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PINTS WEST

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

WANT TO SAVE YOUR LOCAL?



Is your local pub:

- ☐ Currently closed?
- ☐ Threatened with closure?

If yes, do you want to try and save it?

The Community Pubs Foundation can help.

We're here to support community groups fighting to keep their local open. We can assist with:

- ☐ Information and guidance on campaigning tactics
- ☐ Small grants, which could be used, for instance, on:
 - Publicity material
 - Hiring meeting rooms
 - Securing professional advice

You can find out more by visiting our website at:

www.communitypubs.org

Contact us by email: communitypubs@camra.org.uk
or telephone: **01727 867201**

"This is a seriously important and welcome endeavour. Any initiative that helps a community keep its local pub open has my immediate support."

Bill Bryson (Travel Writer)

Welcome back, Albert



WHEN the Albert Inn in West Street, Bedminster closed, many people feared it would never reopen. Despite it being a popular pub with an international reputation for live music, it seemed to be doomed to conversion into residential flats.

Support for the pub was expressed from a number of sources, including George Ferguson, renowned architect and chairman of the Bristol Beer Factory brewery. Fortunately the Albert was then purchased by a Mr Holden (owner of the Rising Sun in Windmill Hill) who was prepared to invest in the sadly neglected building.

It is therefore great news that we were able to say "Welcome back, Albert" when the pub reopened on Friday 26 October.

The pub has had an extensive refurbishment and is managed by Carl Warmington, who had previously been at the Rising Sun. The opening evening was very busy with the pub running out of both change and some beers at times, as the relentless tide of customers washed in to check out the pub. Several real ales were available, including Bristol Exhibition and Number 7 from the Bristol Beer Factory, which were both in fine form. At the end of the evening Carl seemed worn out but very pleased with how things had gone.

The Albert will stage live jazz several nights a week and up-and-coming bands of other genres. The opening night featured a variety of live music ranging from the mellow *Gauloise Blond* to a grand finale from in-your-face rock band *Blackfire*.

(See inside for more on the Albert's reopening.)

Richard Brooks

Bristol Beer Festival

The eleventh Bristol Beer Festival returns once again to the Brunel Passenger Shed at Temple Meads in March 2008. See inside for how to secure your tickets to this always heavily oversubscribed event.

Pubs in Peril

THE PUB is one of the cornerstones of the British way of life. Be it a suburban local, a city-centre classic, a rural gem or a basic boozier, the pub is the source of much social activity and enjoyment.

Whether it's for meeting with family and friends, watching a sporting event, playing pub games such as darts, skittles or cribbage, a meeting place for local community groups, or just enjoying your favourite drink, the pub is the place to be. Without pubs, life would be much drearier – and there would not be much real ale! The British pub is envied throughout much of the world and perhaps we need to appreciate how lucky we are to have this wonderful feature in our cities, towns and villages.

That's the good news.

The bad news is that we are losing pubs at an alarming rate. The most recent research by CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, estimates that around 56 pubs are closing in the UK every month!

The area covered by the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA has not escaped this trend and we have seen many closures in recent times. Pubs such as the Rose & Crown in Iron

Acton, the Fox and the Cambridge both in Easton, the Ship Aground in Ashley Down, the Hollybush in Brislington, and Condells Old Ale House in central Bristol have all been lost.

There are many more. As I write, there are question marks over the future of several other pubs. The General Elliot and Wedlock's in Bedminster are both currently closed with an uncertain future, the Kellaway Arms in Horfield has been closed for several weeks, and then there is the famous Palace Hotel in Old Market, perhaps better known as the Gin Palace. Proposals are to turn this classic into flats and an office – let's hope this one can be saved.

The fact is that many pubs that appear to be in decline can be turned into thriving locals under the right stewardship and with a good customer offering. Note the turnaround at the Inn on the Green in Horfield, or the Assembly in Bedminster. Then there is the very positive development at what was the Smiles Brewery Tap, reopening as a Butcombe pub called Colston Yard.

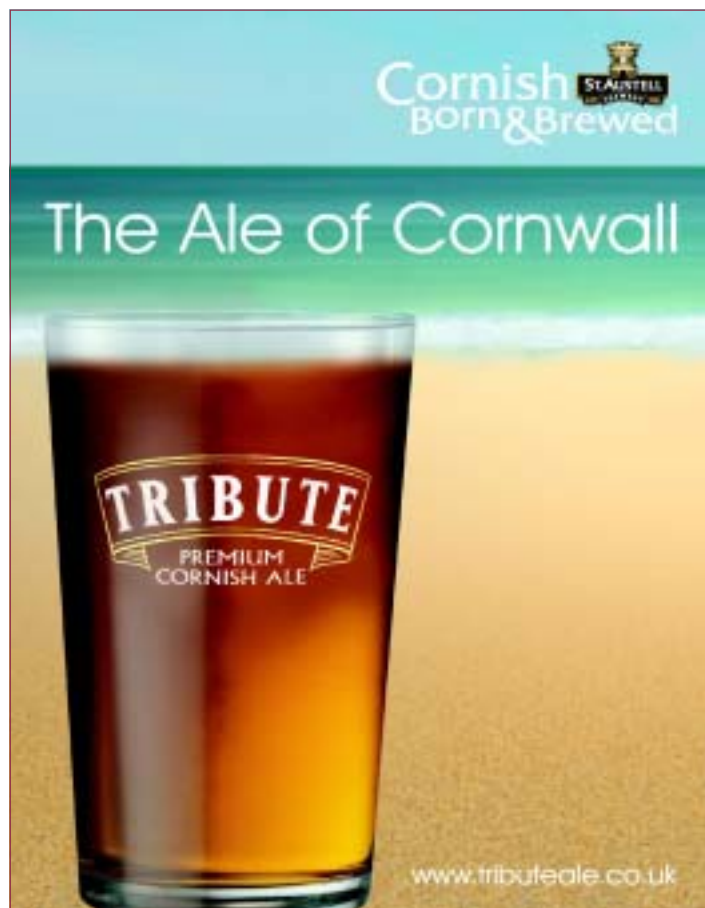
Despite these success stories, we are losing far too many viable pubs. As a result of this worrying trend, Bristol CAMRA is

forming a Pubs Campaigning Group. Its objectives will be to encourage people to support their local pubs, to campaign against the closure of what could be viable pubs, and also against unsympathetic pub refurbishment. The intention is to launch the group early in the New Year.

We have already formed a small committee. We are now looking for a few more people to join us. We are looking for volunteers from all areas of our branch, as we would like at least one person in each local authority area. We will probably meet up around four times a year as most of the communication can be done by email. When we do meet, it is likely to be in a pub in the branch area with an early evening start (say 7.30pm). There have been many positive suggestions already proposed as to how we take the campaigning forward and we will always be open to new ideas.

So, if you care about the future of pubs in our branch area and would be interested in joining the Bristol CAMRA Pubs Campaigning Group, please drop us an email to camra@camrabristol.org.uk to find out more.

Pete Bridle



Save the Gin Palace

Bristol & District branch members are campaigning to save one of Bristol's best known and most iconic public houses from plans to convert it into office space and six flats.

Most Bristolians will be familiar with the Palace Hotel at the crossroads junction of Old Market Street and West Street. It proudly stands as a city landmark to those that travel up Old Market Street or from Midland Road. This former hotel has more recently been a public house with exterior and interior architectural features that have not changed since its build in 1869. As pub-goers and historians will testify, the interior is nothing short of magnificent, with barley-twist brass columns supporting spandrels with glass roundels between each arch, beneath a neat ornate gallery. A fabulous ceiling cornice tops these features, whilst the floor has a significant slope, locally a well known feature.

But how many Bristolians know that this public house has been closed for two and a half years and the new owner has submitted a planning application to convert the magnificent ground floor bar areas into office space, and to add six flats upstairs? Architectural gems such as this are few and far between and are becoming rarer by the month. There is only one other pub in Bristol that compares to this one for historic architectural importance, where once there were scores to choose from. The Palace Hotel cannot be lost as a public house; it is far, far too valuable.

Grade II listed and known locally as the "Gin Palace", it is also listed in Part 2 of CAMRA's National Inventory of Pub Interiors, one of only 250 pubs out of 60,000 in the whole of Great Britain that have this status.

It was built for the wine and spirits merchant, John Sharp, and you can still see his name and profession in the stone facade facing Old Market Street and Midland Road.

Originally named the Railway Hotel, it was supposed to have been a hotel to serve travellers stopping at the railway terminus next door, but the Midland Railway line never came to this point but stopped in nearby St. Philips instead. It is said that the floor sloped in order to assist the porters to wheel luggage about without the inconvenience of steps. The floor actually slopes in keeping with the adjacent Lawfords Street, and encourages you to take a couple of sips from your glass before you dare place it down on a table for fear of spillage!

Upstairs the male toilet walls and ceiling are completely covered with posters promoting WOMAD events from over the years. These posters are in place because of the last owner, Thomas Brooman, managing director of WOMAD, who spent much time and money bringing the place up to the high standard for which it is worthy. Mr. Brooman and his wife had a passion for the place, which we would dearly like to replicate with another caring owner.

The Gin Palace closed in the summer of 2005 and was offered for sale. The new owner submitted a planning application in September 2006 to change its use to an estate agents office. This was followed with another application in June 2007 to remove the bar, although this application was invalid. The intentions of the new owner were obvious and the likelihood of the Palace ever re-opening as a pub can be considered to be in serious threat. In September 2007 two planning applications were submitted, one is consent to change a listed building and the second to convert the ground floor to office use and add six flats to the floors above.

The pub is very prominently positioned on the crossroads of one of Bristol's major thoroughfares in the area of Old Market, and consequently is very well known. We would encourage Bristol City Council to reject the application to change the use or allow any alterations to the bar area.

There is a £500 million regeneration happening at this moment around the area of Old Market with apartments and flats adding fairly affluent residents to an area that has suffered from neglect over the past 40 years. With this regeneration also comes business, bringing potential lunch-time and after-work early evening custom to the pub as well as the



potential increased trade from residents.

Under the right stewardship this popular pub could be rejuvenated into a very viable business. After all, the Good Pub Guide's 2008 "Town Pub of the Year" has been won by a CAMRA National Inventory-listed pub, The Old Green Tree in Bath, showing that there is much interest in this type of public house. While the Palace's appeal is unique in the Bristol area, the pub's surrounding has many well used pubs with a varied clientele.

