift home with the member of Cyser, champion French-style muscos from Bath and Bristol.

Apparently the management were also alarmed by this turn of events and had cause to be extremely grateful to Blindman's, Keynsham, Box Steam and Matthews breweries, all of whom rushed additional supplies to the pub. In the case of Blindman's this was organised remotely from Newcastle, and Keynsham curtailed a golf match to help. Just as well because Saturday was even busier.

On the subject of beers, there were new offerings from Blindman's and Downton who produced festival specials, and from Keynsham, Stroud and Matthews. Stroud is a



very new brewery and their beer, called Budding, was extremely popular: it was sold out within two hours of tapping.



**Matthews'** summer special is now called Midsomer Pale 4.5% and contains pale and amber malts and English Pilgrim and Progress hops. Matthews now has a license to sell directly to the public which I fully intend to test out next month.

It must be the season for festivals at Bath pubs. A few weeks ago the **Raven** tried to tempt the square-eyed footie public away from their world cup screens by having a festival of ten football-related specials from nationally-known and local breweries. I gather that the event caused spaghetti mayhem in the cellar where the normal arrangement is to jointly supply the upstairs and downstairs pumps from five firkins. These all had to be disconnected so that separate supplies could be run upstairs to allow the ten ales to be available concurrently. It was worth the effort and well worth the visit (my assessment). And now they are planning a cider festival for the end of August. It is not planned to run these through the handpump systems though due to the risks of tainting.

At the time of writing the **Star Inn** was brightly decked out with Cornish bunting to celebrate their Cornish beer festival. This pub would normally be the Abbey Ales brewery tap but since the place is run by a Cornishman, Paul Waters, Cornwall comes to visit Bath once per year.

Elsewhere in Bath, Paul's brother has been installed, with the assistance of Abbey Ales, at the **Couer de Lion** in Northumberland Passage. This pub used to regularly feature in the Good Beer Guide and hopefully it will not be long before it returns. Dougal has moved from assisting at the Royal Oak to help out at these two pubs.

*Phill The Pint*



# The new Stroud Brewery

AT the recent Royal Oak festival in Bath I was fortunate to have the opportunity to try Budding, a new beer produced by the new Stroud Brewery. I say fortunate because it turned out to be a beautifully balanced, hoppy bitter that disappeared within two hours of appearing at the bar. I therefore felt that I must contact the brewery to find out what is going on. This is what I found.

The owners of the brewery are Greg Pilley, his partner Jade, and a friendly local investor. Greg is also the brewer, bookkeeper, seller and everything. He obviously has an interesting past having spent time in Nigerian National Parks and written a book on the geographical and social diversity of the African continent reflected through traditional alcoholic drinks. But now, having settled down in the beautiful area of Stroud, his passion for food and drink and for promoting local produce has moved him to start the brewing venture.

This brewery is not Greg's first encounter with brewing since he started at university, moving on to full-mash brewing a little later. Now, after a break for a few years travelling, the seeds planted so long ago have germinated and grown to produce a little gem. Apparently the idea started to grow during 2000 but it was not until December last year that he took on some premises. The brewery is based in Thrupp, on the site of the former Phoenix Iron works. It is a small unit which was originally constructed as the clinic for Lister Petter (the famous diesel engine manufacturers). Greg has done a lot to alter the premises to meet his needs, and his landlord, Impcross has been very supportive.



Greg Pilley (left) being handed his certificate by Tony Aburrow, Chairman of the Gloucestershire Branch of CAMRA

The plant is a five-barrel brewery designed by Greg after extensive research by web and visits. It was fabricated locally over a period of six months by Alphamace, who were very tolerant of his ever-changing needs. The 1,400-litre hot-liquor tank and all other vessels are based on extended five-barrel cellar tanks supplied by Bristol Beer Factory. Greg has had helpful advice about business development from Rob Brady of the Good Beer Company with whom he wants to maintain an association. As far as beer goes, he has referred to Ray Daniels' book about designing beers, but apart from that the work is all his own.

So what has happened in the brewery since last December? Well, following the preparatory work, the first beer rolled out on 22 May 2006. The beer is called **Budding** after Edwin Beard Budding of Thrupp who invented the lawnmower in 1830. This is a 4.5 per cent pale ale with Fuggles used as the main

bittering hop – then late hopped for a luscious floral aroma. A great summer beer!

The best news for Greg is that Budding was recently voted *Beer of Gloucestershire 2006* at the Cotswold Beer Festival held in Postlip at the end of July. This award is based on a blind tasting of all beers from around the county submitted to the festival, and Budding came out a firm favourite. Greg's reaction was understandable: "I am chuffed! This could not have happened at a better time for us. We are a small craft brewery with a passion for beer and it's great to have the quality of our beer acknowledged just as we are starting out."

The second beer to make an appearance was **Redcoat**. This is a ruby red session ale using Challenger and traditional Goldings hops to give this beer its fruity bitterness (these are Greg's words since I have not yet had the pleasure). There was a time when Stroud Scarlet was the most famous colour in the world since the area was the major producer of cloth for the British army known as the Redcoats. Thus the name for the beer.

A new beer called **Five Valleys** is currently under development to be launched in the Autumn.

The beers have been available locally to Stroud at the Bear of Rodborough, the Egypt Mill in Nailsworth, the King's Head in France Lynch, the Queen Victoria in Stroud and the Waggon and Horses in Thrupp, but with the acquisition of more casks it is hoped that Stroud Brewery products will get further afield.

Greg cannot sell direct to the public but he plans to rectify this in the very near future. He is also interested in bottling in the future and would like to find a permanent pub outlet. Gentle expansion is the name of the game. My hope is that the expansion embraces Bath and Bristol.

*Phill The Pint*

## Young's to close Wandsworth Brewery

"Traditional draught beer has been produced on the site of the Young's Brewery since 1581, which makes the Ram Brewery the oldest site in Britain on which beer has been brewed continuously."

So says the Young's web site. Yet the Young's brewery is leaving the famous and wonderful Ram Brewery in the heart of Wandsworth in South West London. The brewery is also leaving Wandsworth and South West London. In fact the brewery is leaving London altogether!

Following a two-year review of brewing operations, Young's is to combine its brewing operations with Charles Wells of Bedford. Neither of the alternative sites that were in Wandsworth on which they could have built a new brewery from scratch (they commissioned a full plan to check) offered any more advantages than the existing site.

Young's will retain their head office in Wandsworth and run a major depot in SW London – on the Ram Brewery site for a year at least.

The merger of the Young's and Charles Wells brewing operations will result in a new major force in the brewing industry. The brewing company will be owned 40 per cent by Young's and 60 per cent by Wells. Both Young's and Wells will continue to operate their pub estates independently of one another.

Not surprisingly, many people are upset at the loss of the Wandsworth Brewery. Not only for the fact the brewery was founded in the reign in Queen Elizabeth I and therefore has a massive history, in more recent times Young's Brewery has been a leading light for real ale in many ways. During the years when many major and regional breweries turned their backs on real ale, Young's stuck with it and was viewed as an industry champion of the cause.

Young's give a number of reasons for the move. Wandsworth Council want to redevelop the area. However, there was no absolute demand from the Council for Young's to move – they would have worked round the brewery

if necessary. Young's blame issues such as the layout of the old brewery, ageing equipment, traffic congestion around the site, lack of space preventing the brewery from expanding, and health and safety issues.

Charles Wells had the foresight, when their old brewery faced problems back in the 1970s, to move their brewery to a new venue. Young's move to a town that is some miles outside of the M25 will dismay many people. Young's famous beers such as Bitter, Special and Winter Warmer have strong connections with the brewery of origin.

It is sad in the extreme to see so much history swept away.

*Pete Bridle*



# A stroll around Redcliffe Hill

IT was a Monday night in early August as we walked along the edge of the Bathurst Basin towards the first stop on our stroll around Redcliffe Hill.



The Ostriche Inn

The **Ostrich Inn** is an old pub built into the base of the steep side of the red cliffs and decorated with ships and fishing ornaments, jugs and old photographs. There is a framed list of the landlords on the wall, and the earliest record of a licensee is in 1755 when "Jonathen Marn" was landlord, but it is uncertain why the pub was called the Ostrich.

We take our Bath Ales Gem outside to the crowded, landscaped seating area on the edge of the Bathurst Lock, and enjoy the cooler evening air after such a sultry day. The Long John Silver Trust hope to erect a ship's mast here (depicting Israel Hands chasing Jim up the mast with a knife in his mouth) as part of the

Bristol Treasure Island Trail. Courage Best and Directors are normally available but we were told they were waiting for a delivery.

The inn is immediately adjacent to the Redcliffe caves which, in their day, were a prime source of sand. Past landlords of the Inn used to send little boys – "sandboys" – into the caves to collect sand to spread on the floor of the Inn to soak up the beer and ale drop-pings (much like butchers used to put sawdust on the floor of their shops). The sandboys were paid for their efforts in beer. They were indeed happy. Hence the expression "happy as a sandboy"

We stroll back towards the General Hospital past the bricked-up tunnel entrance of the old GWR Harbour Railway that ran beneath Redcliffe. I can remember hearing a story years ago that said the workmen digging the tunnel through the sandstone claimed to have uncovered a baby dinosaur that ran around for a few minutes before dropping dead – probably an earlier version of the pink elephants – but beer was generally about two or three times stronger than it is today.

We turn up the side of the General Hospital and climb Guinea Street to the **Golden Guinea**, a Moles Brewery-owned pub serving a good pint of Rucking Mole, with Black Rat cider on handpump. The pub looks quite old, and it would be interesting to find out more about it. Perhaps the walls could be adorned with something about the pub's history, and maybe even something about the



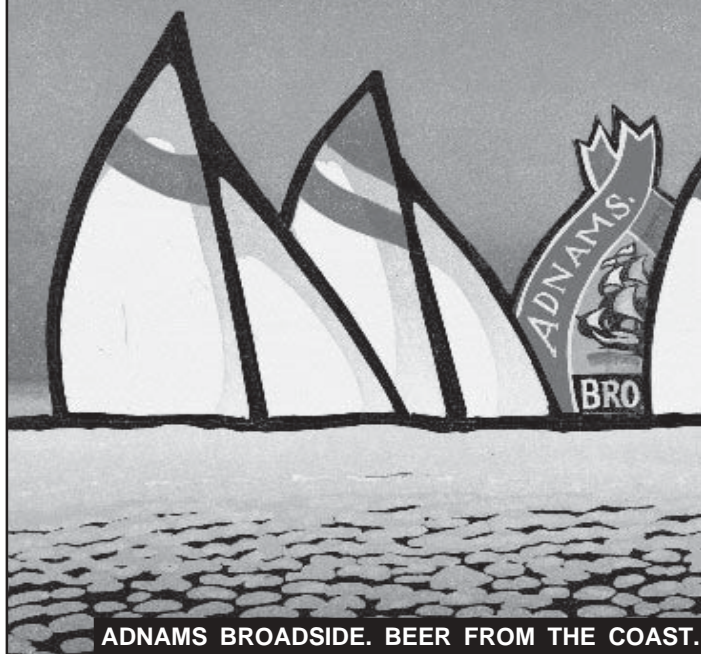
The Golden Guinea

Treasure Island Trail since it comes this way.

We cut through Jubilee Place to Redcliffe Parade where more grand houses stand on top of the cliff above Redcliffe Wharf and gaze out over the Docks and the centre of Bristol towards Cabot Tower and the Suspension Bridge. On the wharf below us in 1997 they built the replica of the Matthew (John Cabot had the original and found new land in 1497). This area has always been associated with the sea and merchants; the famous Bristol privateer Captain Woodes Rogers had his ships fitted out on this very wharf before going off and capturing a Spanish treasure ship. Below us are the public entrances to Redcliffe Caves, a man-made labyrinth formed when the sand was mined for ships' ballast, foundry moulds and for use in the making of Bristol Blue glass.

We continue along Redcliffe Parade and get our first glimpse of the spire of St Mary Redcliffe church over the tops of the trees. We

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<b>Molennium</b> 4.5%alc Deep amber coloured premium ale	<b>Molegrip</b> 4.3%alc Rich ruby red, malty Autumn brew
<b>Landlord's Choice</b> 4.5%alc Dark, strong and smooth happy bitter	<b>Moel Moel</b> 6.0%alc Wonderfully warming Winter ale
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The Portwall Tavern

pass the Coliseum that doesn't have any real ales and head across the car park in front of the church towards the **Portwall Tavern**. This old pub has four real ales; the locals were drinking the Bass and said it was good. We opted for the Slaters Queen Bee and Slaters Premium, two excellent ales from the Eccleshall brewery, and the Adnams Explorer.

From the front of this tavern you can view the whole frontage of the beautiful St Mary Redcliffe church – described by a visiting Queen Elizabeth in 1574 as the



The Ship Inn

“fairest, goodliest and most famous parish church in England”.

Adjacent to the car park here are the remains of Chatterton house, where the boy poet, Thomas Chatterton was born in 1752.

We cross back over to the church and head up pump lane, looking down on our left into the cutting that is the other entrance to the Harbour railway tunnel. The Tunnel runs straight under the graveyard, and apparently when it was dug they had to remove all the residents first – I wonder if they ever buried any dinosaurs there? At the top of the lane is the Cathay, a street with only one building, the **Ship Inn**. The Gem and Old Speckled Hen have gone, so we take our Butcombe Bitter outside to look at the back of the church over the graveyard. Buried in the graveyard is a piece of iron rail, and its headstone tells us that it was a tramline that landed here when Redcliffe Hill took a bomb in the blitz. The spire of the church was hit and destroyed by



The Bell

lightning in 1446 and it wasn't until 1872 that it was rebuilt, the then Lord Mayor of Bristol placing the last coping stone on the summit 292 feet up. It would take more than a few beers to get me up there.

The Ship Inn is another old pub, and the ex-landlord tells us that it was built to sell beer to the workmen building the church, and that John Cabot lived here when foreigners were not allowed to stay within the city boundary. I tell him I didn't know the pub was that old, but I do know that Edward Teach was from Redcliffe and was known as Blackbeard.

We head down Prewett Street towards the **Bell Inn**, so named because it used to be a bell foundry, now another old pub with a modernised interior. In my youth I can remember it being a very lively and popular meeting place during the 70s. Inside this busy local community pub they have Bass and Courage Best.

*Colin & Pennie Postlethwaite*



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# Yo-Ho-Ho and a bottle of fun

TO help raise funds and awareness for a statue of Bristol's (and Britain's) most famous fictional pub landlord, the Long John Silver Trust asked Wickwar Brewery if they would kindly develop a cask beer to help the cause.

After many trials and tribulations, a tasting was arranged at Wickwar, and Long John Silver Beer came into being; a deep ruby coloured beer with an ABV of 4.2 per cent, complete with the natty slogan of "HOP 'TIL YOU DROP" (due to its being dry hopped). Any similarity between our pirate on the beer label and the Ben Truman man – "There's more hops in Ben Truman" – is entirely coincidental. We do know, by the way, that Silver didn't have a wooden leg (his leg was severed at the hip).

Our beer was launched at the Princess of Wales in Bedminster in July 2005 at one of their beer festivals, and Pirate Pete (that well-known local character and Harbourside tour guide) generously officiated at the ceremony.

Since then the beer has sold well at both the Beaufort Arms in Hawkesbury Upton and in Wickwar's pub on the centre, the White Lion. Unfortunately, due to the increasing squeeze on distribution that every small brewery seems to suffer from nowadays, sales have been restricted, but after requests from non-pub-goers, getting LJS bottled has been a natural progression.

Philip Downes, head brewer of the Wickwar Brewery, was charged with the job of producing the bottled version; and a fantastic



Jonfun and Sarah examine a soon to be demolished stack of bottled LJS. Photo by Noel Jones

job he's done. The beer is eminently drinkable, still has its hoppy characteristic, plus the added advantage of being served that little bit cooler.

The bottled beer was launched in July 2006 at Wickwar's brewery tap, and over thirty Long John Silver Trustees and supporters gathered to celebrate and (judging by the big pile of empties) promptly demolished the entire first batch.

If you would like to help our campaign to celebrate Bristol's literary and historic past, please ask your local supplier to stock the beer – a donation from each pint or bottle sold will go to the Trust.

Look out also for a new campaign from VisitBritain entitled StoryBook England where our Treasure Island Trail features in a podcast



Outside the King's Head in Bristol on a Long John Silver trip in July

from DestinationBristol. You can find out more about us on the web at [www.longjohnsilvertrust.co.uk](http://www.longjohnsilvertrust.co.uk).

Incidentally, if any group would like to come on a Treasure Island pub crawl around some of Bristol's historic harbourside pubs, please contact me by emailing [mark@beaufortarms.com](mailto:mark@beaufortarms.com). Hear the strange story of one of Bristol's brewers and his involvement in a privateering venture which led to the first ever English novel, and how it spawned Treasure Island.

Mark Steeds

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# The Price of a Bristolian Pint

DELVING into the Bristol & District CAMRA archives recently, I came across some records of beer prices stretching back 16 years and the graph here shows the average price of a pint of real ale and lager in Bristol over that time. The price of a pint has risen, on average, 7p a year.

