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CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

PINTS WEST

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

From Brewery Tap to Colston Yard

What a difference a year makes!

Substitute one word, and the line from the old song *What a difference a day makes* seems apt when applied to the history of the ex-Smiles Brewery Tap. Many local people, including Bristol CAMRA members, were greatly shocked and bewildered at the wanton destruction which took place in July last year.

A year on and we were delighted to hear that Butcombe Brewery had accepted the challenge of creating their own city-centre showpiece on the site of the former Tap. It is an exciting project for them, being their first 'new-build' outlet, and very different from their other two Bristol pubs, *The Bell* in Stokes Croft and *The Prince of Wales* in Westbury-on-Trym.

This new venture, to be called 'Colston Yard', will be much larger than its predecessor, the trading floor occupying 2,200 square feet, with the basement housing the kitchens, cellar, etc., being of similar size. There will be a traditional bar selling, we are promised, a superb range of cask beers, alongside a number of authentic imported beers and lagers. A separate grill/restaurant is also planned. The façade will remain dark olive green, (a reminder of the former Tap?).

This project is quite an undertaking and the work, which has



The wanton vandalism inflicted on the Brewery Tap by previous owners just a year ago

Photo by Richard Brooks

commenced, is expected to take up to four months with an anticipated opening in late November.

We wish Guy Newell, Butcombe's Managing Director, and his team well in this venture and look forward to its completion.

Margaret Evett

New Bath & Borders section

This issue sees the introduction of a new section dedicated to "Bath & Borders". Submitted by the Bath & Borders branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, it presents news of pubs and breweries in the area, and tells of forthcoming events such as festivals, trips, meetings and socials.

Regular readers of *Pints West* might point out that we've often featured items of goings-on in Bath, but that was by and large restricted to the city of Bath. The new section will cover the more extensive area covered by the Bath & Borders branch of CAMRA.

Real Ale: the new Chardonnay?

THERE was a time when real ale was strictly for the boys – the sort of boys who sported beards and woolly jumpers and were likely to burst into a rendition of the Wild Rover at the least provocation. Or so some social commentators would have us believe. But if that stereotype ever had any basis in reality, it bears about as much relation to the current real ale scene as Julie Andrews has to the Arctic Monkeys.

Real ale has not just won social respectability; it has, even though some may bemoan the fact, become fashionable. Not only that: in a world where environmental concerns loom ever larger, real ale, it seems, is about the most eco-friendly thing you can drink.

Signs of real ale's new-found social cachet are everywhere. Ten years ago, if you wanted to run an up-market drinking venue, you opened a wine bar. Wine bars are still around, of course, but they're fast being elbowed out of the way in the popularity stakes by the new kids on the block – real ale bars, selling locally-produced beer and food made from locally-sourced ingredients, plus wines and spirits. Some, like Zerodegrees in Bristol, even brew their own beer.

In Bath, Charlie and Amanda Digney have followed their successful make-over of the King William, a rundown boozer on the

London Road, with a revamp of the Garrick's Head next to the Theatre Royal. Beer from Milk Street, Blindman's, Keynsham and Matthews breweries are regularly available in both pubs, along with award-winning bistro-style food and an awesome array of wines.

Traditional cider isn't far behind in the popularity stakes either. Most of the new up-market real-ale pubs offer at least one farm cider, introducing Somerset's traditional tippale to a whole new range of customers. The new Apple Cider Barge on the waterfront in Bristol heralds, like Bristol Beer Factory's Grain Barge, a significant change of emphasis for an area once dominated by chic restaurants, clubs and wine bars.

At the same time, traditional pubs, especially those run by local breweries, are seeing a renaissance without compromising their essential character. The Cornubia in Bristol, owned by the Hidden Brewery, and the Star and the Coeur de Lion in Bath, owned by Abbey Ales, are more popular than ever, and attracting a growing number of young drinkers, on the lookout for something more satisfying than bland, anonymous chain bars.

It isn't just in Bath and Bristol that things are changing. Down in Devon, Otter Brewery have opened their first pub – the Holt Bar & Restaurant – on Honiton High Street – in a former wine bar. It still looks like a wine bar, with tapas in the ground-floor bar and a restaurant upstairs, but, alongside the wine, there's the full range of Otter beers on tap.

A recent visit to Yorkshire introduced me to Market Town Taverns, a chain of ten bars in an area stretching from Ilkley to York and Northallerton to Headingley. Rather than taking over existing pubs, the company, established in 1999, have opened bars in shops, workshops and, in one case, a bank. With a strong Belgian influence, and a wide range of continental beers on offer – several on draught – beers from local microbreweries are also much in evidence, along with bistro-style food. I tried the Town Street Tavern

in Horsforth and the Muse in Wetherby – each with its own distinctive character and both places I could happily spend a great deal more time in. I look forward to checking out the others at some stage in the future. If you're up in Yorkshire, I can heartily recommend a visit.

It's not just pubs that are changing; beer festivals are as well. Alongside traditional festivals, where serious drinking, tasting notes and swapping of beer news and notes is the order of the day, an increasing number of organisers are using real ale as a springboard for music festivals or for family and community oriented events, where a whole range of activities are featured. For the purist, such events may constitute a watering down of the serious business of drinking, but they not only introduce real ale to a far wider audience but also set it in its rightful place – at the heart of the community.

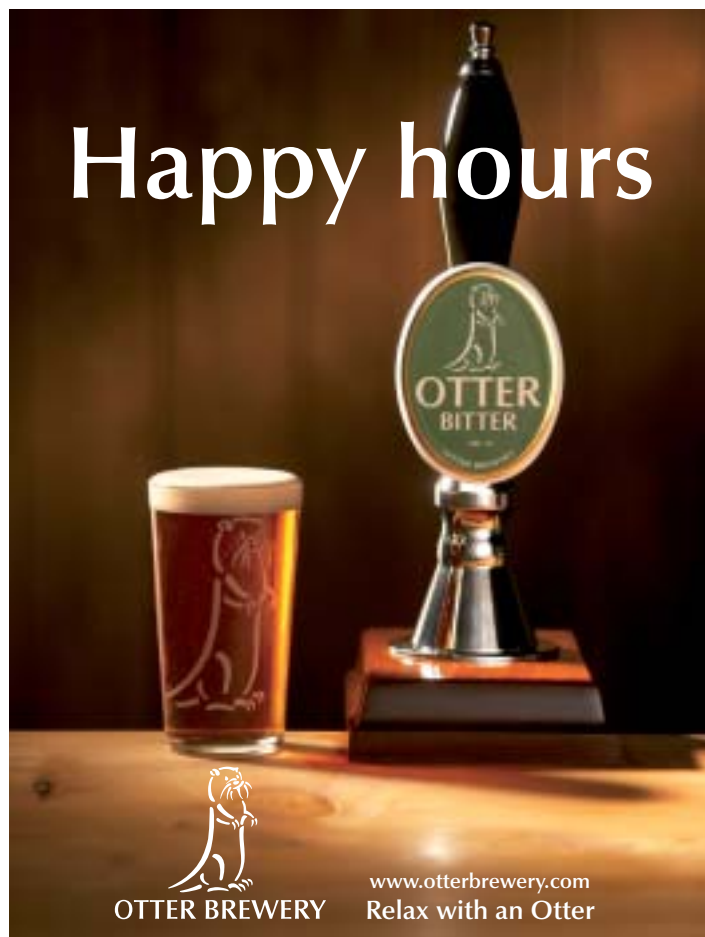
What all these enterprises have in common is that they are essentially local initiatives, a world away from the type of corporate rebranding that has ruined so many pubs in the past and continues to do so today. This is, of course, part of a wider movement towards local businesses and local produce. We are all familiar by now with the concept of carbon footprints and the need to reduce food miles, but a new report published in the journal *Sustainable Food Consumption* suggests that focusing on the distance food travels is too narrow. The authors calculate that only about 2% of the environmental impact of food comes from the distance it travels before it reaches us. Most of its ecological footprint comes from processing, packaging, growing and so on.

They go on to draw up a hit list of foods whose impact on the environment is particularly damaging, along with a list of the most eco-friendly. Drinks also feature in the report, with wine being targeted as particularly harmful. Beer – much more eco-friendly – is suggested as a replacement. No particular type of beer is suggested, but it doesn't require a degree in mathematics to work out that beer produced by a microbrewery a few miles away from the pub where it's served, carried there in a reusable barrel and served in a reusable glass, without using carbon dioxide or nitrogen, is going to come out tops.

All of which confirms what many people have known all along – drinking real ale down at your local is one of the most environmentally friendly things you can do. It may be some time before drinking wine is seen as the gastronomic equivalent of sitting behind the wheel of a gas-guzzler, but, given our ever-increasing ecological awareness, such a change seems inevitable. And when that time comes, Britain's real ale pubs – be they traditional boozers or minimalist bistro bars – will be ready for it.

So there you have it. Think local, drink local, support your local microbrewery ... and save the planet. Cheers!

Andrew Swift



No handpumps in Somerset

"I SAW the fonts and nearly walked out," said the chap who followed us into the Somerset House in Clifton Village. A man who likes his real ale, obviously. Because unless you walk right into this recently refurbished pub, you will be concerned, as he was, at the lack of handpumps, and will miss the glad sight of several casks behind the bar.

This pub in the terrace of shops and cafes near the Library in Princess Victoria Street has, until recently, had a fairly unremarkable reputation for its real ale quality and range. Its claims to fame were largely in its eccentricity (the massive Heath-Robinson style ceiling fan and the enormous George cross on the frontage for the World Cup). However, in May this year, the Somerset House was closed for a short while and reopened under new management and with a new look in both décor and beer, but with a few homely eccentricities of its own.

The pub is now owned by Jess and Gary Spavins, who took on the Rose of Denmark in Hotwells a couple of years ago, and is run on a day-to-day basis by manager Mandy, who looks after regulars and newcomers alike with welcoming care and consideration. The beer quality is much improved, the range is standard S&N list (Courage Best and Butcombe and a selection from Directors, Spitfire and Olde Speckled Hen), but unusually the casks sit under cooling jackets on independent tilting stillage platforms, part of an intriguing and probably state-of-the-art arrangement with overhead rails, pulleys and motor that Heath-Robinson may well have been proud of. They would at some point like to introduce a real cider on handpump, Scottish & Newcastle willing.

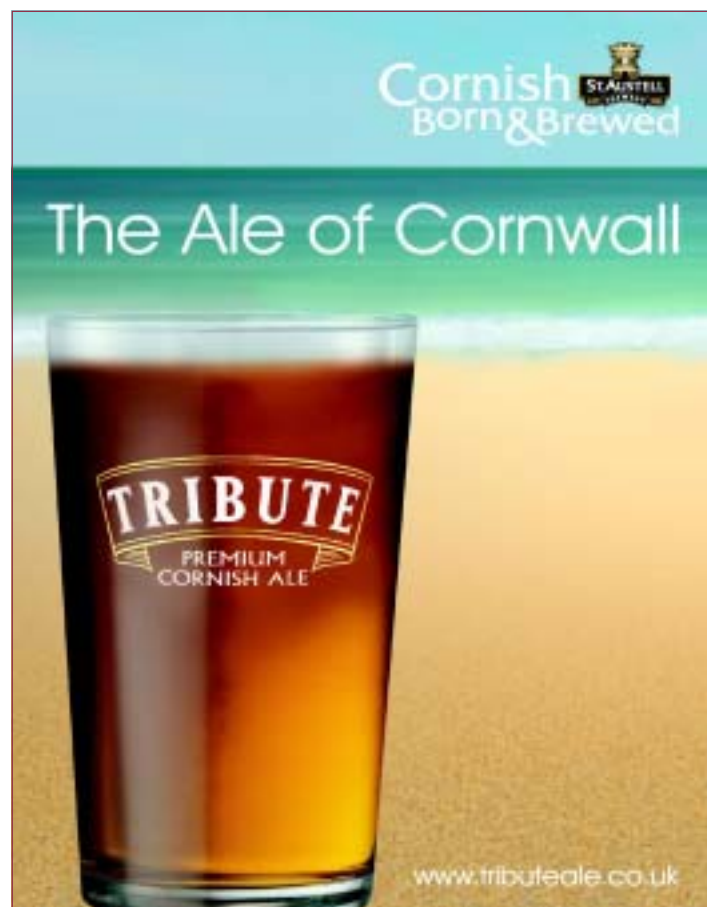
The pub has been given a welcome face-lift with terracotta-washed walls which lighten the place up. It has a fairly narrow frontage but goes back a long way, with the front seating area and bar on the same level and lit by arched windows looking onto the street (where cafe tables are provided for smokers). Two steps across the middle of the pub take you to the rear area, a seating alcove and toilets, with one wall covered by large, attractive wood-framed mirrors to maximise the light. The eccentric ceiling fan has long gone, but there is plenty to interest, including tables made from carved tree trunks, stripped (or in some cases



just unfinished) wood trimming, some friendly and interesting characters amongst the regular clientele and a range of activities usually starting at 8.30pm on different evenings. Monday night is quiz night, Tuesday is open mic night, and live music is advertised for Fridays. Impromptu singalongs outside these hours are not unknown. The pub is also open 8.30am to 12 noon weekdays for hot breakfast, and food is served 12 to 3pm (including Sundays).

Thankfully, the new management has resisted the urge to turn the place into a wine bar or gastro-pub. Above all, the Somerset House is now a friendly, welcoming, proper pub for locals and visitors alike, with proper beer in proper casks (provided you come in far enough to find them!).

Lesly Huxley



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The Sustainable Communities Bill ... and why it matters to real ale drinkers

Councillor Steve Comer, Leader of the Liberal Democrats on Bristol City Council, and a long-standing CAMRA member, explains how this Bill can help our campaigns.

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, and SIBA (the Society of Independent Brewers) recently notched up a major success when the Sustainable Communities Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons. The Bill is now due to complete its passage in the House of Lords. It was introduced as a private members bill with support across the political spectrum, and CAMRA was one of a number of organizations supporting the bill, alongside others as diverse as the Federation of Sub-Postmasters, and trade unions UNISON and PCS.

The stated aims of the Bill are to *"Make provision for the Secretary of State to publish action plans in connection with promoting the sustainability of local communities and to enable local authorities and local communities to participate in the formulation and implementation of those plans."*

OK, so how does that help us real ale drinkers? Well, in many ways.

- It would allow councils to delay a planning application for a new development that would mean the demolition of a local shop, post office or pub, etc, if there was evidence that such a delay would enable a community initiative (e.g. a 'buy out') to retain the local facility could succeed given extra time.

- Demolition would be brought under planning control in order to prevent a developer from demolishing a local pub, shop, post office, school or other amenity/community infrastructure. This will restrict developers from demolishing these facilities in order get round the change of use planning permission requirements.

- The Secretary of State could be required to draw up a 'local food strategy' on how he might help with the development of local food production and markets. This could include local beer and cider.

The basis of the Bill is that it gives local authorities the chance to put forward suggestions to central government on



Councillor Steve Comer in one of his other roles – serving on the foreign beer bar at the Great British Beer Festival

ways in which the government could help to promote local sustainability (with the presumption they will be taken up). Before doing so all local authorities will have to approach their local community and ask them their ideas on what needs to be done to promote local sustainability.

At these stage members of CAMRA in each local area could bring forward suggestions to improve local sustainability which area in accordance with our aims and policies, for example local councils could be asked to:

- 1) Promote guest beers as a way of getting locally brewed beers into pubs.
- 2) Extend rate relief for small businesses, such as pubs, that are an important part of the community and review rate relief provision for sole pubs operating within their community.
- 3) Give incentives for private free trade ownership of community public houses to enable enhanced individual character and widen social inclusion.
- 4) Encourage multiple retailers (i.e. including pub chains) to stock a minimum percentage of locally produced products.

They could also be encouraged to source locally through direct delivery.

Plenty of scope here for local campaigning, and for us to make common cause with others promoting local food produce.

Unconvinced? Well just imagine for one minute how some of these changes would have helped some of the campaigns we've run in recent years – remember the Old Fox, the Ashley Court Hotel, the Brewery Tap? Some of those would still be with us if we'd had this billing force, and we might even be drinking Bristol-brewed Smiles as well!

CAMRA has been a main part of the coalition that has got this Bill to the point where it is close to becoming law, campaigning by our members convinced a large number of MPs to back the Bill, and we must all hope it becomes law soon.

A copy of the full text of the Bill and also a complete rundown on its progress through Parliament can be found on the Parliamentary website at:
www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills/200607/sustainable_communities.htm

CAMRA declares November Old Ales Month

AS this is probably the last Pints West before we hit November, a reminder to all you landlords, brewers and pigeon fanciers that CAMRA has declared November as Old Ales Month – again!

We need to know which pubs will be supporting Old Ales Month this year, so that we can publicise it on our website www.bristolcamra.org.uk along with other activities such as crawls, coach trips, etc. in support of Old Ales.

Brewers:

Please email me at badrag@camrabristol.co.uk with what Old Ale you expect to have for November so that I can pass that info on to landlords and post it on our website.

Landlords:

Please email me at badrag@camrabristol.co.uk with any plans you have for November so that I can pass it on to members, post it on our website and plan our trips and activities for November. If you are unsure what Old Ales are around, there is a list of current Old Ales and Barley Wines on www.camra.org.uk – click on Campaigns, then *Endangered Beer Styles - Old Ales* – to download the list.

Drinkers:

Check out the Bristol and District Rare Ales Group page at www.bristolcamra.org.uk to find out which pubs will have what Old Ales during November, and news of any coach trips to pubs further afield, and any other Old Ale related activities during the month.

WHAT IS OLD ALE?

Old Ale recalls the type of beer brewed before the Industrial Revolution, stored for months or even years in unlined wooden vessels known as tuns. The beer would pick up some lactic sourness as a result of wild yeasts, lactobacilli and tannins in the wood. The result was a beer dubbed 'stale' by drinkers: it was one of the components of the early, blended Porters.

The style has re-emerged in recent years, due primarily to the fame of Theakston's Old Peculier, (Fuller's) Gale's Prize Old Ale and Thomas Hardy's Ale, the last saved from oblivion by O'Hanlon's Brewery in Devon.

Old Ales, contrary to expectation, do not have to be especially strong: they can be no more than 4% alcohol, though the Gale's and O'Hanlon's versions are considerably stronger. Neither do they have to be dark: Old Ale can

More anaesthetic, anyone?

... and another in our series of "It's not real ale, but in case you missed it at the time" stories:

According to the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Achronot*, two Israeli chemical engineers have developed a beer that contains laughing gas. They found a way to incorporate nitrous oxide into an imported Czech beer, obtained Health Ministry approval and plan to start selling the product once it is patented.

According to the report, the beer is likely to cause its drinkers to laugh, though the amount of laughing gas bubbles the brew contains is small and they quickly leave the body. The entrepreneurs also plan to market a similar hybrid vodka. The Israeli Anti-Drug Authority criticised the projects because laughing gas is a controlled substance.

Might this give new meaning to the wine critic's description "an amusing little wine"?

Norman Spalding

be pale and burst with lush sappy malt, tart fruit and spicy hop notes. Darker versions will have a more profound malt character with powerful hints of roasted grain, dark fruit, polished leather and fresh tobacco. The hallmark of the style remains a lengthy period of maturation, often in bottle rather than bulk vessels.

Colin Postlethwaite

BADRAg: Bristol And District Rare Ales Group campaigning to preserve endangered styles of beer



"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 anyway."



PECULIERLY FINE COMPANY

Meeting the Brewers

WHEN I arrived at the **Hillgrove Porter Stores** in Kingsdown at a few minutes past 8 o'clock on Wednesday 1st of August, the place was already crowded with ale drinkers keen to meet three local micro-brewers and taste their products.

Ales on draught were Brassknocker (3.8% ABV), 40 Yard (5%) and Dawkins Bristol Champion (4.5%) from **Matthews Brewery** of Timsbury (the last named being an ale specially brewed to celebrate the Hillgrove's recent success in being voted CAMRA Bristol and District Pub of the Year); Chew Valley Blond (4.3%) from **Keynsham Brewery**; and Potholer (4.3%) from **Cheddar Ales**.

Cottage Great Bear, Hidden Potential and Goff's Joster completed the line-up of eight hand-pumped ales. A digital projector and screen had been set up near the entrance within view of all.

Once everyone had obtained a drink, the meeting was called to order by Master of Ceremonies, Ned Clarke, who introduced the first speaker, **John Firth of Keynsham Brewery**.

Early in 2005 John had been asked by the former owner of the Nursery Brewery whether he would be prepared to resuscitate the plant which had been standing idle since Nursery stopped brewing in 2002. A unique opportunity – usually when a brewery closes the plant is sold off very quickly. John, a home-brewer for 30 years, didn't think twice. He soon realized he had taken on more than he had bargained for.

The ten-barrel plant and accessories were housed in a Nissan hut with no straight walls and hardly a square foot of level floor space, plus everything was filthy. Perhaps, with hindsight, it might have been better to have started from scratch! After lots of hard cleaning work the plant was ready for a trial brew which John completed and left to ferment while he went away on holiday. Upon

his return he found that it had exploded and the whole place was inundated with a congealed stinking mess on the floor. More cleaning!

The first beer, **Somerdale Golden** (4.5%), was launched in the Summer of 2005 and was well received at a number of local outlets including the Old Bank in Keynsham. The feedback from the Old Bank suggested that regular customers would also welcome a darker and lower-gravity beer; hence the launch of **Pixash**, a 4.1% ABV bitter featuring soft-fruit flavours imparted by East Kent Goldings and Bramling Cross hops.

A favourite of John's for many years has been the Imperial Russian Stout beer style and this led him to experiment with a weaker version which he settled as **Stockwood Stout** (5%), using pale, crystal, smoked, chocolate and black malts as well as wheat malt, roast barley and two secret ingredients. It was intended to be launched in October 2005, but production of the new stout at the brewery was delayed until March 2006, as John recovered from a heart attack.