We are therefore hoping that someone will come forward who can see both the history and the potential future for this unique pub and save it from an ignominious fate as an estate agents!

Mike Jackson



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

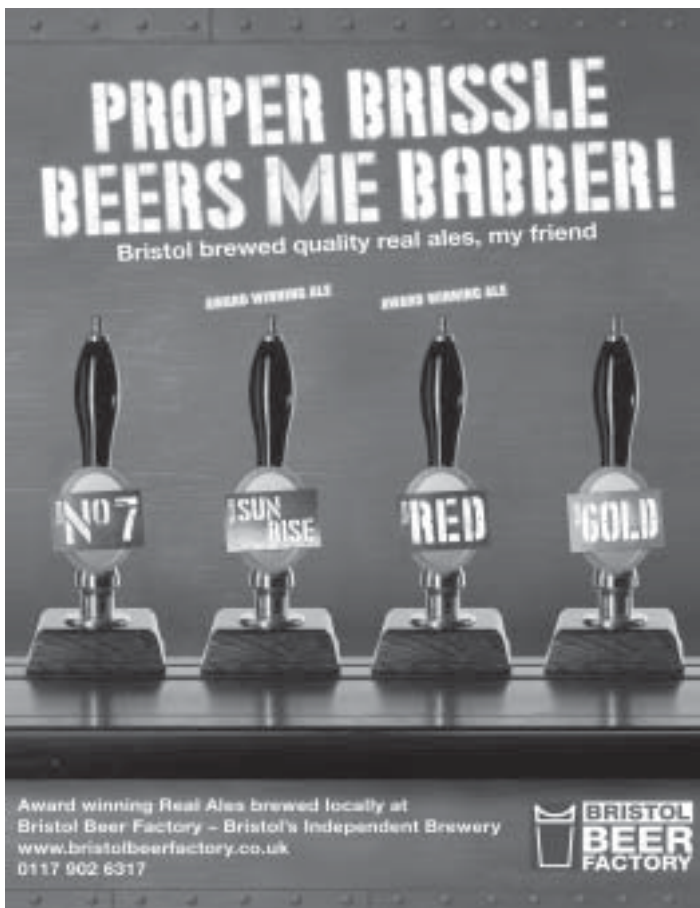
The Albert opens its doors at last!

FINALLY, after waiting two years – enduring numerous threats and disappointments to its future, a vigorous campaign to save it, squatters, structural and refurbishment delays – the Albert Inn opened its doors to the public on the weekend of 26th October 2007.



The pub was packed solid as people flocked to this once famous jazz pub to see live music once again. New owner Oliver Holden and manager Carl Warmington intend to continue the Albert's music tradition, and over the weekend there were three live band appearances (before its closure in 2005, the Albert had gained its fame as one of Bristol's major jazz and music venues during the 80's and 90's when landlord Ian Storrer ran the pub).

There will be live music on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in the traditional-looking bar downstairs, and during the rest of the week there will be open mic sessions in the modern-style room upstairs. When we popped in on the following weekend, a jazz trio were playing in the



Carl Warmington with his Bristol Beer Factory handpumps

packed bar, and we managed to grab some seats in the café-style lounge behind the bar.

There were three real ales currently on offer, Bristol Beer Factory Exhibition and No.7, and Wells Young's Courage Best, and all were in good condition. It is intended to keep the Exhibition as a permanent beer, which is good news as it is difficult to find (except as an occasional guest) elsewhere. As it's a free house, Carl is keen to support local breweries, and with the No.7 and Best regarded as guest pumps, we can look forward to something different in the future.

The bar has been transformed by the removal of the old false ceilings, exposure of the original brickwork at the end of the bar and opening the area out into the back rooms to create a more roomy and airy feel of a traditional bar. There are two large carved wooden gargoyles standing guard above the entrance doors, who have already been nick named Al and Bert, while for smokers there is a large patio area at the back under the gated stable entrance that is covered by the upstairs function room.

The upstairs area has been painted in bright orange (called mango melody) and contains sofas and seats that acts as an overflow space for downstairs, or a quiet escape from the music and buzz of the bar, or a function room holding about 80 people. The pub also hopes to start serving food in the New Year.

There is a free public parking area opposite and buses 52, 75, 76 and 77 stop nearly outside.

It was great to be back in one of Bristol's more famous pubs, and to see it crowded with drinkers and music fans once again after so many years of neglect and dereliction. Well worth a visit.

*Colin Postlethwaite
(photos by Richard Brooks)*

Bristol Beer Festival 2008



Photo by Richard Brooks

THE eleventh annual Bristol Beer Festival will take place at the Brunel Passenger Shed, Temple Meads, Bristol on Friday 14th and Saturday 15th March 2008.

This fantastic event, organised and run entirely by unpaid local CAMRA activists, has been growing in popularity every year. For the 2007 festival there were so many applications for tickets that the vast majority were unsuccessful. This caused some real administrative problems for the volunteers dealing with the postal enquiries and led to endless customer queries. We also found the pubs that sold tickets for us often ran out within hours, leaving people driving from pub to pub in a fruitless quest for tickets.

After a full review the festival organisers have decided to adopt a radical new approach for 2008. The aim is to have a simple, fair method of selling tickets that doesn't involve huge amounts of wasted postal correspondence and returned cheques and means that customers will not waste their time making repeated visits to various pubs to find that someone else has bought up all the tickets. We want to promote real ale within our branch area whilst also rewarding CAMRA membership.

The details of the ticket sales for the 2008 Bristol Beer Festival are as follows:

● **On Sunday 13th January tickets will go on sale at the Commercial Rooms, Corn Street Bristol from 11am to 4pm.**

Tickets will only be sold to card-carrying CAMRA members at this session and there is a maximum of **two** tickets for each valid CAMRA card presented (though anyone who signs up to join CAMRA on the day will also be able to purchase **two** festival tickets).

● **On Sunday 27th January tickets will go on sale at the Old Fish Market, Baldwin Street, Bristol from 11am until 4pm.**

Tickets will be on sale to everyone (including CAMRA

members) at this session up to a maximum of **four** tickets per person.

● **Simultaneous ticket sales sessions will take place with the same rules at Off The Rails at Weston-super-Mare train station on both 13th and 27th January.**

Tickets will not be held back, so once they have sold out they are really all gone. If there are any tickets remaining after these sessions they will be put on general sale at the **Bridge Inn**, Passage Street, Bristol from **Tuesday 5th February**.

We want to promote real ale to the public, and for anyone new to real ale the festival is a fantastic chance to try a huge range of beer tastes and styles. We also want to offer local CAMRA members the opportunity to attend the festival, as they support CAMRA throughout the year. The changes to the ticket sales process are intended to support both these aims. Remember that if you join CAMRA at the sales sessions on 13th January you will be able to buy two tickets there and then.

We apologise to anyone who feels disadvantaged by this new method, however please remember that thousands of people were disappointed last year and the huge success of the festival has made the old approach untenable.

Ticket details and prices are as follows. Please bring the correct cash to the ticket sales sessions as we will not be able to accept cheques or credit cards.

Friday lunchtime	11:30am - 4:00pm	£5
Friday evening	6:30pm - 11:00pm	£5
Saturday lunchtime	11:30am - 4:00pm	£5
Saturday evening	7:00pm - 11:00pm	£4

We strongly advise people to keep an eye on our website www.camrabristol.org.uk which will feature detailed information about the ticket sales procedure and updates as to ticket availability. Details of how to join CAMRA are on the website, or you can fill in the membership form in this copy of *Pints West*.

Shine on Redland

EVERY issue we ask the *Pints West* reader to let us know if there is a part of Bristol (& District) that she would like to see featured in this column. However, since the injunction we can't do that any more, so we have to decide for ourselves. This issue, we're having a look at Redland.

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

Picture the scene. You're an ornithologist. You can't help but be inspired by Kate Humble and Bill Oddie on Spring and Autumn Watch. In fact, you can't help thinking you have a lot in common with Bill Oddie. You share a passionate belief in the importance of wildlife for the well-being of the nation; you love to study the behaviour and migratory patterns of our feathered friends; and you both have the same unkempt beard. And the fact that your husband enjoys nature too is just a bonus.

Anyway, given your love of wildlife, you've been to Durdham Downs to do some bird-spotting. It's a lovely area, with the steep sides of the gorge and mixed, broad-leaved woodland providing shelter for a great deal of fauna and flora – though you saw very little margarine on your visit. However, you were lucky enough to see *Prunella Modularis* (the Dunnock), *Falco Peregrinus* (the Peregrine) and *Corvus Corax* (the Raven). But you had to cut short your expedition when you were on the receiving end of a direct hit from above by a *Tetrax Tetrax* (the Little Bustard). You contemplate why so many birds have misleading names (the Bearded Tit is neither bearded nor a tit, the Moorhen lives in ponds and isn't a hen, the Snipe never says a word behind people's backs, and the Sociable Plover always completely blanks you when you see him down the Syndicate on a Saturday night), and this sets you thinking about other strange and unanswerable questions in life.



The Cambridge Arms

Thinking about life's strange and unanswerable questions is, in your experience, something best done with a decent beer in your hand, so you decide to retire to the pub. You pause to glance up at the title of this article, hoping you haven't gone to the Downs only to have to drink in Portishead or somewhere, but by some coincidence you're going to Redland, which is quite nearby.

The first pub you visit is the **Cambridge Arms** on Coldharbour Road. This is a Fuller's pub, and has been trading on the site at least as far back as 1865. Nowadays run by Paul Fickling, it has just undergone a major refurbishment. The two bars were long since knocked through, though the original double-doorway remains. Polished floors and comfortable wooden furniture throughout, except at the far left as you enter, where there are some lovely leather sofas. This seems to be a perfect place to sit and sup the fine ales on offer. As a Fuller's house,



The Jersey Lily

you expect to see London Pride, but there is also Discovery and London Porter from the same brewery, as well as Butcombe's ubiquitous bitter. As you sit down with a superbly chocolaty pint of London Porter, a question strikes you. Why has monosyllabic got so many syllables? You think it's probably so you can insult monosyllabic types without them realising it. And why is dyslexia such a hard word to spell? Surely that's just rubbing it in. A bit like saying "I'm afraid you've got severe arthritis, now if you could pop up to the top of that long flight of stairs for your prescription...". Side note: although predominantly interested in the beers on offer, you can confirm that the food in the Cambridge is excellent too. Also, your research partner, who was on this trip but got edited out, had the Discovery and that was top notch.