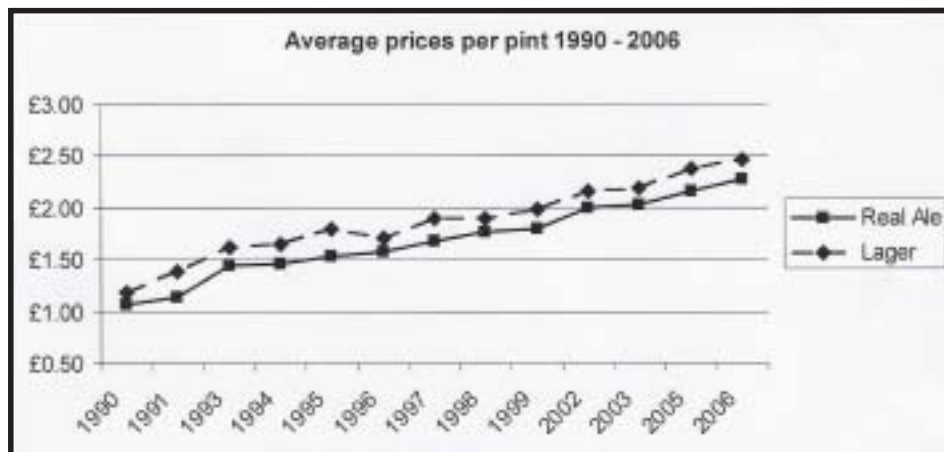
Our records show that the ten-year rise is 47 per cent. In the same time, the total retail price index (RPI) rose by 28.8 per cent, but the RPI ignoring our soaring house prices rose by only 18.8 per cent. So the price of a pint of beer has risen 2.5 times more over ten years than an average item in your shopping basket.

During the early years of the survey, it was interesting to note the dominance of Courage, Wadworth and Bass in the city. There was the occasional Butcombe to be found and, of course, Smiles.

In 1991, beer and lager rose at double the rate of inflation (then 9 per cent) whilst the country was in recession. We had the dominance of the "Big Six" brewers and the survey found at the time that the average price of a pint in an independent brewer's pub was, on average, 10p cheaper.

In 1994, a Bristol pub won the accolade of serving the "cheapest pint in Britain". At the Cadbury House, Richmond Road, Montpelier, you could get a pint of Wickwar's Coopers Ale for just 88p a pint – at this time, the average price of a pint elsewhere in the city was £1.46.

By 1995, we were seeing the dominance of Courage, Wadworth and Bass receding and an influx of beers from our own new local



independent brewers, such as Wickwar, Hardington's, Moles. Prices were still rising at twice the rate of inflation (now 2.8 per cent). New "nitro-keg" beers like Caffreys and Kilkenny (a rarity today, thank goodness) were costing 30p more than standard keg beer and 10p more than real ale.

In 1996, real ale prices rose by only the rate of inflation – 2.2 per cent – and again, the cheapest place to drink real ale was in pubs from Britain's independent brewers. The cheapest pint this year though was in London – this time JD Wetherspoon was offering one beer at 79p a pint.

And so to 2006. Although the Chancellor increased beer duty by only a penny last year, our surveys prove that the cost passed on to consumers is considerably higher. In Bristol last year, the average cost of a pint was £2.15;

it is now £2.27, a rise of 12p. The most expensive pint recently spotted in a bar on the Gloucester Road was Marston's Pedigree – it cost £3.20!

CAMRA is urging the Government to freeze or cut the mount of excise duty on beers, lagers and ciders to stop prices from sky-rocketing. CAMRA's Chief Executive, Mike Benner, said, "Even the smallest increase in tax will blast a hole through the pocket of the pub-visiting public. A reduction in excise duty would reduce incentives for small-time smugglers to bring cheap alcohol from abroad into the UK".

Prices this year continue to move roughly in line with inflation and, as our graph shows, real ale still represents good value at £2.27 for a pint of best bitter compared to a standard lager at £2.46.

*Alison Bridle*

## Brewdoku

Complete the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contain each of the following nine breweries: **Abbey Ales, Adnams, Bath Ales, Butcombe, Cotleigh, Downton, Moles, RCH, Wickwar**. Send your solutions to the editor. The first two correct answers drawn at random after 1st November win a copy of the Bristol Treasure Island Trail, the book of the Long John Silver Trust.

				RCH			Moles	Butcombe
	Moles	Wickwar		Cotleigh	Abbey Ales	Bath Ales		
Downton		Abbey Ales				Wickwar		Cotleigh
		Adnams	Wickwar	Moles	Bath Ales			
Moles	Wickwar			Downton			Bath Ales	
		RCH		Butcombe	Adnams	Downton		
						Moles		Wickwar
	Butcombe	Cotleigh	RCH			Adnams	Abbey Ales	
Wickwar	Abbey Ales			Adnams			Cotleigh	Bath Ales

# Calling time on smoking

THE history of efforts to stamp out smoking go back as far as smoking itself. When Rodrigo de Jerez, one of Columbus's crew members, lit up a prototype cigar on his return to Spain in 1493, he was picked up by the Spanish Inquisition and sentenced to three years in jail. For many years, tobacco was little more than an exotic curiosity, although, bizarrely, some believed it possessed medicinal qualities. Among them was Jean Nicot, the French ambassador to Portugal, who gave his name to nicotine.

The first consignment of tobacco reached England in 1565. In the early seventeenth century, it started to be used as a recreational drug. Because it was generally sold in alehouses, its users were said to "drink" it. Among those who were unimpressed by the new craze was King James I, who published a *Counterblast to Tobacco*, in which he described it as an "invention of Satan" and banned its use in alehouses. He soon relented, when he realised that taxing it would provide a handy source of extra revenue. By the middle of the seventeenth century, a pipe of tobacco was the almost inevitable accompaniment to a pint of ale.

In 1789, the government tried to raise extra revenue by forcing publicans to take out licences to sell tobacco. It did not take the publicans long to find a loophole. In December 1789, the *Bath Chronicle* reported that "in many places the innkeepers and publicans have resisted the taking out licences for dealing in tobacco by giving away that commodity and selling their pipes."

The first Cuban "seegars" arrived in London in 1830, with cigarettes coming along a few years later. Britain's first cigarette factory opened in Walworth in 1856.

In 1858, concerns about the effects of smoking were first raised in the *Lancet*, but nobody paid much attention, and, when Britain went to war with Germany in 1914, cigarettes were seen as the universal panacea for the privations of life in the trenches.

In the aftermath of war, smoking was more popular – and more accepted – than ever. The first shot across the bows came in 1950, when evidence of a link between smoking and lung cancer was published in the *British Medical Journal*.

By 1965, the body of evidence had grown so strong that the UK government banned cigarette adverts on TV. Six years later, the tobacco companies agreed to print health warnings on cigarette packets. The early warnings – "Smoking May Damage Your Health" – were tame compared with the blunt messages used today.

In 1993, Vermont became the first US state to ban smoking in indoor public places. California and New York quickly followed suit. The rest of the world took some time to catch up, but when it did, the pace of prohibition soon became unstoppable. The list of countries that have banned smoking in most if not all indoor public places includes Tanzania in 2003, the Netherlands, Norway, Ireland and New Zealand in 2004, Cuba and Sweden in 2005, and Spain, Scotland and Uruguay in 2006. In February 2006, it was announced that smoking will be banned in offices, pubs, restaurants and other enclosed public spaces

in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2007. The 400-year link between smoking and drinking will finally be broken.

The big question, now that the ban is imminent, is what effect it will have on England's pubs. Headline news from Ireland suggests that the ban will have far-reaching effects on the licensed trade, with many pubs closing. As with all headline stories, however, the truth is rather more complex. The number of pubs in Ireland – especially rural pubs – has fallen dramatically since the ban came in, but, although smoking is one of the factors responsible, there are several others. A police clampdown on drink-driving and a drop in alcohol prices in supermarkets has led to more and more people drinking at home – where they can smoke as well. As well as fewer customers, publicans have also had to contend with rising local authority charges. Not surprisingly, over 600 country pubs (10% of the total) have shut in the republic in the last two years.

Although the smoking ban may be the final nail in the coffin for some rural pubs in England, it is unlikely that the effect will be as dramatic as in Ireland. Drink-driving has been high on the agenda in this country for years and many country pubs have reinvented themselves as gastropubs as their traditional customer base has fallen away. The traditional rural pub, although it may be an endangered species, still exists in large numbers in Ireland; the number of traditional country pubs in England, with no food, and relying solely on local trade, has been declining for years, and in many areas they've disappeared altogether.

The problem of cut-price alcohol in supermarkets is one shared by Ireland and England. During the recent world cup, an anticipated upturn in pub sales failed to materialise in England, as large numbers of fans opted to stock up at their local superstore and drink at home. The downturn in trade in town and city centre pubs in Ireland has been more marked than in England, but price is as much a part of the problem as the smoking ban. Another factor is the growing perception, fuelled by irresponsible comments from those who should know better, of a massive increase in binge-drinking. Inevitably, this leads many who might otherwise be tempted to use city-centre pubs to stay at home and keep out of trouble.

Although town and city centre pubs in Ireland have not suffered as great a downturn as rural pubs, the industry is certainly not happy. It may come as a surprise to anyone who has wandered around Dublin on a Friday or Saturday night, but many major players are pulling out of the pub business altogether. With property prices soaring, many pubs are being converted to apartments or pulled down for redevelopment. According to Oliver Hughes, the owner of the Porterhouse chain, "the superpub era is dead and buried." Traditional pubs, too, are under threat, yet there is little enthusiasm for a rescindment of the smoking ban. Nor is the smoking ban seen as the main cause of the malaise within the industry.

A recent survey showed that 87% of bar staff in Ireland – including many who smoked – were in favour of the ban – up from 71% in March 2004. Most said that they had noticed a significant

improvement in their general health. Tradewise, pubs with covered outdoor seating areas equipped with patio heaters have fared better, on the whole, than pubs with no outdoor facilities. Yet some pubs where people are forced to stand outside on the pavement are managing to hold their own: customers are prepared to put up with the inconvenience if they like a particular pub.

When the ban is introduced in England next year, there will be, as there were in Ireland two years ago, predictions of a meltdown in the licensed trade. But that meltdown – if such it is – has already started. The downturn in the licensed trade in England, as in Ireland, is due to a combination of factors, of which the smoking ban is but one. Whether it is reversible or not, only time will tell. In the short term, the ban will almost certainly lead to a further downturn in trade, although this is unlikely to be as sharp as in Ireland, because other factors – such as the sudden clampdown on drink-driving – will not come into play.

What we will see, along with cleaner air in bars and pubs, is the emergence of a new sub-pub-culture, as groups gather on pavements and in courtyards at the back of pubs to indulge in a habit that for centuries has been part of pub life. And, just as in Dublin, nipping outside for a smoke will become, for many, not just cool but an essential part of a night on the town. Paul Trainer, from the *Dubliners* magazine, explains that "people are heading out for a fag who don't even smoke – smoking corners have become pick-up points because you stand and chat, ask for a light, moan about the weather... You see whole collections of ghost tables of half-drunk pints that have been abandoned, or with a coaster over the top. If a group of six people go out, half of whom are smokers, it makes for a very disjointed night – the other three are left watching the jackets and the drinks for hours at a time."

Eventually, of course, the health police will insist on further restrictions to ban smoking in public altogether. That, however, still seems some years off. Until then, we can look forward to a new social phenomenon – al fresco smoking – and all that goes with it.

Andrew Swift



An overflowing fag bin outside a Dublin pub



# Butcombe Brews

IT'S common knowledge that Butcombe Brewery makes some outstanding beers. From the brewery's founding in 1978, Butcombe Bitter, at 4 per cent ABV, was for a very long time the only beer produced and it very quickly developed a big loyal following. In recent years Gold (4.7 per cent) and Blond (4.3 per cent) were added to the portfolio, with Brunel IPA the most recent one to join the ranks.

Brunel IPA, an authentic IPA at 5 per cent ABV, was launched in December 2005 as the "Official Beer" for Brunel 200, the year-long 2006 celebrations to mark the great man's 200th birthday. The beer was so well received that it will return as Butcombe's winter beer, available from October to March annually – that's quite a long winter, but who's

complaining?

A few words about the Blond...

Butcombe Blond was first brewed in September 2003 (one brew only, and called Butcombe Silver Jubilee) to mark the 25th anniversary of the brewery. It was then launched for real in March 2004, and immediately won the ASDA Beer Challenge. Blond is a delicious Anglo-European fusion, with the palest English malt (sometimes known as lager malt) flavoured with the finest Eastern European hops (Styrians from Slovenia and Saaz from Czechoslovakia). It has proved a very popular beer ever since its launch, with many a bar sporting hand pumps dispensing this draught real ale.

A more recent development at the brewery has been the introduction of a cold-filtered

version of it. Guy Newell, managing director of Butcombe, who took over when founder Simon Whitmore retired, said: "Cold-filtered Blond is brewed here at Butcombe in exactly the same way as the cask version, then chilled at minus one degree Celsius in cooling tanks for two weeks, before being filtered and kegged. The intention is that it be dispensed at around three degrees cooler than the cask variant. It is hoped that the cold-filtered Blond would appeal to a broader range of younger drinkers, whilst establishing a bridgehead, ultimately leading to the Butcombe cask range."

We're not ones for espousing the virtues of kegged beers in CAMRA, but if it does wean certain drinkers off of the poor imitations of lagers that so often adorn bars and eventually on to the wonders of cask real ales (be they Butcombe's or others), then there is hope for our traditional ales, our heritage. SP

## Standing at the bar

ONCE the battle against tobacco has been won, and smokers sent scuttling to pavements and alleyways, what next for the health police? It seems a fair bet that the next bunch of reprobates on their agenda will be drinkers – and we're not just talking bingeing here.

A warning shot across the bows comes from the Preston Police, in cohorts with Preston Primary Care Trust, which has sought to outlaw "vertical drinking" – or, in common parlance, standing at the bar. The reasoning: people are more likely to fight when standing. According to Sergeant Andy Hobson, "if people are sat down there is less potential for flashpoints than with vertical drinking. This is not designed so much to affect the amount they drink; it is the proximity of other people when you are stood up, which is where the problems can start. People go into these places and crowd round the bars, then the next you know some somebody gets a push, the pint goes over and that's it."

Happily, I can report that, after extensive investigation, they backed down, when evidence failed to back up the theory. But perhaps there was another reason they wanted to ban vertical drinking – because people enjoy it. Ban standing at the bar and you destroy a crucial part of pub culture at one stroke. Abolitionists in North America understood this very well when they introduced a similar policy early last century. In Ontario, for example, not only do you have to sit at a table and order from a waiter, you are forbidden to carry your beer to another table. If you want to join another party, you have to get the waiter to do it for you – a grim state of affairs indeed (and that's not taking the quality of the beer into consideration).

To those whose visits to the pub don't involve standing at the bar any longer than it takes to buy a round, and for those to whom standing at the bar is not one of life's minor (or even major) pleasures, getting hot under the collar about an unsuccessful attempt to do



away with vertical drinking at the other end of the country may seem quixotic. And I am sure that many of those who prefer to sit and sup, fed up with having to jostle through broad-shouldered, upstanding throngs to get the bar, would welcome attempts to get them out of the way.

While I can sympathise with their plight, standing at the bar is not only an essential element of pub life, but part of the birthright of every true-born Englishman – and woman – the sort of thing GK Chesterton wrote droll ditties about. All of which may seem slightly fanciful – but there is something about standing at a bar that stimulates the flow of conversation, banter and repartee – or what those who write learned tomes about such things call, without a hint of irony, social intercourse.

But there is one overriding reason why standing at the bar is a more important part of pub culture than ever. It is simply that, for many people, sitting down is what they do at work. If you've been sitting in an office all day, or slaving over a hot computer, the last thing you want to do is go to a pub and sit down. The demarcation between work and pleasure is that much more decisively drawn if you can, erect and with pint pot in hand, rest an elbow on the bar, and put the world to rights with the best of them.

Andrew Swift

## Keynsham success

THE Keynsham Rugby Football Club ran their first Beer & Cider Festival in recent memory and it was a great success.

Jemma Walsh, a previous manager of the club, said they planned the limited festival to test interest in a bigger event in the future. It was open for just five hours on Saturday 12 August with three ciders and ten beers, all of which sold out to the 250 people attending.

Entertainment was provided by Martin Smith alias "Baron Von Smidt Haus" whose humorous accordion playing and songs were enjoyed by all and added a German beerfest atmosphere. Children had a roundabout, bouncy castle and inflatable slide to keep them amused. Bales of straw on the patio and wooden hogsheads in the function room where the festival bar was to be found added to the atmosphere.

All of the ciders were from Thatcher's, being Cheddar Valley dry, Farmers Tipple dry and Heritage sweet. The beers included offerings from Archers, Bateman's, Bath Ales, Bristol Beer Factory, Butcombe Gold, Fuller's, Keynsham's, and Young's. Unfortunately Bristol Beer Factory Red which was on the programme was not available. Jemma has been doing so well at her full time job – sales executive of Bristol Beer Factory – that they sold out of Red just before the festival!