The latest addition to the range is **Chew Valley Blond**, a Summer ale with Cascade and First Gold hops weighing in at 4.3% ABV and available free on the night from a cask set up in the presentation area.

After airing some thoughts about pubs stocking a range of beers of differing styles and strengths rather than the often preferred easy option of offering several different beers of the single most popular style, John touched on the subject of beer with food. He made the valid point that wine, although very popular with food, does not suit as wide a range of dishes as beer does. This is because wine is made from a single active ingredient – grapes – whereas beers have two dimensions – malt and hops.

After a beer break, Ned announced the second speaker, **Jem Ham of Cheddar Brewery**. Jem told us that his first job at a

bank soon lost its appeal and he left it in order to travel the world, as adventurous youngsters often do. In Australia he encountered several craft breweries which sparked off an interest in the *genre* hitherto unrealized.

Back in England a man in a pub told him of a job vacancy at Butcombe Brewery. He applied and, after a short course in brewing at Durham University, found himself working at Butcombe for 15 years until, sometime after the sale of the business in 2003, he left.

A one-month contract as relief head brewer at Ramsbury Brewery in the Autumn of 2005 lasted a year, during which time he had two days a week free to experiment with his own brews and seek out suitable premises for a brewery.

We were shown photos of the brand new building (with vertical walls "no Nissan hut for me") in which is housed the 20-barrel plant, much of it obtained from micros in Dublin and York. Jem brews on three days per week and prefers a high hop rate; he uses a wide variety of hops, and his regular beers are **Cheddar Best** (4%) and **Potholer** (4.3%).

Keen on re-cycling, he concluded his presentation with a photograph of Daisy the cow who lives on spent grains from the brewery.

Following a second beer break Ned introduced the final speaker for the evening, **Stuart Matthews of Matthews Brewery**. A software engineer, and keen home-brewer, Stuart decided in 2004 to look for premises for a micro-brewery. He found an old colliery winding engine house on an industrial site in Timsbury which suited the purpose and, after a short course at Brewlab in Sunderland followed by practical training at both Pictish and Wylam breweries, commenced brewing there in 2005.

Stuart soon faced the same problem as that encountered by John Firth, namely, drainage. He tested all the ducts in the concrete floor with a watering can, carefully monitoring the flow. He also built a new cold store by hand, equipping it with coolers as used in pub



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cellars. We saw photos of the five-barrel plant, "a thing of beauty" Stuart said, and were given samples of the Warminster malts that he uses.

A wide variety of hops is used in the beers: regulars are **Brassknocker** (3.8%) and **Bob Wall** (4.1% and named after a wall through which the beam of a colliery engine protrudes and bobs up and down) and **40 Yard** (5%); seasonals include **Midsomer Pale** (4.5% and available free that night from a mini cask), **Davy Lamp** (5.0%) and **Pit Pony** (5.5%); and monthlies **Davy Light** (3.7%), **Pit Head Porter** (4.5%), **Christmas Beer** (4.5%), **Tim's Bier** (4.6%) and **Birthday Ginger** (4.8%).

Stuart finished his address by mentioning the topic of beer with food, drawing our attention to the fact that his partner Sue Appleton had supplied some home-cooked delicacies that were awaiting our attention in the back room. We were advised that Thai prawns would find their complement in Brassknocker while 40 Yard would be perfect with the sausages or mushroom pate. The double chocolate chip cookies would go well with a dark beer too. The verity of this prognosis was soon demonstrated. Many thanks Sue!

All three brewers were busy answering informal questions as I left, a little before "closing time" to catch my bus home, after what had been a well organized and thoroughly enjoyable evening.

Henry Davies

(There should be another 'Meet the Brewers' event at the Miners Arms on 17th October, but which brewers is yet to be confirmed.)

Seeking pastures new

REGULARS at the White Lion on the Centre in Bristol will be sorry to hear that Les and Carol Clayton are leaving for a new challenge. Indeed, by the time you read this, they may well have already left!

As Les explains: "Although the date has not been made final yet, we are aiming at the first week of September to take over at The Plough, Bradford Leigh, Bradford-on-Avon.

"On a more personal note, both Carol and I have enjoyed our four-and-a-half-year stay at the Lion. We have had the good fortune to meet a huge amount of great people and thank them all, not only for their custom but their kindness and friendship – especially when we arrived in Bristol an unknown couple.

"A special thank you must go to the local branch of CAMRA, who have followed all our ventures with avid loyalty, even though there has been the odd difference of opinion".

It is fair to say that under Les and Carol's stewardship, the White Lion has been transformed into a thriving city-centre pub. As well as serving a wide range of regular and seasonal Wickwar beers and Bass, guest ales have also been a regular feature. Then there have been the regular beer festivals which have been enjoyed by many.



Let's hope that whoever takes over at this pub when Les and Carol move onto the Plough continue the good work.

The Plough itself is a country pub with a paddock, large car park, several outside areas to enjoy a pint, and it also has a restaurant and selective opening hours. Les and Carol would be delighted to see regulars from the White Lion at the Plough. No doubt Bath & Borders CAMRA members will be popping in for the odd visit.

So, good luck to Les and Carol, thanks for all the good times at the White Lion, and good luck at the Plough!

Pete Bridle

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Beer Festivals

Bristol city centre

Although Les and Carol are leaving the **White Lion** in Bristol's city centre, the beer festival planned for Friday 21st to Sunday 23rd September is still going ahead. So don't miss it!

Keynsham

The Keynsham Royal British Legion is holding its first beer festival on the 1st and 2nd September (perhaps over by the time many of you read this). As well as an excellent selection of beers, both cask and bottled, there will also be a large number of ciders and wines to try. Ploughman's lunches will be available and various competitions will take place with a race night on the Saturday evening. Entry is by programme (£2.50), which includes a free drink of your choice.

Stapleton

The Old Tavern in Stapleton is holding a Beer, Cider and Sausage Festival in September, from the evening of Friday 28th through to Sunday 30th.

The Old Tavern, as reported in the last Pints West, is home to the newly formed Arbor Ales brewery. They will be selling a number of their own brews (which include Tendlewood Bitter, Old Knobbly, Hornbeam and Slumberjack) as well as other local ales and ciders.

There will be live music over the weekend and a sausage barbecue. They are also hoping also to recruit Fred's Morris Dancers.

Winscombe

Wrighton Vale Rotary Club will be holding their seventh Beer and Cider Festival at Winscombe Cricket Club, just off the A38 near Sidcot, where you can enjoy a range of around

25 beers and ciders in a convivial location.

There are regular bus services operating stopping at Winscombe, the 121 between Bristol and Weston-super-Mare and the 126 between Wells and Weston-super-Mare.

The festival takes place from Friday 26th through to lunchtime on Sunday 28th October. Opening times are Friday (£2) and Saturday (£5) from 7pm to midnight and Sunday (free) from noon to 3pm. Prices include a souvenir glass, and entertainment on Saturday evening in the form of the "Pocket Rockets", a band who've proved to be a great success over previous years' festivals. Any beer that remains after the festival will be sold off at discounted rates in 5-litre containers at the end of the Sunday session.

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 19th October. Any enquiries call Mark on 07702 589617 or email m.parnell@btconnect.com, or enquire at Thatcher's Cider Shop, Sandford or Ian Studley Cars, Winscombe.

Portishead

The third Portishead Beer Festival takes place on the nights (from 7pm) of Friday, 23rd and Saturday, 24th November at Redcliffe Bay Hall, Newhaven Road. Again, emphasis will be on local, independent breweries. However, beers from another area in the UK will also be featured – it was the Black Country in 2006. Last year's favourite beers were jointly Bath Ales' Festivity and Exmoor Ales' Beast. The aim will be to have over 30 real ales and four or five ciders on tap on the main night, Saturday. To achieve this range, polypins will be used.

Although all the proceeds will go to the Children's Hospice South West charity, the event is run by local CAMRA members who take their beer seriously. Tickets for each night will be £5 which will cover entry, live music

on Friday, tasting notes, a commemorative glass, and your first half pint on Friday and first pint on Saturday. Food such as pasties and rolls will be on sale both nights. You can get tickets by phoning Neil Ravenscroft on 01275 849558, or by post – enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope and cheque made payable to "Children's Hospice South West" – from Neil Ravenscroft, 27 Denny View, Portishead BS20 8BT.

No tickets will

BEER, CIDER & SAUSAGE FESTIVAL

28th, 29th, 30th Sept 07

The Old Tavern

Blackberry Hill, Stapleton, Bristol

Home to

Arbor Ales Brewery

A **FREE** Arbor pint to CAMRA card holders!

be available on the door and it is expected to sell out well before the event. CAMRA members will be welcomed and the Hall is on the main Bristol to Portishead bus route. Newhaven Road itself can be found by turning off Nore Road into Pembroke Road.

Hotwells

The Bag O'Nails is well known for its changing range of beers and for having two festivals every year, in April and in November.

The next one is due to take place from Thursday 15th to Sunday 18th November. Opening times will be from noon to normal closing each day.

There will be around 45 to 50 different beers available over the four days, covering a range of strengths and a range of styles, from light golden ales through to dark stouts and porters.

Rolls and snacks will be available daily.

Beeses

Beeses Riverside Garden & Tea Rooms will be hosting their second beer festival on the weekend of 14th to 16th September. They will be having twelve real ales and four ciders, with live music on Friday evening, Saturday afternoon and evening, and Sunday afternoon. Tickets are £3 per day or £6 for a weekend pass. Fifty per cent of all ticket sales will be donated to the *Friends of Troopers Hill* and *Friends of Eastwood Farm* community groups. These are groups of volunteers who work hard to keep areas on both sides of the river near to Beeses a beautiful space for wildlife to thrive and for people to enjoy.

The Bristol Ferry Boat Company are to be running a trip from Bristol city centre on the Saturday to Beeses for the festival. It is departing the city centre at 2pm for arrival at Beeses by 3pm. The boat will stay for two hours and then depart Beeses at 5pm. Interested drinkers should contact the Bristol Ferry Boat Company on 0117 927 3416.

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

**Friday 26th &
Saturday 27th October
7pm to midnight.**
**Sunday 28th October
noon to 3pm.**

All profits to Rotary charities

Thirtieth CAMRA Bath Beer Festival

The thirtieth Bath Beer Festival will take place on Friday 19th and Saturday 20th October at the Pavilion, North Parade Road, Bath, just five minutes' walk from Bath Spa Station. Opening times are Friday 6pm to 11pm, and Saturday 11am to 3.30pm and 6pm to midnight.

There will be a selection of at least 60 real ales, plus traditional ciders and Belgian beers. The organisers are planning to show the Rugby World Cup third-place play-off (on Friday evening) and final (on Saturday evening) live at the festival on either a large television or big screen.

Admission is £6 Friday evening, £4 Saturday lunchtime and £5

Saturday evening with £1 discount to card-carrying CAMRA members at each session. Please note 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 session(s) required and send a cheque made payable to "Bath & Borders CAMRA" with a stamped, addressed envelope.

Please note that advance tickets will be limited by quota to maximise sales to non-members within the Bath area. Book early to avoid disappointment!



Eighth Real Ale Festival at Minehead Station West Somerset Railway

Saturday 15th Sept 11am - 11pm

Sunday 16th Sept noon - 4pm

The weekend of 15th and 16th September 2007 will see the annual Somerset CAMRA Real Ale Festival, held in partnership with the West Somerset Railway. This highly successful event is now in its eighth year.

The bar and entertainment will be situated in the centre of the station platform, all under cover. There will be a seated area and also static railway carriages for eating and drinking. All of the usual station facilities will be open.

On offer will be up to 100 real ales (and several ciders), many of them from award-winning local breweries such as Butcombe, Cotleigh, Cottage, Exmoor, Glastonbury and RCH. In addition to these, there will be a wide selection of ales from all around the UK, showcasing the incredible wide range of tastes and beer styles produced by our ever-

expanding army of micro-breweries. It is planned to have a locally brewed festival-special beer and at least one cask-conditioned lager. There will be a supply of local ciders, some perry, and wine. Buffet cars on most trains will also stock some beer.

A static buffet car will offer a range of pasties, snacks, sandwiches, and soft drinks throughout the festival. Other hot food outlets are situated very close to the station.

There will be food and live entertainment and entry is FREE. You will however need to purchase a glass which you can keep. A souvenir pint glass will be available, along with a cheaper alternative.

Getting there

Well worth the effort

The very best way to visit the festival is of course to arrive by train on the scenic West Somerset Railway.

A special full-line round-trip train fare of **only £10** is available to all **CAMRA members**. This discount fare is valid for full-line return journeys from either Bishops Lydeard to Minehead or vice versa. To obtain this bargain fare you must show your CAMRA membership card at the ticket office or, better still, enter your membership number on the advance-booking form downloadable from the festival web site at www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk/camra.html.

For **pre-booked train ticket holders only** there will be a **free bus** from Taunton to Bishops Lydeard and return. It will connect with the 7pm Saturday evening train and also the return 10.50pm train from Minehead.

Check out the web site (above) for further details including timetables.

Weymouth

The Dorset branch of CAMRA are holding another Weymouth Octoberfest on 5th and 6th October. Times and prices for both the Friday or Saturday sessions are lunchtime 11-3 for £2, evenings 6-11.30 for £3.

Advance tickets can be obtained by sending a stamped, addressed envelope, and cheque payable to "West Dorset CAMRA", to Octoberfest '07 Fest, 18 Lodmoor Avenue, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 5AF.

See www.camrawdorset.org.uk for more details.



Swindon

The 21st Swindon Beer Festival, a CAMRA event with around 70 real ales and ciders on sale, will take place from Thursday 1st to Saturday 3rd November.

The venue is the Steam Museum in Kemble Drive, the museum of the Great Western Railway, close to the tracks of the mainline. (For details of the museum see the web site at www.steam-museum.org.uk.)

As is customary now, Friday evening sessions are by advance ticket only. You might like to go on Thursday night to avoid the Friday rush!

Friday night tickets are on sale from early October at the Beehive, the Glue Pot and the Carters Rest in Swindon. For other sessions you pay on entry (no advance ticket). Session times and prices are:

Thursday	6pm to 11pm	£3
Friday	12 noon to 3:30pm	£2
Friday	6pm to 11pm	£4
Saturday	12 noon to 8pm	£2

Watering Holes in the Desert

news from Weston-super-Mare

Weston Whispers (pub and beer news)

Golden Lion

OVER the last weekend in May, the Golden Lion in Wrington held its annual beer festival. The Weston CAMRA branch paid its first-ever visit to the pub on the Friday and we were rewarded with an excellent evening.

The ales were racked in the garden, where proceedings were being supervised by landlord Phil Giorgetti. There were only twelve ales but the choice and range was very imaginative. Phil had decided to pitch the festival as a beer trip around the UK and the beers were racked in clockwise geographical order to make life easier for those wishing to undertake the full journey.

The beers, in geographical order, were Orkney Dark Island, Broughton The Ghillie, Black Sheep Best Bitter, Everards Sunchaser, Adnams Broadside, Ventnor Wight Spirit, Goddard's Fuggle-Dee-Dum, Sharp's Doom Bar, Butcombe Bitter, Felinfoel Best Bitter, Bath Ales Barnstormer and Hyde's Jekyll's Gold.

It could be argued that having two beers from the Isle of Wight made the island a bit over-represented in a selection of twelve beers to cover the UK, but anyone who has had the beers from Ventnor and Goddard's certainly wouldn't be complaining. Both were excellent, as was an old favourite of mine, Orkney Dark Island (one of our number started on this and felt that it was so good he drunk nothing else all evening!). I had never seen a beer from Broughton Brewery before and The Ghillie was superb.

The great beers were accompanied by a live band called Ponchartrain, who were squeezed into a corner of the pub – a good mix of Cajun, blues and rock and roll that went down very well. The only food was Clark's steak and ale pies – good value at £1.50.

We had great trouble dragging ourselves out to catch the bus back to Weston.

I returned to the Lion a few weeks later (on the second day of the smoking ban) to find out more about the pub. As I arrived I was greeted by the welcoming site of a Bath Ales delivery van outside. On entering, I got a shock as half the inside had been gutted. Phil had decided that with the smoking ban kicking in, much of the furnishings would still smell of decades of smoke and it would be a good time for a refurbishment. Nothing too drastic that might damage the character of the pub. This work was due to be completed by the end of July. Unfortunately I have not had the chance to revisit – I will soon.

Phil said that the pub is a genuine free

house. It always stocks Butcombe Bitter, which is brewed only a couple of miles away. In addition there is usually a beer from the Bath Ales range and two other guest beers. At the time of my visit these were Greene King Old Speckled Hen and Sharp's Doom Bar. Waiting its turn was Cheddar Potholer.

With regard to the beer festival Phil said that all the beer was sold. This year's was the fourth event and the locals seem to really look forward to it. The steak and ale pies were introduced just for the festival but they were so popular that they have now become a regular fixture.

I would recommend anyone to look out for their next beer fest.

Nightjar

IN July, the Weston CAMRA branch was delighted to be invited by Mark Woodhouse to a social at the Hall and Woodhouse-owned Nightjar on Mead Vale.

Mark Woodhouse is the vice-chairman of Hall and Woodhouse brewery, one of the shrinking band of family-owned breweries in Britain. The company is perhaps better known to some as the producer of beers under the Badger banner. The brewery was founded in 1777 by Charles Hall, and George Woodhouse was brought into the fold in 1847. Mark is the fifth generation of Woodhouses that have been involved with the brewery.

Our evening at the Nightjar began with informal chats with Mark at the bar, where local CAMRA members enjoyed complimentary pints of Badger First Gold and Tanglefoot. After an excellent buffet prepared by landlady Di Bradley and her team, Mark gave an informal talk on the history of the brewery and its plans for the future. This was punctuated by tastings of four of the brewery's excellent bottled beer range – Golden Champion (a winner of the Tesco Beer Challenge, which includes elderflower in its ingredients), Golden Glory (strong aroma and taste of peach and melon – perfect on a summer's afternoon in the garden), Blandford Fly (quite strong at 5.2% ABV and lightly spiced with ginger – allegedly good for warding off the effects of bites from the legendary Blandford fly) and, finally, River Cottage Stinger. The recipe for Stinger was produced in conjunction with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and includes organic nettles in its ingredients.

Mark talked about the new opportunities

presented by people's greater awareness of the pleasures of combining certain beers with foods, as an alternative to the traditional thinking that wine is the natural accompaniment with food. The company will be trying to exploit this new thinking in its promotion of its bottled beers, although Mark was keen to stress that the production of real ale was the bedrock of the brewery and would remain so. The audience asked many questions which Mark was happy to address. A real concern for CAMRA members is how the brewery will fight off the attentions of some of the bigger "vultures" in the industry who would see Hall and Woodhouse and its estate as a very desirable proposition. Mark's response was that they will rely on their obstinacy and bloody-mindedness. Here's hoping that remains enough for a good few more Woodhouse generations.

Old Inn

The Old Inn, Hutton is in new hands. Sandra Murphy has taken over the tenancy of this Greene King pub.

Sandra has been in the trade for 31 years, running pubs in numerous places including Nottingham and Penarth. She took over at the start of July and she seems to be going through the Old Inn like a dose of salts. She reports that the cellar she inherited was "in a shocking state" which comes as no surprise to those of us who had noticed a decline in quality over the past couple of years. Sandra says that the kitchen was just as bad.

Looking ahead, Sandra is looking to raise standards across the board. A new menu will be introduced soon, with local produce being used as much as possible, and she is also keen to expand and improve the beer offer. Permanent beers will continue to be Greene King IPA and Ruddles Best. In addition, and in response to strong feedback from customers, she will be introducing Butcombe Bitter.

There will also be a fourth beer, which will be a rotating guest from Greene King's approved list. Having had a look at this list, there are some excellent choices available. Sandra is involving her customers in deciding which beers will go on (how many pub landlords think to have a genuine dialogue with their customers over the products they sell, I wonder). A real cider is also a strong possibility.

Sandra has been reminded by many locals that the pub's annual beer festival used to be a feature of the village's calendar and she hopes to get one in place before long. Here's hoping that Hutton drinkers and others from sur-

rounding areas will pay the new-look Old Inn a visit.

RON Ford has left **The Waverley** on Severn Road. The new incumbents appear to be keen to keep real ale at the heart of the pub. At a recent visit, the ales were Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Charles Wells Bombardier and Greene King Abbot Ale.

The Royal Hotel regularly features an interesting guest beer, alongside its regular Fullers London Pride. It also has one of the more characterful bars in Weston in which to enjoy a drink.

I DECIDED to do a whistle-stop tour of some of Weston's better real ale pubs on the first Friday night following the smoking ban.

I started at **The Raglan**. There did not appear to be any real difference to normal in the lounge bar. Mainly musicians who I suspect won't let the ban stop their other pleasures.

Next was **The White Hart**. This has always been one of the smokiest pubs in town, so it seemed quite strange to encounter it with clear air. An excellent beer from Harviestoun was on offer. The pub was very busy, mainly due to a skittles match taking place. I noticed that the skittles kept being held up while they had to wait for people who had nipped out for a smoke. Will the ban increase the length of skittles, darts and pool matches, I wonder.

A short stroll to **The Dragon Inn**. The pub seemed eerily quiet – perhaps the Friday night set had already left for rowdier pastures. Very good Thwaites Double Century.

Last stop was **Off The Rails**. Another bar renowned for its smokiness. A gaggle of CAMRA members were working their way through a cask of Hidden Brewery's very nice stout named Depths. The beer was more enjoyable without the smoke and there were quite a few people in the bar. I spoke to a couple of regulars and the general view is that the ban won't be stopping people from going to the pub.