From the Cambridge you head across to the **Jersey Lily**, on Blackboy Hill, also recently refurbished. You are disappointed to note that the current sign, instead of showing Lillie Langtry, actress and



The Clyde Arms

mistress of Edward VII, now shows a painting of a lily, which misses the point entirely. Inside, the furniture is plush enough, but there are no real ales on offer (a Tomos Watkins pump clip is turned away from the bar, so they may have a single real ale on sometimes).

You decide to give it a miss and head down the slope to the **Black-boy Inn**. Formerly the Elephant and Castle, this was renamed in honour of an earlier pub, long since demolished, which would now stand square in the middle of Blackboy Hill, thus causing traffic chaos. Still two bars here – the quiet and unassuming lounge to the front, ideal for watching people scurrying from shop to shop, and a saloon cum sports bar at the back. Two real ales are on offer: Courage Best Bitter and Sharp's Doom Bar. You plump for the Doom Bar, a good pint which, in your humble opinion, may have suffered from the massive expansion in production in recent years and maybe lost a little of its distinctive flavour. It's perfectly well kept here, however, and as you savour the aftertaste, you



The Blackboy Inn

wonder why nobody ever looks at a really well turned-out young beau and says, "Gosh, doesn't he look shevelled. And the way he carries himself is so gainly!"

Next is the **Clyde Arms** on Hampton Road. The exterior of this pub sums up everything that is great about British heritage and architecture. Stone walls, and beautiful stained-glass windows. The words 'Lounge Bar' are etched onto the window in the entrance, stained glass again. As you enter, you can't help but think back to a time, during the second World War, when Bristolians sat in here and railed against Hitler's bombs, declaring, "He can bomb us all he likes, but he cassn't win!" These days, the single bar is U-shaped and, as you walk in, your gaze is instantly drawn to the Thatcher's Traditional Cider (though you believe Doom Bar and Butcombe were also available). This pub is everything a local should be, and is the sort of place you could while away hours with questions like, "Why are there no grunted employees? And how would one go about grunting an employee without the Citizen's Advice Bureau being called in?"



Kensington Arms

A quick scoot through Chandos Road and on to the **Kensington Arms**. This is an oft refurbished pub (for a spell the Rat & Carrot some years back) which is currently aimed at an upmarket crowd, with elaborate food menu, and a TV hidden behind wall-mounted artwork. Live sport is also featured here. On your visit, you forego the Greene King IPA, Ruddles Best Bitter and Morland Original, for a rare pint of draught Perry. A rare event indeed these days and the sharp dryness of Herefordshire County Perry is just what the doctor ordered.

Finally, you complete your circuit of Redland by popping up to the



The Shakespeare

Shakespeare in Lower Redland Road. Another lovely old building with two bars. On the left is the Stratford Room, with the Avon on the right. There's a quiet dignity to the Shakespeare. No loud piped music, jukebox, etc. Most importantly, it boasts some five real ales, beautifully kept by a landlady who is also a qualified and very talented car mechanic. On the day of your visit, the beers are Lancaster Bomber from Thwaites, Butcombe's Bitter and Brunel IPA, Marston's Pedigree and Jennings Sneck Lifter. You try the Sneck Lifter, still brewed in Cockermouth, Cumbria, despite being part of the Marston's national group. This is a lovely beer, really suited for winter. Although you're no qualified taster, you really appreciate the malty flavours, and that roasted sensation that sends a welcoming shot of warmth through your body. (The Brunel IPA is also on excellent form).

So, sat peacefully in the corner of the Avon Room, with an excellent pint in front of you, you ponder another couple of unanswerable questions. Firstly, why do people start sentences with "I don't want to be rude" when that is the only thing you can guarantee they're going to do", and secondly, who is the shambling, slightly jaded-looking figure whose been following you all day, making notes about the beers on offer and clearing his throat more and more loudly?

Duncan Shine

Is there an area covered by the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA that you would like to see get the "Shine On" treatment in a future issue?

If so, send an email to Duncan.shine@britishpubguide.com or steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk, and we'll see what we can do.

SHOW YOUR PUB WITH PRIDE



Imagine a 20" x 16" framed drawing of your inn, exact in every detail, a talking point for regulars and visitors alike.

Think of the possibilities that can be created through art to enhance the image of your business, Place Mats, T Shirts, Post Cards, Menus, etc.



Terry Smith (Arts)
Tel 01179329581
Mobile 07870179176
Email ter_smith@hotmail.co.uk

The Painter and the Publican - part 3

IN the last decade of the 19th century, Bristol could rival Munich's big six breweries in terms of output and renown, but by the end of the 20th century, Bristol's final mighty brewery, Georges (by then part of Courage) was about to do its last brew in Bath Street.

What happened? Mergers, rationalisation and, in the end, land values, did for them all. The brewery's demise started a trend that has subsequently been followed by local chocolate factories and hospitals, with petrol stations and public houses bringing up the rear.

Bristol's City Fathers did their best to keep major brewing alive, allowing expansion in the eighties that resulted in the loss of half an entire Georgian terrace by the great Thomas Patty – just to let articulated lorries turn round!

It briefly enabled Courage to claim that they had the largest dedicated real ale brewery in the world and to prove this they produced a limited-edition bottled beer named "Million Brew" in October 1990, celebrating the brewing of 1,000,000 barrels at the modernised Bristol Brewery.



All that remains in this view is the tower (which contained lockers and malt silos). The despatch canopy has been demolished along with all of the buildings on the left (the old bottling hall and equipment).

But it didn't last long, and when the bean counters of Scottish and Newcastle moved in (in the nineties) the brewery's fate was sealed.

A spirited campaign by CAMRA was mounted (local brewing expert Mike Bone wanted to have the whole site listed as a unique example of a brewery's development over many centuries) but in double quick time half of the site was redeveloped.

This was despite an 8,000 strong petition that clearly demonstrated the strength of feeling surrounding the loss of one of Bristol's major industries. All was not lost however as the developers agreed that they would preserve brewing on the site with a new micro brewery.

So they've promised, but the final plans reviewed in the media show a "now you see it, now you don't" kind of approach, so please, Pints West readers, make sure the developers fulfil this important promise.

Brewing in Redcliffe and Temple goes back to before the Knights Templar had a stake in the city and back even into Saxon times. In fact, the date of the original brewery (according to the Chamberlain's Audit in



The equally famous Cat and Wheel to the left of this picture used to keep the Bear and Rugged Staff company. Both were very old inns, but the Cat is resplendent in a 'modern' brick facade put on by Georges in the late 1890's.

To the right are the premises of Llewellyn and James, one of two major brewery engineers in the city, the other being Adlam's.

Georges drays only used single horses to enable them to negotiate Bristol's old medieval streets. For many centuries only sleds were allowed in order to protect the merchants' cellars below from damage.

Once again, according to Terry Peters, the old castle's dungeons ran everywhere below, including L & J's, and these were very spooky complete with their deep sockets, rings and chains.

the Bristol Record Office) is 1568, which made the Bristol Brewery the oldest continuously brewing site in the country when Scottish & Newcastle cruelly pulled the plug: much older than the 1702 date that seems to be bandied about (erroneously) all of the time.

One thing that seemed to go against the brewery was its reputation as a brewer; possibly due to Georges not recovering from war time shortages, the beer was always regarded as a "bit thin". In the 1970's, this led to a famous (and unfair) local quip "Courage have announced the closure of their Bristol Brewery – 40,000 gnats to be made redundant".

The final tranche of redevelopment is now well under way, and an industry that served the city so well is about to be lost under its new name "Finzels Reach". I can partially understand "Finzels", but why "Reach"? It seems Bristol's past is getting marketed out of sight (I haven't got over Canons Marsh being renamed "Harbourside" yet – I think they must be generated from a sort of "Naff Names R Us" guide).

Let's hope the new Museum of Bristol recognizes our past and sets up a decent section on brewing. In the meantime though, we'll have to survive on records, prints and these marvellous pictures by Ian Cryer. Guessing at the brewery's fate, I managed to get him to do a very rare 'historic' picture, before the wrecking balls moved in.

The brewery buildings are as they were in 1999, but I got him to add some old archive material showing the famous Georges dray horses prior to them giving way to the petrol engine.

The other picture shows the sadly demolished Bear and Rugged Staff receiving a beer delivery. This part of Bristol was badly mauled by

the Luftwaffe and the few surviving buildings were replaced by Castle Park. In Munich, their old shopping district was rebuilt and their communities remained.

Former Courage coppersmith Terry Peters fondly remembers the pub, as he was apprenticed next door in Llewellyn and James, brewery engineers with an international reputation. Apparently, when the firm's huge drop hammer was started up, the landlady of the Bear used to remonstrate with the workers, as all of her pots and pans used to fall off the wall.

As a footnote, Munich still has six major breweries, and they help make the city world-famous for beer – along with their annual Oktoberfest.

Mark Steeds (Publican)

(Ian Cryer's web site: www.iancryer.com)



Captured beautifully by Bristol photographer Stephen Morris, this unique array of brewery chimneys could be lost forever with the redevelopment of the Courage brewery site.

“BY
GEORGE!
that's good”

GEORGES'
GOOD IN 1788

BRISTOL
BETTER 1868

BEERS
~~EST. 1999~~

ETRAYED 1999

The Bristol Brewery Georges & Co. Ltd.

News from Arbor Ales

SIX months have now passed since the first brew from Arbor Ales went on sale at the Old Tavern, Blackberry Hill, Stapleton. That was at the end of April and much has happened since. Jon Comer, the brewer, has left his job to concentrate on brewing and distributing his products – as well as becoming a dad! Congratulations Jon.

The two original ales, **Trendlewood Bitter** and **Old Knobbly**, have both proved popular and are established regulars. Both have been ‘beefed up’ slightly since the launch: Trendlewood from 3.7 per cent to 4.0 per cent ABV and Old Knobbly from 4.2 per cent to 4.5 per cent.