Laurie Gibney

## Another new brewery in the Bristol area?

IN addition to the very recently formed Cheddar Ales (see separate article), news reaches Pints West that another new brewery is being planned.

From what we have been told, it seems that this new brewery may not be operating until the New Year as they are still searching for a site. However, as soon as we receive more news, rest assured, it will be reported in Pints West and on our Branch web site.

Pete Bridle

# Watering Holes in the Desert

news from Weston-super-Mare

## On The Ales at Off The Rails

OFF THE RAILS has been described as the "Spiritual Home" for Weston CAMRA members (and one or two other things). Certainly from the time that the Weston branch was formed in 1999, we have visited Off The Rails more than any other pub in the area and several CAMRA members are regular visitors. In some cases, very regular.

I met with landlord Colin Hicks for a chat about his time at the helm and some of the burning issues of the day, such as next year's smoking ban. Burning issue – small joke.

Colin was an electrician at the time he moved to Weston in 1993. He lived opposite Off The Rails (as he still does) and became a regular customer. Colin had always loved his real ale but says that at that time Off The Rails was not real ale orientated, mainly due to the fact that there was no means of temperature control in the cellar.

Towards the end of 1995, the landlord told Colin that he was planning to retire and asked Colin if he was interested in taking it on. Being 55, the idea of embarking on a new career running a station buffet and pub came as a bit of a bolt out of the blue, but after discussing the idea with his wife, Ruth and looking at the finances they decided to go ahead. They took over in February 1996.

One of the first investments made was in installing a cooling system in the cellar and also installing a beer from the local RCH brewery; Colin has stocked an RCH beer ever since. Other investments were in additional fridges behind the bar and in the buffet area enabling a wider selection of snacks to be made available.

Since he took over, Colin has established a solid base of regular customers and, being on a station, there are always new people passing through. He has also steadily built up the real ale trade. Hewish IPA from RCH is a permanent fixture. At one time there was only one guest beer, but over the past few years there has usually been two guests alongside the Hewish. The guest beers are almost exclusively from West Country microbreweries, such as Cottage, Sharp's, Skinner's and Branscombe Vale. Colin is personally committed to ensuring that the real ale is always in good condition (he even insists on having regular sips to ensure that the quality is spot on for his customers) and his efforts saw Off The Rails get into the Good Beer Guide for the first time in 2001. It has been in every edition since then – the only pub in Weston to hold this distinction. As a result, The Rails gets visitors from far and wide.

A couple of years ago Colin introduced a real cider. Local CAMRA member Tony



Wilcox claims that we have him to thank for this, although I know he is not alone in having said his bit for the cause of real cider (in simple terms, "real" equals not fizzy). I personally have suggested this to numerous licensees over the years. The response has usually been that it will attract the wrong kind of people, i.e.



young blokes who want to get smashed and have a fight. I mentioned this to Colin and he was quite, er, forceful in his response, saying that this view was rubbish (or something similar) and that he had never had any trouble from his cider drinkers. The introduction of a cider was so successful that last year a second was introduced. The ciders, like the real ales, are always locally sourced. There is always one from Thatcher's (Sandford) and the "guests" come from the likes of Rich's (Watchfield) or Crossman's (Hewish).

The "activities" side of things includes a quiz night on Tuesdays, crib on Thursdays and occasional curry and music nights. The latter usually features OTR's cellarman, the legendary Rockin' Ron.

I asked Colin what impact he thought the smoking ban would have, particularly as OTR seems to have a high proportion of smokers amongst its regulars and visitors. He believes that there may be a drop-off when it commences but that the trade will come back as people realise that there are many things that

they enjoy about going to the pub aside from smoking. To try and help with the problem, he is hoping to utilise the outside area at the front of the pub as an area for smokers and install heaters.

In some ways, Off The Rails is a bit of an anachronism – a throw-back to the days when most railway stations, certainly seaside ones, had a comfortable, unpretentious buffet.

Nowadays, these are few and far between, particularly in the South. I have a recurring nightmare that the big business/big profit vultures will march in and turn Off The Rails into the kind of grotesque "up market" coffee emporiums that are springing up everywhere on railway stations. You know the kind – totally soulless, "new age" décor, £1.89 for a cup of coffee, £1.50 if you want a bun to go with it. Happily, Colin says that his tenancy terms should mean that he, and we, are safe, at least until the time comes when he decides to retire. Colin is now 65 but, to my relief, he says that he no plans to retire.

Over the years many people that I have spoken to, even ones who have lived in Weston all their lives, had no idea that Off The Rails exists, let alone serves some of the finest ale available in the area. If you are reading this, like your ale, and have not been to Off The Rails, you know what you need to do.

*Tim Nickolls*

## The Woolpack

The Woolpack in St Georges has recently been revived after becoming a Butcombe pub. Having heard good reports, we decided to try it for ourselves. Two Butcombe ales (plus cold-filtered Blond) and Bath Gem were on offer. A fourth real ale will be available shortly. We both enjoyed a lunchtime meal selected from a varied menu, which was well-presented and good value. Evening food, plus a carvery, will be available when the gas issue is sorted out! The staff were friendly, the pub is now open all day, and there is even new wooden patio furniture to enable you to enjoy your pint outside! Well worth a visit.

## Ebdon Arms

Sadly, the Ebdon Arms in Wick St Lawrence is now no longer owned by Celtic Inns and therefore RCH ales are not available. However, they have been replaced by three Jennings real ales, with an additional one from Hook Norton. The good news is that Rose and Steve still run the pub and the same warm welcome is still available.

*Andy Burt*



# Weston CAMRA socials review

## May

The summer of 2006 will go down in the history books, joining the ranks of other "Long Hot Summers" of the past. However, it did not start too fantastically. The few brave souls who embarked on our May social to Axbridge and Cross got thoroughly drenched. The mood at the start of the evening was not helped by having to pay the extortionate fares now being charged by First Group, who appear to be on a mission to drive everyone off of public transport and into their cars. I knew that the fare to Axbridge would be £6 but was all ready to feign horror and outrage when the driver told me the fare. Unfortunately, he got in first saying, "That will be £6 if you can believe it." He did offer the fact that you can use it for as many journeys as you like, although this "benefit" (First's words, not mine) is of no use to the vast majority of people, who simply want to go to one destination and come back.

Having arrived in Axbridge in torrential rain, we ran full-pelt into the **Lamb**. Our vision of sitting outside on the medieval square soaking up the early summer sun was a distant memory – our new aim for the evening was simply to avoid catching pneumonia. The Lamb had the usual Butcombe range, with Exmoor Silver Stallion as a guest. The Butcombe Bitter was tasty but varied in temperature – mine was pulled first and was much warmer than anyone else's.

We headed out into the rain and en route to the **Alms House** bistro on the opposite side of the square we bumped into Luke and Jennifer, two local CAMRA members who we had arranged to meet up with. The Alms House sells Timothy Taylor Landlord, which was in decent condition, but probably lacks the required turnover to make it sparkle.

The next dash in the rain was to the Good Beer Guide-listed **Crown Inn**. Most people were congregated in the back bar to watch the Champions League Cup Final between Arsenal and Barcelona. These included the landlord, Ian, a keen Arsenal fan. We watched the first half of the match here, with Bass, Sharp's Doom Bar and Glory for company.

At half-time the rain had stopped, so we decided to walk down to the **New Inn**, Cross. We declined the opportunity of cask Brew XI at the hotel on the square. The New Inn had a good selection of beers, all from the West Country. These were Sharp's Cornish Coaster, Skinner's Dartmoor Best Bitter (both brewed in Cornwall) and Otter Ale (Devon). All in good condition and the mood became even better as the evening wore on, with Barcelona scoring two send-half goals to win the match.

A few people shot up to the nearby **White Hart**, where four ales were available before we reconvened to catch the last bus back to Weston.

## June

A first-ever trip to Highbridge and Burnham. The first thing to say about this evening is what good value trains now seem to

be compared with buses. The normal day return to Highbridge is £3.70, which meant that using the group travel rates, we only paid £1.85 each. Compared with £6 to go the shorter distance to Axbridge, this seemed like a good bargain. In fact, it is cheaper to go from Weston by train the 25 miles to Taunton, than the 9 miles by bus to Cross. It is also cheaper to go to Bristol by train than bus and takes half the time. Until sanity prevails, we will not be going on outings by bus any more.

Much of the Highbridge jaunt is covered in Dave McVittie's separate article. However, there is even more of note in the area. The early arrivals in Highbridge made the short journey to the **Royal Artillery**. This pub is in the hands of new owners. Happily they seem certain to maintain using RCH as their source of ale. At the time of our visit the very wonderful PG Steam and Double Header were on, at a special "introductory price" of £1.50! This pub is well worth a visit and with Graham Dunbaven, Head Brewer at RCH, living nearby the beer quality should remain high.

In Burnham some people visited the Good Beer Guide-listed **Dunstan House** on Love Lane. This large pub is owned by Young's and does the full range of their beers. All beers sampled justified their GBG entry. They also do carry-outs of any four beers from the Young's bottled range for £5. I went for three bottles of their 7.2 per cent ABV barley wine, Old Nick and a bottle of Double Chocolate Stout. Also worth a look in Burnham are the **Victoria** (Ringwood Best Bitter) on Victoria Street and the **Somerset and Dorset** at the end of the High Street. The S&D sells Butcombe Bitter, Wadworth 6X and on a recent visit Otter Bitter, although the latter was a mind-boggling £2.60 for a 3.6 per cent ABV beer. All in all the Burnham and Highbridge area is quite a good place for a pub crawl – not the desert that I had been led to believe.

## July

In July, Weston was pleased to host a Bristol & District CAMRA branch meeting. This was held at the **Raglan** on Upper Church Road. The lounge/piano bar was closed to non-CAMRA members for the evening. The meeting was very well attended with nearly 40 CAMRA members squeezing in. It was a steamy evening, which meant that the electric fans had to be on and the door open to provide some air. This all made the conditions less than ideal, but there were some interesting and lively debates. The beers on were Harviestoun Schiehallion (a Scottish cask lager), RCH Steam Festival, Butcombe Blond and a mystery beer on which people were invited to record their comments and their guess at the brewery. The beer was well-received by most people. It has subsequently transpired that it was brewed by Newman's and the plan is that this will become a permanent fixture at the Raglan.

It had been intended that Pickwick bitter from Mauldon's brewery would also be available. However, this had to be taken off early in the evening, as it wasn't right. I think it may have gone off at the sight of some of the legs on show in the bar – some of which looked as though they had not seen the light of day since Elton John had a full head of (his own) hair.

Our thanks to Gary and Jo at the Raglan for their fine hospitality.

A further selection of socials is lined-up for the Autumn. See the Diary section near the back for more details – non-members welcome.

*Tim Nickolls*

## Highbridge and Burnham

IT is Midsummer's Day. So our esteemed leader, Tim, had arranged for the Weston Branch to be off on a pleasant summer's evening crawl around a seaside resort. Huh! Gale force winds greeted us on the sea front at Burnham. It was perishing!

It was not so much a pub crawl, more a ramble, and an event to remember. We were tied to train and bus timetables. Those of us on the later train met some of our CAMRA colleagues from Bristol and arrived at Highbridge to find no sight of any taxis to take us to meet the earlier arrivals in Burnham. We popped in to the **Cooper's Arms** and called a taxi big enough for seven of us. Twenty minutes wait, just long enough to have a pint from a choice of RCH Double Header, Theakston's Old Peculier, Fuller's London Pride and Reverend James.

Taxi arrived and we shot off to the **Royal Clarence Hotel** (birthplace of RCH Beers, now brewed in West Hewish near Weston-super-Mare). No CAMRA members in the bar. A phone call established that others were at the **Crown** on Oxford Street. London Pride, Berrow Topsy Turvy and Flowers IPA on the pumps – all very nice. We next rambled along to the Weatherespoon pub on Pier Street which was very busy. Loads of tempting beers but the bus timetable was catching up with us and we needed to get to Highbridge or we would miss our train back (not to mention two more venues to try).

The bus took us to the **Highbridge Social Club**. RCH Old Slug Porter was the favourite but London Pride was the alternative beer. Very hospitable in the social club: they admit CAMRA members on presentation of a membership card. After the social club we went to the **George**. Robbins Brew was of unknown pedigree but acceptable. Other ales on were Archers Best and Princetown Jail Ale. Then back, for some of us, to the Cooper's Arms. Soon the 11.32 train beckoned. Mike got some chips – which we all enjoyed – and the train was on time.

It was at this time that I noticed we were missing our colleagues from Bristol. Had we lost them? Were they under a table somewhere in the depths of Burnham's libation houses? No, it seems they needed to return by an earlier train to make links to the Bristol bus services and had slipped off quietly by taxi somewhere en route.

*Dave McVittie*

# A Round with Robin

ONCE again this year, with companions from the Weston sub-branch, I went to two very good small beer festivals, at Bitton and Wrantage.

The third annual Bitton beer festival, held on the old railway station, was marked by being on a day when England were playing football, so when we went on the Saturday afternoon there were no queues for the beer and those who wanted shade from the lovely weather were able to get it. As a sop to those who might have wanted to know the score line, the organisers had put a blackboard up by the side of the bar, and soon it read England 1, and it remained so for the rest of the day.

However, the 45 beers from 13 breweries were more exciting, with some breweries not normally seen in Weston-super-Mare, for example **Millstone** from Mossley in Cheshire, and **Battledown** near Cheltenham. Also it was good (at last) to be able to sample both the **Bath Ales Rare Hare** and **Wild Hare** in the same moment, so to speak; it is difficult though to choose which I prefer!

My favourite dark beer there was the **Monumentale** from **Severn Vale Brewery** a 4.5 per cent porterish, warming beer with heaps of hoppy aroma. From the lighter coloured ales the competition was strongest from **RCH Double Header**, **Goff's White Knight**, and **Cotswold Spring Brewery's Olde English Rose**. There were also five ciders available.

At the **Canal Inn at Wrantage**, their third beer festival had three more ales on than last year, and an even bigger choice of Belgian beers. The day was overcast and slightly muggy so we went by bus all the way there and back from Taunton. However, we were still thirsty and tried many of the beers on offer, the best being from **Glastonbury Ales**.

By the time this edition of Pints West has reached you the **Raglan Arms** first beer festival may have taken place on the August Bank holiday, including a beach party on the Sunday. We also had a Bristol branch meeting there in July, when four ales were on. There have been so many tasty pints there in the last few months it is impossible to pick a favourite, but I am hoping that **Butcombe** will do another brew of the **Brunel IPA** (they will, Ed.), after all it is still the anniversary year and it always went quickly at the Raglan. I also had the best **Cottage Whippet** beer there this year; I normally prefer the **Cottage Railway** series, but when Wimbledon was on I liked both the name and the taste of the beer *You cannot be serious!*

There has been an interesting selection of beers at both the **White Hart** and **Off The Rails** with recently the **Hidden Fantasy** at the White Hart being the most unusual, while the **RCH Old Slug Porter** at the "Rails" never seems to last much more than a day! I have


been having an ongoing discussion with a fellow member of CAMRA about the merit of **Flowers IPA** which beer, as far as I know, is only available in Weston at the **Regency**. I think it is a very good session ale and very thirst quenching, especially on a hot day, and recently had a pint between having pints of **Butcombe Blond** at the Raglan and **Butcombe Bitter** at the Regency, and though I never was a fan of Whitbread beers – though who brews the Flowers now I do not know (*Badger Brewery for Interbrew, Ed.*) – the Flowers IPA stood as a most tasty pint between the two others. It is also still on sale (as I write) at £2 a pint. **Newman's** latest ale **Mendip Mammoth** is to be recommended (if you can find it at a pub near you).

I was reading a good social history with photographs recently about Clevedon by Jane Lily, and pass on two bits of information that may be of some interest. The recent demise of the pub The Reading in Copse Road into flats, is only one use the building has been put to in its lifetime. Formerly a bakery and a restaurant, it was named after the town of Reading as Simmons was the brewery that ran it. The sign outside of a man reading a book was an artistic error by the signmaker! Also in Clevedon is the Market House designed by Hans Price from Weston: it was planned at one stage after it fell into disuse to use it as an electricity generating station but instead, for a short while in the 1930s, it was the North Somerset Brewery which had its office in Kingston Seymour. The book includes a price list from that period, showing one dozen half-pint bottles of Bitter Ale at 2<sup>s</sup>/6<sup>d</sup> (old money), whilst the same number of Special Milk Stout cost 3<sup>s</sup>/9<sup>d</sup>.

It would be good to know if there is a history of brewing in Somerset. I wonder if anyone knows of any such thing? For example I have in my possession a document published in 1982 under the auspices of the Crockerne Pill and District History Society by Jan Walmsley on the history of the Lodway Brewery at Pill. Walmsley has gone to a great deal of trouble researching as to when the brewery started and when it closed and who owned it, but despite it all being of great interest there seems no definite answers. It is good to note though that the references at the close of the paper refer to Campaign for Real Ale (1976) *Good Beer Guide*. The early years of the Lodway seem hazy but the ending is well recorded: "Thus the Lodway Brewery followed by James & Pierce, Bedminster, John Arnold of Wickwar, the Welton (Somerset) Brewery, and the Ashton Gate Brewery into extinction at George's hands. George's in its turn has succumbed to J. Courage & Sons."