Here's hoping that proves to be the case – popping outside for a smoke in the summer is one thing, it might be a different kettle of fish in the middle of winter when it's cold and windy outside.

Tim Nickolls

Dave McVittie's piece

THOSE of you who have read my pieces in Pints West before will know that I am only here for the beer. I enjoy the social side of CAMRA and not so much the sipping and slurping, discussing the merits of this or that hop or malt or brewer. For me CAMRA is about getting out and visiting places that I might not normally go to. Once again I have not been disappointed with our recent 'crawls'.

My first crawl for a while (I must admit I missed one or two as I was gallivanting around the world on business) was the Kingsdown crawl, which is a novel crawl for those of us who do not normally travel to Bristol. I met our leader, Tim, at Weston-super-Mare station and we travelled by train to Bristol (only £5 return, a bargain). Others, and more senior in age, from our sub-branch had travelled by bus utilising their Diamond bus passes and travelling free (thanks to that nice Mr Brown at the treasury). Mind you they left Weston at the crack of dawn and needed a packed lunch and a flask as the bus tends to stop a lot. Seriously though it doesn't take that long by bus and the freebie pass is a great idea for us 'drinkers'. I wish they would put loos on these buses though.

Now, back to the crawl. Tim introduced me to the excellent **King's Head** public house in Victoria Street, not far from Temple Meads stations, where we tasted Bath Gem. Laurie Gibney joined us here and we moved round the corner to the **Cornubia**. Now I had only heard of the Cornubia through Pints West. What a place! What a gem! But then you Bristolians know that. No wonder everyone was in panic when it closed. Great beers too! Hidden Depths and Hidden Quest were my two choices. More of our sub-branch joined us here along with some Bristol branch members, notably Steve Plumridge having a swift pint or two before rushing home to edit this journal.

In the interest of brevity I will now list the rest of the crawl and beers tasted. White Lion: Wickwar Old Arnold; Commercial Rooms: Burton Bridge Damson Porter; The Bell: Butcombe Blond; Hare on the Hill: Bath Gem; Hillgrove Porter Stores: don't remember; White Bear: London Pride; Robin Hood: "out of ale"; Ship: Theakston's Mild, Old Peculier.

My next CAMRA occasion was the Claverham Beer Festival. A small group travelled on Friday evening by bus from Weston. The festival was held in Claverham

village hall and organised by the Yeo Valley Lions. The theme was Celtic beers, with 35 on the list (though one or two were not available or ran out early). What a selection! I started with Molly's Chocolate Stout (4.2%) from College Green Brewery in Belfast. Good, but as Tim pointed out the Plain Stout (4.3%) from Maguires Brewery in Dublin was better. Meantime we were being serenaded by an Irish band called Shenanigans (basically working their way through the Dubliner's song book). I had Manx Export Bitter from the Isle of Man; Piper's Gold from Argyle; Silver Ale from Lisburn; CO2 from Pontypridd; Lomond Gold from Bridge of Allen (this was very nice), Saltash Sunrise from Blackatawn Brewery, and Spingo Middle from Helston. This really was a well organised festival and, if you missed it, make a note to watch out for it next year. All the beers were sponsored so all monies went to the Lions who, last year, divided the proceeds between three charities, Motivation, BIBIC and Weston Hospicecare.

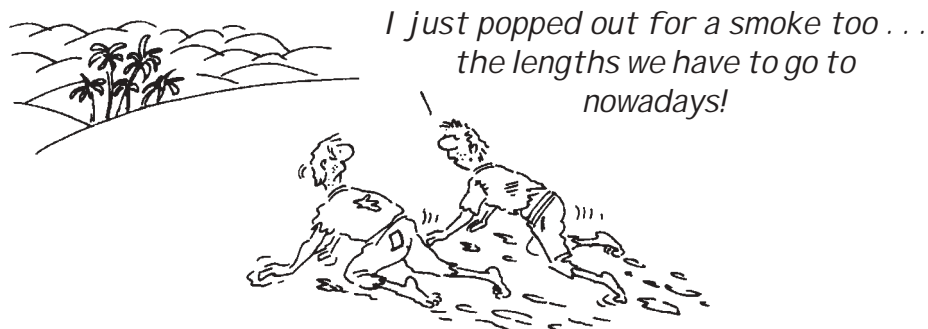
Finally the Weston sub-branch Wednesday Social on 18th July took in three venues, starting with the Dolphin at Uphill. The pub has eleven handpumps! But it had only one real ale on offer, Sharp's Doom Bar. Amazing, all those pumps, only one ale, which was very tasty. Obviously the regulars at the Dolphin are not great real ale drinkers, more's the pity. We moved the 100 yards or so down the road to the Ship Inn, claimed to be the oldest in Weston (though, technically it is not in Weston but in the village of Uphill). Here we had the offer of Archer's Nosmo King and Greene King's Old Speckled Hen. Most plumped for the Nosmo King which was very pale (like a lager) but very tasty (unlike a lager).

Our numbers had grown to fifteen at this point, a very good turn-out for a social evening, and while we stood outside the Ship, a new member turned up and joined us in our trip round to the Weston Cricket Club. The more energetic of us walked but some caught the bus from the bus stop directly outside the Ship, and arrived just ahead of us.

There was an improved selection at the Cricket Club, with Ales from Moor, Butcombe and Fuller's (in the form of Chiswick Bitter). We lost a few of our group at the Ship, as they stayed on the bus back to Nailsea (Laurie Gibney and friends) but we gained a couple more of our members who had been elsewhere that evening (yes, they did bring a note from Mummy apologising).

So all in all another successful social and mini-crawl arranged by Tim. If you haven't joined us on one of our outings yet, why not come along soon. We do drink but we don't get drunk. We don't roll around on street corners jeering passing pedestrians, but we do have fun. Come along, it is a good night out. There is a list of events towards the back of this journal and you would be made very welcome. Someone might even buy you a beer.

Dave McVittie



A Round with Robin

GENERALLY speaking in this rather dismal weather I suppose I have been fortunate in that most of the beer festivals I have been to this summer have been at least on the bright side, if not rather hot. **Bitton Beer Festival** was one such event and, although I missed their very first festival, I have been with a party from Weston-super-Mare to every subsequent one.

This year, from a choice of 30 ales (and a good descriptive programme) I delighted my taste buds with Artist Ale from Nailsworth Brewery, Owzat from Wychwood, and Olde English Rose from Cotswold Spring, before settling down with the ladies present to make the difficult choice between the Garton ales as to which was the best of the two. The troubles were that it was rather a hot day and that the beer was in plastic glasses; Chocolate Frog would probably have bettered the Liquid Lobotomy Stout in normal conditions, but the stout on the day was the winner, in that it didn't seem to matter if it was a few degrees warmer than it should have been.

We stopped off at **Lockkeepers** on our way back to Keynsham rail station, and in Bristol we broke our journey at the **Cornubia** for the excellent Dark Star Mild (Special Edition), before returning home.

At the combined **Royal Oak** and **White Horse** festival at Twerton near Bath on 29th June, I went to the Royal Oak first where seven out of the nine beers on tap were new to me. With a long day ahead of me, I settled for a half pint of Rhymney Dark (4%), a delicious malty and chocolaty mild, followed by a half of Grafton Two Water Grog (also 4%), similar to a porter with a liquorice aftertaste. Then I followed Andrew Swift's easy instructions on how to find the White Horse (page 27 of Pints West 74), where I was able to have a good chat with landlord Steve, over well-kept halves of RCH East Street Cream and Hopback Odyssey. Being a sunny day I enjoyed the view from the

newly finished patio, before returning down the hill to the Royal Oak. There I had a half pint from a new brewery in Cornwall, the Coastal Treasure (5.1%) which was to my way of thinking not unlike a Belgian beer with hints of marmalade and spices.

The same day was the beginning of the local beers festival at **Horts**, so I made my way there and had a half of Beer Factory Old Smokey. This struck me as a beer that would recall in future days the times when smoking was allowed at the bar; alternatively it hadn't the flavour of a peaty malt whisky but rather the stale smokiness of a disused railway tunnel – but I liked it.

As I had to get back to Weston for summer skittles at the **White Hart**, I didn't avail myself of any other of the beers at Horts, though at the White Hart I had a few of Moles Molekeeper.

On the last day of June, six of us went by rail to Topsham, as it was Tony's birthday and he had never been to the **Bridge Inn** there, a pub described by Mike Coleman as "one to see before you die".

On our way we had a quick RCH Slug Porter in Weston's Good Beer Guide-listed pub **Off The Rails**, and whilst changing trains at Exeter, we had a beer in the also-listed **Great Western Hotel**. Here I had Princetown Jail Ale (4.8%) from the selection of eleven real ales offered.

We got to the Bridge Inn, well after mid-day, as the pub keeps opening hours as they were in 1917. Actually very little has changed in the pub since then, with no optics, beer engines, etc. The concession they have made is to have real ale served in lined third-pint glasses which is convenient for trying new ales. I had Branscombe Vale Napoli on the Rocks, Redrock Driftwood, and Warrior Sitting Bull in this way, before having a pint of RCH Steam Special (5%). Food here is very good and most of the party had lunch here.

At a little after 3pm we made our way by train to another regular entry in the Good Beer Guide, the Redwing at Lympstone Village. As well as the regular O'Hanlon's Royal Oak, and Dartmoor IPA, I had the guest ale Teignworthy Beachcomber (4.5%) as it's something of a rarity in our neck of the woods. On our way back to Lympstone railway station we called in at the **Swan**, where the ambience was beyond reproach as was the Adnams Broadside.

Faced with a decision to either explore the other pubs of Topsham or go to Exeter, the majority opted for the former, not in hindsight the best option. We visited in

turn the Globe, the Steampacket, the Lighter Inn, the Passage House Inn, and the Salutation and at all these pubs the beers were good, though at the Lighter we all tried the new Badger Stinger, "organically made using nettles hand picked in Dorset", and I'm sorry to say one or two didn't finish their beer. We had to dash for our last train and found that one member of our group was no longer with us. Graham spent the night in Exeter returning the following day. The rest of us proceeded home in an almost orderly fashion via Off The Rails and more Slug Porter. This of course was the last day when smoking in pubs was allowed and we had to sit outside the pub as they had a smoking party on and we wanted fresh air!

A week later was the fourth beer festival to be held at the **Canal Inn** at Wrantage, a few miles south east of Taunton, and Gooner, Graham and Mike, whilst agreeing to accompany me there, were also desirous of going to the **Halfway House** at Pitney. As these two Good Beer Guide pubs are on the same bus route this seemed a good idea, and there was very little chance of leaving Graham behind again. As the Halfway House opened only until 3pm we went there first, spending two hours inside and one outside in the suntrap of a front garden. From nine real ales, three real ciders and a collection of malt whiskies, I contented myself with four favourite ales and one new one, that being the Branscombe Vale BVB Own Label (4.6%).

A little before 4pm we caught the bus in bright sunshine from the stop opposite the pub in Pitney to the stop opposite the pub in Wrantage! At the Canal Inn the choice of beers was more varied than last year, and at £2.40 a pint were pretty good value. RCH East Street Cream, Bath Ales Barnstormer, Hadrian & Borders Legion, Oakham White Dwarf and Moor Revival were among the top tasty beers on offer, with also three bottled guest beers and three draught Belgian beers. Bryher Simmons again played her guitar and sang in her unique way, and I got ragged by my companions that I was her number one fan. The sunshine continued to shine and it was a real effort to return to Taunton and thence home.

With Mike and Gooner I went on 15th July to the **White Horse** summer beer festival at Twerton, where they had 24 beers from 20 brewers. Some of these were even new to Gooner! Predictably the Black Adder from Mauldon and the Danish Dynamite from Stonehenge were superb; the Irish beer Molings Red from Carlow was not quite ready but still gave great satisfaction with its chocolate, coffee and smoky undertones; but for me the Milk Street Shimmer (4%) was the best of the fest.

Once again we sat outside with the sun chasing us around the sunshade, whilst we tried to stay cool next to the barbecue; some of the local lads tried snuff for the first time which sobered one up considerably, whilst boules was played on the piste provided by the pub. It would have been criminal to pass the **Royal Oak** on the way home without paying our respects there, so I tried the Warcop Honeyed Stout, whilst the other two had beers that were new to us all as well.

My final beer festival in the sunshine of July



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- ◆ Firebox

Guest Beers and Beer Festivals catered for

2007 was to be at the **Swan Inn** at Barton Stacey, a few miles south of Andover in Hampshire. Although all around us in England that weekend were suffering from flooding, we were on the Sunday afternoon able to sit outside enjoying the beer and trying to make ourselves heard over the blues band. From the eleven casks available, I had on Saturday, Somerled (4.7%) from an unknown brewery in Argyle, Beowulf Gold Work (4.5%), and Freeminer Slaughter Porter (5%). On that Sunday afternoon when only four casks remained (and the beer was down to £2 a pint – almost unheard of in that region) I had Monumentale Strong Mild from the Severn Vale brewery, Moor Old Freddie Walker, and Box Tunnel Vision. Also, not willing to let the opportunity pass me by, I had a try of the beer in the Swan from the beer engine, Turners Sunset from Lancaster brewery. On the evening before I was taken to a pub called the **Watership Down** in the little hamlet of Freefolk Priors, where I had the Wychwood Wychcraft – another new beer I hadn't tried before.

I was pleasantly surprised to see that someone on the staff of one of our local papers – The Weston Mercury – actually reads Pints West, and picked up on my piece in the last edition about snuff being available in Weston pubs, as it is in the **Star Inn** at Bath. Of course they put a different slant on the story, but the fact remains that at all the pubs I mentioned I have received free snuff, although I (amongst others) have given tins way to them to provide snuff for those who care for it. I still think it goes well with real ale, and certainly helps those who otherwise would not be aware of some of the great scents that you can obtain from real ale as well as the taste.

At the **Hillgrove** in Dove Street, after collecting my free Dawkins Club pint of Matthews Bristol Champion, I had a most excellent pint of Three Castles Pewsey Longbarrow (4.5%). Like many pubs I had no idea until the smoking ban that they possessed a garden, and in a funny way this restrictive law has opened up new vistas and constructions for us to admire.

Robin E Wild

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Inn and around Portishead

The Priory Inn

A couple of miles inland from Portishead, Portbury is a historic village with one pub. The Priory was originally built in 1822 as a hotel. It is now owned by Vintage Inns- in turn owned by Mitchells & Butlers and as such has a corporate feel to it. The main business going on here is undoubtedly food, served through the day but a couple of real ales were on when me and my personal trainer (wife) walked through its doors. The Butcombe Best and St. Austell Tribute were both decent enough and quite reasonable at £2.40 a pint each.

Although not our main concern in this publication, it has to be applauded that the array of keg beers and lagers on show had their prices clearly shown and were cheaper than expected. This is not a place to be recommended for a session if you are not thinking of eating- all the tables are devoted to food and hanging around the bar is not encouraged but, if you are eating, you will probably enjoy the occasion and the real ales available.

The Poacher

Landlord of the Poacher, Mark Hazelton, continues to turn out fine cask ales, including a changing guest ale and was pleased to see his profile adorning the previous edition of Pints West. However, he was quick to point out that he has never played rugby for local team, Gordano but, instead, has been a mainstay of Old Bristolian's Front Row for many years. It is expected that Gordano supporters were as surprised as Mark was to be as closely associated and it is agreed that he remains very much an "Old B".

The White Hart

The White Hart is situated two miles out of town on the Clevedon Road and in the village of Weston in Gordano. There has been a change of landlord here with local boy, Craig Roper, taking over a few months back, having previously run the George in Backwell for the same management company, 3 Ales Limited – also of Backwell – who lease another half dozen pubs locally.

The regular real ales remain as Courage Best and Butcombe Bitter, with ciders including Thatcher's. Craig has recently introduced a changing guest ale with the help of the pub's Monday Club of real ale drinkers. When I recently visited this was Spitfire from Shepherd Neame. Although this isn't a personal favourite of mine, it went down a treat.

Craig described how the new chef, Mike Brand, is proving popular and has a wealth of experience, despite his boyish looks. Being a

bit of a cheapskate, I first took advantage of the two courses for £6.50 deal (and particularly liked the fresh salad and desert) available Monday to Friday lunchtime till 2pm, but heard that Mike has introduced a bistro-style blackboard menu in the evenings and is attracting a lot of custom, so followed this up by a Friday night visit and was equally impressed. You can book a table by 'phoning 01275 849478.

Neil Ravenscroft



Craig, landlord of the White Hart, with his other half, Rhea

Meet the Landlord

Name: Craig Roper, landlord of the White Hart.

Age: 27.

Where from: Portishead.

Interests: Snooker – Craig captained England Under 21s at one stage and turned pro at 16.

Previous pubs: The Fox and Goose on the A38 near the airport, then the George at Backwell.

Best thing about being a landlord: You can drink while you work.

Worst thing: Long hours.

Favourite other pub: The Black Horse, Clapton in Gordano.

Average hours worked in a week: 65.

Vic's Corner

An occasional feature paying homage to the words and thoughts of local legend, Vic Long, veteran landlord of the Ship and all round sage.

One lunchtime a few months ago a lady came to the bar and asked for six bowls of chips.

But, we don't sell bowls of chips, he said. You include chips in your meals though, said the young lady.

We include peas in the meals, too, but we don't sell bowls of peas, replied young Victor. The customer went chipless.

A weekend in Derby and Nottingham

A WEEKEND in the drinking-friendly cities of Derby and Nottingham? England versus West Indies at Trent Bridge? Plus a chance to meet up with an old friend (Paul) and several new people (Vince's old college pals)? When Vince Murray mooted his plan I readily accepted, having never been out around the real ale pubs of Derby and Nottingham.

The two cities, although within 15 miles of each, offer a very different experience. Arriving at Derby station on a showery Friday lunchtime we went to meet Paul at the nearby **Station Inn**. The landlord apologised for only having Draught Bass available, his beer delivery had been delayed by the flooding further north! As it happened, his Bass served in the flat style in a jug straight from the cellar was excellent, and by way of apology he produced a complimentary plate of small sausages.

From here a short walk took us to Railway Terrace and the renowned **Brunswick Inn**, a famous brew-pub now owned by Everard's brewery who have treated the pub sympathetically. Of the 15 beers available, only two were Everard's own, and seven were brewed on the premises, including the Black Sabbath, a suitably dark and powerful brew. We were struck by the economical prices, a theme of all Derby pubs.

Just round the corner in Siddals Road is the **Alexandra Hotel**, the first of many Tynemill pubs we were to visit over the next three days. We had actually considered staying at "The Alex", but were eventually put off by the 11.30pm curfew. The landlord proved a little spiky when questioned about his policy, although in fairness he proved to be a fine host when we returned for another pint in the evening!

Crossing the River Derwent, next stop was the **Smithfield**; their seven beers featured three from Whim Brewery, including a tasty wheat beer, Snow White. The **Exeter** was visited next. Although a Marston's pub, there was a good range of six beers including Marston's splendid Old Empire, plus beers from Hook Norton and St Austell.

After heading to the very pleasant Chuckles guest house to drop off our gear, we dodged the showers by dropping into the **Wardwick Tavern**, a comfy town centre sort of place, and then made our way to the current Derby CAMRA pub of the year, the **Flowerpot**, in King Street. The surprise here is the view in the cellar bar. The food was good and well priced, though the menu would have been described as unadventurous in the 1980's!

The olde-worlde style **Olde Dolphin Inn** was next on our list, where we enjoyed Bazen's Black Pig Mild. We then took a taxi to the **Falstaff** in Normanton. Home of the Falstaff brewery, this lively local offers a guest beer plus several of the on-site brews. By now we were perhaps becoming a little tired, and faulty navigation led us through a diverse area of the city.

In the spirit of exploration Paul and I persuaded Vince to join us in visiting a Polish pub. Sadly there was none of that country's mighty Zywiec Porter on offer so we contented ourselves with vodka.

The CAMRA Good Beer Guide entry for the **Babington Arms** claims it is probably the best JD Wetherspoon in the country. It may well be right! We arrived after midnight and found 17 beers available, thoughtfully listed on a large video screen. Pick of the list for us was Spire Brewery's Sgt Pepper's Stout. It was pleasing to find the pub immaculate at this stage of the evening. Sadly we ran out of time to visit the Crompton Tavern – even though our B&B was literally next door!



The cellar bar at the Flowerpot

A verdict on Derby? Undoubtedly a very good city for beer range, and beer quality. Where it falls down is the lack of variety of the pubs. Almost all visited were basically traditional boozers, and although of course this is not a problem, many seemed to be resting on their laurels. It was difficult to see many of them attracting a wide range of drinkers or appealing to people outside seasoned real ale drinkers. Derby does seem to be in a bit of a time warp, in contrast to nearby Nottingham!

Phil Cummings

Over to Vince for Part two of the trip.

Although this was Phil's first trip to Derby's pubs, I am a veteran of many trips in the 1980s and 1990s when the city was considered to be arguably the "real ale capital" of the UK (and when I had free rail travel because of my job of course!) but I hadn't been for about five years.

I have to endorse his final comments as almost all of the pubs visited were very much unchanged from 15 years ago, which is testament to their lasting appeal and quality, but I did find myself yearning to find a few new up-and-coming pubs with a new approach. That said there are still many places a lot worse off than Derby!

An early start and splendid breakfast saw us on our way via a short train ride to Nottingham, to watch a somewhat pathetic England defeat against the West Indies. We dropped our bags at the Acorn Hotel, chosen because it was right outside the ground – it was a very friendly and helpful place but not in our view great value especially as the window blind was completely useless against the rising sun at 5am next day!