Hornbeam, an occasional at 5.7 per cent, has not fulfilled expectations in a number of ways and will probably be discontinued. **Snuffy Jack's Old Ale** (5.9 per cent) began life as a mis-brew of the strong ale **Slumberjack** (7.0 per cent), but went down well so is now part of the portfolio. Slumberjack itself will be available again soon to brighten up those long winter evenings.

A series of monthly ales began in August under the generic title **Single Hop**. Beginning with a 3.2 per cent light bitter using First Gold hops, drinkers have since enjoyed a 3.4 per cent beer with Northdown (September) and a 3.8 per cent beer using Cascade hops (October). For November you can try a rather tasty 4.0 per cent red-brown ale featuring Challenger hops. The next seasonal will be **Dunkel Bier**, a 4.3 per cent in the style of a German dark beer using Challenger as bittering hop and Hersbrucker for aroma. To celebrate the Rugby World Cup, Jon brewed **Bums and Roses** (4.2 per cent with East Kent Goldings hops) but, hardly daring to hope that England would reach the final, underestimated the quantity with the result that it sold out far too soon.

The beers are finding their way into new outlets all the time. The Café Bar at the Watershed currently sells a complete brew (two and a half barrels – about 90 gallons) of Trendlewood each month and will be adding Old Knobbly very soon. In addition to those he supplies already, Jon is on the lookout for more outlets on the roads between Worcester (where the hops come from) and Warminster (the source of the malt) and Stapleton. Supplying them with beer at the same time as fetching the raw materials makes environmental sense. Speaking of ‘the environment’, the Bristol water proves ideal for brewing without any need for special treatment and the spent grains from the brewery go to a nearby farmer to feed his pigs.



Persistent rumours among locals that the Old Tavern once had its own brewery were confirmed recently with the discovery of a photograph dating from the early 20th century. The actual building shown is that now in use as the cold store for the ales. It still carries many features of a small Victorian tower brewery in the fabric. Who knows, one day Jon may ‘do a Ray Penny’ and move the brewery back into the original building, as recently happened at Wickwar.

Henry Davies

The New Inn, Mayshill

DRIVE out of north-east Bristol on the A432 and venture beyond Coalpit Heath, and you will come across the New Inn at Mayshill. Run by Alix and Dave McKillop, this 17th century building with its classic exterior was originally three cottages and a pub, but has evolved into a long sprawling pub with four distinct areas.

The door from the large car park leads into a small porch which in turn leads to the Says Court lounge that is dominated by an original fireplace with a wood burning stove. Mind your head on the cradle hook! After entering the pub on a chilly evening this fireplace is very welcoming. Walk up a couple of steps and you're in a dining area with another, but unused, fireplace.

Next along is the bar. This offers bar stools and seating for those not wishing to eat. There is a short corridor leading past the front door, which is normally open only in the summer, into the restaurant. Known as the Chestnut Lounge it has recently enjoyed a make-over whilst retaining its traditional style (the Says Court and Chestnut names are taken from the surrounding farms).

Back at the bar there are four real ales on offer, one from the local Cotswold Spring Brewery and three continually changing guest ales from micros and regionals, often including a dark ale. These are sourced through SIBA's Direct Delivery Scheme.

Ales appearing on the bar are frequently new brews and seasonals from sources not normally found locally. All are well kept and presented, and the pub's reputation for real ale means that they are turned around within days. Dave has recently introduced tasting notes for the ales on offer as well as listing what is on next and what is in the cellar, to assist you planning your next visit! There's good news for card-carrying CAMRA members, as they qualify for a discount on their ale on Sunday and Monday evenings. If you want to continue drinking ale from the New Inn after you have left then just ask for a two- or four-pint carry keg.

The pub is also on the Bristol to Chipping Sodbury bus route with



Dave McKillop with a recent selection of real ales

bus stops right outside in each direction (X30/X40/342).

Dave and Alix were the managers at the pub from April 2002 to April 2003. They then left for pastures new but returned in November 2003 to buy the lease when it unexpectedly came up for sale. They are extremely professional hosts and they and their staff always present a warm welcome. As you would expect, they have built up a very loyal custom for excellent food and great ale.

Whilst Dave (himself a CAMRA member, with a broad knowledge of real ale) ensures a fantastic pint of ale is always available, Alix takes care of the kitchen where excellent food is prepared and cooked. Food can be enjoyed in the bar as well as the restaurant. Weekends are popular for dining, as is Tuesday evening with the "two-steaks" offer. The diners have normally finished by around 9:30 giving the drinker a bit more room to relax and chat while supping a fine ale.

The beer garden in its countryside setting is a pleasant environment with play equipment for the children. For the smouldering tobacco fans there is also a substantial smokers' shelter.

It's always a pleasure to visit the New Inn and the "lucky dip" of the ale choice makes it an experience to be sought after. Add to that the option of great food and your journey is well worth while. May Dave and Alix's reign at the New Inn continue!

Mike Jackson

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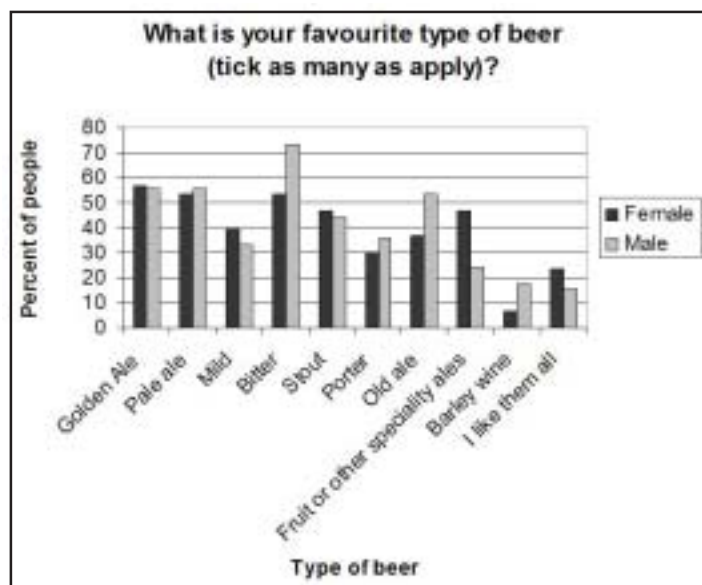
The Fem-Ale debate

IN our Summer edition of Pints West we ran a piece by Kirsten Elliott which has had our mailbox overflowing. Kirsten was up in arms because certain quarters (CAMRA included) think that the way to encourage more women to drink ale is by promoting golden and fruity ales to them. As a woman who often drinks dark ales, Kirsten was rightly rather disgruntled. She cited talking with other women who also like dark ales. I can certainly support Kirsten in asserting that there are many women who like dark ales, myself included.

In response to this article were people agreeing with Kirsten while making suggestions as to how to encourage more women to try real ale. Some have suggested that if ale was promoted as a natural product more women would be inclined to try it. It was also postulated that women would be more likely to try ale if they knew that by doing so they were supporting local businesses.

Well, we couldn't resist a challenge such as this. What ales do women really like to drink? And why do they drink real ale? More importantly, is this any different from men? We thought we'd find out by creating an on-line questionnaire which has now closed. Many thanks to everyone who contributed.

We had 75 responses, 60% men, 40% women. Participants were invited to tell us which were their preferred beers (they could choose as many as they liked) and their reasons for drinking ale. Graph 1 shows the types of ale our participants enjoyed drinking.



Graph 1

Now I'm not a statistician, so I'm happy to be corrected by any reading this. But graph 1 reveals some interesting results. According to the views expressed by some, men should prefer the darker ales, and women the lighter ales. But this is evidently not the case with over 53% of both male and female respondents stating a preference for golden ale and pale ale and over 44% of both male and female drinkers enjoying stout. However, the pundits had something right. Nearly 47% of women like drinking fruit ales, while only 24% of men do.

So what about the reasons for drinking ale?

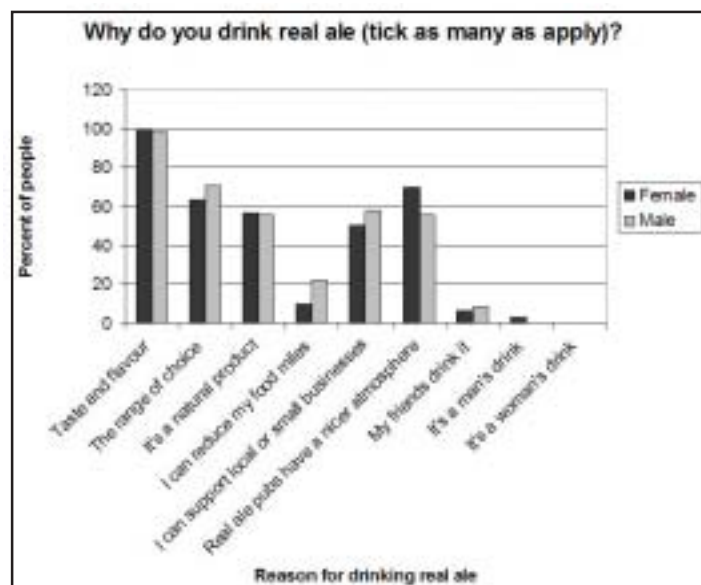
Unsurprisingly nearly everyone who responded said they drank real ale for its taste and flavour – phew! Ale being a natural product was also favoured by the same percentage of both male

and female real ale drinkers. After that, there was disagreement. A higher proportion of men than women enjoy drinking ale because of the range of choice, reducing food miles and being able to support local businesses. On the other hand, more women than men enjoy real ale because real ale pubs have a nicer atmosphere.

However, it would be wrong to suggest that these benefits are important only to either men or women. Over 50% of both men and women rate the range of choice, ale being a natural product, supporting local or small businesses and the nicer atmosphere of real ale pubs as being motivations for drinking real ale. A small fraction of the respondents were happy to be able to reduce their food miles (22% of men, 10% of women). It looked like some respondents succumbed to peer pressure! 7% of women and 9% of men stated they drank ale because their friends did.

And yes, one person said they drank ale because it was a man's drink. However that person was a woman!

So what can we make of all this? Well, it was a small sample of the ale drinkers in and around Bristol so we can't be overly confident. But I think it's fair to say that both men and women drink a wide range of types of beer. Golden ale isn't the preserve of women, but perhaps the fruity beers are. Dark ales are enjoyed by both men and women. We drink ale for a wide variety of reasons: taste and flavour mostly, but we do have other considerations. Perhaps the marketeers should not try to push one type of ale to either gender, but listen to the comments of two of the



Graph 2

respondents who enjoy a certain excitement in drinking real ale:

"I find ordering ale an adventure, never fully knowing what you are going to get served." Male, 35-44.