I hope in the next few *A Round with Robin* articles to touch on the history of some of the public houses in Weston-super-Mare. As well as having access to the first edition Ordnance Survey map I will be indebted to the authors of the Avon Extensive Urban Areas Survey (AEUAS). The problem with the OS map is that in some places it marks PH by the street number and other times does not, although the building is unquestionably built as a public house or hotel. The author of AEUAS has done much good research but admits "the preliminary work presented here is brief, and there is much scope for further research." As the Elm Tree at the corner of Meadow and Orchard Street is at the time of writing undergoing extensive refurbishment, it is worth noting that it was in use by 1861 (Kelly) and was substantially intact when AEUAS surveyed it with the entrance doors, toilets and coved ceilings all being original. It was first recorded as a commercial building and was built prior to 1841. I wonder how much we have lost and will it reopen with real ale again?

Robin E Wild



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# Spring turns into Summer

AS Spring ended I was told by a young lady to seek the services of a taxidermist and so I went to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery in Exeter. This is not only near to where Brunel was aiming the railway that just missed Weston-super-Mare but also the repository of many large stuffed animals. Having been told something about dropping dead before they could help me, I sought solace in the local Good Book hosteleries. Devon has the cream of them they say.

The **Great Western Hotel**, which possibly featured as a saloon in such movies, is just across the forecourt from Brunel's station. Its regulars included Adnams Broadside and Timothy Taylor Landlord, plus Bass and the local Branscombe Vale Branoc, and O'Hanlon's Yellowhammer and Royal Oak. Guests were Dent Kamikaze, Cottage Clifton Ale (4.3 per cent ABV) meant to celebrate Brunel 200, Fuller's London Pride, the rotating Downton Chimera Quadhop (3.9 per cent) and the local Countrylife Golden Pig (4.7 per cent) premium ale. I found the Loco Bar very accommodating.

Not far from Exeter Central rail station is the **City Gate**, possibly named after the way patrons walk after leaving the pub. It had the aptly-named Young's Waggledance, brewed with liquor from their own Wells and delivered by Bedford truck. Also their Special Premium Ale and Bitter, which is how some people feel about things. There was additionally the very quaffable seasonal St George's full-bodied English Ale (4.3 per cent). You do not have to put drag on to drink this.

The still traditional **Well House Tavern** is obviously nowhere near the hospital but just in front of the Cathedral. It runs promotions with the ninth pint free and beer trips. I have those too, always hoping they are with an empty glass. The half dozen ales are complemented by Rich's Farmhouse Cider (6 per cent) from Highbridge. There are local Otter ale

regulars, although for me the temperature of the Otter Head seemed perfect. As did the Well House Ale, a house re-badged Otter Ale. Some guests were from Wiltshire, including Archers Swindon Strong Bitter, at 5 per cent ABV not really a training beer. Also Stonehenge Spire Ale, as served in the MI5 staff bar. Somerset was represented by Cotleigh Tawny Bitter. Morris sides have been known to visit the pub as a minor attraction.

The **Globe Inn** in Newtown is a bit out of the centre so one could go by balloon. Smoking at the bar does not cause friction, or vice versa if one is reasonably well-oiled. There is live music or theatre every day, except when there is Story Telling. In the pub that is, not when the regulars finally arrive home. The local Topsham and Exminster Ferryman (4.4 per cent) is a regular. As one has to cross a river and a canal to get from Topsham to Exminster, the name seems reasonable, especially as it's a bit out in the Styx. Another local is O'Hanlon's refreshing Firefly Bitter 3.7 per cent session beer. Sounds as if it could be a bit painful.

For football fans and students, there is the **Brook Green Tavern**, which sounds like Shepherds Bush. It is by St James' Park rail station, which sounds more like Newcastle United than Exeter City, especially as the pub is black and white. On offer are half a dozen ales with regulars Butcombe Bitter, Fuller's London Pride and Timothy Taylor Landlord. He seems to have a lot of pubs. Guests include O'Hanlon's Yellowhammer, Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Courage Directors Bitter, probably because they are bored.

On the canal, or actually a bit to one side, is the **Double Locks Hotel**. This was once a lock-keeper's cottage so presumably had a hairdresser's. Regulars are Branscombe Vale Branoc, O'Hanlon's Royal Oak, Young's Special and Bitter, and Otter Bright. Obviously not the one from Wind in the Willows.

The Guests include the local Jollyboat Freebooter, O'Hanlon's Red Ale and Scattor Rock Valley Stomper and also Young's Waggledance.

As I left the city

for Taunton, the roads were closed and a brass band was playing. I was thus convinced that my presence had been detected but, alas, it was just part of the latest regimental regroupings. Either they did not see me or the rifles were not loaded and so I went on my way.

Taunton has only two entries in the Good Book. The **Wyvern Club** is out of town but I happily followed the signs to the nearby Fruit Farm. The club is run by Councillors so, although it has low prices, it is evenings only except Sundays even if an afternoon cricket match is being played. It had the regular Exmoor Ale with guests Butcombe Blonde and Hop Back Summer Lightning. This may refer to the return stroke or, more probably, what one does when struck by lightning. There was great excitement in the club as Tetley's nitrokeg was to be replaced, hopefully by a new guest. Those who wish to know more may do so at the beer festival October 13 to 15.

Harpoon Louies by the rail station has real ale at £2.30 or £1.90 if you are there before 7 pm Monday to Friday (and Saturday if you smile.) The regular is Otter Ale and I found a guest Sharp's Eden Ale, celebrating the Eden Project and possibly brewed using fig leaves. One would have thought a cider more appropriate, Adam's ale being a bit insipid. There was also Cotleigh 25 Anniversary Ale (4.0 per cent), to celebrate Cotleigh's Jubilee Anniversary in 2004. Professor Geoff Palmer, OBE at Heriot-Watt University helped come up with this new brew. The Uni offers courses, research and services. Harpoon Louies has some excellent fish courses, so the Prof is right to offer a service to humanity researching beers.

Falling asleep on the train home, I finished up in the Royal Forest of Dean at the **Fountain Inn** in Parkend. That's three 'ins' without an 'out'. The inn with two 'n's, but no ducks as no one is out, has three ales. These included Freeminer Bitter, for which I had to pay due to my advanced years. One may wish to try the celery soup downstairs in the beer garden. If it is too hot, there is a vintage fire engine nearby. This is presumably filled from the Fountain, which has a four poster bedroom but does not say for which films these are.

Dr John



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I was told by a young lady to seek the services of a taxidermist. So what brings you here?

## Weston Whispers (pub and beer news)

FOR those of you who get this in time, there are various festivals being held around the end of August and beginning of September. In Weston, **The Raglan** is holding a real ale and real music festival from 25 to 28 August. The Sunday (27th) promises to be a bit bizarre. A Beach Party is being held ... inside the pub! The sand has been ordered. Garish shirts and shorts welcome. Phone 01934 418470 for more details.

**The New Inn, Cross** is holding another of its regular Bank Holiday weekend festivals. More info on this one on 01934 732455.

The first Saturday in September (the 2nd) sees the first ever beer festival at **The Crown, Axbridge**. This day is "Somerset Showcase" day in Axbridge, an all-day extravaganza that does what it says on the tin: day celebrating local food, drink, music and traditions in the historic setting of Axbridge. The organizer,

Jennifer Trotman, is a CAMRA member and she has persuaded Ian, the landlord of the Crown to hold a beer festival. This will feature a beer from every Somerset brewery – £2 a pint and no admission charge. Contact 01934 732518 for more info.

Looking back a few weeks, **The Ashcombe** held a beer and music festival over the weekend of 15 and 16 July. Unfortunately, not many knew about it. A cock-up at the local press meant that their advertisement was published a week late. The only reason I knew about the festival was from driving past on the day and seeing a notice outside. (Memo to all landlords: please let CAMRA know if you are having a beer festival – attending these is our hobby!)

The selection of ales was limited to six, which was probably just as well given the lack of publicity. These were East Street Cream

and Pitchfork from RCH, Bass, Skinner's Betty Stogs, Sharp's Doom Bar and Webb's Black Widow. All ales were straight from the cask and decent value at £2 a pint. Real ciders too. A very pleasant evening was spent in the garden sampling the ales.

As reported elsewhere, **The Woolpack** at St Georges has recently been taken over by Butcombe Brewery. There is no question that if any company was going to buy the pub, then there are few better than Butcombe and we hope that they will bring some much-needed consistency to the beer quality at the Woolpack. However, it is always a sad day in CAMRA circles when a free house (such as this was) is sold. This can result in one less outlet for small, independent breweries to get their products in to, resulting in less choice for the consumer. Butcome though do allow their landlords to have some guest beers.

*Tim Nickolls*

## Beyond our Sven - a football abstainer writes...

A Scottish friend of mine, Colin, opted to visit on the day of England's first World Cup match, so we decided to see if it was possible to spend a day pubbing it whilst avoiding the football! I'm as patriotic as the next man, but I hate being in a pub jam-packed with lagered-up blokes all shouting at the TV... like it makes a difference! Where to go though, Bath or Bristol? During the walk to Weston railway station we decided on Bath for various reasons, the main one being that Colin wanted to go there and he's bigger than me. We arrived at the station with sufficient time before the train's departure to have a quick pint of RCH IPA in **Off The Rails**. As you do.

A pleasingly quick and uneventful journey followed by the first of many a leisurely walk through the sun-drenched streets of Bath found us in **The Star**, where despite several tempting alternatives it just had to be two pints of Bass from the jug! Still one of my favourite pubs, just a shame that it's in the wrong city.

Across the road, down and round the corner into Walcot Street and there's **The Bell**. We were at the mercy of the students behind the bar, whose leisurely attitude (must have been the heat) meant that it took 15 minutes for our two Summer Lightnings to arrive. Perfect beer for a beautiful hot, sunny day. So far, so good – no sign of the football yet!

A moderate potter led us past several pubs (from which emanated hoots, squawks and groans that can only be produced by the vociferous televised sports viewer) to **The Old Green Tree**, where we were rudely slapped in the face by two pints of Wickwar's Mr Perretts – not a wise choice given the intended duration of our journey and the outside temperature, but it's terribly difficult to refuse such a fantastic beer. Not that we tried too hard.

We then fell into **The Salamander**, which

was pleasingly empty apart from us and a charming barmaid who my Celtic chum tried to chat up in vain – it seems that Latvians struggle to understand a Glaswegian accent (well, that was her excuse anyway). We each had a pint of Spa in a futile attempt to redress the balance after our overly strong choice at the previous pub. Spa is still one of my favourite beers, and was rather refreshing today.

Out of the door and turned right, and walked straight into **The Raven**. Very convenient indeed! While supping my pint of Abbey Bellringer I noticed the plaque detailing the award of Bath CAMRA Pub of the Year. This struck me as odd seeing as how this pub wasn't in the Good Beer Guide. The chap behind the bar seemed equally baffled. It seems that God isn't the only one who moves in mysterious ways. (*Simply a matter of timing, the selections for the Guide having been made the previous year. Ed.*) Mind you, upon leaving we found that our movements were becoming increasingly mysterious too.

It was at this stage we decided to head back to Bristol and explore the area around St. Michael's Hill. A taxi ride (didn't fancy the walk up St. Michael's Hill) from Temple Meads brought us to **The Highbury Vaults** where I chose a cracking pint of Young's Bitter, which is a very underestimated beer. Very tasty for a 3.7 per cent beer. Still no football yet!

After a longer walk than anticipated (following directions from a Welsh chap of questionable helpfulness) we arrived at **The Hare on the Hill** where we were unable to refuse the Bath Ales Wild Hare. A ludicrously short hop (continuing the 'hare' theme) to **The Hillgrove Porter Stores**, where we enjoyed a nice pint of Wadworth 6X.

Still no sign of the football, so we made our way to **Zero Degrees** for a couple of their Black Lagers – very good indeed. We followed

them up with some IPA which was also jolly good. Again, due to the lack of a TV the place was virtually deserted. We decided to head off to **The Commercial Rooms** for a well-earned pint of Diet Coke each, but our poor choice of route meant that we had to try and walk past **The White Lion** in the centre, and as it would have been rude not to go in, we each had a pint of Wickwar IKB which continued the form of the day by being excellent. There was a TV in here but for some delightful reason it was tuned to something other than football. Result!

We finally made it to The Commercial Rooms where we had two pints of Diet Coke each, which lulled us into a false sense that everything (both physical and mental) was fine and dandy, so much so that we tottered off with renewed intent toward **The Cornubia** where I am afraid to say we had to have the Warsteiner. An excellent German lager, and most refreshing on such a hot day. This was the straw that broke two camels' backs, and we decided to head back to the desert.

Unfortunately, on the way we succumbed to the charms of **The Reckless Engineer**, and managed to see off a pint of Otter each. Since I cannot recall any complaints I have to assume that this too was a fine beer.

We somehow managed to find Temple Meads and ended up back at **Off The Rails** – RCH IPA again! After a very brief discussion we decided to forego the temptation offered by **The Raglan**, and undertake instead the short stagger to **The Bristol Hotel** where we had our final beer of the day – Butcombe Bitter. I have long believed that this pub consistently serves the best pint of Butcombe that I have ever had, and today was no exception.

All in all, a very successful day. Two marvellous centres of beer availability explored and not one minute of the football to spoil it. Good company, great pubs and cracking beers in each one. Roll on Euro 2008!

Fantastic!

*Graham Robinson*



# The Fall of the House of Usher: a po-faced tale of takeover, turnover and beer

USHER'S Brewery was founded at Trowbridge in 1824. By the time it merged with Watney Mann in 1960, it had an estate of around 900 pubs. The brewery and its name survived the merger, as well as the acquisition of Watney Mann by Grand Metropolitan in 1972.

Then in the late 'eighties came the "beer orders," designed to curb the power of the "Big Six" – the six brewers responsible for around 80% of beer production. One of them was Grand Metropolitan. It was laid down that no brewer should own more than 2,000 pubs, loan ties should be abolished to prevent the effective takeover of free houses, and every pub should have at least one guest beer.

The beer orders may have been well intentioned, but the breweries soon spotted a loophole that made them an irrelevance. Courage and Grand Met did a deal, swapping pubs and breweries: Courage would concentrate on brewing; Grand Met formed a company called Innpreneur to run the pubs.

In this new climate, Usher's suddenly found itself facing closures. This was averted by a management buyout in 1991. After 31 years, Usher's was once again an independent brewery, with an estate of 433 pubs. For a time all went well. Then, in 1999, Usher's merged with the Alehouse company to create a pub company with around 800 pubs. A year later, the company changed its name to Innspired Pubs PLC. Shortly afterwards, the Trowbridge brewery, despite running at full capacity, was recommended for closure because the Innspired accountants considered it "not cost effective." What this meant was that, because of its town centre location, the site was ripe for redevelopment.

Once again, a management buyout was attempted, but was unsuccessful. One hundred and seventy-six years of brewing history came to an end at midday on Wednesday 16 August 2000. The occasion was low key, the chief executive of Innspired having decreed it inappropriate for the event to be marked by any sort of celebration. The site was later cleared to make way for redevelopment.

So much for the brewery – what of the pubs?

In September 2004, Innspired, which now had an estate of 1,064 pubs, was acquired by Punch Taverns, the second largest Pubco in the country. Their first move was to sell 51 Innspired pubs, plus 37 from its own portfolio "to address specific areas of local concentration" (whatever that means).

Two months later, following a strategic review of the Innspired estate, 545 of its pubs that had "been identified as non-core to Punch's long-term strategy" were disposed of to Pubfolio Ltd for £162.5M (just under £300,000 a pub). The 545 pubs selected were those with an "average outlet profit" of £29,000 a year. The average outlet profit of the 471 pubs retained by Punch was £52,000.

In other words, Punch, having acquired the Innspired estate, promptly divested itself of the less profitable half of it to concentrate on the more profitable half.

Giles Thorley, chief executive of Punch, said after the deal had been agreed that, "this transaction demonstrates Punch's ability to create value by acquiring pub assets, retaining those that meet our criteria and disposing profitably of the remainder, thereby further enhancing our estate. The Innspired pubs being retained share the stable and sustainable business characteristics of Punch's pubs, providing enduring and evolving appeal in the community now and in the future." He added that the company had opted for a quick disposal of the 545 pubs to take advantage of the buoyant property market.

Pubfolio, the company that acquired the pubs disposed of by Punch, had been formed in 2004, when it acquired 157 pubs from Enterprise. The acquisition of the 545 Punch pubs made it the tenth largest pubco in the UK. The Pubfolio mission statement, taken from its website, reads as follows:

"The Pubfolio group strategy focuses totally on the leased and tenanted sector of the market, to improve the quality of pubs, and to offer a free of tie lease. The company believes that there are many entrepreneurs willing to utilise their skills, given security of tenure, and access to a portfolio of brands second to none at massively discounted prices. We offer 10-25 year leases (assignable after three years) which allows the leaseholder to gain equity in the lease, and to have the confidence to invest in the future."