The ground operate a strict "no alcohol to be brought in policy" and after we checked the first few bars we assumed that we were condemned to supping keg rubbish all day. Thankfully our local correspondent Pete discovered that there was a well hidden upstairs bar in the admin block




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The long-closed Shipstones brewery – what a waste!

dispensing acceptable pints of Bass and London Pride – and no queues to boot! That sorted us out but more and more folk discovered our secret and sure enough the beer ran out mid afternoon.

At lunchtime Pete (a lager drinker) suggested “a pub he knew nearby” and we feared the worst but he did us proud again as it turned out to be the **Stratford Haven** – a splendid modern Tynemill House offering about ten beers, mostly guests. So good that we went back after the match too. So a pleasant morning and afternoon, especially as Ian and Mike had brought enough tasty food to feed an army and insisted on sharing it – spoilt only by dodgy English batting and bowling!

We moved back towards town and visited the **Vat & Fiddle** close to the station – another Tynemill house of the more traditional type and home of the superb Castle Rock Brewery. About five of their beers and a number of interesting guest beers featured here.

Next up was yet another Tynemill pub – the **Canal Tavern** just the other side of the station – more up-market and only four beers here, with a greater emphasis on food, but the remarkable feature is that the canal and a barge are *inside* the pub!

Paul had to depart for his absurdly early last train back to Market Harborough so we were down to just three intrepid explorers. We proceeded to the world famous **Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem** which claims to be Britain’s oldest pub. Sadly on this evening it was Britain’s most crowded pub too and the prospect of getting served a beer quickly was remote so we had a quick look round and moved on – it is a Greene King house these days anyway.

Next stop was the **Salutation** on Maid Marion Way, mentioned in the latest Nottingham drinker – I had been here previously, but it had changed a lot and now has a down-market “rocker’s pub” feel, which was fine with us but may not suit all – four interesting beers on though.

Pete then guided us to the **Gatehouse** pub and bade us good night, so then there were two. This Good Beer Guide-listed pub was frankly a little dull with a very uninspired, mainly Greene King, range on so a quick half sufficed.

On to the ancient **Bell Inn** right in the heart of the town centre – an amazing survivor surrounded by all things modern and loud. This is a pub of many bars and about ten interesting beers and was very busy with folk of all ages. A live band was in full flow and food service was just finishing. An absolute “must visit” if you go to Nottingham. It is no exaggeration to say that the centre of Nottingham is a vibrant and noisy place on a Saturday evening – even more so than Bristol in our view – and it was getting a bit much so we showed our age and legged it out of there in a taxi!

We chose to visit the **Test Match** pub in West Bridgford about half a mile past our hotel. This is a CAMRA National Inventory pub with the most amazing art deco interior and a strong cricketing theme. Very interesting but sadly, since the takeover and closure of the local Hardys and Hansons brewery, now only Greene King served. A stroll back to the hotel took us past the Stratford Haven again which was still incredibly busy at about 11.30pm.

On Sunday a pleasant breakfast took us to 10am and then a bus to town (£2.70 all-day ticket for all buses and trams – First Bus please note) for a stroll round then a coffee at a surprisingly busy Wetherspoon. Then we

took the tram out to Basford and made our way to the **Fox & Crown** – home of the Alcazar brewery and offering a choice of six of them, strangely almost all golden in colour. A couple of their excellent beers and a very economical Sunday roast (£4.50) and we were back in the mood.

One tram stop back to Shipstone Street and a short walk past the splendidly intact and enormous but criminally long-closed Shipstones brewery (a Whitbread victim in the 1990s) brought us to the **Horse and Groom**. This is another top free-house serving about eight or ten changing beers and well worth seeking out.

A five-minute walk brings you to the **Lion Inn** just the other side of the defunct brewery. This thriving modern redbrick pub is owned by Bateman’s brewery and features about three of their beers and half a dozen guests. A live jazz band were in full flow. We headed back to town and had time for a couple of quick stops – a quick half at the **Cock & Hoop** in High Pavement and the **Keans Head** in nearby St Mary’s Gate. The former is a very formal feeling bar attached to a posh hotel with three or four good beers, and the latter yet another Tynemill pub. This one is different again, a single small bar with a gastro-pub feel and about six beers. All Tynemill pubs also feature a large selection of draught and bottled foreign beers. Time was up and we were unable to get to the last few Good Beer Guide pubs including the Lincolnshire Poacher the current local pub of the year – you guessed it – owned by that Tynemill lot!

Our conclusions on Nottingham? A really lively and vibrant place with an excellent selection of real-ale-friendly pubs and something to please everyone – from basic boozers to classic buildings, brew-pubs and gastro-pubs – all featuring great real ale. If I had to make one grumble it would be that the city’s pubs seem obsessed with golden beers – they were everywhere and it was very difficult to find anything dark at all. Maybe that was a one-off weekend though?

Our search for cheap train tickets had meant building in a two-hour stop-over at Birmingham on the way back so we were “forced” to visit the excellent **Wellington** in nearby Bennetts Hill, a pub which showcases an ever-changing range of about 15 real ales from all parts. We had planned to do a couple of other pubs but a torrential downpour put an end to such thoughts. Ironically I had my idea of the best beer of the weekend here – a beautiful dark stout from Full Mash brewery based in, of all places, Nottinghamshire! Then home and a few days on the wagon.

Vince Murray

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New walking route opens in the Mendip Hills

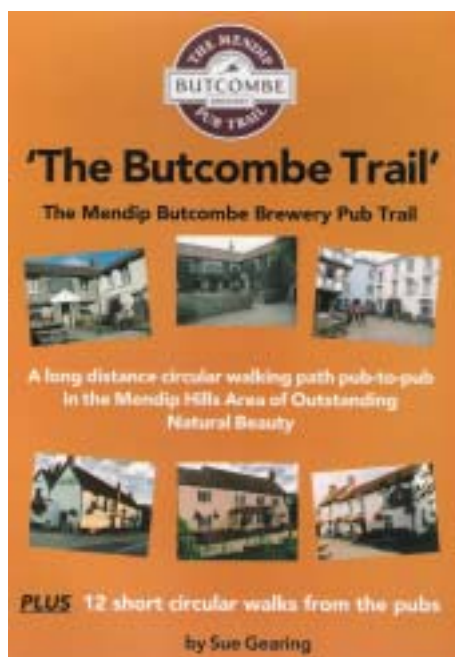
A NEW long-distance walking Trail of nearly 50 miles that should please drinkers and walkers alike has opened in the Mendip Hills in the "Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty".

The Mendip Butcombe Brewery Pub Trail links six very popular Mendip pubs owned by Butcombe Brewery. It was devised and written by West Country walking journalist Sue Gearing with much support and help from the Mendip Hills AONB Service.

The Trail links the Ring O'Bells at Hinton Blewett, the Queen Victoria at Priddy, the Lamb at Axbridge, the Queen's Arms at Bleadon, the Swan at Rowberrow and the Ring O'Bells at Compton Martin. It is a 47-mile circle which is divided into six legs, from pub to pub, ranging in length from about four to nine miles. Walkers can start at any point and do as many legs as they want in one go. There is a reward for those who complete all six legs of the Trail in the form of a special Butcombe Trail t-shirt.

A Trail book written by Sue is available with route descriptions, photos and excellent hand-drawn maps. In addition there are instructions and maps for twelve short circular walks – two short circular walks from each of the six pubs.

The route is designed to give walkers a real



insight into the landscape and beauty of Mendip as well as allowing them to enjoy refreshment at the six very different pubs.

It takes in some of the most attractive and interesting points of the area, including ancient burial barrows, wooded combes, villages, high open spaces, and the highest point on Mendips.

Sue worked on the Trail with Les Davies of the Mendip Hills AONB Service, and the waymarking of the route was carried out by Mendip Ranger, Dave Parker and his wife Margaret from Winscombe. The maps were hand-drawn by Sarah Grice from Congresbury.

"Arriving at a pub after a decent walk is very enjoyable and so it seemed a good idea to link these six popular pubs situated in such a beautiful area. The aim is to promote leisure on Mendip as well as local food and drink," said Sue.

Guy Newell, managing director of Butcombe Brewery, said, "The individual legs of the Trail should be within the capability of regular leisure walkers, and the short circles from each pub should be suitable for people who are reasonably fit. We hope the challenge will be taken up by individuals and groups and may be useful also as a charity fund-raising route. So, put your boots on and get out on the Butcombe Trail!"

Copies of The Butcombe Trail, price £5, are available at Butcombe Brewery at Cox's Green, Wrington, BS40 5PA (tel 01934 863963, email info@butcombe.com) or from any of the six pubs as well as at some shops in the area.



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Visit to Butcombe Brewery

IN June members of Bristol CAMRA paid a return visit to the Butcombe brewery, our previous being in 2005 when we were privileged to be the first group to tour the newly operational brewery site. It is just as impressive the second time around and you know you are going to experience something special from the time you enter the visitor reception area and brewery shop, both displaying a prominence of quality wood fittings.

Being a new purpose-designed plant, the biggest in Britain for over 20 years, it has the many advantages of space, light and airiness and, of course, the sparkling stainless-steel equipment. There are a team of brewers, all multi-taskers, who divide the duties between themselves.

Lawrence, one of the brewers, conducted our tour, comprehensively detailing the equipment and processes which are ultra-efficient from start to finish, with great attention to detail. Sending samples from each



rack on a long delivery journey before returning to the brewery for stillaging and quality checking is one such detail.

At the conclusion of our tour, and to complete a very enjoyable and informative evening, we returned to the bar in the brewery shop where excellent Bitter, Blond and Gold were generously dispensed by Lawrence and Neil, one of Butcombe's sales reps, and where we were able to purchase various goods of our choice.

Our thanks go to Butcombe for welcoming us back for this return visit.

Margaret Evett

Butcombe pub update

The Queen Vic in Priddy

The Queen Victoria is now serving its beers from handpumps instead of gravity feed. This change was felt necessary in order to maintain a consistent temperature.

Parents (and children) will be very impressed with the new play fort provided in the garden here, which has replaced the old swing fittings. (Health & Safety issues at work again!)

The Cross Keys in Rode

The small front bar of the Cross Keys, one of Butcombe's more recent acquisitions, has been tastefully refurbished without losing its original character, with the dartboard being retained and some very attractive window seats in place.

Outside, a new attractive paved seating area has replaced the original grassed one, giving an extended seating capacity.

Margaret Evett

News from Bath Ales

GREAT news for lovers of dark beer, Bath Ales have just introduced a stout to their beer portfolio!

Dark Hare is described by Bath Ales as a deliciously wholesome stout, with flavours of bitter dark chocolate, coffee and a little spice vying for prominence. It should be available in Bath Ales pubs from late August. At a modest gravity of 4%, it should be possible to drink several pints too!

Now that the bottling plant is fully operational, all Bath Ales beers will soon be available in bottles. Barnstormer is the first beer to benefit; it is now available bottled at the brewery shop and in all Bath Ales pubs. It can also be purchased bottled in the gift set which also includes Gem, Wild Hare and a glass.

Also available in bottle is a new, totally organic Dutch lager. Named Natural Blonde, this 5% lager is brewed by Budels brewery and has a fresh, floral taste.

Sharp-eyed visitors to Bath Ales pubs may have observed a house newsletter, "Hare & Now", which as well as informing on all things Bath Ales has other light-hearted features.

Meanwhile, out in the pubs, the outside area at the **Swan at Swineford** nears completion. This will provide a children's playground and much improved car parking.

And at the **Eldon House** Sunday lunch has been receiving rave reviews – it was the featured place for Sunday lunch in a recent edition of Venue. Served from 12 till 4, there is a choice of three or four meats plus a vegetarian choice. Children's portions are also available at a reduced price. This author can confirm that it is indeed excellent, and at £7.95, good value too!

Phil Cummings

bath ales

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

The Hop Pole

Upper Bristol Road, Bath (opposite Victoria Park playground)

The Hare on the Hill

Dove Street, Kingsdown, Bristol

The Merchants Arms

Merchants Road, Hotwells, Bristol

The Salamander

John Street, Bath

The Wellington

Gloucester Road, Horfield, Bristol

The Bridge Inn

Passage Street, Bristol

The Swan

Bath Road, Swineford

Casks and beer boxes available for parties and functions
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www.bathales.co.uk

Pub crawls by bus

I HAVE often moaned about the relatively high cost of bus services in the Bristol area, which I believe are a direct result of the total lack of competition faced by First Bus in this area. Strange how in many other cities, buses are so much cheaper when more than one major operator exists!

However, if you love checking out a variety of good pubs, then it is possible to get good value from our bus services. The secret is to buy an all-day pass and then make good use of it. Those who travel to work by bus may prefer weekly or monthly tickets of course. Two types of day pass are of possible use. If you want to spend a whole day out and are feeling adventurous then A “*First South West Explorer*” at £6.20 after 9am is the ticket for you. You can go anywhere in the Southwest right down to Cornwall with unlimited journeys on this one.

More on that another time though as this article will concentrate on the “*First Day*” ticket which is valid for what might be described as “Greater Bristol” – the whole of the City of Bristol area plus inner parts of South Gloucestershire and part of North Somerset. This ticket costs £4 before 9am and £3.70 after 9. If you are travelling in from more than a few miles out then it is about the same price as a return to central Bristol.

With a little imagination it is possible to put together a number of decent pub crawls to parts of Bristol that you might not otherwise get to, and to check out some of the great real ale pubs that we feature in Pints West. Over the next few editions I will suggest a few crawls that you could try, starting with the following two. The idea in each case is to purchase the *First Day* ticket on your bus into town, meeting up with friends at a good central pub and move on from there.

Crawl One

Bus Route Number 5 Centre to Fishponds and Downend

The number 5 to Downend departs the centre every 20 minutes (more frequently at peak times) during the day and half hourly in the evenings. I will use Saturday evening times in my example.

Travel into town by your local bus buying First Day ticket – meet friends in central pub such as the **White Lion** or **Commercial Rooms**. Make your way to the bus stop in Quay Street (out of White Lion turn right).

Catch the 18.50 bus (others at 18.20 and 19.15 then 19.45). Bus number 25 will also do at this point.

Alight the bus by the junction of James Street and Mina Road (due approximately 19.05) and walk approximately 200 yards along Mina Road towards the City Farm – on your right will be the **Miners Arms**, one of the three excellent “Dawkins Taverns” in Bristol. Expect a friendly community pub (no food) and a range of six or seven well kept real ales including changing guests from independent breweries. The pub opens at 4pm weekdays and 2pm Saturdays or 12 noon Sundays.

From the Miners walk back along Mina Road and across James Street – you will see a small park on your right – walk through this and you will stumble upon the well hidden **Duke of York** pub. The first thing you will notice are the extensive murals on the external walls. Inside expect three changing guest beers, four real ciders, fairy lights, plenty of spook and a lot of surprises! Be aware that this pub does not open until 5pm (4 on Saturday and 3.30 Sunday). Unusual features are the working skittle alley and the upstairs sports bar.

On leaving the Duke of York, head back to the bus stop that you got off at and catch the next number 5 (due around 20.00 and 20.30 and so on). If you have plenty of time then disembark about five minutes later at the **Masons Arms** just past Stapleton Church – this small traditional pub usually has five or six interesting beers and a couple of ciders on. It also has the most astonishing “secret garden” at the rear.

Take the next number 5 bus on to Blackberry Hill about three stops on (up a very steep hill) and seek out the **Old Tavern** – Bristol’s newest free house and brew pub. This is the home of Arbor Ales, usually serving one or two of their own beers and two or three guests.



The Cross Hands, Fishponds (Photo by Duncan Shine)

Good food is also served here, and it is open all day.

On leaving the Old Tavern yet another number 5 bus will take you close to the **Cross Hands** at the top of Fishponds Straits – about three minutes by bus or ten minutes on foot. This wonderful pub offers no less than twelve handpumps selling a constantly changing range of beers and real cider to boot. The separate restaurant area at the rear sells gourmet-style food.

The quickest way back to town from here is to exit the pub and walk to the next bus stop on your left – from here buses 48 and 49 run every 15 minutes to the centre (08, 23, 38 and 53 minutes past each hour) until 22.53.

Crawl 2

Gloucester Road

This crawl is somewhat more straightforward than Crawl One. Meet on the centre with you *First Day* tickets and proceed to the stops opposite the White Lion on Broad Quay.

Look for buses 75, 76 or 77 which run every 15 minutes in the evening or more often during the day. Take any of these buses until you are just past Horfield Sports Centre and the top of Muller Road – about 20 minutes journey. Alight opposite the **Inn On the Green** – a large pub on your right on the main road. This pub has no less than 14 handpumps dispensing many changing guest beers plus several real ciders too. Food is also available. It is open 11 to 3 and 5 to 11 Monday to Thursday and all day Friday to Sunday.

On leaving the pub walk back the way your bus came for about 400 yards and on your right is the **Wellington** – Bath Ales’ largest pub dispensing three or four of their range and occasional guest beers. Food is available too and the pub opens 12 to 2.30 and 5 to 11 Monday to Thursday and all day Friday to Sunday.

On leaving cross the road to the bus stop and take any bus back towards town for about a mile and a half to Bishopston. Between two stops on your left is the **Robin Hood’s Retreat** – sister pub of the Inn on the Green and Cross Hands, Fishponds. This busy pub sells around six changing beers, often featuring several from its “brewery of the week”, and also specialises in up-market food.

From here about six bus routes will take you back towards town so you should not have long to wait.

Hopefully you will agree that it is therefore possible to get good value for your £3.70 bus ticket!

Full bus times are available on the web at www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/southwest/bristol or by phone on 0845 6020156.

Vince Murray

Pub of the year runner-up: The Hunters Lodge, Priddy

I AM prepared to wager that many of our readers have not heard of the Bristol & District CAMRA pub of the year runner-up for 2007. I would also bet than many more have heard of it but would not have a clue how to find it.

Nevertheless many people travel from far and wide to experience its unique attractions. It is situated close to the very edge of our branch boundary on a remote crossroads near Priddy – on the very top of the Mendip Hills in Somerset. It can be reached via various minor roads but perhaps the easiest route from Bristol is to take the A37 / A39 towards Wells and turn right at the traffic lights at Green Ore adjacent to the Ploughboy pub. Keep driving for about two miles and you will come across the Hunters Lodge which is easy to miss due to its plain and unpretentious exterior. For the well equipped traveller the Ordnance Survey reference is OS549501. For the hopelessly lost the phone number is 01749 672275. At night, aim for the big red radio mast.

The truly remarkable thing about the Hunters is the way it has remained completely unchanged for longer than anyone can remember. This extends to the people running it – Roger Dors the landlord has lived on site for over 60 years and been in charge for more than 40. If anyone knows of a longer serving landlord anywhere locally then we would love to hear about them. Together with his wife,



Photo by Richard Brooks

Roger has steadfastly stuck to the same basic formula for all of that time. Expect no frills, warming log fires in winter, the only sound to be that of cheerful conversation, and well kept beer straight from the barrel. In fact the only sign of change has been in the slightly more adventurous choice of real ales in recent years. One or two beers from Butcombe are always on offer, but usually also a couple from the likes of Cheddar Ales, Glastonbury or



Blindman's breweries – this pub definitely supports its local producers.

The policy also extends to its real cider, supplied by Wilkins from nearby Mudgely. Indeed I was amazed when one evening I spotted Roger Wilkins himself behind the bar at about 10.15pm. He explained that he was "out delivering" but had to shoot off as he had more pubs to do. Now that's what I call service!

The pub has very thick old stone walls which I believe explains why the beers always seem to be at a cool enough temperature even in the hottest weather, despite the total lack of cooling equipment.

I can personally vouch for the unchanged nature of the pub as I well remember making many a trek out from Burnham-on-Sea with friends in the late 1970s and early '80s – it was literally the same then as it is now. It therefore gave me and

many others huge pleasure to see them presented with their award by our branch chairman Richard Brooks.

The pub consists of three rooms – the main bar to the left as you enter, a smaller central area, and the "secret" back room which leads on to the pleasant garden at the rear. The main bar features a good view of the beer barrels on offer and coming next, a log fire, and

an intriguing recess or "priesthole". I am often amused at seeing bottles of beer such as Mackeson stout or Mann's brown ale on sale – I had thought these to be extinct! The middle bar is quieter and less frequented. Those brave enough to venture down the dark corridor to the rear bar may sometimes stumble across a meeting of locals looking unimpressed at being interrupted like we once did (think American Werewolf in London when the Americans walk in on a pub full of Yorkshire folk!) but more often feel very much at home in the cosy room. Indeed if you do so on a Tuesday evening you can expect to be entertained by a large group of local musicians who meet up for an informal jamming session of folk style music.

One final thing that makes the Hunters stand out is the quality and value of the food sold. Haute cuisine this is not – just a few plain, simple dishes done very well and sold at exceptionally low prices. Expect locally made faggots and peas, large bowls of chilli or similar for under four quid. Alternatively the ham or cheese and onion rolls at around £1.20 are ideal fodder for those enjoying a few beers – they do not spare the fillings either.

The Hunters has a regular following amongst locals, cavers and ramblers but all are welcome – just leave your mobile phone in the car as Roger does not approve of their use in his pub – as one foolish Daily Telegraph features writer once discovered when reviewing the pub! So if you are one of those people yet to discover this wonderful old place, you no longer have the excuse of ignorance – why not get on out there soon? Long may Roger continue to reign at keep it unchanged for ever!

Vince Murray

Bath & Borders Branch

Pub and brewery news

Cross Guns, Avoncliff

An unexpected recent visitor to this pub was American actor, and current artistic director of London's Old Vic theatre, Kevin Spacey. He was apparently spending a quiet weekend on a boat on the Kennet and Avon canal. He called on the Friday night and on that occasion nobody recognised him, but when he returned on Sunday he was noticed and lightly besieged by autograph hunters. He had a few pints of Box Steam's Tunnel Vision and took two pints of the same beer away from in a carry-out box (and to think he could have visited the Devizes beer festival that same weekend!)