"I like it ... and I like to try something new and local rather than drinking the same thing the whole time!" Female, 45-54.

Post script: yes, I know, we only had a few responses to the questionnaire, they were self-selected and not necessarily representative of ale drinkers in the area, and I'm not a statistician, but it's start. As we were interested in why people do drink ale, rather than why they don't, we don't know if Kirsten's theory about laddish pump clip design and dodgy names could be affecting ale drinking. Perhaps there's scope for further research?

Helen Featherstone

The Sharp's Brewery success story

SHARP'S Brewery was founded in 1994 at Rock, located on Cornwall's Atlantic coast. The success and growth of the brewery has been phenomenal with Sharp's now laying claim to being the largest brewer of cask-conditioned beer in the South West and its leading brand Doom Bar one of the UK's fastest growing beer brands.

And further brewery expansion plans for next spring are set to go ahead, with the building of a much larger brew house capable of producing over 100,000 barrels of beer a year. Currently the brewery's production is achieved by two shifts a day, seven days a week, producing seventy-five barrels of beer each brew.

The new brew plant, which is being supplied from Canada, has been financed by the Royal Bank of Scotland and follows the purchase of the brewery from Bill Sharp a couple of years ago. Expansion has continued year on year and it is intended that the new brew plant will be commissioned before April 2008. Distribution of Sharp's beers continues to grow through their increasing depot network and Doom Bar in particular can be classed as a nation brand, available in draught and bottled versions. Depots in Bristol (Avonmouth), Manchester and London maintain supplies to large areas of the country. Next year's major expansion follows on from the recent opening of the much-awaited brewery shop.

There has never been an intention for Sharp's to own and run any pubs because this is considered a completely different ball game. However, beer quality in pubs is seen as a very important aspect and the brewery now provides a cellar service to licensees, helping with the installation of good cellar cooling, replacing beer lines and dispense equipment where necessary. A pub will be visited when requested, or if returned beer quantities indicate something may be going wrong with storage or dispense. Armin Palmer is in charge of this aspect of the company and has a "model cellar" soon to be completed beside the brewery shop where licensee training may take place.

Concentration on producing consistently good beer continues under the direction of head brewer Stuart Howe. Appointed in November 2002 by Bill Sharp, Mr Howe had previous experience at the Berkshire Brewery (yes, that keg lager factory beside the M4 on the outskirts of Reading) and before that at Brakspear and McMullen breweries. He has faithfully followed the original recipes with a new innovation of Friday's flavour panel, where samples of each beer brewed that week are tasted. Laboratory testing of all ingredients as well as the beer is also carried out to maintain quality.

One of the few changes to a recipe has been that of Atlantic IPA where the alcohol content has been reduced from 4.8% to 4.2% (it's still 4.8% in the bottled version though). This was apparently at the request of licensees, and Stuart Howe admits that the stronger version would sometimes catch out the unwary drinker as it is dangerously drinkable!

Eight Sharp's beers are regularly produced,

these being Cornish Coaster, Doom Bar, Eden Pure Ale, Atlantic IPA, Own, Special, Cornish Jack and Will's Resolve. Of all these, Doom Bar amounts to 76% of the total beer production.

For the curious, Doom Bar is named after an infamous sandbank at the mouth of the Camel Estuary in North Cornwall which is at its most dangerous between low and high tides when it is submerged by just a few feet. In fact the treacherous sandbank has been responsible for countless wrecks over the centuries and is a formidable challenge to all sailors entering the estuary.

In addition, a wide range of special blends are produced as "house beers" to customers' requirements. A beer called **Nadelek Lowen** is produced for Christmas. There are four bottled beer varieties, although none are bottled on site as yet, most being bottled at Robinson's in Stockport.



Sharp's head brewer Stuart Howe admiring the fruits of his labour

The brewery's "carbon footprint" in all this transport of beer up and down the country is kept to a minimum by all brewery vehicles being run on bio diesel. In fact the company takes great pains to minimise environmental impact in terms of waste, carbon dioxide emissions and water use.

Sharp's brewery is one of the UK's most energy efficient with sophisticated heat exchangers recovering energy at each process stage. Sharp's even recover the natural heat generated by fermentation. Water is used sparingly throughout the brewery and it has one of the best water usage to beer output ratios in the industry. This focus on sustainability has resulted in a reduction of 2,400 cubic litres of water used and 6,000kg of carbon dioxide emitted in the past 12 months.

The delivery fleet was the first in Cornwall to use 100% bio diesel. This clean fuel is produced from regionally grown rapeseed. The fleet also collect empty beer bottles from across Cornwall which are turned into drinking glasses by the Green Glass Company.

The Brewery has also collaborated with the Eden Project to show its commitment to making great beer with the least possible impact on the environment. Director Joe Keohane said: "Eden Pure Ale proved that a natural beer brewed in conscience with the environment can taste so much better than the multitude of mass produced factory beers which these days crowd our public bars and supermarket shelves."



The Cornwall Sustainability Awards last year was an interesting part in the success story. Judges were surprised to find a local herd of cows in Cornwall enjoy the flagship brand Doom Bar, drinking around 30 litres of waste beer a week. This is not only supported by vets for the health benefits of yeast and barley but contributed to winning the South West Low Carbon Business of the Year 2006.

Cornish Farmer Darren Pluess said: "The herd get quite noisy if they don't get their Doom Bar. I think it helps them relax but the cows can't get tipsy by drinking beer!"

In fact Sharp's recycle all raw material waste through novel environmentally efficient channels. As well as the local dairy herd consuming the waste beer they also munch through thirty tonnes of spent grain every week whilst neighboring hungry pigs devour almost five tonnes of protein-rich Sharp's yeast in the same period.

A recent innovation is a new bottled beer, conditioned in the bottle, called **Chalky's Bite**. With the original idea of including locally picked fennel in the recipe thought up by famous restaurateur Rick Stein, the beer is named after his equally famous dog (as seen on TV), now departed to that great kennel in the sky. Full of hoppy bite, this beer is conditioned for at least three months at low temperature with dry hopping in the conditioning tank. This is achieved by the use of what resembles a giant tea bag, enabling a quicker and more efficient cleaning of the conditioning tank, but not very popular with the cleaning staff. Chalky's Bite uses all Maris Otter malt.

Sharp's have expanded so much since their beginning ten years ago that Tuckers Maltings in Newton Abbot can no longer supply all the brewery's requirements. The remainder is supplied by Simpsons Malt. All recipes use only malt, no adjuncts, and this is milled at the brewery from a 35-ton bulk silo. With a view to maintaining consistency of malt supplies, some local farmers are now being approached to grow barley under contract. The main hop varieties used are Northdown and Northers Brewer, but as the supply of Northdown is under threat, a late hopping with Styrian Goldings is now being tried.

Confidence in the brewery staying at its Cornwall base remains high with the latest news of its expansion.

Adapted from an article by Steve Willmott that first appeared in Cornwall CAMRA's newsletter, One and Ale

Pub(lic) toilets

IN November 1660 Samuel Pepys confided to his diary that, "being troubled with a sudden looseness, I went into a little alehouse at the end of Ratcliffe and did give a groat for a pot of ale and there I did shit", thus setting down what is believed to be the first recorded instance of that common phenomenon, nipping into the pub because you're caught short.

I've often contended that you can judge a pub – and the quality of its beer – by its toilets. Dirty loos, with loose or non-existent toilet seats, broken locks, and – worst of all – no toilet paper, signify a lack of regard for customers that is likely to be reflected in other areas as well. Unclean loos more often than not mean unclean beer pipes and unclean glasses – leading to the sort of emergency measures Pepys needed to carry out in 1660.

At least Pepys had the decency to buy a pint. Increasingly these days, it seems, people are using pub loos without asking and without buying a drink. It's hardly surprising when you consider that nationally the number of public toilets has halved in the last ten years. In Bath, the situation is even worse, with virtually all the city's loos having been shut and sold off in the last five years in a vain attempt to claw back some of the money spent on the Spa. On top of that, withdrawal of facilities has been followed by calls for draconian measures against those forced to al fresco evacuation.

Now, it seems, there is a move afoot across the land to get rid of council-funded public toilets altogether in favour of a "community scheme". This means that the owners of pubs, bars and cafes will be paid a subsidy

if they open their toilets to all and sundry.

It's already happening in Richmond, where premises taking up the scheme display a Community Toilet Scheme sticker announcing that their facilities are available for public use, in return for which they get paid £600 a year. Although the scheme is voluntary, it is perhaps worth bearing in mind that councillors running the scheme will probably be the same councillors who judge licensing applications.

The director of the British Toilet Association, Richard Chisnell, points out that "it's become increasingly difficult in recent years to have a proper toileting experience" (I promise I'm not making this up). He goes on to explain that "the emphasis is shifting towards public access to toilets which already exist in most towns and cities. We have to persuade businesses to allow the public to use them, and local authorities to provide financial assistance with cleaning."

When you consider that one of the main reasons (apart from cost) public toilets closed in the first place was the range of anti-social activities that went on there, you begin to wonder whether these people can be serious. Publicans, in particular, have enough trouble keeping anti-social elements at bay – with councillors only too ready to jump on them if they don't.

This idea should be given the short shrift it deserves and council's urged to provide decent facilities, instead of passing the responsibility onto others. Much as I deplore the current lack of public toilet facilities, when I go out for a drink I want to sit – or stand – in a pub, not in the ante-room of a public convenience.

Andrew Swift

Maximus



IT seems to have been a number of years since the Abbey Brewery in Bath have brewed anything completely new but during October things changed with the production of **Bellringer Maximus**. The reason for this new beer, if one needs a reason, was the tenth anniversary of the brewery.

I reckon that Alan ("Bad News") Morgan is to be applauded for the ten years of success that he has achieved with his brewery and also for his hand in the turn-around of the **Star** in Bath from an ailing pub to a successful pub. What a gem of a pub and an excellent and sympathetic restoration.