Pubfolio's pubs are managed by County Estate Management (Pubs) Ltd. County Estate Management, founded over 15 years ago, is one of the leading companies offering advice and specialist services within the residential property management sector. Their management portfolio encompasses 15,000 residential units in London, Bristol, and the South East.

Years ago, when a brewery was taken over – when Courage acquired George's, for example – nobody was left in any doubt what had happened. A new corporate identity was stamped on its tied houses, and the name of the new brewery was emblazoned on walls, signs, pump clips and beer mats. Today, when a pub company acquires a new portfolio of pubs, the event is marked by little more than a column or two in trade journals and the



business pages of the national press. Many pubs in the West Country and beyond still carry the name Usher's on their signs, over five years after the brewery closed. Most drinkers in ex-Usher's pubs would be hard pushed to name the pubco that owns their local. But why the reticence? It isn't as though corporate branding has fallen out of fashion – far from it. So why don't pubcos want the people who use their pubs to know who owns them? Is it because, in the rollercoaster world of high finance, asset disposal and portfolio management, change of ownership is likely to be so frequent as to make establishment of corporate identity meaningless – or is it because they just don't want you to know?

*Andrew Swift*

## A new pub on the block in Bath

THE last week in July saw the reopening – after five years – of Broadley's on Gascoyne Place, just across from the Theatre Royal. A pioneer of the real ale revival in the 1970s, and notorious as the last pub in the city to have a men only bar, by the time it closed in 2001 it had slipped down the rankings somewhat and was pulling in a young, rather indiscriminate crowd. The *Itchy Bath Guide* for 2001 regarded its impending closure as inevitable, but added that its loss would not be too keenly felt.

Five years on, after extensive renovations and the refitting of the interior with green tiles and a mezzanine floor, Broadley's is back as the **Gascoyne Place Pub**. Spotting a pair of handpumps through the window one Friday lunchtime, I popped in to investigate, only to be told that there was no real ale on offer, but "there might be some next week." When I asked what the beers were likely to be, "Butcombe and Something Else" was the reply. A return visit will be made in the not too distant future, when I hope to be able to file a report on the beers from the elusive Something Else Brewery.

*Andrew Swift*

# Island in the sea

By your Nailsea, Clevedon, Backwell & District team of correspondents

*I regret that because of holidays and other commitments my report must be short this quarter, and I am including some pictures this time of pubs, etc, that I report on in Nailsea.*



Mizzymead Social Club

The **Mizzymead Social Club** continues to provide Courage Best, Butcombe Bitter and a changing guest ale.



White Lion

Louise Thomas, licensee of the **White Lion** in Nailsea tells me that she has convinced her locals to give her back her guest pump! Courage Best, Butcombe Bitter are the regulars and the "changing guest ale" has been New-  
man's Wolver's Ale since Christmas until July when she changed it for Bristol Beer Factory's No. 7 which has been "sailing out of the cask" says Louise, who would welcome any ideas for good, low-strength beers as a guest beer.



Queen's Head

Richard Beaton and Lucy King at the **Queen's Head** in Nailsea town centre field Green King's IPA and Old Speckled Hen as their real ales. The area in front of the pub was being fitted with an outdoor seating area enclosed with railings when I took the photo below, the back garden has already been fitted with three stepped patio areas and is looking very attractive.



Sawyers Arms

Ron Peters at the **Sawyers Arms** stocks Bath Ales Gem and Courage Best.



Old Farmhouse

The **Old Farmhouse** off Trendlewood Way stocks Badger beers.



Moorend Spout

Terry and Sharon Beardshaw have done well developing the **Moorend Spout** in Nailsea into a dining and drinking pub, with a very pleasant garden with water feature. The pub was thought to be a candidate for permanent closure until Terry and Sharon took the tenancy.

Punch Taverns have agreed to spend £150,000 on essential renovations, but a date has not yet been set. This will include replacing the upstairs electrics, which have been "condemned", replacing all windows, some of which are in a very bad state, external repainting, modification of external lighting and signage, and re-roofing and insulation of the toilet block – which used to get very parky in the winter! All of this will enable the upstairs function room to be re-opened, access being up the external staircase shown to the left of my picture. Unfortunately the only toilets are those on the ground floor, which severely limits use by disabled people.

The real ales are Bass, Butcombe Bitter

and Marston's Pedigree, and Thatcher's Premium Cask Cider is available.



Courtyard Wine Bar

The **Courtyard Wine Bar** provides Bass and/or Marston's Pedigree.

## Away from Nailsea & District

The **New Battle Axe** at Wraxall is to be congratulated; they have replaced Courage Best with Wolver's Ale as their regular ale and additionally stock another changing real ale, which was "Bite" both from the local New-  
man's Brewery in Yatton. Opening times have changed phone 01275 852645 to book a table before travelling any distance.

## And finally...

### 'Creative plumbing' delivers beer from Heaven

A woman said she thought she was in heaven when she turned on the kitchen tap to find a plentiful supply of beer. Haldis Gundersen was planning to do the washing up when she made the unusual discovery at her apartment in Kristiansund, West Norway. "I turned on the tap to clean some knives and forks, and beer came out," Ms Gundersen told Reuters news agency. "We thought we were in heaven." But the beer was flat and tasted odd, she said. Ms Gundersen bore no grudge. "If it happens again, I'm going to order Baileys," she said.

But two flights below at the Big Tower Bar, workers in a bar faced the more disappointing realisation that water was flowing from their beer taps. A worker had connected a beer barrel to the apartment water pipe by mistake; a new barrel had been misconnected to Ms Gundersen's water supply. "The water and beer pipes do touch each other, but you have to be really creative to connect them together," said Per Egil Myrvang from the local beer distributor. He helped employees to rectify the problem over the telephone. In Norway, the sale of alcohol is controlled through a state monopoly and beer prices are some of the highest in the world.

Laurie Gibney



# An evening sojourn to Clevedon

IF you fancy a summer (or autumn) evening sojourn to Clevedon, with a stroll along its famous Victorian pier, there are several seafront pubs where you could stop for a refreshing pint.

**The Campbell's Landing**, at the foot of Marine Parade and opposite the pier, draws a mixed crowd and is known locally for its music nights. They serve Greene King Old Speckled Hen, Fuller's London Pride and Courage Best as permanents and sometimes offer a guest ale such as Butcombe Bitter. During the World Cup, I watched, with the same morbid fascination that some people have for road accidents, an attempt on a yard of Thatcher's Traditional Cider (they also stock Thatcher's orange elixir, Cheddar Valley) – like the England team, it was spectacularly unsuccessful.

Just along the beach, you'll find **The Moon & Sixpence** – a Greene King inn offering Greene King's IPA, Abbot Ale and Old Speckled Hen. Moving on, you might consider cutting left up a footpath that runs from the beach to Copse Road and discovering the delights of The Royal Oak.

A favourite of mine, **The Royal Oak** has an older, more gentele crowd who know and like their beer. With no music, no food and no beer garden, people come to chat, play cards

and, well, drink beer. The new landlord, Fred Bishop, is indeed new to the whole pub scene, but has a love for real ale and has already introduced a regularly changing guest ale (at the time of writing, it was Brains SA) to accompany the two regulars, Butcombe Bitter and Courage Best. The Oak also has Thatcher's Traditional Cider – popular with many of the locals.

At the other end of the beach, with lovely views across the water, is **The Little Harp**. Another Greene King pub, they have IPA and Abbot Ale as regulars with a guest alternating between Ruddles Best and the omnipresent Old Speckled Hen. For cider fans, they do have Moles' Black Rat on draught.

A little further along the road, perched above the Salthouse Field and Marine Lake is **The Salthouse**. This big, in-ye-face, pub has the feel of a Wetherspoon's, but whilst often very busy outside in the summer months, it can be surprisingly quiet inside. The manager, Sue Ellis, is keen to support local breweries and the one guest ale pump has seen the likes of Newman's Wolver's Ale and RCH Pitchfork in recent months. It is nice to see that the permanents – Sharp's Doom Bar and the less-seen Butcombe Gold – also have a West Country flavour.

Perhaps the pick of the crop, in terms of


beer choice, is **The Old Inn** on Walton Road (the beginning of the road to Portishead). Lesley Butler, the landlady, is also keen to feature local ales and has two guest beers, often changing twice a week, in addition to the Courage Best and, yes you've guessed it, Old Speckled Hen, that they offer as regulars. The guest ales are nearly always from West Country breweries – Dorset Brewing Company beers are popular and, at the time of writing, Bath Ales' Wild Hare was on good form. Thatcher's Traditional Cider is good here too.

**The Triangle Club** in the centre of the town is a social club with an interest in ale. They have two guest ales (recently Robinson's England's Champion Ale was on offer) in addition to Courage Best and Wadworth 6X. They recently held a beer festival which might further increase the interest of members in terms of drinking something more exciting.

On the subject of beer festivals, the inaugural **Clevedon Beer Festival**, which was hoping to be held on the first weekend in September, looks in danger of being cancelled due to a lack of sponsorship. There are hopes that it might be rescheduled for next Spring.

Outside the town, **The Drum & Monkey** at Kenn has Wychwood Hobgoblin, Bass and Thatcher's Traditional Cider.

Pete Dommett



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# A Portishead pub report

## Windmill Inn, Nore Road

For many who live in the town of Portishead, the Windmill, situated next to the pitch & putt golf course, has become a bit of an institution. OK, it's a food pub, but they do it well. Food is available through every day until late – full meals with puds or just snacks if that's what you want.

There are four regular real ales – Bass, Courage Best, RCH Pitchfork and Butcombe Gold – along with two guest ales. The pub is owned by Jeff Churchill and managed by Pix and Liam.

When I visited recently, both guests were from the Hidden Brewery in Salisbury. Their beers were Quest at 4.2 per cent ABV (alcohol by volume) and Fantasy at 4.6 per cent, available for £2.30 and £2.50 respectively and both in good nick. The guest beers change every two or three days. At the time of writing, Wye Valley beers were due to follow the Hidden beers. Also on show are the usual lagers and draught ciders from Thatcher's and Blackthorn. Liam showed off the new Butcombe Blond tap through which the chilled beer – cold-filtered and kegged at the brewery – is dispensed. It is hoped it might turn a few local lager boys, via this intermediate step, to the real thing.

With a large garden with fantastic views, and no smoking at the bar and in the downstairs lounge, the place has won a well-earned reputation locally as somewhere friendly for all ages to meet.

## The Ship, Redcliffe Bay

On the coast road to Clevedon can be found a bit of a surprise: the Ship is a genuine freehouse run by husband and wife team, Vic and Debbie. Vic is a bit of a character and local wit and can usually be easily found behind the bar – being vertically unchallenged. Importantly, he keeps a mean pint and is justly proud of his cellar.

When I last went, Newman's' Wolver's and Theakston's Best were alongside the usuals, Butcombe Best and Bass. To this day I can say I've never had a bad pint here and would recommend it to anyone looking for an old-fashioned pub experience.

Meals are available lunchtimes, except Sundays.

## Royal Oak, West Hill

The Royal Oak is a genuine locals' pub, still retaining a separate bar and lounge. Courage Best is available along with ciders, including Thatcher's. Guest ales offered are often from O'Hanlon's; Martin, the pub owner, is a rare Torquay United fan and has a bit of a bent towards all things Devon. Food is provided in their café on Friday, Saturday and Sunday mornings.

When I visited recently I was lucky enough to join Martin and his wife Brenda at their round table when some of the local knights were elsewhere. Luckier still, two of O'Hanlon's beers were guesting, the appropriately named Royal Oak (£2.35 a pint) and the refreshing Yellow Hammer (£2.28 a pint). I plumped for the latter, which went down a treat. Since then, I popped in by chance on their "BOGOF" night, Wednesday, and enjoyed the Yellow-hammer for £1.14 a pint. Happy days!

## The Poacher, High Street

The Poacher is a prominent pub, nicely placed halfway along the High Street, with a large car park. Since Mark took over as landlord from his father, Ron, the emphasis on real ale seems to have increased. Mark is as good a judge of beer as he looks. Courage Best is a regular but the other real ales on show when I last visited

were Sharp's Doom Bar, Shepherd Neame Spitfire and the Butcombe Blond which I sampled (in excellent form) at £2.40 a pint.

The pub has a long-standing reputation for good, home-cooked food at lunchtimes and most evenings.

## The Phoenix Bar, High Street

Tucked behind the Ghandi Restaurant, the Phoenix is well worth the visit for lovers of Marston's Pedigree, which is regular along with Marston's Best and local ciders. It would reward anyone with a sense of quirkiness. This pub looks and feels a bit different but it's guaranteed there will be lively conversation available.

## The Black Horse, Clapton-in-Gordano

The Black Horse in Clapton-in-Gordano is only a mile or so out of town and claimed by many here in Portishead as their local. With five regular real ales – Courage Best, Butcombe Bitter, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Wadworth 6X and good old Webster's Green Label – as well as local ciders on tap, and widely used, the only thing missing, possibly, was a changing guest beer. Well there is one now! When I visited recently, the guest was Sharp's Eden Ale and I had no complaints at all.

Any one who has visited will realise how lucky we are to have the Black Horse, this wonderful, centuries-old pub.


Landlord Nick and his crew are welcoming to visitors, which can include cyclists, walkers and horsey types. This is a proper pub, with flagstone flooring, a big fireplace with a log fire for the winter, and outdoor seating (or standing) and a beer garden for warmer times. And not forgetting my personal favourite of outdoor toilets. And there plenty of characters around.

Food here is served lunchtimes Monday to Saturday.

*Neil Ravenscroft*

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# Backwell and beyond

## Shipham Beer Festival

This reporter is pleased to have attended the Shipham Beer Festival which was jointly held with the Shipham Food Festival at the superb Village Hall facility overlooking the Bristol Channel during the weekend of 1st and 2nd July. In fabulous sunny weather the weekend also featured many stands offering local produce, children's activities and excellent music in the evenings. As an inaugural event run entirely by volunteers it must be rated as a resounding success as a family event raising valuable funds for the Village Hall and local activities.

Up to twelve beers were available at the festival including offerings from Cotleigh, Wickwar, Sharp's, Newman's and Dark Star. The star in the hot weather seemed to be the 3.8 per cent golden ale Hophead from Dark Star Brewing Company. This was supported by several ciders, wines and a good range of soft drinks. Superb lunches and snacks prepared on the premises and excellent home made cakes were also very popular. It is hoped by the organisers to run a similar event next year, so watch this space and please get along to offer your support!

## George Inn, Backwell

As I write, the George is currently undergoing internal and external refurbishment

work. Still focusing on Caledonian Deuchars, Wychwood Hobgoblin and other varying guest beers on my last visit, Summer trade was noted as being reasonable. Enquiring on plans for introducing "no smoking" next Spring, the George management are still formulating their plans.

## New Inn, Backwell

Having recently changed management, the New Inn continues to feature changing real ales – Sharp's Cornish Coaster, Webster's Green Label and Fuller's London Pride on hand pump amongst occasional others. Purchasing primarily through Enterprise, the New Inn is probably generally best known locally for good food. However, the increasing profile of real ale shows the will of the management to add to its reputation. Plans are being drawn up for addressing the smoking ban in the Spring.

## Dew Drop Inn, Flax Bourton

Business here is reported as brisk, thanks not least to the Dew Drop's reputation for good value food. I found Old Speckled Hen, Otter and Courage Best on hand pump and noted the future plans to feature Newman's Wolver's Ale and possibly others. Excellent Summer trade was anticipated with the welcome here for all the family especially in the well-tended garden to the rear. No-smoking

plans are still being considered moving towards the legislation coming into force next May.

## The Old Barn, Wraxall

Superb conditioned St Austell Tribute and fine Fuller's London Pride and Butcombe were amongst the ales on offer on my last visit. With a good varying guest beer programme the Old Barn appeared very busy with many using the outside facilities.

## Backwell Village Club

This members' village club is looking to the future with its real ale programme. Often struggling to keep pace with its increasing guest beer programme, there are now plans to phase in a possible second guest ale. Also, it is hoped to feature many more speciality real ales for its members and guests who are increasingly buying from the varying real ale list. Sharp's Eden Ale, Palmer's Best, Moles Best and Studland Bay Wrecked are amongst the most popular recent features. Following the hugely successful Village Pump Beer Festival last Winter a further festival is planned for 27th to 29th October 2006. With the Club planning its future with confidence, it is hoped to introduce specific "no-smoking areas" in coming months.

*Martyn Howell*

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# Raiders of the Lost Ale

## Beer Crisis in the 21st Century

TRENDY theme pubs. What's that all about then?

I know, I know, I'm 30 years old and probably going on 75, but even a few years ago – when I may have been accused of being in the prime of youth, without a care in the world, an eye for the ladies, and a penchant for a beverage – I never, EVER saw the attraction of these places. Bar One Bar, All Bar Excellence, Excellence One Bar One, Bar One Excellence Bar. I mean, what does it all mean?!