Bear, 8 Wellsway, Bath

A popular landmark is in search of a name. A large polar bear has stood guard on the roof of the Bear pub on Bear Flat for decades and now the new landlady Denise Ashworth has decided it deserves its own monicker. She is inviting people to come up with an apt name for the bear, with each entry costing £1. Proceeds will go towards the RUH's *Space to Grow* appeal, which aims to raise £4.5m to rebuild the hospital's neo-natal intensive care unit. The Bear re-opened in March following an extensive refurbishment. The beer range includes Courage Best, Wadworth 6X, Fuller's London Pride, Wells & Young's Bombarrier and a guest.

Cross Bath, Bath Street, Bath

The company that runs the spa has won permission to serve complimentary alcoholic drinks at the Cross Bath. A group of protesters made up of city residents, Cross Bath users and people who believe the hot spring which feeds the pool is spiritually important staged a protest outside the Guildhall, but they were not allowed to make formal objections to the council's alcohol sub-committee because they do not live near the Cross Bath and so did not qualify as "interested parties"

under the licensing legislation. Margaret Stewart of the Springs Foundation, a charity that believes the spa waters to be sacred, said, "This appears to fly in the face of the Millennium Commission requirements that an aspect of the spa had to be available for the local community on a 'not-for-profit' basis." She threatened to pursue a High Court judicial review against the sub-committee's decision. The company's legal representative David Holley said: "It's just a complimentary service." He denied it would become a "party pool" as the objectors have claimed.

Olde Farmhouse, 1 Lansdown Road, Bath

Bath's premier jazz pub has been refused permission to let customers smoke in its outdoor beer terrace late at night. The pub is licensed to open until midnight but only on condition that the terrace at the back of the property is not used after 11pm. In response to the introduction of the national smoking ban owners Wadworth asked for the restriction to be partially lifted so that people could smoke, but not drink, in the outdoor area until closing time. But residents slammed the application as an opportunist move because the pub has already operated a successful smoking ban since last December without the need for a dedicated outdoor smoking area.

Royal Oak, Pulteney Road, Bath

It was the first visit by the branch to this pub in several years on 4 July. Four beers are available. At the time of our visit they were Courage Best, Butcombe Gold, Bath Ales Gem and Hop Back Summer Lightning. The two last were in very good condition. The pub has recently been refurbished and taken on by former landlord of the nearby Ram, Simon Wynne. The interior is open-plan, unpretentious, comfortable and reasonably quiet. The double skittle alley is still out back. Hot meals are served until 9pm on weekdays. Well worth a visit.

Castle Inn, Mount Pleasant, Bradford-on-Avon

First visit by the branch following refurbishment on Wednesday 11 July. It is indeed as reported in June's news: utterly changed and chav-free. It was felt that possibly that it had one too many beers available. The range at the time of our visit was "Flatcapper" Bitter and Porter, Hidden Pleasure IPA and Three Castle's Barbary Castle and Tanked Up. With the exception of the Flatcapper Porter the quality was good verging on excellent. Flatcapper is the name of the pub-owning company and we have no idea of the true source of the bitter and porter.

George, Woolley Street, Bradford-on-Avon

First visit by the branch to this pub in quite a while on Wednesday 11 July. The beer range was Butcombe Bitter and Bath Ales Gem. Also available on draught was Bulmer's Traditional cider.

Raincheck Bar, Swan Hotel, 1 Church Street, Bradford-on-Avon

This well-known Bath bar has relocated to Bradford-on-Avon. Formerly to be found at 34 Monmouth Street it will by now have decamped to the cellar of the recently refurbished Swan Hotel. Owner Mark Heather said: "It was the kind of place that staff knew your name and what you drank and where customers got to know each other too. We will be mixing the same formula here at the Swan and look forward to welcoming old and new faces." The bar opens from 8pm to 1am on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Former Beale's shop, St John's Street, Devizes

It is now widely expected that this former shop will be transformed into a Wetherspoon's pub by the end of the year. I understand that a new Wetherspoon's is coming to Chippenham as well.

Eighth Devizes Beer Festival on the Wharf

This year saw the return of this unique part-under-canvas, part-open-air event, after a year out in the cold. It was, unusually for this year's summer, a warm and sunny day. The event had around 1,325 visitors this year; the tickets did not quite sell out. Around fifty or so beers were available along with a wide selection of ciders and perries.



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Meanwhile Denis and Mick manned the foreign bottled beer counter. There was more-or-less continuous live music throughout the all-day event along with children's entertainment and a visit by the Wadworth's shire horses. The complexities and cost of security and licensing, which in large part had contributed to the cancellation of last year's event, have been overcome, and the port-o-loos, a new feature this year following the recent demolition of the nearby public toilets, did not overflow! The organisers are so buoyed up by the success of this year's event that they are seriously considering an indoor winter beer festival for early next year.

Hidden Brewery, Oakley Industrial Estate, near Dinton

The brewery, which is slightly outside the branch's area, was recently visited by the branch for its *Beer of the Festival* presentation. Against stiff competition Hidden Potential had taken the accolade at the 2006 Bath Beer Festival. At the same time there was a visit from our friends in the Portsmouth & South Hampshire Branch. Since last visited by our branch, around three years ago, Hidden has expanded considerably. Former Oakhill head brewer Gary Lumber set up the business in partnership with a local businessman in 2003 as a small-scale micro. In that year's Bath Beer Festival Gary's first beer, Old Sarum, was the runner-up in the *Beer of the Festival* competition. Since then the brewery has received significant investment and now supplies up to around 500 outlets in a large local area. Hidden has an estate of two pubs. First to be acquired was the nearby Bell at Wylde; then last year the brewery took on the Cornubia in Bristol. The beer range includes four regulars (Pint, Old Sarum, Quest and Pleasure) and four seasonals (Spring, Fantasy, Depth and Treasure).

Prince of Wales, 94 High Street, Dilton Marsh

The interior (apart from the skittle alley) has been recently redecorated, re-carpeted and refurnished throughout. It looks very smart and the new carpet is thick and bouncy. Landlords Alan and Lynne have also opened a very pleasant covered and heated smoking area in the small garden at the back of the pub.

Rose & Crown, on A36, near Limpley Stoke

A recent edition of the *Wiltshire Times* reports that this roadside pub has been sold to Enterprise Inns for around £1m. Owner Brendan Wilkins had run the pub for five years but is now emigrating to Canada. The Rose & Crown dates back 300 years. It has a main bar, large restaurant area, games and pool room, and a beer garden that overlooks the Avon valley.

Crown Hotel, Timbrell Street, Trowbridge

Bed and breakfast facilities and the promise of mum's home cooking are expected to pull in the punters following a major refurbishment of the Punch Taverns-owned pub. Since taking over the Crown in December landlords Liam and Judy Foggarty have revamped the hotel facilities and given the pub itself a major face-lift. It is now, according to a recent *Wiltshire Times* article, a warm, cosy, inviting pub. No information was given in the article on the range of beer.

Fox & Hounds, 6 Deverill Road, Warminster

Recently visited by the branch. The beer range consisted of Butcombe Bitter, Ringwood Best and Wessex Warminster Warrior, with Hidden Fantasy coming on as the next guest. One of the best pubs in the area for real cider, Thatcher's Cheddar Valley and Traditional and Rich's Farmhouse available at the time of our visit. Landlord Chris Pitcher is planning to build a skittle alley and a new outside drinking area on to the side of the pub.

Organ Inn, High Street, Warminster

Landlords Daniel Keene and Carly Edwards celebrated their first complete year of business with a barbecue with live Irish music on Saturday 21 July. The original Organ Inn closed in 1913 because of the council's regulations over the high number of pubs in the area at that time. Since then it has been a butchers and a locally famous fruit and fish shop. The building re-opened as a pub on 21 July 2006 when the young couple chose to take on the challenge of starting a pub from scratch. Daniel and Carly have carefully preserved the original interior and have used items from charity shops and recycled parts to turn the previously

derelict building into a thriving business. There was a large piece with photograph in a recent *Wiltshire Times*.

Crown Hotel, Market Place, Westbury

This Wadworth pub recently received a visit from local MP Andrew Murrison. Dr Murrison visited the Crown as part of the *Proud of Pubs* week campaign organised by *Publican* magazine. The MP pulled a few pints and discussed a range of issues affecting the licensing trade, including the effects of the smoking ban, with landlady Christine Holt.

Village Pump Music Festival, Stowford Manor Farm, Wingfield

Beer drinkers at this four-day festival supported Dorothy House Hospice in Winsley each time they bought a pint of Rumpy Pumpy, a special beer brewed exclusively for the festival by Wadworth. Introduced last year, the beer sold so well then that double the amount was produced for this year's event. For each pint purchased 10p was donated to Dorothy House.

Bell Inn, Church Street, Wylde

This pub is now owned by the nearby Hidden Brewery, and is the principal local outlet for much of brewery's range. Four Hidden beers are usually available. The Bell, which is situated in one of the Wylde valley's most picturesque villages, has a quiet cosy atmosphere and a locally excellent reputation for its food. The beers were found to be in excellent condition when the pub was recently visited by branch members after the *Beer of the Festival* presentation at Hidden Brewery.

Forthcoming events

In September

Re-opening of the Lamb Inn at the top of Bath Hill in Frome. A precise date is still to be announced. This will be Blindman's first estate pub and it is likely that the branch will receive an official invitation to attend the re-opening.

Wednesday 5 September, starting at 8:30

Branch social at the Forester & Flower, formerly the Forester's Arms, Combe Down, Bath. A short beer festival meeting will be held at 8pm ahead of the social proper.

Thursday 13 September, starting at 8:30

A social at the Cross Guns, Avoncliff, one of the principle outlets of the Box Steam Brewery.

Wednesday 19 September, evening

Minibus trip of the Shepton Mallet area to include a first visit by the branch to the Stumbles Inn. From reports this pub, a local main outlet for Matthews Brewery, sounds well worth a visit.

Tuesday 25 September, starting at 8:30

Branch meeting at the Bladud's Head, Larkhall, Bath.

Friday 28 to Saturday 29 September

A first Wessex Beer Festival at the Bath & West Showground near Shepton Mallet. This is a Rotary Club event on an ambitious scale with 120 beers and entertainment on at all sessions. More details are available at www.wessexbeerfestival.co.uk.

Friday 19 to Saturday 20 October

The Thirtieth Bath Beer Festival. More details elsewhere.

Saturday 27 October, start time to be confirmed

CAMRA southwest regional meeting at Horts City Tavern, 49 Broad Street, Bristol. The regional meetings are held every four months and are hosted by regional director Ian Packham. They are an opportunity for the active membership of branches across the whole of CAMRA's southwest region to come together and discuss the national campaigning issues of the day and share advice on running branch level activities such as beer festivals and so forth. The region's branches take it in turns to host these meetings.

A Few Swift Rambles (news from Bath)

THE quality and range of beers at the **Royal Oak** beer and folk festival, held between 28 June and 1 July, came as no surprise; what did come as a revelation was the outstanding quality of the music. The acts I managed to catch were equal to anything at Glastonbury or Trowbridge – and with over 50 real ales on offer, plus a refreshing absence of mud and chemical toilets – and no admission charge – the Royal Oak was definitely the best option.

The place was understandably chocker much of the time, so it was just as well that an overflow venue – a bit like the acoustic stage at Glasto – had been laid on up the road at the **White Horse**. Among the acts featured at the Oak were Jhassi Elliott, James Hollingsworth, Jane Taylor, Steve Robinson and Alie Byrne, the Master Chaynijs, Inu, the Mandrake Project, Babel, and James Fagan & Nancy Kerr, while the Gaulois Brothers, Malarchy, Sam Brookes and Jenny Crook were among those appearing at the White Horse.



Royal Oak folk festival

Over 50 beers were on offer, including many rarities. Beers from breweries founded in the last twelve months included Old Knobbly and Trendlewood Bitter from Arbor Ales, Bishop Percy from Bridgnorth, Best and Potholer from Cheddar, Festival Bitter from Festival in Cheltenham, Dicky Doodle from Cumbrian, Gold Spice and Wiltshire Pale Ale from Keystone in Salisbury, Top Hop from Hornbeam in Manchester and Tanked Up and Barbery Castle from Three Castles in Pewsey. Blindman's brewed a Folk Fest Special for the event, and Old Smokey from the Bristol Beer Factory, brewed to mark the introduction of the smoking ban (which came into effect on the last day of the festival), was also available. Three days simply weren't long enough to do justice to the range of beers on offer ... Alchemy from Abbeydale, Boggart's Pale, Empire Dark Satanic Mild, Hopstar Dizzy Danny, Moor Milly's Mild, Otley 08, Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild, Thornbridge Hall Jaipur IPA ... roll on next year.

Incidentally, the Royal Oak website (www.theroyaloak-bath.co.uk) now includes not only details of forthcoming events but also a list of new and up-coming beers.

The new team at the **White Horse** were so taken with being involved in the Royal Oak festival that they organised their own a couple of weeks later. A superb selection of beers, plus music from the Midge Peas, Cross Town



White Horse

Traffic and the Boys in the Bush, saw the place packed to the rafters. Twenty-one beers were featured, including such delights as Hop Stock & Barrel from Blindman's, Molings Red from Carlow in Ireland, Freebooter from Jollyboat of Bideford, Black Adder from Mauldon's in Suffolk, Shimmer from Milk Street, Simply the Best from the Mighty Oak Brewery in Essex, Bishop's Farewell from Oakham and Double Header from RCH. Votes for Beer of the Festival produced two clear front-runners – Otley 01 (no surprise there) and Pink Panther from Cwmbran. This did surprise me: Cwmbran is a cracking little brewery, nestling on the slopes of Mynydd Maen in Monmouthshire, but this pink-hued, blackcurrant-flavoured tippie, which I first came across in the Bell a couple of years ago, doesn't do it for me, I'm afraid. I've nothing against fruit-flavoured beers as such, but in this case the fruit seems to overwhelm the taste of the beer. But that's just a personal opinion, and a lot of people obviously don't agree. The funny thing is, given the ongoing "fem-ale" debate, that the overwhelming majority of those who voted for this beer were men!

The publicity generated by this very successful event should ensure that this excellent little boozer is now on a few more real ale drinkers' itineraries. A winter beer festival is also planned, although no date has yet been set. Details of other forthcoming events, including Tim Basset's tribute to Elvis on 23 September, can be found at www.thewhitehorsebath.com.

Also in Twerton, the **Golden Fleece**, midway between the Royal Oak and the White Horse (how's that for location?!) is winning approving comments for the quality of its ale. Range wise, the blackboard outside seems to promise a mouth-watering variety. Sadly, if you read the small print, you'll find that most of the beers listed are ones that have been on in the past! Still, there's no point stocking loads of beers if you can't sell them and the new management have very wisely decided to take things gently at first. The Golden Fleece, last in the Good Beer Guide in the late 1990s, may well be one to look out for in the future.

Meanwhile, back down the Upper Bristol Road towards the city centre, the **Belvoir**



Golden Fleece

Castle is also under new management. The skittle alley's been cleared out, the garden reclaimed and reopened and the whole place cleaned and smartened up. Only Courage Best is available at the moment, although there are hopes that other beers may soon follow.

An eagerly awaited event in the Bath beer calendar is the annual Cornish Beer Festival at the **Star**. This year's festival, held on 5th to 8th July, was the fourth and it more than lived up to expectations. As well as old favourites such as



Belvoir Castle

Spingo Special from Blue Anchor and Skinner's Heligan Honey, there were plenty of new Cornish beers to try, including Blackawton Westcountry Gold, Doghouse Seadog, Organic Brewhouse Lizard Point Bitter and Wooden Hand Pirate's Gold. Pasties shipped in from Cornwall and the traditional singing of Cornish songs also added to the success of the occasion. Incidentally, if you haven't been up to the Star recently, the Bass (served, as always, straight from the barrel) is as good as ever, and there's an increasingly adventurous selection of guest beers on offer as well.

One festival that should be well worth a visit is the Round Britain Beer Festival at the **Raven** on Queen Street in Bath from 31st August to 6th September. Up to 30 beers will be available over the course of the week (with ten on offer at any one time). Highlights include Orkney Skull Splitter at 8.4%, Caledonian Rebus, Theakston's Grouse Beater, York Guzzler, Springhead Roaring Meg, Ventnor Sunfire and Wight Spirit, Titanic Triple Screw, Moorhouse's Blond Witch, Thwaite's Lancaster Bomber, Northumberland



Barley

Quayside Blonde, Otley 08, Archer's Predator and Cotswold Spring Honeybear. Live music will be provided on 4th September by Elijah Wolf, on 5th September by 'Ere Whacks (comedy) and on 6th September by Danny Vincent & Friends. For more details see www.theravenofbath.co.uk.

Over in Bathwick, the new management at the **Barley** are not only keen to stock more real ale but are hoping to stage a beer festival later in the year. A recent visit found Black Sheep, Bass, Butcombe and Old Rosie cider on offer – all in good condition. For years, this friendly local (with the most obtrusive sofa in Bath) has seemed on the brink of becoming a really top-class real-ale boozer. Let's hope the new management can take it the whole nine yards.

Just around the corner from the Barley, the beer range at the **Pulteney Arms** now extends to six hand pumps. A recent visit found Otter Bright, Bath Ales Gem, Wadworth's 6X, Young's Bitter, Butcombe and London Pride on offer. The Otter was particularly good.

Along the road at the **Curfew**, meanwhile, Heidi Hunt and Anne Livesay, the new management team, have continued their efforts to turn the place around. It now looks cleaner and brighter than ever, with well kept beer and a lovely garden at the back. I've been looking in recently to check out Horizon, the new offering from Wadworth's – strongly recommended, if you've yet to sample it.

Hard on the heels of the conversion of the upstairs of the Crown & Anchor in Weston (that's Weston in Bath) to the Shaad Indian restaurant comes the takeover of the **Fairfield Arms**, high above Camden Crescent on the north of the city, by Aziz and Alec Chowdhury. Following a refurbishment, the pub now offers



Fairfield Arms

food from northern India, Bangladesh and Nepal, alongside beer from somewhat closer to home – although for anyone wanting the full curry house experience, Indian bottled beer is also available. Initial reports suggest the combination is proving very popular. Food is served from noon to 2.30 and 6 to 11.30 seven days a week.

The **Old Farmhouse** on Lansdown Road has had an application to allow customers to use its outdoor patio until midnight turned down. Although the pub is licensed till midnight, the patio has to be cleared by eleven. Wadworth's, the pub's owners, asked for permission for the patio to be used till midnight for smoking only, but this was refused after a campaign by local residents.

Over in Bristol and being in the Stapleton Road area, I looked into the **Sugar Loaf**, a pub I'd been wanting to try for some time – a lovely old-fashioned boozer and a superb pint of Blindman's Golden Spring. Later, in the city centre, I stopped off at **Zerodegrees**. I know their beers, brewed on the premises, have won awards at beer festivals, but in the past I've often found the beers served at the pub a tad on the chilly side. But as it's one of the hottest days of the year so far, I'm happy to give it a go. I




Lamb Inn, Frome


opt for wheat beer, weighing in at a modest 4%, but with a well-rounded citrussy punch that would, I feel pretty confident, have most lager drinkers converted to the real ale camp if they could be persuaded to try it. Sitting on the balcony overlooking Christmas Steps, with the whole of Bristol spread out below and sipping (!) a beer like this has to be one the best ways to while an hour or so on a sunny summer afternoon.

Last, but by no means least, comes news that Blindman's Brewery's refurbishment of the **Lamb Inn** on Christchurch Street East in Frome is nearing completion. It is expected to open sometime in September; further details will be available on their website, www.blindmansbrewery.co.uk. Once the tap for the Lamb Brewery, one of the biggest in Somerset, the Lamb will not only serve the full range of Blindman's beers, along with food, but also offer overnight accommodation. With the Griffin (the Milk Street Brewery tap), and the newly-refurbished Olive Tree on Christchurch Street West, Frome is definitely on the up in pub and real ale terms. And with a pleasant, if rather intermittent, train service to the town from Bristol and Bath, there's no excuse not to pay a visit.


Andrew Swift



THREE GOLDS FOR WYE VALLEY



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Butty Bach

HPA - Awarded West Midlands CAMRA Bitter of the Year 2006

Butty Bach - Awarded West Midlands CAMRA Best Bitter of the Year 2006

Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout - Awarded West Midlands Bottled Beer of the Year 2006

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HPA - Silver Medal winner at West Midlands CAMRA Beer of the Year 2006

Wye Valley Brewery, Herefordshire
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The Champion Beer of Britain 2007 ... is Mild

HOBSONS MILD from Hobsons Brewery in Shropshire was recently judged to be the best beer in Britain by a panel of brewers, beer writers and journalists at the Great British Beer Festival at Earls Court.

The beer is described in the 2007 edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide as: "A classic mild. Complex layers of taste come from roasted malts that predominate and give lots of flavour."

The Shropshire-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 great victory for a traditional British beer. It's bursting with flavour and, unusually for a mild, it's got plenty of hop character."

"It's great to see a classic copper-coloured beer take the top award."

Nick Davis, Director of Hobsons, said: "What a great surprise! It's a nutty mild and despite being only 3.2% abv it's packed full of flavour."

"I would like to thank all the team at Hobsons in Cleobury Mortimer for their outstanding work in achieving this prestigious award."

The Silver award went to Mighty Oak brewery in Essex for their Maldon Gold. The

Bronze was awarded to Green Jack brewery in Suffolk for Ripper.

Judging at the Champion Beer of Britain finals is done on the morning of the first day of the Great British Beer Festival starting at 10.30am. 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 (typically, the bitter and best bitter classes include more entries, and therefore the gold and silver category winners go through to the final). The winner is then announced later in the day during the Trade Session at the Great British Beer Festival.