The one thing that I do criticise (and this is one for all you pub-quiz-night freaks) is the choice of name that Alan made. The beer was to celebrate the tenth birthday of the brewery, the brew is called Bellringer, and the Abbey Church in Bath has ten bells. In bell-ringing terms the word 'Maximus' means twelve. The ringing term for ten bells is 'Royal' and it strikes me that this would have been so much more appropriate and would have left the door open for another brew called 'Maximus' in two years time. I did email Alan and tell him this when I found out about the naming but, alas, it was too late.

But what about the beer? Well it was produced at a strength of 5. per cent and has been described by Abbey Ales as a malty brew, and was launched at the Bath Beer Festival. Alas again I missed it due to bell-ringing in Yorkshire, but I am told that the Bellringer Maximus was very popular and was one of the first to run out. It hit the pubs in time for the mighty Bath Rugby Club's defeat of arch rivals Leicester and again there was a run on this elixir. I gather that the brewery had to go into overtime production to keep up with the demand. I eventually found some at the **Couer de Lion**, Abbey Ales' other pub in Bath. And very pleased I was to try it. Not bad at all, and I hope that all of you out there were lucky enough to try it.

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READERS' LETTERS

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steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk

An oxymoron and an abomination

Dear Mr Plumridge,

Do I detect a worrying trend?

Over the last few months I have visited a number of pubs, all of them known for the quality and range of real ales.

However in one of them I saw both an oxymoron and an abomination – Bass Smooth! And in another something called Toby Smooth. Now Toby never was much of a drink and I haven't seen it for years. Like most of us I hoped it was dead and gone, but no, there it was alongside Fosters and all the other cr*p.

But Bass Smooth? At least most other landlords of my acquaintance reported that they had been asked by "a Bass rep" if they would stock it and were given short shrift.

Is there an underlying – and worrying – trend here?

Yours sincerely,
Chris Buckell (?)
Eastfield, Bristol.

Urged

Steve,

I have been urged by a couple of my customers to let your readership know of the changes that have taken place at The King's Head in Whitehall, Bristol. After being closed for four months for refurbishment, it reopened on July 16th, providing a much improved environment to enjoy real ale and good pub grub. We currently only offer only Courage Best and Bath Gem, but are keen to expand our offering. We do have a spare beer engine for a guest ale, however, as we are only doing a cask of each a week, we need more support before we can offer more choice.

The pub is a family concern with myself and my partner Christine Hall, with her son Martyn and his wife Pauline. I have only been in charge of a cellar for a few months but have been complimented on the quality of my ale – big change from the IT industry, although viruses can cause havoc for both.

I look forward to seeing some of your readers in and having some suggestions for a guest ale list.

Thanks,
Graham Deere,
The King's Head,
Whitehall, Bristol.

4th BoA RFC Winter Beer Weekend

Hello Mr Plumridge,

Having not got around to it for far too long, I've just reminded myself to sign and pay up for a subscription to your fine quarterly

publication, and it's only a co-incidence that this should occur now that there is a Bath & Borders section included! The cheque is, quite literally, in the post!

For my sins I am the main organiser of the beer (and cider) festivals which are held at Bradford on Avon RFC which is actually located off of the Winsley bypass to the north-east of BoA. Our fifth main (Spring/Summer) event is due this coming May, but of more immediate import is our fourth Winter Beer Weekend which is to be held over the weekend of 18th (6:30-11pm), 19th (1-11pm) and 20th (1-4pm) January 2008. Entry is free to all sessions, there will be a dozen or so (mainly) seasonal beers, a cider and perry or two, and there will be food available throughout (hot pies, pork pies, filled rolls, all with vegetarian options). There is no music, apart from perhaps Mojo Radio at acoustic wallpaper level ... but there will be two home games on the Saturday afternoon for the rugby union enthusiast which would make for a lively late afternoon/early evening.

The nearest railway stations are Bradford on Avon (thence by taxi or the X4/X5 bus service) and Avoncliff (thence by public footpaths uphill across fields and minor roads!), and Winsley is on the X4/X5 bus route betwixt Bath, Trowbridge and Salisbury, the club being three minutes' walk from the nearest bus stop. (N.B. for the Spring/Summer event we run a shuttle between BoA station and the club.)

Our beer festivals are supported by (i.e. loan of chocks, taps and buckets), frequented by, and partially staffed by (James Honey is a regular staffer) Bath & Borders CAMRA members, and I'd be grateful if you could make a brief mention of the event in your 'Beer Festivals' section of the Winter edition ... if I'm not too late!

Best regards,
Dave Bethell,

Honorary Beer Hunter (with all due respect to the late, great Michael Jackson).

Kontroversial Kirsten

Dear PW,

Re Kirsten Elliot's excellent piece "Kontroversial Kirsten" in the last Pints West...

As an enthusiastic, but somewhat distant reader of your publication (I read it on-line and find many of the articles very well-written) I wanted to clarify that the beers chosen by Master Beer Sommelier Marc Stooandt at his beer and food seminar at The Taste of Bath event were not simply from 'Leffe', but from the brand-owners, InBev.

Without exception all of the beers mentioned in the piece are brewed by InBev (aka Interbrew, brewers of Stella, Leffe, Hoegaarden, Artois Bock, BelleVue Kriek, etc). Whilst not wishing to criticise his expertise, it seems perhaps Mr Stooandt might be financed by one of the world's largest brewing behemoths? Does his independence remain intact?

I strongly believe that a poll of Belgian beer fans would come up with many finer

examples of pale or dark abbey-style ales, fruit lambics and strong beers, etc, than those sampled.

Best wishes,
Mike McGuigan,
Beer and food fan ... and brewer,
Wirral, Merseyside.
www.betwixtbeer.co.uk.

Mouse improvement

The Mouse in Waters Lane, Westbury-on-Trym has re-opened after a major refurbishment. It's a great improvement. Hook Norton Hooky, Sharp's Doom Bar and Theakston's XB are on at the time of writing, all in fine nick.

Bill Jones (by email).

The way to the Hunters Lodge

Just a quick note to say that in the recent Pints West, in the article about the Hunters Lodge in Priddy being the CAMRA Pub of the Year runner-up, there is a statement that if you turn right at the Ploughboy you'll get to the Hunters Lodge ... you won't!

You need to turn right approximately half a mile past the Ploughboy.

If you turn right at the Ploughboy you'll get to a crossroads after a while and you'd then have to turn left and at the next crossroads the Hunters will be in front of you. Following the directions in your newsletter folks will presumably end up in Cheddar Gorge.

Sean Miller (by email).

Gotcha

Steve,

A while ago I was introduced to my new nephew and one of the first questions I asked him was, "What beer do you drink?"

"Lager" came back.

"Oh God, you've got to drink the real stuff," and I took him out and tried a variety of ales. Even Adnams turned up somewhere.

He mentioned to me one time, "The other night I had Otter, you know, that one on your glass in the window."

Steve, I reckon I've captured him.

Yours again mate,
Dennis Richards,
Stoke Gifford.

WARNING
From the Management of the
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BREWDOKU

The winners of the brewdoku competitions in Pints West 74 were Mr & Mrs Foster from Barton near Winscombe and Steve Lewis from Nailsea, who won a copy of the CAMRA Good Bottle Beer Guide and a Butcombe keyring respectively.

The Annexe Inn – revitalised

THE Annexe Inn in Seymour Road, Bishopston has been one of those pubs that has been in and out of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide over the years. It is interesting to note that in the 1982 and 1984 edition, it was described as "a converted skittle alley serving Courage Best and Directors".

Located just three minutes' walk from Gloucestershire Country Cricket ground, it underwent a renaissance in the 90s when a children's area was added, in the form of a conservatory along with a landscaped safe garden. By this time, the beer range had risen to a choice of seven real ales, including a changing guest ale. The renaissance continued with the conversion of the adjoining stables and hayloft of the old County Ground Hotel (now the Sportsman pub) into a restaurant which, although it enjoyed some success, has since closed.

It now seems to be going through something of a secondary renaissance with the development and enhancement of the now partially covered Victorian courtyard, providing well thought-out seating and potted plants. In fact it can almost be described as an outdoor TV lounge as a flat-screened TV has been cleverly mounted into the door recess of the former restaurant. Inside, the spacious interior, with its mock beams and settles, pool table and TV screens, remains much the same, although we are advised by Phil, the manager, that a refurbishment is imminent.

The beer range has been updated: it still serves at least seven real ales, which comprise Hop Back Summer Lightning, Wye Valley Hereford Pale Ale, Sharp's Doom Bar, Courage Best, Bass and Shepherd Neame's Spitfire, as well as a changing guest ale. Since Phil took over at the helm approximately 18 months ago, the real ale sales have doubled. When asked what his secret was,



modest Phil put it down to experience and good cellarman'ship.

The kitchen of the old restaurant is put to good use by providing extremely good value for money meals and bar snacks for adults and children alike, including 12-inch pizzas with a choice of four toppings at a fiver a time. The idea was to offer pizza when the kitchen finished doing meals – they tend to be available after 4pm on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and after 5.30pm Monday to Thursday. On big match days, they're made available all day. And to test the brains, Monday night is quiz night from 9pm.

Alison Bridle



THE STAR INN



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News from Butcombe | A visit to the Island

THE Butcombe brewery has recently added to its estate of pubs by purchasing the **Malt Shovel** in Cannington, Somerset, just north of the Quantock Hills. This is an attractive, multi-roomed 300-year old inn with en-suite guest rooms and a large garden.

Their new Bristol acquisition, the **Colston Yard** (as reported on the front page of the last edition of *Pint West*), is now expected to open in mid-December, or possibly later – slightly later than originally planned due to the almost inevitable hiccups which arise in any major building project. That will be after this edition of *Pints West* comes out, so we'll bring you more on that story next time.

There has been a reduction in the alcoholic strength of Butcombe Gold from 4.7 per cent to 4.4 per cent, giving them a premium bitter to compete directly with beers such as Bass and Pedigree.

Sadly, Blond, their lovely zesty, fruity, pale best bitter, will now only be brewed from April to September, with Brunel IPA taking over in the winter months from October to March. On the plus side though, it means we should see more of the excellent Brunel IPA. The bottled version of the Brunel, by the way, has just won the Tesco bottled beer challenge 2008. Well done Butcombe!

Margaret Evett

Recently I found myself out some "Old Ales Month" propaganda to various pubs, and out of this I decided that **The Orchard** in Hanover Place (off Cumberland Road, 50 yards from the SS Great Britain) was deserving of a visit.