The places look the same (tacky, uninspired, formulaic, identikit behemoths), they sound the same (oh yes, you can guarantee the barman hitting PLAY on Karaoke-laced hits at some point during the evening), they've the same atmosphere (over-crowded, slightly edgy, not totally relaxed), the people seem the same (cloned reproductions of each other – hair, clothes, attitude), and the beer – and I use the word as lightly as a very light thing which is extremely light indeed – is, well, who knows WHAT it is? (super iced, flavourless, over-priced dishwasher).

I just never have and never will get it. And yet these places – churned out with monotonous, worrying and multi-national regularity – insist on priding themselves at the ultimate in high sophistication, supposedly combining drinking, eating, clubbing and socialising as one complete, cross-functioning, fusion experience (I made that up, but you can imagine it being used as the tag line to promote one of these ten-a-penny booze houses).

The fact remains that there has never, ever been anything remotely high fallutin', elitist, or sophisticated about drinking. And yet, listen to the marketing men, the guys in the suits who cream off the profits of the young, naive, gullible and stupid from their latest enterprising little so-so wannabe trendy bar, and they'd have you believe it was the most up-market thing in the world.

Years ago, it seemed to be different (least, to my eyes). At the end of a busy week you ventured to the local with your mates, had eight pints of Moorish Maureen's Busty Apron (5.5 per cent ABV), went home, crashed on the bed, saw the ceiling spin for ten minutes, then woke up the next morning with a blistering headache and desperate need for the aspirin. There was nothing remotely sophisticated or up-market about it. At all. Fair enough, I MIGHT have scoffed back a bag of pork scratchings. I may even have asked the barman for a packet of crisps (with little blue bag of salt) with a pickled egg in it. But those were rarities. Darn it, those were LUXURIES! I never had a Milky Mud Slide or a Sex on the Beach or a glass of red/orange/green alternating-coloured cocktails with less alcoholic content than a bottle of water and even less change from a tenner.

Now the basic premise of good, old-fashioned drinking in a good old-fashioned pub has been twisted, contorted and perverted into

something now unrecognisable to the folk who remembered the days of a fine pint in a fine ale house. And that's another thing .... ale houses. What happened to them? Or more so, what IS happening to them? They're slowly being closed down one by one, replaced by faceless corporate hell holes, pertaining to be places of eating and drinking superiority, but with none of the knowledge, know-how, simplicity and charm of the very places they are slowly making relics of the past.

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has battled against this kind of lunacy for many years, with each year becoming more and more aggressive in a bid to save the smaller independent REAL pubs as the competition from the multi-nationals becomes fiercer and fiercer. And it's all a worrying trend that is rendering anything with real quality or character obsolete. And those are the two main traits that this new wave of pseudo-pubs and wannabe-bars lack every time a new one is launched with an opening night that's crass and vulgar and distasteful and that sets the tone for the rest of its existence – quality and character.

Everything has to be spic and span, coated with an immaculate sheen of showiness, where the paint burns your nostrils and the decor blinds your retinas. But what's wrong with emporiums from the spit and sawdust years? What's wrong with going to a pub and seeing the barrels lined up behind the bar? What's wrong with having the regular Ol' Jack with his faithful canine companion sat in the corner nursing a pint of Smiles Heritage? What's wrong with going to a pub where there's more of a conversation and relaxed atmosphere than an exchange of bolshy attitude and fake machismo? I'll tell you what's wrong with it – absolutely NOTHING!

It's reasonable to say and fair enough to accept that there are different places for different people, and your as-always popular watering hole is no different from any other place that caters for a mass market that needs to constantly quench its thirst. I'm not bemoaning that. What I AM bemoaning is the ever-expanding, constantly growing, increasing body-snatcher pod-like invasion of like-for-like drinking edifices which are threatening to blot the landscape and make it more and more difficult to turn back the clock.

These aren't rose-tinted glasses. These aren't eyes that are getting all misty, recalling the halcyon days of years gone by. But they ARE eyes that are NOT blind to the excruciating, painful reality that will continue to roll out unless something is done and action is taken.

Is it no small wonder that these places crash and burn within a matter of months, only to be resurrected as another pitiful, woeful incarnation not that dissimilar from its previous life, only with a new and improved name and a fresh coat of fluorescent paint? Is it no small wonder that these places don't have the skill, the product, the staff, the longevity to sustain themselves? Of course not. There

are a handful of pubs in Bristol that have been going strong (and hopefully, will CONTINUE to go strong) for many, many years.

To think of Bristol without pubs like the Cornubia, Punch Bowl, Hare on the Hill, Bag O'Nails, Plume of Feathers, Highbury Vaults is, well, unthinkable. But I am confident that these pubs will stay exactly where they are because, one, they are fantastic, cosy, welcoming, traditional pubs, and, two, if anyone DID attempt to shut it down to make way for, say, a block of unaffordable flats for a bunch of people who can't afford to live in them (seems to be the trend), then there would be such a backlash and revolt that any top exec would be left wincing and holding his extremely damaged crown jewels.

Look at the waterfront – not only a hotbed for weekend violence and yobbery, but also a classic example of endless bars changing names, changing licensees, changing designs, changing promotions, changing styles. All in a bid to rejuvenate and re-invent an image and attitude that is characteristically interwoven and synonymous with all that is loathsome and distasteful about contemporary drinking places. And just because they serve nachos or tapas or rabbit food with a splash of mustard dressing and a single cheese shaving on a funny shaped plate, it doesn't make the place any better. They can't out-jump their own shadows.

The only thing you can do – as I have done several times – is to write to your MP when you hear of an imminent pub closure or some grand design to transform a pub into a new property chain by some suit who's never even visited the city.

Locals are called exactly that because they have survived over the countless years through the respect and support of its closest customers. New bars won't have loyal custom because their punters are barely loyal to themselves. These are self-obsessed, over-indulgent, delusional, over-priced, hedonistic times – and that is exactly what the Bar One Excellence Room Bar Limiteds of this world blatantly and sickeningly represent, where style washes over content, and where people demand the same, more of the same and nothing else because they know no better.

Remember the independent cinemas before the arrival of the multiplexes? Our local pubs will surely go the same way if we don't make regular visits for a pint of Barnstormer (you won't get ripped off, either, AND you'll get a full pint without a derisory frown from the barman when you ask him to 'top it up, please').

So, support your local pub. Remember and embrace what's great about the fine British drinking history, tradition and heritage – the smaller venues need all the help they can get, and if we vote with our feet, it will remain the heritage and tradition it must remain, rather than the history it could sadly become if we don't.

*Jamie Caddick*



# It must be Silly Season

There now follows a press release from Alan "Bad News" Morgan, managing director of the Abbey Ales Brewery in Bath.

## *Pints make Prizes!*

Two Bath pubs are in the running for a major industry award for the way they serve the quintessential British pint of Bellringer.

The Star Inn on the Paragon and the Coeur de Lion in the city centre at Northumberland Place, have made the shortlist of the top two Abbey Ales pubs in the area.

Now they will be visited by a judge who will mark the pub on the quality of its pints, customer service, hygiene and staff training.

The Bath area champion will be announced soon and then another round of judging will take place next month so both pubs pick up maximum publicity and both can be winners.

Alan Morgan, who owns both pubs, said: "We're really excited about this. There has been a lot of hard work and commitment from our staff to get this far and now I want to keep this going. The mystery judge angle will be quite interesting as it's me. It is important that both managers are aware that I can be bribed."

It is not the first time Abbey Ales, which

started brewing nine years ago, has proved it is a better pub operator than most.

In March, the Star became the one of only a handful of pubs to pick up the Bellringer Quality Award followed in April by the Coeur de Lion.

Run by Abbey Ales and Bellringer, its prize-winning best bitter, the award, known as "Ringer", is only given to pubs which sell good quality Bellringer and have high levels of customer service and are owned by Abbey Ales.

"I want to be the best in the business," said Mr Morgan. "I want us to brew the best possible product and give the customer the best possible experience, and, at the end of the day, be the best Abbey Ales pub in the city."

Paul Waters, manager of the Star said: "With such a high calibre of entrants this year, it will be extremely tough for the judges to make a decision."

"Quality and service within the brewery industry continues to rise and it's important that the hard work of the Abbey Ales pubs be recognised," added Julian Waters, manager of Abbey Ales' other pub, the Coeur de Lion.

*Spot the Spoof. All complaints to Alan Morgan on 01225 444437 or 07711 118441.*



Bad News

# Avon Packet



Legendary? An institution? There are fewer and fewer pubs that can claim that distinction in Bristol, but I can certainly count the Avon Packet (on Coronation Road, Southville) as one.

The Avon Packet is undoubtedly one of the most characterful pubs in Bristol, and it's likely that if you visit once, you'll be back time and time again.

The licensee of the Packet is Steve Davis who, at 25 years, is reputedly now the longest-serving landlord in Bristol, a remarkable achievement in an age when so many landlords seem to change with the weather.

As well as Steve himself, what gives the pub so much character? In summer time, take a look at the "bear pit" located the rear of the pub in the garden. This was historically said to have been used for bear baiting (a highly unusual feature in a pub) ... but was it really? While you're in the back say hello to the resident ducks, who animatedly prance around in their pen and throughout the garden. If you like the sun, why not take advantage of the sun-trap beer garden, with umbrellas for those who like to stay in the shade? For those with kids, there's a very decent play area where they can amuse themselves.

Open all day (11 to 11, and 12 to 10.30 on Sundays), the real ales are Courage Best and Bass, and for the lovers of cider (my favourite tippie) there's always an excellent pint of Thatcher's Dry, usually served in a mug. It's always a popular venue on our "cider saunters", which occur a couple of times a year. Another unusual feature is that the food, which is home-made and very good, is served right up until closing time and is extremely economically priced, £3 being the highest price you have to pay at the time of writing! The hot meat rolls are legendary, and the cheese and onion rolls are always well worth a try as well.

A green tiled exterior, a handy collection of key fobs and real characters in the bar (one had his own stool especially made to sit on), and sport on the TV also add to the ambience. It's also a great pub to have a pre-match pint in if you are of the Bristol City persuasion.

I hope that my ramblings will encourage readers of this magazine to go there sooner rather than later. Cheers and wassail!

Richard Walters

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## READERS' LETTERS

Readers are welcome to send letters to Pints West Editor, Steve Plumridge, Garden Flat, 6 Royal York Villas, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4JR

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

### King's Arms, Brislington

Dear Steve,

Just a quick note to thank you for mentioning us on page 5 of your Summer 2006 issue and to say "keep up the good work" as Pints West is always an informative and enjoyable read.

We also have a little feedback for you. Your article mentioned that we have chosen Bristol Beer Factory No. 7 as our resident ale, however this is not quite correct. Courage Best will always remain on tap due to its popularity, especially with our older customers, although we understand, not least of all from one of your very funny articles on a pub crawl in one of Bristol's suburbs, that it may not be everybody's first choice for real ale. And Courage do give us a lot of support.

We then have shared residency between Bristol Beer Factory No. 7 and Bath Ales Gem which we alternate on around a fortnightly basis. Both are very popular with our regulars and they like the variety provided by alternating them. We then offer a good variety of guest ales. We try to support as many local breweries as we can but of course we do move further afield to keep it interesting. We have featured approximately 70 to 80 guest brews in the last year. We are also looking to introduce another beer engine soon so hopefully this will continue to increase.

We bought the lease on the King's Arms just over a year ago (our anniversary party last month was a great get-together) and, at that time, only Courage Best was being served. Reconfiguring the bar helped us achieve one of our objectives, which was to turn the King's into a place where lovers of real ales could get a great pint. We have refurbished inside and recently opened our new beer garden which is proving very popular in this balmy weather. We are taking everything one step at a time and getting there slowly but surely.

We are only a small pub but nevertheless we are looking to put on a mini beer festival on Saturday 30th September and Sunday 1st October. We are still in the planning stages at the moment but envisage five brews, with Bath Ales being our major contributor, and other

contributions from Bristol Beer Factory and, we hope, Abbey Ales. We are looking to have some lively live music on the Saturday night and live music also on the Sunday afternoon, although a little more mellow for those who like a Sunday dinner-time session. Details are still to be finalised but we will keep in touch once we have everything arranged as this is hopefully something in which Pints West may be interested.

We also recently applied for joint CAMRA membership so we are looking forward to keeping up-to-date with all the news and getting out and about ourselves to a few festivals.

Kind regards,

Jan Ostefeld and Brain Warren  
(Co-Licensees)

King's Arms

1 Hollywood Road, Brislington  
Bristol BS4 4LF, Tel: 0117 9715515  
[kingsarmsbrislington@btinternet.com](mailto:kingsarmsbrislington@btinternet.com)

### Sunday Lunch

Hi,

I was reading through an earlier online edition of the magazine Pints West and read an article about Sunday lunches. At the bottom it asked for any recommendations for pubs serving a good Sunday lunch. I would like to recommend the Barrs Court in Longwell Green.

Carrie Hale  
(by email).

### Advice sought

Steve,

I am recently retired and have for some time been thinking about buying a pub here in the south west. My concern is that I would not be able to run it single-handed and would want to have a good manager in place from the outset. The problem is that I don't know how to go about finding a good manager, hence this email. Would somebody be able to offer any suggestions or pointers?

Geoff Iles,  
Bristol.  
[ilesallsmiles@btinternet.com](mailto:ilesallsmiles@btinternet.com)

# John Does Wetherspoon

WHEN I was younger and had my own brewery, I spent my summers investigating what the Greeks, Romans and others did us for. Now impecunious, I use them to see what **JD Wetherspoon** can do for us. This year, I had a look round Bristol.

In Bedminster, the **Robert Fitzharding** (no Ella Fitzgerald jokes please) has over half a dozen well-chosen ales and half that number of equally special ciders. There are plenty of books in its lending library but one should remember that drinking through a reed may lead to inebriation.

The **Knights Templar**, which is also open days, is a modern Crystal Palace handy for Temple Meads and with a wide range of local and distant ales. It is often crowded and one has to signal the well-trained bar staff for service. Wedding parties may arrive in a carriage.

At the bottom of the Clifton Triangle is the **Berkeley**. Its hunting associations are the origin of the derogatory term "berk". No, not he of the peerage better known as Peeping Tom. It derives from a contraction of the rhyming slang "Berkeley Hunt" whose etymology I will explore no further as some readers may be of a delicate disposition. The pub does about eight ales and a couple of good local ciders.

Up Church Road in Redfield is **St. George's Hall**. There one is completely safe from the dragon. Not only does it have over half a dozen ales, including some interesting guests, but also a couple of good ciders.

On Regent Street, the **Kingswood Colliers**, with up to eight ales, commemorates the local miners and so children are welcome.

On the High Street, the **Staple Hill Oak** can do over half a dozen ales that one may sink whilst reading about the Titanic.

On Fishponds Road, the **Van Dyke Forum**, possibly named after a discussion on how to get a Transit out of a rhyme, has about eight on. As it was a bingo hall it may well have tables numbered up to 75 or 90. It is rumoured that Spotted Dick may be ordered with the meals when Mary Poppins is being shown on TV. The painter van Dyck won a Tony for that.

I thought Lloyds was in London but there is a **Lloyds No 1 Bar V-Shed** somewhat appropriately on the Waterfront with about as many excellent ciders as ales on the main deck. If one has to go up to the poop deck there is another fine selection.

For aching feet in Corn Street, the non-smoking gas-lit **Commercial Rooms** date back to 1811. Just after ten past six that is. It is good for watching the girls and guys go by whilst sampling the best part of a dozen ales, some maybe Belgian. Felix Farley's Bristol Journal of 1817 is there if you wish to be the tenant of the Blue Bowl at Compton Martin. Or spend 25 guineas a year to send your daughter to the Establishment for the Education of Young Ladies in Hereford run by Miss Croucher, who presumably taught them to curtsy.

*Dr John*

# Poetry Corner

## Great British Beer Festival Mk III

Two years ago I stood outside  
The Cornubia waiting for a ride  
Unfortunately one day late  
To stay in Bristol was my fate

Last year no one ever told me  
That to Reading the trip would be  
So I just simply stayed at home  
And for Pints West wrote a bad pome

This year it was my lucky three  
And the Old Slug Porter I did see  
Sinking an Abbey Ales White Friar  
Whilst a Butcombe Blond I did admire

*Dr John*



## Pub news

● After a long period closed and looking unlikely ever to open again, the Masons Arms in Old Market has reopened as *Prague*, aimed at the gay community. No real ale, sadly, but at least it hasn't been converted to flats.

● Also rising Lazarus-like from the dead is the *Albion* in Cumberland Road. Closed for months and months, and with application submitted to convert to flats, it suddenly reopened in July. Goodness knows what the long term future is, but fingers crossed.

● The *Stapleton Road Tavern* just round the corner was, at the time of going to press, closed again and boarded up. A chequered history for this pub, but hopefully it will find some stability soon.

● In St Paul's, the *St Nicholas House* is sadly closed and boarded up at the moment, though the *Inkerman* did, as expected, reopen after its refurbishment.

● The *Star* in Pucklechurch now sells Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Courage Best. Sadly no sign of the Bass brought up in jugs from the cellar.