(Note that the winner of the Champion Winter Beer of Britain, "Ripper" from Green Jack Brewery in Suffolk, was already in the final after being entered in February at the National Winter Ales Festival.)

OVERALL WINNERS

Gold: Hobsons Mild

Silver: Mighty Oak Maldon Gold

Bronze: Green Jack Ripper

Category winners:

Milds

Gold: Hobsons Mild

Silver: Nottingham Rock Mild

Bronze: Brain's Dark

Bitters

Gold: Castle Rock Harvest Pale

Silver: Twickenham Crane Sundancer

Joint Bronze: Surrey Hills Ranmore Ale

Joint Bronze: Fyne Piper's Gold

Best Bitters

Gold: Purple Moose Glaslyn Ale

Silver: George Wright Pipe Dream

Joint Bronze: Fuller's London Pride

Joint Bronze: Nethergate Suffolk County

Joint Bronze: Station House Buzzin'

Strong Bitters

Gold: York Centurion's Ghost

Silver: Inveralmond Lia Fail

Bronze: Brain's SA Gold

Speciality Beers

Gold: Nethergate Umbel Magna

Silver: Little Valley Hebden Wheat

Bronze: St Peter's Grapefruit

Golden Ales

Gold: Mighty Oak Maldon Gold

Silver: Oak Leaf Hole Hearted

Bronze: Otley 01

Bottle-conditioned Beers

Gold: O'Hanlon's Port Stout

Joint Silver: Wye Valley Dorothy

Goodbody's Wholesome Stout

Joint Silver: Titanic Stout

Bronze: Wapping Baltic Gold

Around the Backwell area

AT the time of compiling this brief report it is too early yet to fully assess the impact of smoking legislation on all our licensed premises featuring cask ales. So your scribe has concentrated on real ale range and pricing and will include reaction to the smoking ban next time in *Pints West*.

The **Old Barn** in Wraxall recently bade farewell to landlord Tony Fey who set off to pastures new in South Devon. New proprietor Steve was all set for properly catering for smokers on my visit to distribute *Pints West* some weeks ago. He offered well kept and well served Butcombe, Fuller's London Pride and St Austell Tribute, each at £2.40 a pint, while Timothy Taylor's Golden Best was moving well at £2.20. A quiet lunchtime was being enjoyed by a few customers when I called – obviously anxious to be ahead of the busy evening sessions the Barn experience.

Meanwhile at the **Dewdrop Inn** they were still giddy with change after Marston's latest move swallowing up Eldridge Pope kicked in. This prompted Pedigree to appear on the bar and at £2.50 a pint was being welcomed by their customers. Courage Best at £2.50 is still the biggest volume seller, while for those wanting a more local beer Newman's Wolver's Ale, perhaps priced a little on the high side at

£2.80, was nevertheless moving well. Strong food sales appear to be the backbone of the business at the Dewdrop, which is rumoured to be under consideration for further refurbishment soon.

Into Backwell itself now – in West Town the **New Inn** were putting finishing touches to their smokers' shelter a few days ahead of July 1st. Reporting strong food sales when I called by, this Enterprise-supplied pub offered Courage Best and St Austell Tribute, both at £2.40, while their favourite, hand-pulled Webster's Green Label sells well at £2.20 a pint.

The **George Inn** in Farleigh were also finalising their heated smokers' shelter as I called. Their lunchtime two-course meal special offers exceptional value and to wash it down I found well kept Wadworth 6X and Greene King IPA, both at £2.55 per pint, and superb Butcombe Bitter at £2.50. Customers still see the occasional appearance of other guest beers on their bar – priced around the same level, your writer is led to understand.

Tucked away a few hundred yards up Backwell Hill Road is **Backwell Village Club**, a members' club situated in a quiet conservation surrounding. Though a members-owned club, BVC can and does welcome

visitors and is always accepting new members from around the local area. Beer-wise, BVC offers well kept Courage Best at £1.85 a pint and an "ever changing" guest beer from large and small breweries far and wide. The guest beer is priced highly competitively at £1.95 a pint and particularly notable recent ales include Butcombe Blond, Crouch Vale Brewers Gold and the wonderful Studland Bay Wrecked, personally fetched from the Isle of Purbeck Brewery in deepest Dorset by one of many real ale orientated members! Perhaps BVC should consider acquiring the distribution rights to this gem of a beer which always attracts great sales when it appears!

Look out for the imminent annual BVC Beer and Cider Festival, currently being planned for late October. Gaining a reputation as one of the best-organised local festivals, BVC anticipate another hugely successful event and hope to raise more funds for local charity from their own version of October Fest!

As you can read, from five outlets in and close to the village of Backwell real ale is prospering considerably and the variety and pricing is also closely in proportion to most other local areas. Make sure you take your time to stop in Backwell when you have an hour to spare – you and your taste buds will not be disappointed!

Martyn Howell

Cider Saunter

A GROUP of about a dozen of us, including a Birmingham CAMRA member Clive, decided to embark on the docks cider saunter on Saturday, 23rd June. Despite poor weather during the week, and indeed afterwards, it remained reasonable throughout the day.

We began at the **Apple** barge on the Welsh Back, which has an extremely good selection of cider, including Hecks, Rich's, Thatcher's and more recently West Croft Janet's Jungle Juice. Though not the cheapest in town, it is great to see such a variety of ciders available from the cask, or downstairs via handpump, although both bars are not always open at the same time. The food, reviewed favourably in the local press recently, also looks very appetising.

We then strolled to the ever excellent **Orchard**, with the SS Great Britain close by, which has expanded its opening hours and range of ciders – the new landlords have introduced a guest cider, available until it runs out, in addition to the Thatcher's Dry and Black Rat, which is of course very welcome. The quality of cider in the Orchard is never less than excellent.

Our third stop of the day was the characterful **Avon Packet**, on Coronation Road, where we sat outside and spotted several newly arrived ducklings. The Thatcher's Dry, always served in a mug here, was on cracking form as always.

Our fourth and final stop was the **Coronation** on Dean Lane, the excellent Hop Back tied house which just happens to do a splendid pint of West Croft Janet's Jungle Juice, which many people rate as their favourite cider of all.

All in all, another enjoyable day!

Richard Walters

The Bellringer Crawl

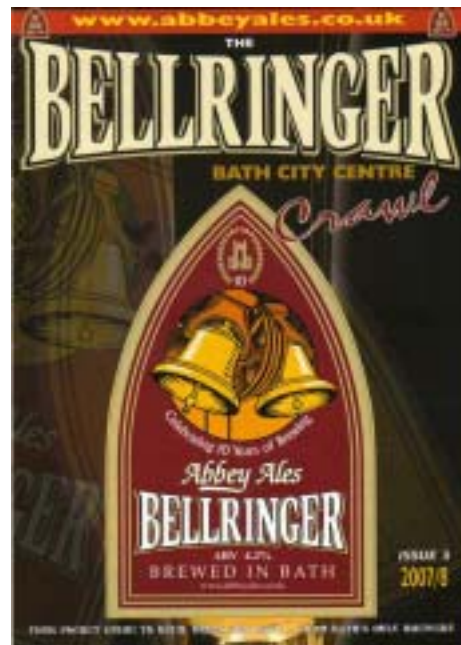
THE third edition of a free guide to some of the best real ale pubs in Bath city centre has just been published.

Compiled by beer writer Chris Freer on behalf of the Abbey Ales brewery based at Camden Row in Bath, the guide features 14 top real ale hostellers within easy walking distance of the Abbey itself, a familiar landmark in the World Heritage city of Bath.

Managing Director of Abbey Ales, Alan Morgan, said: "Each of the pubs is known to regularly stock the famous Bellringer, the company's flagship beer, and it's a handy guide for real ale drinkers visiting Bath for the first time."

Appropriately, the guide is entitled "The Bellringer City Centre Crawl" and features articles on the fourteen pubs, information on Abbey Ales and its raw material suppliers, plus a map indicating where all of the pubs can be found.

Copies of the guide can be obtained at all the outlets featured including Abbey Ales' own two city pubs – the Star Inn and the Coeur de Lion.



The 14 pubs featured in the guide are the Porter, Star Inn, Bell, Pig and Fiddle, Old Green Tree, Gascoyne Place, Sam Wellers, Volunteer Rifleman's Arms, Flan O'Briens, Coeur de Lion, Crystal Palace, Huntsman Inn, Lambrettas Bar, and Ram.



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The Painter and the Publican - part 2

ONE of my favourite books is "Heritage Pubs of Great Britain – Britain's Most Beautiful Authentic Pub Interiors". Published by CAMRA in 1998, the photography was by Mark Bolton and the commentaries were by local journalist James Belsey who, sadly, is no longer with us.

The book is an absolute stunner and anyone with a love of pubs can't fail but to admire it. Its *raison d'être* was to celebrate "From Edinburgh to Cornwall and from Belfast to the heart of London, real pubs [that] have managed to retain their integrity and their appeal. It is a heritage to be applauded."

Several superb local pubs featured including the **Black Horse** in Clapton-in-Gordano, the **Star** in Bath (complete with its "Death Row") and the **King's Head** in Victoria Street, Bristol. All the pubs mentioned enjoy CAMRA National Inventory (NI) status, but that's no guarantee of survival: the **Berkley Hunt** was closed whilst the book was being compiled.

A local pub that didn't make the book was the **Green Tree**, also in Bath, and like the others well worth a pilgrimage; it was probably omitted because there was only enough space for 26 pubs nationally.

Ian Cryer has been painting the West Country's NI pubs for years and long before the book's publication he had produced some great paintings from down our way, the **Star** in Bath being a particular favourite of Ian's, along with the **Queen's Head** in Willsbridge, not only his local but on his doorstep!

One pub that I've always believed should have a full listing in the Inventory is the **Palace Hotel** in Old Market, Bristol. Known locally as the 'Gin Palace', it was another haunt of Ian's where he liked to indulge in that great Bristol passion for 'flat Bass'.

The pub has fallen on hard times recently, and a few years ago there was hope for a revival when Rab of Bath Ales fame took it over. However even his talents couldn't turn the pub round, but it wasn't helped by the total exclusion of Bass from the premises.

It was during Rab's tenure that I decided to commission Ian to do an exterior view of the Gin Palace, to try and drum up support for a full NI listing and recognition of the pub's plight. After getting it featured in the Bristol Evening Post, I then decided to ask Geoff Brandwood (CAMRA's National Inventory guru) directly if he could intervene.



The 'Gin Palace'

My opportunity arose in June 2003 when I attended a joint conference in Swindon put on by the Association for Industrial Archaeology (AIA), the Brewery History Society (BHS) and English Heritage. It was entitled "From Grain to Glass" and Geoff was giving a talk about CAMRA's NI pubs.

During a break I managed to corner the poor fellow and berate him about the Gin Palace's predicament, only to be told "sorry", there was nothing he could do. It just didn't have enough surviving original features.

I believe to this day though that, if someone went in there and undertook a sympathetic restoration, the situation could be reappraised and, who knows, Bristol could have its second National Inventory pub.

Apart from embarrassing myself with Geoff, I met Pints West regular Andrew Swift for the first time along with Jeff Sechiari of the BHS, who have both become friends. The event had been put on by Mike Bone, who has saved many a local building in his roles with the Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society and the AIA, where he has done a long stint as chairman.



Frank Shippides in the Kings Head

Having been so taken by these remarkable pubs, when the opportunity for a picture of the Long John Silver Trust's first Patron, Frank Shippides arose, I immediately plumped for the King's Head. This was where myself, Frank and Gerry Brooke (our chairman and editor of the Bristol Times) had many a meeting.

Frank loved Bristol's old pubs and it was a natural choice; Ian did a fantastic job, capturing the superb detailing of the pub's original features along with our LJS references, which included the Jamaica Rum sign and the Cheddar Caves advertising skull.

Ian struck up an instant rapport with Frank and was impressed by his model, by then well into his nineties, calling him "the perfect sitter". The painting was a huge Cryer success, another of his pictures which was exhibited for the Royal Society of Portrait Artists in the Mall Galleries in London, this time in 2005.

If you would like more information about the organisations mentioned here, these are their websites:

The Brewery History Society: www.breweryhistory.com

The Association for Industrial Archaeology: www.industrial-archaeology.org.uk

And Ian Cryer on www.iancryer.com

Mark Steeds, Publican

God Save The Palace!

OLD Market Street is one of the most ancient and historic thoroughfares in Bristol, a main artery that has linked Bristol to London since the 11th Century. It is more cigar-shaped now, but was once tree-lined and ran from Bristol Castle to Lawfords Gate.

Kingswood Forest ran up to this gate and one of Bristol's oldest inns, the Green Man, was situated just inside it. No doubt named after its proximity to the woods, the inn and the gate succumbed to road widening, but not before they bore witness to several monarchs making their processions into Bristol.

Right up to the mid 20th Century, the street has adapted to its age, always a place for inns, brewers and maltsters, it has also been home to nearly every other conceivable trade, from pawnbrokers to peruke makers.

An example of this is the Stag and Hounds which during its lifetime has been a malt house, brewery and even a courthouse, home of the famous "Pie Poudre Court" where for over 600 years people with "dusty feet" were tried for misdemeanours in the market.

Old Market has lived and almost died by being a main road, and the internal combustion engine has nearly cost it its life. The Temple Way underpass that nearly claimed the Stag and Hounds, destroyed the Empire Theatre, the White Hart, the Pelican and most of the

huge Rogers' Brewery, as well as many other fine buildings.

When horses and trams ruled, you hardly went anywhere in Bristol without traversing the area. This was one of the reasons why it was so well pubbed. In its heyday it had two Bunches of Grapes (one now survives as part of the Old Market Tavern), the beautifully tiled Punchbowl (which still retains its

original Rogers signage under the current barge board), the Long Bar (formerly the Three Horseshoes and still extremely picturesque), and the Masons – now a trendy Vodka bar, but thankfully still intact.

Other pubs that have come and gone include the Golden Lyon, the Plume of Feathers, the Chequers, the Ship (at least three different), the Crown, the Warwick Arms, the Druid, the Two Necked Swan, the Sun, the Royal Table, the Ostrich, the Jolly Waterman, the Golden Bottle, the Fox and the Cheshire Cheese.

Very near the site of the venerable Green Man, is Bristol's greatest architectural gem – our own piece of Paris that seems to have been sliced off of the Louvre and magically transported to the corner of West Street and Lawfords Street: The Palace Hotel.

The 'Gin Palace', as it's known locally, retains many of the pub's fantastic original features. Internally it has galleries supported by brass barley twist columns, a famous sloping floor, and Midland Railway Griffin bosses (the pub was intended to be the first part of a huge hotel as part of the Midland's plans for a rail terminus and station in St. Philips).

Externally it's even grander, with architectural features galore. But here the good news ends: the pub has been shut for months now, and the future of one of Bristol's best-loved buildings is in doubt. If we're not careful it could become another developer's flat conversion.

One possible salvation could be a sensitive pub restoration *à la* King's Head, revealing more of the pub's original features. A full National Inventory listing would drag customers in from far and wide, just like it does for the Green Tree and the Star Inn in Bath.

If anyone can convince one of our local breweries (who have a fine record of sensitively restoring old pubs and keeping their character) into taking on one of Bristol's finest buildings, they would be doing us all a huge



favour.

Local people have suggested that Old Market will only come to life again when the motor car is banned from using it 24/7. As an interim step, what about restricting it to just buses and taxis after 7pm and on weekends?

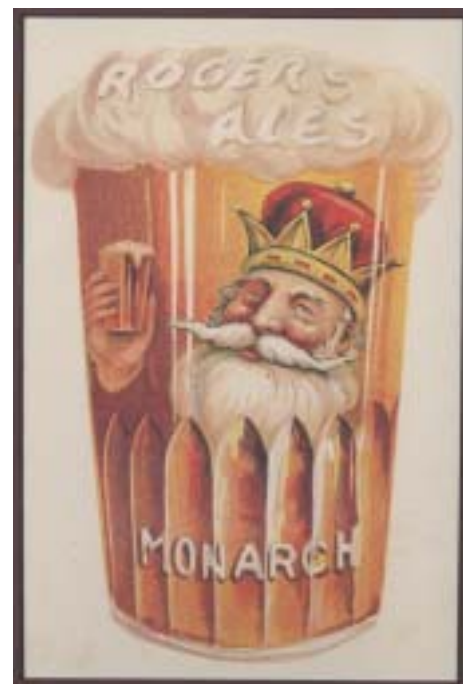
Most of the historical facts in this article came from 'The Old Market Research Project' conducted at the Bristol Records Office by members of Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society (www.b-i-a-s.org.uk) under the direction of Mike Bone.

Of the pictures, above is a coloured map of Old Market that I had prepared for our Old Market Project, and is based on Millerds 1673 of Bristol. Below is of a poster from Rogers' Brewery that resides in the Public Record Office.

Mark Steeds



A painting of the inside of the 'Gin Palace' by Ian Cryer



Cotswold Spring brewery launches another new beer

WHILST scanning news pages on the internet I noticed that the Cotswold Spring brewery, based near Chipping Sodbury, had launched a limited-edition beer called **Gloucestershire's Glory**. The launch, at the **Dick Whittington** pub in Gloucester on 20th July, was part of the 1,000th birthday celebrations of Gloucestershire.

Always eager to support local breweries and taste new beers, I set off to track down this new brew. I started at the brewery where Nic, unusually for a Saturday, was busy brewing. He explained that this was his penance for spending a day that week at the Great British Beer Festival! Unfortunately, he did not have Gloucestershire's Glory ready for 'off sale' as there had been a short time problem with his cool room. I did though come away with a flagon of his excellent **Olde English Rose** for future consumption.

I then ventured to the **New Inn** at

Mayhill where I was pleasantly surprised to find Gloucestershire's Glory ready to go on, so I spent a happy hour in the sunny beer garden sampling my goal. It turned out to be – as the web site promised – a “golden beer with a distinctive citrus hop nose, mouth-filling malt and fruit, and a deep dry finish”.

The beer should be featuring at local pubs and beer festivals across the county. If it proves popular, Nic hopes that the ale could become a regular feature of the Cotswold Spring stable. A percentage of the profit from its sale, 10 pence per pint, will be donated to the Gloucestershire Community Foundation's Millennium Appeal, which aims to overcome disadvantage across the county.

Let's hope local pubs choose Gloucestershire's Glory, giving drinkers the opportunity to try this new beer whilst supporting local charities in the spirit of Gloucestershire's 1,000th birthday.

Steve Matthews

A Tale of Ale (...and a sip of cider)

by Jamie Caddick

There's really nothing like it
(so say fable, myth and tale)
Like the quenching drop of nectar
Known as pure, refreshing ale

A day of slog and swagger
Is so heartwarmingly met
By this whistle-watering beverage
All tasty, smooth and wet

No matter how referred to
Be it cask conditioned, malt
Or hops with brewed distinction
Any drinker worth his salt

Will selflessly implore you
And grandiloquently declare
No drink across the country
Such as real ale can compare

And the taverns around Bristol
Dotted regular and true
Have become an institution
Serving up this hearty brew

True, this city is esteemed
For an apple drink that has defined her
That scrumpy taste of excellence
Traditionally known as cider

Has equally this potent blend of
Mashed apples, green and red
Created cherry cheeks and merry mirth
And morning-delicate heads

So be blessed! Companion drink of choice
From the inns and public houses
Our liquor of love and liking
And the woe of many spouses

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GO TOGETHER AT**

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At least 12 different real ales a week

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The 11th Berlin Beer Festival

Alexander Platz is the commercial hub of east Berlin with *Karl-Marx-Allee* running almost due east from it. The *Allee* is boulevard style, being close to 100 meters wide. On the south side are shops, a small grass verge, then a large dual carriageway. The north side has a wide pavement adjoining the shops and bars and a 30 meter wide grassed verge. On this pavement and grassed area, from Friday 3rd to 5th August, was to be found the 11th Berlin Beer Festival. It ran between *Srasberger Platz* and *Frankfurter Tor* (two *U-Bahn* or underground railway stations) with a third station about half-way along. So the festival must have stretched for two kilometers! A house-sitting opportunity in Berlin gave myself and wifey the opportunity of visiting the Festival.

The festival kicked off at noon on the 3rd and we were on site by one o'clock, entering from the east. There was no charge to get in – it would have been impossible to enforce one. There was a festival store and from the goodies there we bought our 0.2 litre lined tasting “jugs” (just a tad more than 1/3 pint). The festival “deal” was that most bars sold 0.2l of beer for 1.5 euros (£1.10).

Along either side of the pavement before us stretched beer and food outlets. Every brewery present had its own high-tech portable bar/trailer. This was plugged into a water and electricity supply. Thus the beers could be served appropriately chilled and when ones glass was proffered for a drink, it would be washed!

The publicity claimed 240 breweries and 1,750 beers, though how anyone managed a remotely accurate count is beyond me! Food and entertainment were very much in evidence.

It would have been easy to mistake the festival for a food festival, such was the array of food on offer. A number of outlets had brought their own 6ft high wood-burning ovens and were making bread, etc. to be consumed fresh. Then there was the traditional German meat dishes, with sausages very much in evidence and all were excellent value. There was even a Vietnamese area complete with bars, food outlets and a travel agent.

Eighteen live music stages were spaced out along the strip. Each had a seating area with tables in front of it. The music was of a good pub standard, while some was quite excellent. This being our first long visit to Germany we were bemused by the fact that all the acts gave a very accurate rendition of English language pop classics, but then broke into German for the links. Our favourite was the Lowenbrau beer tent/keller. This was a large marquee with about 24 trestle tables seating eight people each. The entertainment was provided by what we might commonly call an “oompah band”, all horns of various sizes with a drummer. The audience, who were generally well past their first flush of youth, loved it. These was much singing and dancing, oh, and drinking.