It was a mild Friday teatime and when I arrived the tidy bar was healthily occupied; indeed I don't think there was a free seat, which was a good sign. The ales on offer were Bath Ales Gem, Wychwood Hobgoblin and Three Castles (of Pewsey) Witches Brew, all attractively priced at £2.40 a pint, with 20p off between 5pm and 7pm.

Gem is the house "permanent" with two rotating guests, with an emphasis on local breweries. Previous visitors have included Wickwar, Cottage, Newman's, and Bristol Beer Factory, with the "forthcoming" list looking very attractive, featuring Glastonbury, Hidden, RCH and, best of all in my humble opinion, Box Steam Brewery's contribution to Old Ales Month, Dark & Handsome (4.7%). Three real ciders were also available, two permanents (Thatcher's and Cheddar Valley) and Black Rat as a guest. The pies had all sold out, much to many people's disappointment, but filled rolls were available.

A warm welcome was afforded by the landlord, Hugh Black. Hugh has been in situ since March of this year and has made great efforts in the promotion of real ale and I am pleased to say that, as a result of his and his team's hard work, there was very little to find



fault with during my visit, and that the place is more than worthy of a visit.

The number 500 Buglers bus stops on Cumberland Road, but alas the last service arrives/departs around 6pm. (Could First Bus not divert an occasional in-bound and out-bound Clevedon or Weston service along this road or would that be too sensible?) Therefore it is a short walk from the bus stop at Merchants Road, or it can be accessed from the dockside, after walking past the Industrial Museum and railway line.

In addition to the above, on the same evening a brief visit was made to **The Nova Scotia**, where Severn Vale Dursley Steam (4.2%) was excellent at £2.30 a pint, and to **The Merchants Arms** with the standard, though consistently quaffable, Bath Ales fare and a warm welcome from Luke.

Mark Hanrahan



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News

Biggest change of all, the landlord featured in the *Meet the Landlord* spot of the previous *Pints West*, Craig Roper, decided to leave the **White Hart** in Weston in Gordano at about the time that edition was being printed. I hope this does not prove to be a precedent.

Now, Mark Hazelton of the **Poacher** is a beer man and does not claim to dabble in cider. Still, he has selflessly installed Thatcher's Heritage as a regular real cider. Being less dry than some of the real ciders locally available, this should attract a good following.

Vic "the Legend" Long continues to put out interesting guest beers at the **Ship**. Having an interest in nautical matters, Vic recently featured Fuller's latest brew under the George Gale badge, Seafarers Ale. At 3.8%, this was tastier than its strength indicated and certainly hit the spot.

At the **Royal Inn** at the end of Pier Road sales of real ale continue to increase. When introduced as a guest ale, Sharp's Eden Ale, 4.3%, proved very popular, challenging its Doom Bar stablemate on sales. Butcombe Best still has its loyal local following.

Amongst the good news of our local pubs, a bit of a disappointment to report. There has been a change of ownership at the **White Lion** on the Marina end of the High Street. As a result, there has been a nice refurbishment with a lovely modern array of lager taps but the longstanding draught Bass has gone and is available in bottled form instead.

Meet The Landlord

Name: Jeff Churchill, landlord of the Windmill Inn, Portishead.

Age: Very late 40s.

Where from: Bristol originally. Now living in Wick St Lawrence.

Interests: Home and family.

Previous Pubs: The *Full Quart*, Hewish 1976 to 1984. *Claremont Vaults*, Weston 1984 to 1987. *Little Harp*, Clevedon 1988 to 1995. He then bought, refurbished and later sold three pubs in the next few years before taking on the Windmill. The pubs were the *Seymour Arms*, Blagdon, *Dunston House*, Burnham and the *Albion*, Portishead.

Previous life: Newsagent.

Best thing about being a landlord: Dealing with people.

Worst thing: The most difficult thing is employing 35 people and maintaining the same standards from them all.

Favourite other pub: One that comes to mind is the Highwayman's Haunt, Chudleigh, Devon.

Present plans: Jeff has exiting plans for the expansion of the pub to make the most of the extensive views of the channel. Watch this space!



The Windmill's landlord, Jeff Churchill, in the garden



The Windmill Inn from the front

The Windmill

I thought it time to give a bit more detail on this successful pub. Jeff Churchill owns the place but, undoubtedly, a lot of its success is down to his staff (this is where I get into trouble for leaving someone out).

Heading up the crew is his manager, Pix, and head chef, Tristram. The rumour is that Pix is wearing black until Liverpool finally win the Premiership or Steven Gerrard accepts her indecent proposal and an all red Abbaesque jumpsuit is ready for that day. Now the quick turnover of good quality food is key here. Watch out for the eve-changing daily specials on the board – especially the fresh fish options. Other managers in the bar area are Liam, who chooses the guest real ales and notably organises the Easter Beer Festivals, and Little Liz who probably holds the local record for the speed she moves behind the bar.

The Windmill has existed in its current form since 2000 when it was opened after a major refit after Jeff bought it. Previous to that it had been the "Hole In One" pub and before then it was the original clubhouse to the 18-hole Portishead Golf Club built by Bristol Council – the course was designed by Harry Vardon. The golf club opened in 1907 and was dissolved after the Second World War. Interestingly, the building was used as the local Home Guard headquarters during the war. The oldest section of the building is the round stone tower which was part of the original windmill built in 1832 and which ceased operating in the 1840s. There are stories of smugglers operating out of the bay at the bottom of the hill and possible association with the occupants of the miller's cottage in the 1860s. The cottage still exists but the smuggling is thought to be a thing of the past.

Back to the present, food is served throughout the day, each day of the week, and children are welcomed in the downstairs lounge. There is a large beer garden with lovely views of the channel. Most importantly, there are always at least six real ales: four regulars and two guest ales usually from local independent breweries.

Woopee!

Local pubs, the **Poacher** in the High Street and the **Black Horse** in Clapton in Gordano have joined the **Windmill** in the Good Beer Guide. No one can doubt the years of research Mark at the Poacher has put in to beer and he's got his reward. As to the "Horse", what a great pub. If you've not visited this gem, be it on your head! As I've putting these articles together over the last year or two, it's dawned on me how lucky we are in this town. Only two of our local pubs give cask ales a miss and the others offer two or more real ales, quite a few with changing guest ales. The 2008 Good Beer Guide confirms this.

Neil Ravenscroft

News from Bath Ales

“OCCASIONALLY something happens that makes all the hard work worthwhile and when the drinkers at the Wessex Beer Festival voted Gem as ‘best in class’ it was a well-deserved pat on the back for the whole of the brew team at Bath Ales.” These were the words of jubilant Bath Ales spokesman Paul Kenchington recently. There was an official presentation of the cup to sales director Mark Harding and head brewer Gerry Condell (pictured) and it is now proudly displayed in the brewery shop.

The new website is looking better than ever covering all things Bath Ales, that is the pubs, the brewery, events, beers, merchandise and more. Check it out at www.bathales.co.uk.

All of the pubs that do food have posted their Christmas menus on the website as well as having copies to take home from the behind the bar. So if you were thinking of heading out with friends, colleagues or the family for a bit of festive food or just didn’t fancy cooking on Christmas day, get yourself a menu today.

Work is progressing well at the **Wellington** on the Gloucester Road to build a kitchen that will allow the pub to produce a more diverse menu and provide a faster, more efficient service. There is no food available while the refurbishments are taking place. The news at the moment is that the work should be finished by the first week in December so get yourselves over to Horfield and take a look at what’s cooking.



Moor beer at the Volunteer

THE Famous Royal Navy Volunteer – or the ‘Naval Volunteer’ as most people seem to call it – is now a freehouse.

This magnificent listed building, located in historic King Street in central Bristol, dates back to the 17th century and has no less than four distinct rooms, furnished with dark wood panelling.

It is fantastic to see that the landlord, David Lee, is supporting the cause of real ale from local breweries. At the time of writing five real ales from the likes of



Cotleigh, Bath Ales, Cotswold Spring and Moor were featured.

Beers from Moor brewery are a rare sight in Bristol, and at least two have so far been featured – Merlin’s Magic, a refreshing hoppy, fruity bitter, and Peat Porter, a chocolaty morish porter.

Entertainment is provided by a series of live music nights – traditional Irish music on a Tuesday, traditional jazz on a Wednesday and blues on a Thursday. Lunch is served Tuesday to Friday, catering mainly for local office workers.

This is a friendly pub with great bar staff (I promised that I would mention them). It is great to see this pub thriving and David is doing an admirable job in championing the cause of local real ale. Just remember, however, that if you plan to visit the pub it is closed all day Sunday and Monday.

Dave Jane (photo by Duncan Shine)

bath ales

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The Wellington

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The Bridge Inn

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Flat Bass at the Phoenix

A visit to see the Phoenix amongst the ashes . . . well amidst the dust at least!

Recently Pete Bridle and I met up with some fellow pub campaigners, Mark Steeds and Mike Jackson, in order to publicise the proposed ruination of the Gin Palace in Old Market (*see separate article, Ed.*). After we'd finished with the *Evening Post* photographer, a proposal was made to have a quick pint in the vicinity. Suggestions made were the Stag & Hounds or Punchbowl on Old Market Street, or the Volunteer in New Street, St Judes. The latter was selected but alas, after a circuitous search for the place, it transpired that, while there were two real ciders on (Heritage and Old Rosie), real ale had been discontinued. Back to previous suggestions you would think, but no – instead we decided on the Phoenix, in Wellington Road, St Judes.

This pub is surely unique. It is situated in the middle of the new Cabot Circus development, and only currently accessible by foot through a block of flats from the Old Market

direction, or by road or foot from the Wade Street direction. The pub building is one of about six properties, which are the subject of a preservation order. The interior is tired (to say the least) but I have to say the “flat” Bass (the only real ale sold) that was on stillage with cooling jackets behind the bar was of a rarely experienced high quality. It was at this point we met Merv Reeves, the landlord.