*Duncan Shine*

## Happy Birthday, Royal Oak

IT was party-time at the Royal Oak on the Lower Bristol Road in Bath on Saturday 5th August. Becky and John Whinnerah reopened the pub just a year ago amid doubts that a pub which had been closed for so long and is so far from the city centre could succeed. There were also mutters about the ten hand pumps they had installed – the Bell in Walcot Street, a prime situation, was the only other Bath pub which offered such a choice of beers. Were the Whinnerahs mad?

A year on, the Royal Oak is a remarkable success which has shown that they were not. It now boasts a small but delightful beer garden, does food without losing its character as a pub, and John's skilful management of the cellar has brought the pub a loyal following. This has been

boosted by the regular music nights, the display of art on the walls and the book club.

On party-night, all the ten pumps were in full use, with the normal pump-clips replaced by Royal Oak specials, produced by Heidi, one of the pub's faithful supporters. Among the beers was a birthday special by Blindman's and an Anniversary Ale by Downton. Downton Brewery created a strawberry flavoured beer for the folk festival held in July – the Anniversary Ale was flavoured with apricots.



*Becky says thank you while John is just overcome*

Forget Belgian-style fruit beers – these Wiltshire beers are not overly sweet or too strongly flavoured – the fruit gives an extra dimension to the beer without being intrusive. Another beer with a fruity flavour was Icen Brewery's Raspberry Wheat Beer, while Downton had also contributed a Polish ale. Amongst the rest were a wedding ale, a cream ale

and Rebellion Brewery's IPA. Also on tap was perry – apparently hard to find after a poor pear crop last year.

The party mood was maintained by a local band, one of whose members, known as Blues Player John, is yet another signed-up member of the Whinnerah fan club. Perhaps one of the happiest moments of the night came with a presentation to John and Becky of an album of

photographs. This included some historic pictures of the pub, but was also a record of some of the events that have been held there during their first year. The launch of Matthew's Brewery and of course the recent Folk and Beer Festival are just two which spring to mind. The night was a splendid occasion celebrating a most successful first year. Like all the pub's fans, I wish the Whinnerahs even greater success in the future.

*Kirsten Elliott*

## Cornwall came to Bath

IT was Thursday evening and temperatures were hitting the high 30's as we headed through the tourist centre of Bath, to our destination, The Star Inn.

The manager Paul Waters was presenting his third annual Cornish Beer festival this weekend, and if last year's festival was anything to go by, we were certainly in for a treat. The pub was decked with the black and white cross flags of Cornwall adorning its unspoilt interior of dark wood panelling that divides the pub into many smaller rooms, giving this inn its charm and character. This pub is deservedly on the CAMRA National Inventory of Heritage Pubs.

Lifelong Cornishman, Paul, with bar staff Lewis and Karen, were suitably attired as pirates and gave us a warm welcome with a shout of "Yo Ho Ho!" contributing to the friendly and jolly atmosphere.

This year Paul had got an amazing eleven different Cornish ales, in the form of:

**Wooden Hand Brewery** - Cornish Mutiny 4.8% and Cornish Buccaneer 4.3%

**Skinner's Brewery** - Heligan Honey 4%, Keel Over 4.2% and Cornish Blonde 5%

**Organic brewhouse** - Lizard Point 4%

**Blue anchor brewery** - Spingo middle 5.1% and Spingo jubilee 4.6%

**St Austell Brewery** - Tribute 4.2 %

**Sharp's Brewery** - Cornish Coaster 3.6% and



*Pirates Karen, Lewis and Paul*

**Doom Bar Bitter 4%**

When we arrived the Heligan Honey had nearly run out (*sorry, we got there before you – it was very nice. Ed*), so we started on that as it is a particular favourite of Pennie's and a delicious drink. This year the special pasty & pint price was £4 and we had a couple. The pasties are from the St Ives Cornish Bakehouse and these hot, succulent, juicy and meaty beasts must rate amongst one of the best pasties we have ever had.

The first pint didn't touch the sides, as we were hot and thirsty from our trek up the hill from the station and the heat inside the bar from all those hot pasties sends us outside into the slightly cooler air with pints of the Wooden Hand Brew-

ery's Cornish Buccaneer. The Buccaneer is a beautifully crafted golden beer with a fruity citrus taste and good hop balance. Paul came round with some very tasty smoked mackerel on biscuits as we started on the Spingo Middle, a 5 per cent rich, fruity, luscious red beer from the Blue Anchor Brewery. We moved back outside again to watch some traditional old Cornish drinking games and listened to an interesting rendition of "Lamorna" and "Trelawny". I'm sure real pirates would have sung with such gusto, if they were similarly fuelled with such fine ale. As the Honey ran out, Sharp's Cornish coaster went on, which was a light golden ale with a dry hoppy finish.

Once again we had a great evening of excellent beers, in a fun-filled, friendly atmosphere – so our thanks to Paul and his staff, and we look forward to next year's fourth annual festival.

*Colin & Pennie Postlethwaite*



# The ultimate British pub crawl – by plane!

SO you think you've been on some impressive pub crawls? Try this one for size!

Back in February I hatched a bit of a mad idea, prompted by the announcement that Air Southwest was to launch direct flights from Bristol to Norwich. A bit of internet searching led to the following itinerary being devised.

- Fly with *Air Southwest* 12.35 to Norwich, Sunday 11 June - £19 all in cost.
- Fly with *Flybe* Norwich to Glasgow, 12.30 Tuesday 13 June - £24 all in.
- Train Glasgow to Edinburgh on Wednesday 14 June - £6 one way.
- Fly with *Easyjet* Edinburgh to Bristol, 21.15 Thursday 15 June - £21 all in.

Three flights on three airlines, plus an Inter City train, for £70 in total – now that's what I call a travel deal! A few phone calls later and four mates (Phil, Paul, Rich and Lord Lucan) had agreed to do the whole trip with a sixth person (Tim) joining us from Glasgow onwards. Over the next few months we scoured the internet for good hotel deals and managed to get both Norwich nights and the Glasgow one for £26 per room per night in city centre Travelodges – two to a room. The Edinburgh Travelodge price never dipped below £60 per night so in the end we opted for a B&B in Portobello, just a few miles out of the centre but on the coast, for £28 each per night – it turned out to be an inspired choice by Phil. Total cost for transport and hotels was therefore £137 – hardly expensive surely?

We had chosen our destinations due to the fact that we knew all three to have more than their fair share of excellent real ale-friendly pubs. We were not to be disappointed even if the whole thing did become something of an endurance test!

We were delighted to see a newly installed **Butcombe** pump in one of the Bristol airport bars but were thwarted in our attempts to buy some when the extremely uninterested barmaid said it was "being changed". No problem we said – we will wait – until she said, "I don't know when it is being changed, maybe not today." (*I too was very excited the first time I saw the Butcombe real ale hand pump at Bristol airport – but three trips later and I still have not managed to try the always "unavailable" beer. Ed.*)

The flight to Norwich went smoothly on a less than half full smallish plane, but we were surprised that having left a cool cloudy morning in Bristol we stepped off the plane in a heat wave – we had to double check that we hadn't taken the wrong plane and flown to Spain! This was our first experience of this Norwich "International" Airport and we were in for a bit of a shock. We proceeded to the bus stop to find that the only service ran from 09.30 to 16.00 Monday to Friday only, despite planes landing at all times all days! What on earth is that all about? Needless to say, our beloved First bus were involved in this madness. We then

tried for a taxi, only to find that a large queue had formed and no taxis were in sight! The "taxi office" turned out to be an unmanned kitchen for drivers. There was no shelter from the hot sun (and would be little in the rain either). This airport has a long way to go to be taken seriously. We eventually secured a cab after about 40 minutes sweltering in the heat. By the time we got to the hotel we were more than ready to start the pub crawl.

I have written much recently about the pleasures of visiting Norwich and its 20 plus city-centre free houses so do not propose to repeat it all again. Instead I will allow Phil to give his impressions as a first-time visitor (having fumed at home enviously during our previous visits which work commitments prevented him from joining).

Over to Phil . . .

*As Vince suggests, I have been champing at the bit for a while to get over to Norwich. As it turned out, our visit was not really typical due to the heat wave we experienced. This provided a very tough test in terms of beer quality, as we sought to avoid the dreaded warm and out-of-condition beer. First stops were the **Coach & Horses** and the **Champion**, the latter memorable for its excellent boxing memorabilia. We then moved on to the famous and fabulous **Fat Cat**, where astonishingly 31 beers were on, including, to the delight of Rich, the mighty Gale's Prize Old Ale, a very rare sight on draught, and with the takeover of Gale's by Fuller's, sadly it may possibly never be seen again. We also returned next day, and I would say every beer was in good condition and the ambience and service as excellent as I had anticipated. But at the risk of being declared a heretic I was surprised how many mainstream beers were featured, and with respect to Greene King, Shepherd Neame and other regional breweries, there seemed no need to us to feature the likes of Bass, Abbot and Spitfire, whilst there were probably not more than eight from true micro breweries, including the three from the Fat Cat's own brewery. (It has seemed on my last few visits that the local independent beers have been less evident here than before – Vince). Of course, we may have just been a little unlucky.*

*Next up was the **Nelson**, where a beer festival was taking place in an outbuilding. Alas, there was only rudimentary cooling on the barrels and with temperatures over 30°C the results were not edifying. So we moved on to the **Ribs of Beef**, very fine on two visits. Norwich CAMRA have an embarrassment of riches to choose from, but nonetheless we felt the Ribs out-performed several current beer guide pubs. Just round the corner is the **King's Head**, definitely an up-and-coming pub with the best range of local beers we encountered in Norwich. So after a diversion to a local curry house we headed on to the **Duke of Wellington**, where we were greeted by the landlord with the words, "Sorry lads, only 13 beers on tonight"! The beer range had been toned down in deference to the weather conditions. Needless to say, we didn't complain!*

*To finish our day we squeezed in a visit to*

*the **Shed**, a new pub owned by the Fat Cat. We would suggest this pub is destined for star status, as it was in all respects outstanding.*

*Monday again dawned fine and fair, so after a stroll around what is a very interesting and attractive city centre we adjourned to the **Wig & Pen** for an early lunch. Lucan found a new way of cooling down by drinking, to our general astonishment, Strongbow! This error was compounded in the **Ketts Hill Tavern** (another pub whose inclusion would not let the Good Beer Guide down) when he sampled the Kronenbourg to general scorn and disbelief. We put it down to heatstroke... thankfully he seems to have made a full recovery since! Seeking pubs with TV so we could keep up with the World Cup, we moved on to the **Jubilee**, then swiftly to the very pleasant **Rosary**, which features a bar billiards table. Next came one of my favourites, the **Chalk Hill Tavern**, the tap for the Chalk Hill brewery. Rich was so impressed he bought the T-shirt behind the bar which the staff refused to charge for as they claimed it was smoke damaged! I missed out on the **King's Arms** (Bateman's plus five or so guests), the **Rose** (another fine non-Good Beer Guide pub) and the **Alexandra**, but next up was the **Trafford**, a very fine boozier, leaving us to finish off at the Fat Cat. Paul's sense of direction, which has served him so well throughout the world, unaccountably failed here resulting in a lengthy and scenic detour, making the Fat Cat all the more welcoming. So 18 pubs on the first two days of our tour, including all but three of the Good Beer Guide entries, and for me an impression of Norwich as a very fine city with many outstanding pubs – I shall return!*

So, having completely failed to keep our promise to "pace ourselves" over the first two days, we took a taxi to the airport and our Flybe flight to Glasgow, which went smoothly enough. One or two of our number indulged in Guinness or keg lager at the airport bar, but tea was fine for me, ignoring the "wimp" comments from the macho ones.

There are two ways to get from Glasgow airport to the centre – direct airport bus at £5 or by regular bus to Paisley and train from there (massively frequent service every few minutes). Thanks to Tim, the train expert, we knew to buy one-day travel cards at the airport which covered us on all main-line and underground trains, but not buses, for about £4. Another £1 paid for the bus to Paisley and a chance to visit the National Heritage-listed **Bull Inn** in New Street. This was a cracking pub with lots of enclosed drinking areas and much interesting architecture – and good beer to boot! The three other beer guide pubs in Paisley all sounded interesting but it was time to press on to the centre and our hotel.

Having checked in we took the ever amusing "clockwork orange" underground to Hillhead. This put us within a few hundred yards of three Good Beer Guide pubs. **Tennents Bar** was very good and very busy for the time of day. As always Broughton's Old Jock (6.7 per cent



and very sweet) was on tap and Rich was straight in there, whilst I preferred an Orkney Dark Island. Tim was due to arrive so we grabbed a quick cheap and cheerful meal here too. A quick glance inside the **Aragon** bar was enough to see that the beer range that day was disappointing so we moved on to the **Three Judges**. This excellent pub had around nine beers on and was featuring brews from Yorkshire. By now I could feel one of my favourite pubs calling me so it was a tube then short train ride to the **Clockwork Beer Company**, near Hampden Park. Suffice to say that it has just about the biggest range of high-quality alcoholic beverages that I have come across in the UK, at very fair prices. We tried a few home brews and guest beers before starting to "chase" them with high quality and rare single malt whiskies. I might have got away with this but I had been banking on another meal – sadly they had changed their food hours since my last visit and I missed out. I therefore partially excuse myself for my later condition! Dragging ourselves away at about 10pm we headed back to the centre and the world famous **Pot Still**. It really does serve over 500 malts (and good beer) in its small compact bar. Phil and Paul then persuaded me to join in several rounds of extreme quality rare malts at about £6 or £7 a shot. These were great but possibly better sampled on a more sober occasion. Final call of the night was the **Horseshoe Bar** where I resorted to a pint of diet coke much to the horror of all present!

Day four arrived and Lucan started earning his nickname by disappearing. Drinking for the rest commenced at that other great Glasgow institution, the **Bon Accord** with its great array of hand pumps. An early and very tasty lunch was enjoyed and washed down by a scarily early strong cider in Rich's case. We noticed that pub food was of a generally very high quality and value in most Glasgow pubs, although it did seem to be of the "chips with everything" variety in most cases. It was all the more enjoyable now

that all Scottish pubs are smoke-free too. Next stop was the **State Bar** where the friendly barman amused us by correctly guessing that, a) we were on a pub crawl, b) where we had just come from, and c) where we planned to go next! An excellent pub with good beer. Our visit to Glasgow concluded with a visit to the **Station Bar** (nowhere near the current stations!).

A 50-minute train journey brought us to Edinburgh, where Lucan miraculously reappeared to meet us. The heat wave that had followed us from Norwich to Glasgow was here too. We invested in the excellent value all-day bus pass at £2.50 each and headed off to Portobello. The Ardgath guest house was very good indeed with excellent service and a great breakfast. A 20-minute bus trip then took us to Leith, a formerly run-down port area now rapidly being regenerated. We enjoyed three pubs here – the **Carriers Quarters**, the **Malt and Hops** and the **Old Dock Bar** – before taking a bus back to the centre. Next stop was the amazing **Halfway House** which manages to cram in quite a few hand pumps and good food in its tiny bar halfway up some steps behind Waverley station. Next up was the legendary **Bow Bar** with its eight beers and hundreds of malt whiskies. Out came Phil's whisky bible and the expensive rounds were back – Tim and Rich gamely joining in too! Lucan said he was popping out and would see us in a short while – but was not seen again that night! Was that Shergar's hooves I heard galloping away? Day four concluded at the **Cask and Barrel** before availing ourselves of Edinburgh's excellent night bus service (all night every night for £1.50 to most areas) to return to Portobello.

The final morning saw the jaded tourists (minus Lucan who had briefly appeared at breakfast) enjoy a pleasant walk along the seafront before grabbing our bags and returning to the centre. Lucan then announced it was "too early for a drink" and vanished again, only

to regale us later with tales of the pubs he visited shortly afterwards! The serious business then began at **Bert's Bar**, followed in a leisurely fashion by **Thompson's**, the **Blue Blazer**, **Guildford Arms**, the **Cumberland Bar** (Lucan reappeared here), **Kay's Bar**, and the **Oxford Bar**. These were all excellent with very good and varied beer ranges. The one disappointment was the **Cambridge Bar** where the beer was not what we'd hoped for. We had been scouting for a good and safe place to watch the England v Trinidad match and settled on Kay's Bar where the locals ribbed us about England's woeful play, but made us very welcome all the same. Then it was time for a taxi to the airport, all feeling that the drinking endurance test was over and that we'd go teetotal for a long time. Unfortunately our plane was over an hour late and we had to imbibe some of the surprisingly good Caledonian 80/- in the **Wetherspoon's** bar!

This was a hugely enjoyable trip but not one for the faint-hearted. The hot weather made it harder still and blisters were experienced at times. On the whole I am glad we did it but am in no hurry to repeat it just yet. Forty-three pubs in three cities in five days was just a little bit crazy!

Vince Murray

## News from the Beer Factory

THE Bristol Beer Factory have had two new 10-barrel fermenters installed and this has doubled the capacity of the brewery. They can now produce even more of their 4.4 per cent beer *Sunrise*, as sales of this smooth pale ale have rocketed throughout the summer and nearly caught up with the Bristol Beer Factory's best selling product, *No.7*.