So now we get to the nub of the festival.

Apart from German beers we saw Russian, Polish, Czech, Italian, Austrian, Belgian, Dutch, UK and Irish beers on offer. While most beers



were “keg” there were a lot of bottled beers available. We were excited to have the opportunity of trying so many “quality” continental beers, so in we waded with gusto. Being an Abbey Ales Bellringer man I tended to stick to the lighter “pils” type beers, while wifey, a



Courage Directors woman by choice, tried the darker beers. Seven hours later I found myself in a disappointed state. I had not drunk anything that was unpleasant, but all the beers I tried could not give a decent bitter/sweet taste. Wifey fared somewhat better, quite taking to the usual

molasses taste in the dark beers, although she too found it a bit repetitive.

We branched out into some of the more “speciality” beers. We tried fruit beers and even a “double malted” beer – wifey seemed to like them all, while I found them all palatable and often interesting, they just did not suit this West Country palate. My prejudice that “continental beers are too strong” took some serious knocks as beers down to 2% ABV could be found.

Lest this sounds a bit negative, be assured we had a great time. We really liked the family/party atmosphere. Children were often seen and almost universally well behaved. We met groups of women giggling their way from bar to bar, sharing one 0.2l glass between them. The flatness of Berlin makes wheelchair access very easy throughout the city, and this was very evident at the festival.

Being free brought its problems, of course. By 8pm on Friday you could hardly move. Yet for all this drinking we saw very few examples of boorish behaviour, sadly mostly involving Brits.

For us the beauty of the festival was it was in a capital city in another country. A long weekend to Berlin would be cheaper than the equivalent in London. Without particularly looking we saw rooms for 40 euros a night, and more up-market ones were only charging 60.

Outside of the festival there were so many things to see and do: museums, art galleries, river trips and loads associated with the Cold War, like “Checkpoint Charlie”. On the Monday we caught the jam session at the A-Trane jazz club.

We caught the bus from Bath to Bristol and then the Airport Flyer to Bristol Airport and flew Easy Jet both ways.

It was certainly different and well worth thinking about! We are, for next year!

Lewis the Barman

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Do women like different beers from men?

THE Bristol & District branch of CAMRA (the Campaign for Real Ale) are asking local real ale drinkers the big question, "Do women like different beers from men?"

There are many different types of real ale produced by British breweries, such as Bitter, Mild, Light Ale, Stout, Porter, India Pale Ale, Old Ale, Barley Wine and a whole range of speciality beers and these all come in a variety of strengths and flavours.

There is a quite widely held view that women who drink real ale tend to want beers that are light in colour or contain some type of fruit flavouring. Sometimes these beer styles have been promoted as "Fem-Ale" to encourage women to try real ale.

Some people may believe that women are just not interested in dark or strong beers, whereas others claim that trying a speciality fruit beer as a change from the usual lager or alcopop can be an entry to the whole world of real ale styles.

An article in the previous edition of *Pints West* by Kirsten Elliott entitled "Down with the Fem-Ale" has sparked some local debate about this issue and indeed some letters from readers. Kirsten is a Bath-based CAMRA member who finds the concept of "Fem-Ale" to be patronizing and believes that women's tastes range just as widely as men's.

Without any real data it could be argued that both sides of this debate are down to personal opinion. So we think the best way forward is to actually ask our real ale drinking public for their views. Local CAMRA member Helen Featherstone has designed a short survey to try and find out if there really is a difference between the real ales that males and females prefer.

The survey is available on-line and can be accessed from our website at www.camrabristol.org.uk.

We have endeavoured to keep the survey as concise as possible so it should only take a minute to complete.

We would now like local real ale drinkers of both sexes to complete it. Not only might it answer the big question, but it should also give us some useful information to consider when organizing campaigning events, promoting real ale, and indeed for the Bristol Beer Festival.

Richard Brooks

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

The "Fem-Ale" debate

I READ with great interest the article by Kirsten Elliott (*Pints West* 74) concerning the campaign to promote real ale to females. I shared her concerns and feel that as a young woman I would certainly feel patronised if someone suggested that I would prefer a 'Fem-Ale' compared to other ales. I am perfectly capable of choosing my own ale independently of any marketing strategy. More information on the type of flavours contained in the ale would be a better guide.

I realise that Real Ale needs to be promoted to a wider audience and would certainly benefit from an image shake-up, however 'Fem-ale' is not the way to do it. It certainly won't attract the sassy independent woman – we are more sophisticated than that you know!

Having discussed this with several friends of both sexes I would like to make a few suggestions:

- Beer-tasting sessions as Kirsten suggested would be great, as are beer festivals, so more of them please.
- 'Fem-Ales' will alienate the beers selected from male audiences (who wants to go to the pub with their mates and order a 'fem-ale'!).
- The new no-smoking laws will have a significant impact and I think more people (of both sexes) will be attracted to the 'dark smoky old pubs which sell real ale' (a stereotype I know, but so is 'fem-ale'), of which the smoky part put non-smokers off. Capitalise on that, marketing people, and you could be on to a winner with all consumer groups.

Cheers,
Emma Neal
(by email).

I FELT I had to write in and support the view of Kirsten Elliott whose article berating the 'Fem-Ale' appears on page 35 of the last *Pints West*.

I am a 30-year-old woman, presumably the target market, and a recent convert to real ale, so this is the first I've heard about marketing brands specifically to people like me. Had I done so before making the discovery on my own I possibly would never have made it, such would be my dissatisfaction at the polarisation of men and women – can't we be equals in anything?!

At the few real ale festivals I've attended so far, I've never been advised to go for a lighter brew, I've always been treated with

respect and lack of judgment at my drinking tastes. Now I fear that this issue and the emergence of these girly beers might endanger that level playing field.

I understand the marketing decision to try and make real ale more attractive to women. Let's face it, women make up a massive chunk of alcohol sales, but consider this before going too far down the somewhat patronising route. If real ale was marketed as a healthy, natural product made of pure ingredients, free from additives and chemicals as well as a purchasing opportunity which gives the consumer the power to support locally sourced products which can often be supportive of small independent producers, more women would want to get on board. I did, and many of my female friends have because these are the real issues of importance to us in this day and age, not whether it's ladylike to drink a strong, dark beer out of a pint glass.

Kind regards,
Clara Hambling,
Virtual Arts Centre Officer,
Cheltenham Borough Council.

Smoking ban

I HAVE read your article about people will come back to the pub after the ban. I do not believe a single word of it. I for myself as a smoker feel no longer welcome in my local pub, because I am a smoker.

Is CAMRA now against smokers? Is CAMRA now publishing propaganda for the smoking ban? If you look at other countries it is clear that pub takings are down after the smoking ban. Pubs will close and that is a sad thing. Sad is also that now we smokers have no rights and are second class citizens. Even in my local pub.

Felix Mathais
(by email).

The answer to both questions is no. Ed.

Beer festival

FOLLOWING the review of the Bristol Beer Festival 2007 in the latest edition of *Pints West* I thought I would give a south-easterner's perspective on the festival; particularly in light of the issues over ticketing that have been highlighted. I have attended the Bristol festival for the past four years on the Saturday lunchtime, owing to having a friend in Bristol able to get tickets and put me up; however I feel there are several areas in which you are letting yourselves and the drinkers of Bristol (particularly the non-CAMRA members) down.

Firstly I feel the festival is far too short for the potential number of people you have coming. Most beer festivals in the South-East run from Tuesday or Wednesday night until Saturday night. This means that your potential audience would be spread over a number of lunchtimes and nights instead of all trying to get into three sessions. (*Four sessions. Ed.*) This gives some people chance to drop in on more than one occasion as the beer range changes over the week (see also ticketing

further on) and others, coming from further afield, chance to make a day trip of it (also sampling some local hosteleries) as many of my friends and I do at other festivals. It also allows you to stock a larger beer range (although your current one is quite impressive!) which will change over the week (as not everything will be available all the time), encouraging people to visit more than once.

Secondly – abolish the ticketing system! By making the event ticket-only you are causing all sorts of problems for yourselves without any real benefits. First off, by making it ticket-only you are preaching to the converted. You are not going to attract anybody new to the festival because they can't get tickets, and they certainly can't drop in for an hour to see if there's anything they like. Secondly, you are restricting your potential number of customers. If you make the event ticket-only, people come at the beginning of the session and stay until the end, regardless of whether they really want to or not. By having a pay-on-the-door system you will get people who drop in for a couple of pints then leave, and they can be replaced by others once the venue is full, using a one-out, one-in basis as used by many beer festivals in this part of the country. If you combine this with a reduced or free entry for CAMRA members, you will find that members will drop in every evening for a couple of pints or so (quite possibly on their way home from work) and then leave (allowing later drinkers to enter); this also means that they can bring people with them who are not CAMRA members to try the beer and hopefully add to the ranks of real ale fans.

Lastly, glasses. Please do not make the glass part of the admission price. Have a separate deposit for glasses that can be refunded at the end if the glass is returned intact. Most CAMRA members have far more beer festival glasses than they have room for (or their spouses will tolerate); being forced to add another one because you can't get a refund on it is not doing them any favours! Also please have both pint and half-pint glasses available; many ale drinkers (including myself) prefer to drink fewer ales in pints, as a pint gives you a real opportunity to savour the beer – I find if you adopt the usual “one mouthful to take the taste of the last pint away, one to clear the palate and one to really explore the beer” method of tasting that a half is very nearly gone, and you cannot continue to enjoy the experience of that beer. Of course for those who would rather sample as large a range as possible then the half-glass (or even the third which has been introduced at the Great British Beer Festival) is more suitable (although you can always get a half in a pint glass – rather trickier the other way about!). I have brought my own pint glass to the last two Bristol festivals, and have been asked by a lot of people at both where I got it from; people who were very disappointed when I said I'd brought it with me as they'd been hoping to get one for themselves.

I hope this gives you some food (drink?) for thought, and I wish you every success with

More musings from Kontroversial Kirsten

WHEN I sent in my piece about the ‘Fem-Ale’ for the last *Pints West*, I never dreamt it would take on a life of its own. My biggest shock was on my birthday. There I was, sitting on the Torbay Express, travelling first class – my birthday treat from Andrew – on a glorious day, and I opened up *Venue* magazine – only to find my name leaping from the page. My comments had made it into Bristol's coolest mag.

But I've found that other points I raised in that article have generated some discussion. First is my suggestion that CAMRA should be promoting beer as an accompaniment to food. So when I saw a beer master-class on combining food and beer in the programme for the *Taste of Bath* festival, part of the series *Taste of Britain* organised by Channel 4, I thought they must have got their act together over it. Closer investigation of the programme, however, revealed that it was Leffe who were sponsoring this otherwise laudable scheme. Still, I went along, and very instructive it proved. Not only that, but the Master Beer Sommelier in charge, Marc Stoochand, called for a round of applause for me at the end – apparently I was the only person he had ever seen actually taking notes. Readers of *Pints West* will guess what I was up to.

After an explanation of the various glasses, including why the Belgians prefer the goblet glass (it holds the aroma) and the fact that the positioning of the logo shows where the head should start, we began on the actual tasting.

First up was Hoegaarden Witbier. This, of course, should come in the traditional hexagonal glass – the thickness is designed to keep the beer colder for longer. We were told to pour about two thirds of the bottle into the glass, swirl the bottle, then pour the rest in. Wheat beer should be cloudy. It was a perfect companion for the Thai chilli prawns which we were told to taste with it.

Next was an amber beer – Artois Bock. Marc's choice of food to go with this was a mozzarella cheese and tomato pastry. The tasting notes we were subsequently given – and what a pity they were not given out with the demonstration – suggest it also goes well with grilled and barbecued red meats.

Inevitably there was a kriel beer – Belle-Vue kriel. You might expect this to go with a

dessert, and it would be suitable for this, but I knew from our holidays in Belgium that there is it often used with savoury dishes. Here it went surprisingly well with duck rillette.

Now we were on to the desserts – yes, two of them. With crème brûlée we had Leffe blond, which Marc thought had a similar character, while with the very rich chocolate torte we had Leffe Brune.

It had been an enlightening and entertaining session, and we each came away with a goody-bag of beer, a glass, recipes and the aforementioned tasting notes. All credit to Leffe for putting on such a show with an amusing and knowledgeable speaker. But this was supposed to be a Taste of Britain – and more importantly, a regional taste. Where was CAMRA in this? With all the small local breweries around, shouldn't CAMRA have got on to Channel 4 and offered to organise something? I'll bet there are plenty of microbreweries and local chefs who would have been more than willing to collaborate on such a project. Let's hope that before the next series, the chairman and committee might get their heads round such a notion. I would certainly be prepared to co-ordinate any such event were there to be another Taste Festival in Bath or Bristol.

The other subject which I touched on in my article was pump clips, and this has proved the source of many a lengthy discussion. I have to say that I do not recall a single occasion when we came to any definite conclusion, beyond the fact that everyone has their own favourite sort of pump clip. John Whinnerah, landlord of the Royal Oak, Twerton, pointed out that frequently the best-selling beer in an evening will be one for which he has had to do a hand-written pump clip because the real one hasn't turned up. But I like a pump clip that is clear, tells me at one glance the brewery, something about the beer and the ABV. Sharing top spot for me are Bristol Beer Factory and Blindman's, with Matthews Brewery coming up fast on the rails in third place. So when you've stopped putting the world to rights and the conversation starts to flag over the beer mugs – the old pump clip debate should soon have the tongues going again.

Kirsten Elliott

the 2008 festival (which I hope to attend!).

Yours faithfully,
Chaz Cozens,
Essex CAMRA member,
Brentwood, Essex.

Thank you for your comments. We'll consider your glass size suggestion, but I'd also point out that people have always been able to return glasses for a small refund if not wanted. As for having extra sessions, the main problem is

getting enough CAMRA volunteers to staff them. Encouraging them to pop in and out rather than volunteering to work won't help. And having the event non-ticket, pay-on-the-door, especially with the imposed fire-limit, could be a nightmare. People may come from far and wide and queue for hours and even never get in at all. And our experience shows that the majority of attendees are in fact non-CAMRA members, not the “converted”. Ed.

Island in the sea

By your Nailsea correspondent
Laurie Gibney

After a scorchingly hot weekend in 2006, the **Nailsea & Backwell Rugby Club Beer & Cider Festival** hit a very wet weekend in 2007, except the Saturday when from opening time at mid-day the sun shone and the crowds poured in numbering a couple of thousand. The family entertainment was ever popular, blue-painted Smurfs were in evidence, the bands played, cider and beer poured and the tills rang to support this year's charity, CLIC Sargent and the Rugby Club's funds. The cider and beer poured a little too well and despite extra cider being brought in mid-evening, all 30 ciders and 50 beer casks were dry by the closing time at eleven o'clock.

There were five ales from local brewery Wickwar, and the Country Life brewery (based in Bideford in Devon at the Big Sheep tourist attraction) provided six ales including their 10% ABV barley wine Devonshire Tender and four "Winkly" ciders. Local cider producers were well represented with Thatchers having eight on offer if you include Mole's Black Rat which is made by Thatcher's. There were two each from Rich's and Wilkins and six including Perry Perry from Wye Valley across the Severn Bridge, and four from Winkleigh in Devon. Waverley TBS appeared to have supplied the other ales on offer from about a couple of dozen breweries from far and wide. Notably absent were really dark ales such as milds, stouts and porters because, I was told by festival committee member Nick Williams, they didn't sell well in previous years. The majority of ales were of the modern blonde or golden variety with some amber ales.



The "reduced" site awaiting a rainy Sunday and more crowds?

The festival opened at 6pm on Friday 13th July during a windy downpour which lasted for hours and within a short time the 450 pairs of festival goers' feet made the path between bar tent and the loos a squidgy muddy mess. The live groups who were giving their services free that evening were cancelled and a substitute disco was provided in the bar tent. As the volume got higher and higher and the music seemed to become an electronic maze of heavy metal crescendos, the drinkers moved further and further from the speakers because conversation became nigh impossible, or they left the bar tent to stand in the drizzle later in the evening or left the festival early.

This is not the only festival where I feel free music has been allowed to dominate the festival at the expense of drinkers who are paying to keep the festival afloat. There is a place for music at a beer and cider festival, but I don't think it should be allowed to drown out conversations about the beer, cider and other topics, otherwise it becomes a music festival with a bar. The main reason for neighbours objecting to such events is because of the noise factor: slurping of beer and cider and conversation contribute little to that noise factor.

The forecast for Sunday was bad but didn't turn out as bad as predicted. Late on Saturday evening casks were scrounged from local pubs and clubs to provide some real ales for the Sunday session. These included Butcombe Bitter, Cotswold Spring's Codrington Codger, Fuller's London Pride, St Austell's Tribute, Timothy Taylor's Golden

Best, plus a healthy stock of Thatcher's Cider.

More details and photos of the festival may be found at www.applefest.co.uk.

The **Sawyers Arms** has ceased stocking Courage Best. The regulars there didn't get on with the brew gushing from Wells & Young's which took over the Courage cask brands from Scottish & Newcastle. The Sawyers Arms stocks Sharp's Eden Ale at £2.40 per pint instead, as well as Bath Ales Gem when I last visited.

Robert and Yve Hulls finally re-opened the **Star** at Tickenham at the end of May. They trade as "Kianti Foods and Fine Wines" and may be contacted by phone on 01275 8588836 or by email to kiantibristol@aol.com. A few CAMRA members went along on the preview night on Friday 25th May and found four cask ale hand pumps on the bar supporting in rotation Bath Ales Gem, Butcombe Gold, Fuller's London Pride, Greene's King Ruddles County, Sharp's Cornish Coaster, and Wells & Young's Courage Best 4%. Sharp's Cornish Coaster went down very well and appears to be a regular on the bar.

The Star offers the facilities detailed in the previous *Pints West*; the style is that of a modern wine bar with a light coloured décor and furnishings. After a few start-up hiccups I have found the food and ales to be good and inevitably after a very heavy investment the prices are a little higher than some other restaurant pubs, but are good value for money. The accommodation rooms have now been fully refurbished and are ready for booking.

The **Ring of Bells** has spent six thousand pounds on a heated, lit canopy for smokers on the patio at the back of the pub. The upholstery and soft furnishings must have been cleaned well because there was no smell of smoke in the bar a week after the smoking ban came in. Landlord Kevin Milden told *Pints West* that new signs and light as well as re-decorations were planned to welcome non-smokers back, and that food would be more prominent with a new chef being appointed.

Pints West would like to offer a belated welcome to Terry Mansfield the licensee and his manager Matt James at the **New Inn**, Backwell which used to specialise in fish dishes but now has a wider choice provided by two new chefs, offering an à la carte menu in the evening as well as a luncheon menu. Cask ales are St Austell Tribute, Wells & Young's Courage Best and Webster's Green Label.

Welcome also to other new licensees in the area during the last twelve months. Not welcomed previously in *Pints West* are Paul and Lynn Dunn at the **Dew Drop Inn**, Flax Bourton; Claire Nichols at the **Grove Sports and Social Club**, Nailsea; and Mark Middleton and manager Pete Matyasick at the **Old Farmhouse**, Nailsea.

And away from Nailsea...

For those readers yet to visit the new Bristol Beer Factory's first "pub", the **Grain Barge** moored in Hotwell Road, Bristol, the opening times are Monday to Thursday 10:30am until 11pm, Friday and Saturday 10:30am until 11.30pm, and Sunday 12 noon until 11pm. For further info phone 0117 929 9347.

Taking our grand children to a Haven Holidays site near Porthmadog, I didn't expect any real ale on site and my expectations were accurate. The nearest thing to cask ale was Newcastle Brown in bottles. The best selection of real ales locally was at the **Spooner's Bar** on the Festiniog Railway Station, real ale and narrow gauge steam trains a kind of heaven really. The selection included Holden's XB, Enville Saaz, Salopian Fallen Angel, Teme Valley Dark Stranger, and Woods Quaff. The **Golden Fleece** at nearby Tremadog had Bass, Enville's Simpkins Ale (my holiday favourite), Purple Moose (of Porthmadog) Glaslyn, and on keg M&B Mild! Nearer the Haven Holidays site was the **Tafarn**

Glanaber which stocked Felinfoel Best Bitter and Double Dragon. On a trip to Caernarvon we sheltered from the rain in the **Black Buoy Inn** which offered Brains Land of my Fathers.

And finally ...

If you have the need to stay over night before or after a flight from Luton Airport, I recommend the **Live and Let Live** pub and restaurant at Pegsdon. Ray and Maureen Scarbrow run a very well-kept pub and gardens with seven chalet rooms at £63.75 per room which includes an extensive continental breakfast in your room. This also includes a free door-to-door service to and from the airport and parking will only cost £4 per day. Ray turned out at 1:30 in the morning to pick us up and returned us to the airport at 11am to catch our National Express coach via Heathrow to Bristol.

For more details see www.theliveandletlive.com or phone 01582 881739.

Real ales include Adnams Bitter, Brakespear Bitter, Marston's Pedigree and Fuller's London Pride. The Brakespear Bitter was due to be rotated for another ale yet to be decided at the time of our visit.



The Live and Let Live, Pegsdon



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The Old Tavern - breweries, then and now



It was last summer when Paul and I visited the Old Tavern in Stapleton with thoughts of taking it on and setting up Arbor Ales on site. The pub had everything we needed; room for the restaurant which Paul's sister Karen was to run and a disused garage for their brother Jon's brewery.

We moved aside piles of broken tables and chairs and inspected the stone-built garage. To the left of the interior, behind yet another bundle of cobwebbed bar furniture, was a low wooden door that led into an adjoining building to the side of the pub. It evidently had not been used for some years and on asking the landlady for a key she looked at us blankly and asked: "What door?"

Paul shoulder-barged the door open. I felt slightly apprehensive as to what we would find. Scenes from *The Canterville Ghost* flashed across my mind.

A cascade of dust and cobwebs fell from above. Through the gloom we could just make out that the room was also stone-built and full of crates and boxes. (No skeletons, thankfully, or mummified bodies trying to scratch their way out.) A wooden staircase led to an attic space in the far right-hand corner. Nobody had entered this room for over twenty years.

Paul and Jon spent months renovating the area – lining the walls and installing electricity, and now it functions as the home of Arbor Ales.

A few weeks later one of our customers handed a photograph to me across the bar. It was a picture of our pub in 1869 – horses and carts passing by and, amazingly, the Old Tavern Brewery – standing right where our brewery stands today!

The photo shows the gable end of the building where there are painted words: "The Old Tavern Brewery, Brewers & Bottlers; Pure Home Brewed Beer; Bonders of Wine & Deliveries to....." (some words obscured by trees).

We were pleased to have reinstated something traditional into the pub. Now, when the smell of the mash wafts across the pub garden, and out across Trendlewood Estate, it's known that it is the same smell that set locals' nostrils twitching over one hundred years ago.

Rachael Revelle

PINTS WEST

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

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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.)

○ Wednesday 12th September - Branch committee meeting, Cornubia, 8pm.

○ Thursday 13th September - BADRAG meeting, Grain Barge, Hotwells, 8pm.

○ Wednesday 19th September - GBG survey trip to Axbridge and Cheddar. Depart from the Cornubia at 6.45pm.

○ Wednesday 26th September - Branch meeting in Weston-super-Mare district, venue to be confirmed. Bus from Bristol departs from the Cornubia 6.45pm.

○ Thursday 27th September - Bristol Beer Festival planning meeting, at the Cornubia, 8pm.

○ Wednesday 3rd October - GBG survey trip to South Gloucestershire. Depart from the Cornubia at 6.45pm.

○ Wednesday 10th October - Branch committee meeting at the Fishmarket, 8pm.

○ Thursday 11th October - BADRAG meeting, the Ship, Lower Park Row, Bristol, 8pm.

○ Saturday 13th October - trip to Gloucestershire pubs. Depart from the Cornubia midday.

○ Wednesday, 17th October - GBG survey trip to Portishead & district. Depart from the Cornubia at 6.45pm.

○ Wednesday 24th October - Branch meeting, venue to be confirmed, 8pm.

○ Tuesday 30th October - GBG survey trip to North Somerset. Depart from the Cornubia at 6.45pm.

○ Thursday 8th November - BADRAG meeting, the Hillgrove, Kingsdown, 8pm.



Bath & Borders

See elsewhere in this issue for forthcoming events of the Bath & Borders branch.

Contact

Denis Rahilly: denis.rahilly@virgin.net

Weston diary

○ Wednesday 5 September - Pints West distribution social at The Dragon (Wether-spoon's), Meadow Street. All purchasers of a real ale to be offered a PW. Volunteers required for 12.00 to 14.00 and 20.00 to 22.00 sessions.

○ Saturday 15 September - Somerset CAMRA Beer Festival at Minehead station. A party will be going from Weston. Contact Mike Coleman on 01934 631441 for details.

○ Wednesday 19 September - Off The Rails. 8.30 onwards

○ Wednesday 17 October - Conservative Club, Alexander Parade. Good Beer Guide review meeting. 8.30 start.

○ Wednesday 21 November - Royal Hotel. 8.30 onwards.

Non-members welcome at all of the above events.

Weston contact

Tim Nickolls - 01934 644925 (evenings)
or email tim.nickolls@virgin.net

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Moles' 25th Anniversary

MOLES BREWERY, one of our well-established local micro-breweries, is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Based in Melksham, Wiltshire, they were one of a growing number of micro-breweries set up to meet the consumer clamour for traditional beers, i.e. real ale.

When I joined CAMRA, back in 1987, Moles was one of the first three breweries I visited – the other two were Archers (Moles' brewing neighbour in Swindon and still brewing, having recently been saved from administration) and the Miners Arms brewery in Chewton Mendip, now sadly long gone. Although many of Moles' contemporaries have fallen by the wayside, a lot more micro-breweries have sprung up – in fact in 1991, in the South West region, which stretches from Swindon in the north to Cornwall in the far south west, there were only about 30 breweries. In 2007 there are in excess of 80 breweries, which just goes to show that despite what you read in the papers, there remains a huge demand for real ale.

Since its inauguration in 1982, Moles has gone from strength to strength and recently one of its brews, Rucking Mole – which, as you can no doubt guess from its name, is usually brewed for and during big rugby events – recently won a Gold Medal in the Society of Independent Brewers South West competition, and with the Rugby World Cup just round the corner, there is no exception to the rule – it is available now, as well as a special 25th anniversary ale.

Moles have a small, but expanding, estate

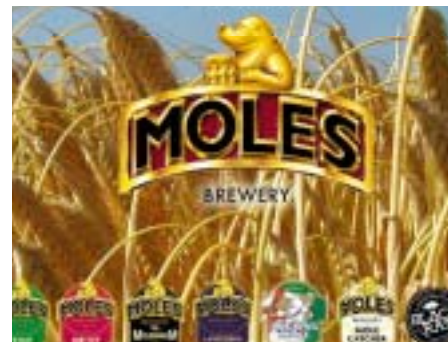
of 13 pubs, from Bristol in the west to Devizes in the east, Cirencester in the north to Trowbridge in the south. The two Bristol ones are the **Cat & Wheel**, by the Arches on the Cheltenham Road, and the **Golden Guinea** in Guinea Street, Redcliffe. Slightly further afield, there is the **Crown**, Bristol Road, Keynsham, and near Bath there is the **Moorfields Inn** in Oldfield Park and the **Old Crown** in Twerton.



The Golden Guinea

(photo by Colin Postlethwaite)

The **Cat & Wheel** is one of my locals and is an extremely well-run community pub. They really enter into the spirit of the big sporting events – in fact, during last year's Football World Cup, you could sit in one of their attractive outside patio areas and watch the games. Earlier this year they ran an excellent cider festival



again using one of the patio areas to full effect – all the cider casks were standing on tree trunks, surrounded by bark chippings under a barn-like canopy creating the atmosphere of a country barn! How surreal was that in Bishopston? Oh, and that reminds me, for those cider drinkers amongst you, Moles also market a cider called Black Rat.

Moles have been a staunch supporter of Pints West and its forerunner, the Avon Drinker. Bristol & District CAMRA would like to thank Roger Catte and his team publicly for their support and wish them a very happy 25th anniversary.

Alison Bridle

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MOLES

BREWERY

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Tap Bitter 3.5%alc Smooth malty flavour & clean bitter finish	Holy Moley 4.7%alc Spring beer which is truly heaven 'scent'
Best Bitter 4.0%alc Well balanced, golden coloured bitter	Barleymole 4.2%alc Straw coloured Summer ale
Molennium 4.5%alc Deep amber coloured premium ale	Molegrip 4.3%alc Rich ruby red, malty Autumn brew
Landlord's Choice 4.5%alc Dark, strong and smooth happy bitter	Moel Moel 6.0%alc Wonderfully warming Winter ale
Molecatcher 5.0%alc Copper coloured ale with spicy hop aroma	

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www.molesbrewery.com

Bath in Bloom



BOTH Abbey Ales' pubs, the Star Inn and the Coeur de Lion, have won silver gilt prizes in the 'Bath in Bloom' competition for the second year running. The Coeur de Lion (pictured right), famous for being Bath's smallest pub, is situated in Northumberland Place and has been an



Abbey Ales pub for the last year. The Star Inn (above) on the Paragon was Abbey Ales' first pub and features in CAMRA's National Inventory of historic pub interiors. Expect to find some excellent beers from the local Abbey Ales brewery, plus changing guest beers.

Bristol Champion



The Hillgrove Porter Stores has been celebrating being named as Bristol CAMRA's Pub of the Year 2007 with a special brew from Matthews Brewing Company.

"Bristol Champion" is described as a 4.5% ABV bitter ale, chestnut-gold in colour, with balanced malt flavours and a spicy-fruity hop aroma derived from a blend of four classic English hop varieties.

Bristol Champion has been available exclusively in all three Dawkins Taverns throughout the summer. As well as the Hillgrove, these include the Victoria in Clifton and the Miners Arms in St Werburghs. The Hillgrove itself is located at 53 Hillgrove Street North in Kingsdown.

Stuart Matthews, Director of Matthews Brewing Company, said: "We were delighted to be asked to produce a special brew for Dawkins Taverns and hope that people will enjoy toasting the Hillgrove's success with a Bristol Champion."

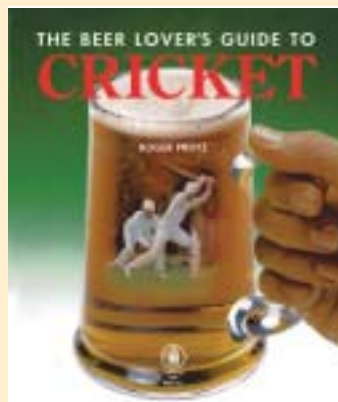
Two great new titles from CAMRA Books

BEER, BED & BREAKFAST Susan Nowak and Jill Adam

Beer, Bed and Breakfast is a unique and comprehensive guide to more than 500 pubs throughout the UK that serve fine real ale and offer good quality bed and breakfast accommodation. All entries include contact details, type and extent of accommodation, list of beers served, meal types and times, and an easy-to-understand price guide to help you plan your budget. Pubs vary from tiny inns with a couple of rooms upstairs to luxury gastro-pubs with country-house style bedrooms, rural and urban, on main roads and off the beaten track. Also contains feature articles including eco-friendly British holidays rather than using air miles, emphasis on pubs using local ingredients for breakfast.

Available from CAMRA now
£14.99

CAMRA Members' price just £12.99



THE BEER LOVER'S GUIDE TO CRICKET Roger Protz

There are many books about cricket and many on beer, but this is the first to bring the two together. Leading beer writer and cricket enthusiast Roger Protz has visited the major grounds of all the First Class counties to prepare in-depth profiles. Each visit is rounded off with a detailed description of the best pubs nearby and the real ales they sell. The book also traces the story of the birth of the modern game at the Broadhalfpenny ground in Hampshire opposite the Bat & Ball pub and shows how the tradition of good beer and cricket is kept alive.

Available from CAMRA from 20 April
£16.99

CAMRA Members' price £14.99

POSTAGE AND PACKING: UK orders – please add £1.50 per total order, plus £1 per book if ordered. EU orders – please add £2 per item or £4 if you are ordering the Good Beer Guide. Rest of the world orders – please add £4 per item or £7 if you are ordering the Good Beer Guide. Orders can be placed by sending your card details or a cheque made payable to CAMRA to: CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW. Orders can also be placed over the phone on 01727 867201, or via our website www.camra.org.uk/shop where you can see the full range of books, clothing, and merchandise. We deliver your order as soon as possible. We will normally send your order within 10 business days. This could extend to 15 days in peak periods.

Pints Abroad - Skagen, Denmark

WHEN it is April and the sun is shining nothing seems more tempting than a successive couple of weekends away with the splendid Bristol Morrismen in June. The first was to be to Derbyshire a few miles south of Sheffield.

Now, we all expected the Derbyshire trip to be wet, at least internally. The organising team of dancers from Ripley are well known for arranging top quality beer, and so it was. We stayed at Ashover which has three cracking pubs, especially the 'Old Poets Corner' which also houses the Ashover Brewery. What we hadn't reckoned with was the weather. We were camping and it was the weekend that Sheffield flooded and the collapsing dam closed the M1.

But the second trip was to Denmark and surely this would be better on the weather front though not so good on the beer front. My memory of my last visit was that the cost of ale was high and that it was all rather average fizzy lager.

It just shows how wrong one can be. We arrived in Aarhus airport or a sultry dry evening and were whisked off to the town of Skagen (apparently pronounced with a silent 'g'). Next morning we awoke to rain, but with high spirits and a belly full of strange breads, salami and cheese, we repaired to the harbour where we hoped to dance between the showers.

The one thing that I had right was the price of the beer. It was pretty much universally £5 per pint, so by these standards we do not have it too bad in the UK. However, the bar was most generous and supplied us with free 'giraffes' of lager while we danced there. Now I had never heard of such contraptions before, at least not until Lesly Huxley described them in the last issue of Pints West.

But things were not looking good. It was raining, the beer was expensive and there was nothing that we really, really wanted to drink. So with a relatively heavy heart we wandered back for tea. We passed a comparatively large brick building that we had spotted as a pub on the way into town without giving it a second thought, but on this occasion I happened to spot through the side windows what looked like brewing vessels. A quick check around the back also found a bottling line so it was obvious that we should examine this further. And this is what we found.....

The Skagen Bryghus (which I am guessing means brewhouse) turned out to be a smart, airy establishment (though at this stage not entirely smoke-free) which I gather is a conversion of an old power station for the town.

I managed to buttonhole the manager, Carsten Østergaard, who kindly gave me a quick trip round the brewery and a potted history. The Skagen brewhouse was established couple of years ago. Apparently the good folk of Skagen felt that they should have their own brewery (very forward-thinking) and local subscriptions to shares stumped up a cool 17 million krona (approximately £1.7m) to allow the scheme to go ahead.



What they created was a brewery that now produces 20,000 litres of beer a month, and it is not just lager. A lot of the production gets bottled and is distributed to approximately 750 shops around Denmark. The bottled beer is filtered and pasteurised but the beer sold on the premises is not.

You can still see the crane rails inside and



the travelling crane has been used to support the lighting gantry and glass racks over the bar. Inside there is pleasant decorative brickwork and two polished coppers and a number of stainless steel vessels are on view at the back of the bar.

The beer list was impressive. As is my want, I usually start on the left and work through, but in this case it was I who was left with a red face since Vand turned out to be water. But that did leave seven other pumps to be tried, and tried them I and my colleagues did.

As one would expect there was a lager, called Drachmann Tysk Pilsner with a strength of 5%. It was not a bad lager but for all that not particularly interesting when one's preferences are for stouts and IPAs. Second on the list was Skawskum Tysk Munchener (5%), which turned out to be a darker ale not at all dissimilar to Barnstormer.

The next pump dispensed an English-style ale with a lower strength and it was a good facsimile of traditional English mid-brown bitter. This had been brewed specifically for the town's folk festival. Beside that there was a 5.5% Irish stout called Sortbøder Irsk Stout. Once again a very good effort at reproducing the style.

My own particular favourite was the Nordlys Sydtsk Hvedeøl which I believe to be a 5% wheat beer with the typical yellowish cloudy appearance and a slightly peachy flavour. I lost count of how many of those that disappeared down the happy tube. Adjacent to this was the pump for GI Skagen Amerikansk India Pale Ale. This was a 6% IPA with bags of fruity flavour and a rich orange colour. It seems slightly sad to me that such flavours would be associated by the Danes with American beers rather than ours, but perhaps some companies apply the title of IPA to inappropriately weedy ales in the UK too often.

The last on the list was the Christian d. XI, a barley wine which I believe is named after a member of the royal family. Stroll on, this was an 8% fixer that was thankfully served in smaller glasses and very highly flavoured. Not my style to be honest, a bit like chewing a mouthful of currants.

For those people that wanted to try a selection, the pub sold a tray of six small glasses with one water and five different beers. They also sold large stoppered bottles of two litres for those that wanted take-aways. I was pleased to note that Denmark seems to operate a deposit on the bottle system to encourage returns. As one committed to recycling beer, I also believe that we should be recycling the containers.

Anyway, thank you Skagen Brewhouse, you made at least three Bristol Morris Dancers very happy (except for the price) against all the odds.

Phill the Pint

See www.skagenbryghus.dk if you can understand the language or just want to see the pictures.

New Horizons for Wadworth

Wadworth has released a new beer called Horizon. The beer is a pale golden ale at 4% ABV made from 100% pale ale malt and a blend of Fuggles, Styrian Goldings and Cascade hops and has zesty citrus and hop aromas and a crisp tangy finish on the palate. It will be available all year round.

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

Bristol Beer Factory's Grain Barge ... complete with panoramic view

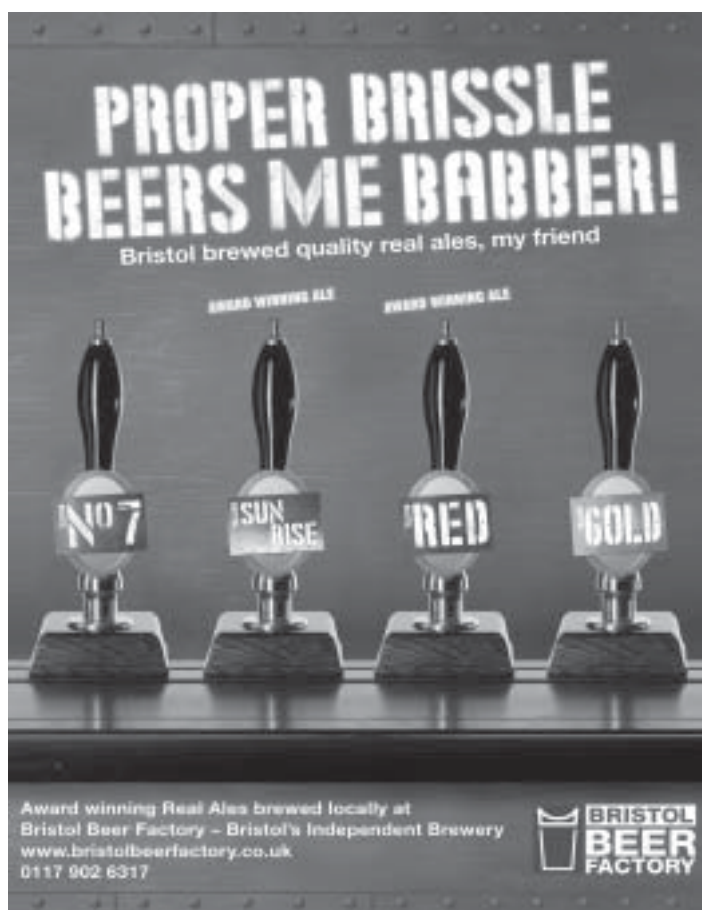


THE Bristol Beer Factory, based in Bedminster, have been ploughing much of their energy recently into their first venture as publicans, with the launch of the Grain Barge, the converted 80-year-old transport vessel (formerly Shoots floating restaurant) moored on the harbour side in Hotwells.

They've been in the process of adding the finishing touches to make her all shipshape and Bristol fashion.

We're happy to say that the Beer Factory are describing "real ale on a boat" as a success. The issue of a moving boat has not affected the ability for their beers to settle. This was obviously a worry but it's worked better than expected and they describe the beers as coming out in tip-top condition.

Photos by Richard Brooks



Postlip Beer Festival

"IT'S ON, but bring stout, waterproof shoes or Wellingtons," said the website about the Postlip Beer Festival.

Gloucestershire's July flooding had cast a question mark over whether the Festival could go ahead, so I was greatly relieved that my first visit to this legendary event wasn't going to be cancelled. But Wellingtons?! With a day to spare I had to go and buy some!

This was a 'thank-you' trip for those who worked at this year's Bristol Beer Festival in March, and fortunately the day turned out dry and even hot and sunny: the first for weeks.



The event is held in an ancient Tithe Barn in the grounds of Postlip Hall and organised by the Cheltenham branch of CAMRA. Many of the volunteers staffing the bar were still without water or electricity at home, and chairman Tony Aburrow showed us where the normally insignificant stream alongside the barn had flooded the ground several yards beyond its normal course. The fields normally used for camping and car parking were too sodden, so our party of 25 walked up from the road through the fields (spotting eagles and other wildlife on the way) to enjoy a great range of beers, many from the North East that I hadn't tried before.

My favourites were Durham Brewery's Magus and Hophead, and Oakham White Dwarf. The Thornbridge Jaipur IPA that I've previously enjoyed at the Royal Oak in Bath ran out before I got to it, so obviously a hot favourite with others too. Entertainment was provided by Morris



dancers on the Hall's terrace, and a local band – introduced as "from the island of Tewkesbury" – inside the barn.

Thanks to the phenomenal efforts of all the volunteers and others, the Festival was a great day out and an opportunity to try different beers in a gorgeous country setting. All I've got to do now is find some other reason to wear Wellingtons ... next summer, probably.

Lesley Huxley



Moor Beer

ON 7th July a group of volunteers caught a coach to the Moor Brewery at Ashcott in Somerset to see how this brewery was shaping up. Formed in 1996, there had recently been a few changes, mainly in the guise of a new brewer. He is called Justin Hawke and hails from America, finding a love of English real ale when he visited England with his parents in the 1980s. Later he switched from a career in IT and moved to England to become involved in brewing. He joined Moor in late 2006.

Moor beers use a wide variety of hops,

including some from America and New Zealand, to produce some fruity and very flavoursome ales with plenty of aroma. When we visited, this ten-barrel brewery was installing a bigger mash tun. This will complete a programme of replacing most of the brewing equipment over the last couple of years, expanding capacity and improving efficiency.

Justin has kept most of the existing portfolio of ales, although he has changed the recipes of some; he has also introduced a couple of new ones. The range now includes two porters, one of which has added port! Still being brewed, of course, is their award-winning Old Freddie Walker at 7.3% ABV – a classic rich and full-bodied old ale.

The Ashcott Beer Fest was on that same weekend, held on the farm which is the Moor Beer Company's base. This gave us an opportunity to try no less than six of the Moor beers (including Old Freddie). They

were all very good and we would recommend Revival (3.8%) and Somerland Gold (5%) to anyone – they are both bursting with hop flavours and very refreshing.

*Colin Postlethwaite
& Norman Spalding*



Posing in the Moor brewery