New-design pump clips have been released, and work is ongoing on some unique handmade metal pump clips that will be available at various outlets.

The Bristol Beer Factory have not given up on their attempts to save the Albert in Bedminster (as reported in the last *Pints West*), even though it has been purchased by another party. They have had tremendous support from Bristol's public and will take it further if the opportunity arises. The Bristol & District Branch of CAMRA would certainly like to see the Albert reopen as a Bristol Beer Factory pub rather than suffer the fate of conversion into flats.

Plans for this year's *Factoberfest* are underway. The date is yet to be confirmed but it will be mid to late October. Tickets will be from the Tobacco Factory theatre box office. Further details we be posted on the Bristol Beer Factory's website [www.bristolbeerfactory.co.uk](http://www.bristolbeerfactory.co.uk).

Finally our congratulations go to brewer Chris Thurgeson, who has passed the first module of the Institute of Brewing & Distilling Master Brewers Examination.

Richard Brooks

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**CAMRA Good Beer Guide:** suggestions for future entries, and comments on existing ones, can be made to our GBG co-ordinator, Vince Murray, care of the editor (above).

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

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# Diary

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

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

○ **Tuesday, 5th September** - Frampton Cotterell survey trip. Depart from the Cornubia, 6.45pm.

○ **Wednesday, 13th September** - Branch committee meeting, Old Fish Market, 8pm.

○ **Wednesday, 20th September** - East Mendips survey trip. Depart from the Cornubia, 6.45pm.

○ **Wednesday, 27th September** - Branch meeting, venue to be arranged, 8pm.

○ **Wednesday, 25th October** - Branch meeting, venue to be arranged, 8pm.

○ **Wednesday, 22nd November** - Branch meeting, venue to be arranged, 8pm.

○ There will also be pub survey trips, destinations as yet undecided, on the following dates: **Wednesday 4th and 18th October, and Tuesday 1st and 15th November.**

Each will depart from outside the Cornubia (closed or not) at 6.45pm.

○ Committee meetings will take place on Wednesday 11th October and 8th November, both at the Old Fish Market.

## Weston diary

○ **Wednesday 20 September** - Bristol city centre crawl. Train from Weston at 18.45.

○ **Friday 13 October** - Wyvern Club Beer Festival, Taunton. Train from Weston at 18.27. Also visit to Good Beer Guide-listed Harpoon Louies.

○ **Wednesday 15 November** - Three-venue town social. 8.00 The White Hart, Palmer Row, 9.00 The Bristol Hotel, 10.00 Off The Rails.

○ **Wednesday 20 December** - The 8th Annual Seasonal Ales Saunter. Visiting all pubs in the town centre offering a Christmas/Winter beer. Start at The Raglan at 8.00.

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

## Weston contact

Tim Nickolls – 01934 644925 (eves) or email [tim.nickolls@virgin.net](mailto:tim.nickolls@virgin.net)

## Albion cider fest

The Albion in Clifton is intending to have a mini cider festival on Sunday 27th August from 5pm onwards. There should be about half a dozen ciders from the likes of Thatcher's, Westons and other local producers. The intention is to set them up on stillage outside the front of the pub, just as they did with their recent mini beer festival. There will be a barbecue and a live jazz band (until about 8 o'clock) to accompany it all.

## Neville Mort RIP

IT was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Neville Mort in May. Neville was a one-time head brewer at Smiles. He had been battling with cancer for several years and eventually lost a hard fought battle.

Neville's funeral was held in Weymouth, his adoptive home town, on the 18th May. Chris Thurgeson, who worked with Neville before moving on to the Bristol Beer Factory, had been to visit him two weeks prior to the sad news that he had passed away and said he had lost none of his dry wit despite the constant pain. A lot of people will miss him greatly.

The crematorium was so full, there were at least 50 people who had to stand outside and listen to the service via a P.A. system. The wake was held in Weymouth Sailing Club, of which Neville was a member for over 30 years. Many from the brewing industry all over the country were in attendance.

We would like to express our condolences to his wife Pam and sons Richard and Nicholas.

## THANKS TO THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

Alison Bridle  
Andrew Swift  
Andy Burt  
Colin Postlethwait  
Dave McVittie  
Dr John  
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Neil Ravenscroft  
Norman Spalding  
Pennie Postlethwaite  
Pete Bridle  
Pete Dommett  
Phil Cummings  
Phill The Pint  
(and SWMBO)  
Richard Brooks  
Richard Walters  
Robin E Wild  
Simon Theakston  
Tim Nickolls  
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Vince Murray

Editor: Steve Plumridge

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# Pub news

- The *King's Head* in Whitehall is available to lease, but still open when last we checked.
- I have received several excellent reports lately about the *V Shed*, Wetherspoon's Lloyds No 1 bar by the Watershed. Their own brand Brigstow Premium Ale and Butcombe Blonde were certainly on especially good form when I was in recently.
- Not necessarily new news, but not mentioned in these pages before, is the refurbishment of the *Reckless Engineer* opposite Temple Meads Station. Looking much smarter without losing its character, it's a great source of real ale before catching that train.
- On the theme of formal confirmation: for those who don't get into the centre very often, we can confirm the demolition of the *Mail Coach* and the *Crown and Cushion* to make way for the new extension to Broadmead. The *Phoenix*, the *Seven Ways Inn* and the *Volunteer* have all escaped for now though.
- In Broadmead proper, the pub formally known as the Prince Rupert, The Rat & Carrot, and Christopher's Bar in Fairfax Street, is now known as the *Bliss Café Bar*.
- The *Royal Oak* in Clifton has announced plans to start selling two real ales straight from the barrel. The barrels will be added to the section nearest the entrance during September. Landlord Simon Dauncey explains that it is only possible for him to maintain the right temperature outside the hot summer months.

Duncan Shine

# News from Cotleigh

COTLEIGH brewery has been promoting its brewing history and celebrating its more recent foray into bottled beers.

Its brewery dray and heavy horses proved a huge attraction at the Taunton Flower Show, whilst four of its bottled beers (Buzzard Dark Ale, Peregrine Porter, Red Nose Reinbeer and Cotleigh 25) attracted Gold awards at the Taste of the West Food and Drink Awards 2006.

Fred Domellof said, "We are delighted to have



been given gold accolades for our range of bottled beers. We have only been bottling for 20 months and it is a great compliment."

His business partner Stephen Heptinstall added, "To win four golds is a tremendous honour and is a reflection of what we are trying to achieve, in other words buying the best local ingredients to make the best beers in the South West!"

Cotleigh celebrated its 25th anniversary in



2004 and is proud of its commitment to brewing traditional cask ales such as Tawny, Barn Owl, Golden Eagle, Harrier Lite and Buzzard, as well as its close association with the Hawk and Owl Trust (hence the livery of birds in its pump clips and ale names and the thousands of pounds raised by the brewery to support the charity's work).

That affiliation with the countryside and tradition is reflected in Cotleigh's dray, first built in 1935 and lovingly restored by the Cotleigh team, and put through its paces by Michael Yorke's Suffolk Punch horses at the Taunton show in early August.

Cotleigh's Engineer Paul Priest dismantled and rebuilt the dray, painstakingly checking every one of 510 nuts, bolts, chains and planks. The paintwork and sign writing was undertaken by local artist Brian Gay (seen attending to the finishing touches in the photo).

Lesley Huxley



## 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 amarone biscuit.

### Cotleigh 25 4.0% abv

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

### Golden Eagle Best Bitter 4.2% abv

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

### Harrier Lite 3.5% abv

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

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

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



# Box Steam Brewery

BREWING at Box initially developed following the construction of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's famous Box Tunnel in 1841 but the brewery, Pinchins, closed in the 1920s. Some eighty years later the Box Steam Brewery was established in 2004, on the outskirts of the village, by Mark Hempleman-Adams and Marshall Ewart.

Subsequently the business has moved out of Box and the micro-brewing operation is now based at a specially-adapted business unit at Oaks Farm on the outskirts of Colerne. While the brewing process remains the same, the beer-making equipment has of course improved. Box Steam Brewery has been enjoying its traditional, yet modern equipment, including a Fulton steam boiler which they inherited from Bath Ales upon their expansion to larger premises.

Now for another shift of scene. Last year Ken Roberts, the proprietor of the Cross Guns at Avoncliff, was let down by a major national in the supply of beer to his pub over the bank holiday. By a happy coincidence the Box Steam Brewery had just visited and left a card. As a consequence the brewery provided emergency supplies of their ales in place of the national brand. This proved so popular with the customers that the Box Steam ales became a permanent fixture. Latterly Ken heard that the brewery was up for sale and it seemed an obvious opportunity to take over the establishment to secure supplies.

The transfer of ownership was made to



Ken and his wife during May this year and the brewery operation is now conducted by Gordon King and Andrew Roberts who do the brewing, marketing and delivery. Gordon is on the left and Andrew on the right in the picture.

Now I would have thought that just walking into a brewery and starting to brew would be a bit of a tall order. In this case though Mark and Marshall effectively provided Andrew and Gordon with a three month apprenticeship before the transfer went through and have also made themselves available for emergency advice when other problems occur.

At present the beer list is still Tunnel Vision, the straw-coloured Reverend Awdry's and the "hoppy" Blind House, named after Wiltshire's notorious lock-ups but the name 'Broadgauge Bitter' has been registered with SIBA as a name for a new ale to be produced



The Cross Guns at Avoncliff has been awarded the "Country Pub of the Year 2006" prize by the Heart of Wessex Railway Partnership passengers.

around October.

They had been told that the summer tends to be a little slow for beer but they are not finding that this is the case and are struggling to keep up with demand. The beer gets delivered to the area between Devizes, Bath and Cirencester and direct sales from the brewery are also popular, partly because the brewery is located on a pick-your-own fruit farm. To ease the distribution issues and give an opportunity to expand, additional casks have been ordered and are due to be delivered very soon. Ken and his wife have also just purchased the Inn at Freshford to increase the permanent trade in the Box Steam beers.

They always say 'location, location, location' are the keys to success. Well Box Steam and its crew do have this with their two pubs and an inspired position for the brewery. Try them!

*Phill the Pint*

## Cutting down on the CO<sub>2</sub> at the Swan Inn

EARLIER this year, the Swan Inn on Conham Hill, Hanham had an oil-free compressor installed, supplied by Durr Technik. Its purposes included driving both the cleaning ring main line gas pump, and also four gas pumps for the cask ale side of the cellar. The compressor should reduce the Swan Inn's cellar costs significantly; the estimated savings on purchases in CO<sub>2</sub> alone, over the lifetime of the compressor, amount to £1,890. This figure is based on today's CO<sub>2</sub> costs and after taking into consideration the purchase price of the compressor.

The Swan Inn's management also expect further cost savings as the constant pressure in the system provided by the compressor reduces wastage due to less lively beer. It should make pouring it easier for the bar staff, too!

Cask ale can be dispensed with a small compressor package, where between three and five beer engines (hand-pulls) are supported by a gas pump to ensure a cost effective solution as with the Swan Inn.



Oil-free compressors are designed to supply clean, oil-free compressed air for food and beverage applications. An internally coated receiver ensures a clean and hygienic supply of compressed air.

Durr Technik are a local company based in Keynsham and, in case you hadn't noticed, have an advert right here.

*Norman Spalding*



**Oil-Free Air Compressor Stations  
for the Beverage Industry**  
*A Cost Effective Solution for  
Running Gas Pumps.*

**DÜRR  
TECHNIK**

**Would You Like to Reduce Your CO<sub>2</sub> or Mixed Gas Costs?**  
Please ask yourself the following questions:-

1. Do you have 3 or more Beer Engines (Hand Pulls) in any of your outlets?
2. Do these Beer Engines have gas pump support via the cellar?
3. Are the gas pumps driven by CO<sub>2</sub> / Mixed Gas?
4. On average, do you sell 4 barrels (144 Gallons) a week of cask ale from the Outlet?

If you have answered yes to the 4 questions above  
We can show you how to save money  
Call Durr Technik NOW!

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www.durrtechnik.co.uk

# New brewery for Bristol CAMRA area



JEM HAM, formerly of Butcombe brewery, is setting up a brand new operation at Winchester Farm in Cheddar. In fact, by the time you read this, the first brews may be underway! The brewery is called **Cheddar Ales**.

Jem had 15 years experience as a brewer at the Butcombe brewery before leaving in 2005. Since then Jem has been working as a freelance brewer and has spent a year at Ramsbury Brewery in Wiltshire whilst setting up the new plant. The building will have all mod cons and services and the kit was sourced from Ireland, where it had been stored in a barn for five years following a failed project.

Cheddar Ales hope to be up and running in September and will initially start with two



brews, the first being a 4 per cent best bitter (called Best) and a 4.3 per cent golden ale (called Potholer). Further brews are expected

in due course and it is also hoped to launch a bottle-conditioned version of Potholer fairly soon.

Both the beers will be available to pubs, clubs and other licensed premises throughout the region, as well as to members of the public for home consumption.

Also starting with the business will be Toby Wright, whose emphasis will be on sales but will also help out in the brewery making sure the beers reach the public in top condition.

I'm sure that everybody in Bristol CAMRA wishes Cheddar Brewery well and we look forward to sampling their beers in the very near future.

*Pete Bridle*

## New CAMRA guide has lots of bottle

THE new Good Bottled Beer Guide from the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) is the only book that details every bottle-conditioned ale in the UK, making it an indispensable resource for the beer shopper.

Bottle-conditioned beers are nowadays often referred to as 'Real Ale in a Bottle'. It is beer that continues to ferment and mature in the bottle, just as real ale in a cask ('cask-conditioned beer') matures in the pub cellar.

The sixth edition of the guide – which was launched at the recent Great British Beer Festival – has been revamped to include a new easy-to-follow rosette system to acknowledge outstanding breweries and a star system for excellent bottle-conditioned beers.

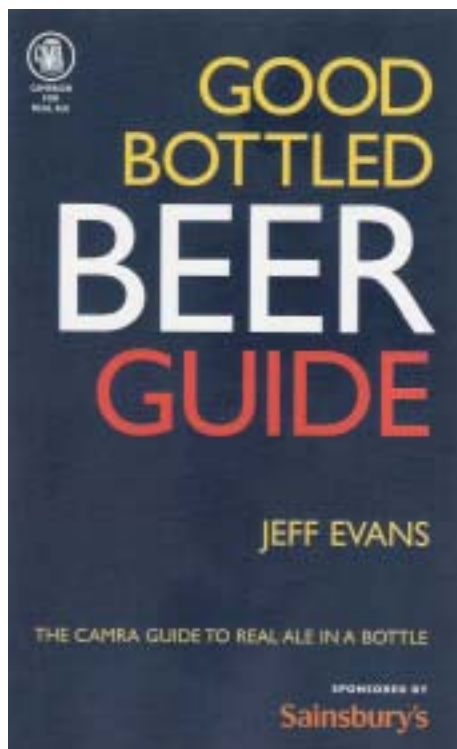
Good Bottled Beer Guide author, Jeff Evans, said: "The guide has truly evolved from its predecessors to reflect that beer is being drunk more commonly with food, that there is an increasing interest in local produce, and that consumer demand is increasing for bottle-conditioned products brewed by local breweries. The new rosette and star system makes it easier than ever before to find the best bottle-conditioned beers available in the UK today."

This new edition of the Good Bottled Beer Guide includes:

- Not only traditional bitters, but real lagers, stouts, fruit beers, wheat beers and organic beers.
- Details of every bottle-conditioned beer in the UK – nearly 800!
- Details of CAMRA's 'Real Ale in a Bottle Accreditation Scheme'.
- Extensive listing of international bottled beers.
- The best shops in which to buy real ale in a bottle (including some in Bristol).
- Sound advice on how to store, serve and taste real ale in a bottle.

A selection of beers which have been awarded stars include:

- **Hop Back (Wiltshire): Entire Stout and Summer Lightning.**



- **Wye Valley (Herefordshire): Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout.**
- **RCH (Somerset): Old Slug Porter.**

Jeff Evans added: "The star rating system demonstrates the best real ale in a bottles, which have diverse and wonderful flavours to offer. The breweries of these particular beers have also been awarded a rosette within the guide as brewers of outstanding bottle-conditioned beers."

The Good Bottled Beer Guide is a pocket-sized hardback book comprising 320 pages. The cover price is £10.99 and it is available in all good bookshops and direct from CAMRA on 01727 867201, or from our website [www.camra.org.uk/books](http://www.camra.org.uk/books).

## Good Beer Guide 2007 launch

**THE 2007 edition of the Good Beer Guide, CAMRA's flagship product, will be launched at the Old Fish Market, Baldwin Street, Bristol between 4pm and 8pm on Friday 15th September.**

Come along to get your copy hot off the press. There is a substantial discount in the price for CAMRA members including anyone who joins on the day.

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

There are only so many pubs that can be included in the Guide each year though, and non-inclusion of a pub does not imply any negative statement about that pub.

As well as the best of Britain's pubs the Good Beer Guide also contains 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. There is also a full list of CAMRA's National Inventory of Pubs – pubs with interiors of outstanding historic interest. Helping to save these pubs for posterity.

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

*Richard Brooks*