Merv has been drinking here for over 40 years, and has been landlord for the last five. He reported to us that prior to the building work starting the pub was doing ten (yes ten!) firkins of Bass a week, but it has now dropped back to “only” seven! A lot of pubs would be proud to do that. Merv added that despite all the upheaval going on around, the pub will stay more or less as it is. It had a somewhat brutal refurbishment in the 1970s which would not be allowed today. He assured us its 21st century redecoration will be far more sympathetic (the gaffer-taped seats are top of the list



for the bin!). He also noted that the sale of other ales was tried in the past – I recall having Moles here which was also quite good, but the “flat” Bass always stole the show. But options might still be open in the future.

So if you're a Bass sceptic like me, get yourself around there and be quietly impressed. And when Cabot Circus is open, remember you have the most original shopping plaza pub anywhere in England to help you recover from your domestic exertions!

Mark Hanrahan
(photo by Duncan Shine)

The pubs of Sheffield

WHAT follows is an account of a weekend in Sheffield in September 2007. It was something of a trip down memory lane for me, as I used to live there more years ago than I care to remember. Quite a lot has changed in 25 years or so – not least the choice of real ale, which is now among the widest of any city in the UK. The local branch of CAMRA did a survey recently and found over 180 different beers on sale!

All pubs mentioned are within five minutes' walk of the excellent and frequent tram service. A day ticket makes travelling this way cheap as well as convenient.

The Good Beer Guide-listed **Bath Hotel** is a remarkably original multi-roomed 19th-century pub. Listed in CAMRA's national inventory of unspoilt pubs, it is situated just off West Street, a very busy road leading from the city centre towards the university, and on Friday night it was thronging. Five real ales were on sale, including Hanby Mild from Shropshire and a beer from Cottage Brewery in Somerset.

The **Museum** is also listed in the Good Beer Guide, and its recent history is unusual. In 1979 a new generation of young managers took over at the nearby regional offices of Whitbread, who were then one of four major brewers in Sheffield. They decided that the Museum would be an ideal place to experiment by turning it into a permanent “beer exhibition” pub. This meant introducing a number of real ales not previously seen in the area, including Whitbread's own Castle Eden Ale brewed in County Durham, Marston's Pedigree from Burton-on-Trent and Wadworth's 6X from Wiltshire. At the time

Sheffield had no free houses at all, and the choice of real ales was almost entirely limited to the small product ranges of the city's established brewers (Bass, Ward's and Whitbread) and Tetley's from Leeds. The experiment was a tremendous success, and was followed by numerous similar ventures across the country. However, the Museum was doomed because it stood in the way of a major shopping development. Thankfully, the plans were revised to include a replacement pub in nearly the same place, adjacent to the pedestrian access to the shopping centre.

The new pub is now owned by Greene King, but none of its five real ales came from that brewery. Otter Ale and Pheasant Plucker were two of them.

The **Wellington** (until recently called the Cask and Cutler, but now reverted to its previous name) is a small but deservedly popular multi-roomed pub with a beer range of note; brewers represented on our visit included Beowulf, Blackwater, Foxfield, Glentworth, Millstone, Newman's, Pictish, Stonehenge, and Teme Valley, plus Cheddar Valley cider. All the ones we tried were in tiptop condition, and the range included at least one dark beer (a porter).

The **Harlequin** (formerly the Nottingham Hotel) has taken the name of a wonderful little back-street local I used to frequent, since demolished for a road improvement scheme. Eight real ales and a cider on sale here, all again in fine condition. Beowulf was represented again, as it had been at the Wellington, but with a different beer; all the others were from brewers not encountered before. Again the range included at least one dark beer, this time

a stout. All the beers we tried were in top form.

The **Kelham Island** tavern has apparently been transformed in the last year or two into one of the city's most noted “beer exhibition” pubs, and eleven beers were on sale, all from different microbrewers. Glentworth and Pictish were among them, but the remainder were again all from brewers not seen so far in the weekend. There were two dark beers, a mild and a porter. Yet again all the beers we tried were flawless.

A minute's walk or so took us to the **Fat Cat**, a long-standing entry in the Good Beer Guide and home to the Kelham Island brewery. Here there were eight real ales on sale, only two of which were brewed by Kelham Island. Once more, a dark beer was available (a porter). Beer condition, it almost goes without saying, was irreproachable.

After five minutes' more walking we arrived at the **Riverside**, where five beers were on sale, including four from breweries not encountered yet. One was Coalport Dodger mild, which I'd never heard of before, from the All Nations brewpub in Shropshire.

After a short tram ride back to our accommodation at the Hillsborough Hotel there was a chance to have a beer (what another? you might well ask). They were selling seven beers, three of which were brewed on the premises; one was a stout and all those tried were exemplary.

All in all, a very successful whistle stop tour of microbrewery brewed beers. We visited eight pubs, selling between them 58 real ales; only three of the beers were on sale in more than one of the pubs.

Roll on the next visit!

Norman Spalding

Watering Holes in the Desert

news from Weston-super-Mare

CAMRA's team take bronze in Weston-super-Mare LVA challenge

THIS year the Weston-super-Mare Licensed Victuallers Association annual barbecue was hosted by the **Regency** pub in Lower Church Road. Not a terribly exciting event one would have thought, but for a change this year, Mark Short and his team from the Regency and also the Back Bar in the High Street, dreamt up the three-pub sports challenge, open to all comers in aid of the LVA charity.

On Monday 3rd September from 4pm no less than 11 teams of four players per team gathered together to play knockout pool and darts and to achieve the highest score on the new Regency skittle alley. I say new, but it was originally at the Hospital Social Club (that used to serve good real ales) before the local NHS trust closed. The Regency bought it and has reconstructed it in a brand new location. Although two teams play on it on alternate Fridays it is available on other nights (speak to Mark on 01934 635406) for social or team events. At the end of the challenge the CAMRA team consisting of Mike Coleman, Brian Jenkins, Graham Pillar and Robin Wild came third overall and scored the best total on the skittles.

The total raised for the LVA local children's charities was in excess of £750. Various drinks were at a special price including Draught Bass which was in very fine form (as usual). Three of the CAMRA team play skittles for the White Hart Harriers but Brian, who said hadn't played for years, did exceptionally well. As for the barbecue I was unlucky not to have any, but if it was up to the usual standard of food produced by Sue all day, everyday, it would have been excellent. It always amazes me how people can eat a dessert after a huge Sunday Roast at the



Regency.

This pub should be of interest to local CAMRA members in that it was in the Good Beer Guide for many years in the 1990's. It is, so far as I am aware, the only pub within the old borough boundary to have continually served at least four real ales on hand pumps (allowing time to clean the lines between barrels), and in its days in the Guide had six beers on tap. Nowadays it has only the fifth beer on for special occasions like over the Christmas season. Recently there have been alterations to the back of the pub, not only the extension for the skittle alley but a make-over of the back garden with a canopy for smokers. This is one pub that strives to keep traditional standards, and yet keep up to date with changes. As mentioned before the Bass is always of good quality (one of the publicans drinks it) and the other beers are Wells & Young's Courage Best, Flowers IPA (still at £2 a pint) and Butcombe Bitter.

A new beer outlet in Weston-super-Mare which should be of interest to real ale drinkers and cider lovers opened its doors in the second week of November. Aptly named **Liquid Allsorts**, it is situated on Alexandra Parade opposite Tesco's. Run by Mark Reed and John Bowles (the latter who joined CAMRA near the start of the organisation) it has in stock over 40 bottled beers from micro-breweries plus a selection of local ciders, both draught and bottled. The bottled beer costs £1.69 for all strengths, and I had the first bottle of Bath Dark Hare stout from there. It is hoped to sell draught ale to take away in the near future. The shop also sells mead, wine, spirits, cheese and eggs, and a selection of Wilson's snuffs!

John and Mark run the **Red Admiral** next door, where they have two lower-gravity beers, always at £2.10 a pint, and one higher-gravity beer (two change regularly). They sell a limited range of food all day – especially good value is the all-day breakfast. John has been in the trade since running pubs in Abingdon since the late 1970's when Morlands were the brewers, and has not lost his touch in the cellar here.

Robin E Wild



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My glass runneth over

I HAVE written previously in Pints West about the fantastic real ales produced by the **RCH** brewery at West Hewish near Weston-Super-Mare, their general scarcity in the West Country and the fact that they are now regularly available at the **Royal Artillery Arms** at West Huntspill in Somerset.

This excellent freehouse, which is a new entry in the 2008 edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide, has up to eight real ales on tap and Double Header from RCH is a permanent fixture. The remainder consist of beers from far and wide, including other regularly produced RCH beers such as PG Steam, Old Slug Porter and Firebox, and their monthly specials.

Following on from their first beer/cider festival over the August bank holiday weekend in 2006 to officially re-launch the pub as a freehouse under the direction of enterprising landlord Ray Sparks, they held their second beer/cider festival over the same bank holiday weekend in 2007.

As last year, the 2007 festival again featured all of the regular RCH beers (Hewish IPA, PG Steam, Pitchfork, Old Slug Porter, East Street Cream, Double Header and Firebox). However, building on the success of last year, there were also more than 20 beers from other breweries including Burton Bridge,

Cheddar Ales, Cotleigh, Downton, Everards, Exmoor, Fuller's, Hook Norton, Hop Back, Otter, Sarah Hughes, Stonehenge and Taunton.

In addition, the star attraction was one of two casks of RCH's stupendous winter beer Santa Fé (7.3% ABV) from 2006 that the Artillery had been keeping back for a special occasion. This had been maturing at the brewery for several months and brewed out at 8.5% ABV according to Graham Dunbavan, Head Brewer at RCH. Unfortunately the Thornbridge Jaipure IPA did not arrive in time for the festival, but it did appear a couple of weeks later and mighty fine it was too.

The livelier beers were available on handpump at the bar, with the remainder being on gravity dispense from a stillage in the skittle alley (which doubles as a function room); the latter being run by Graham and his wife Pam. The availability of the full range of regular RCH beers plus the Santa Fé meant that there was a rare opportunity to re-create some of the blends that used to be occasionally available elsewhere a few years ago. These include Double Cream (Double Header and East Street Cream); Firefork (Firebox and Pitchfork); B4 (Double Header and Firebox); B5 (Double Header and Santa Fé) and B52 (Firebox and Santa Fé). My personal favourite

was, and still is, the Firefork.

The real cider came from Thatcher's and Westcroft. There was also food available in the form of a barbecue together and live music (*Shoot the Bedroom*, a band from Weston-super-Mare doing covers of modern pop songs using just acoustic guitar and male/female vocals, were particularly good on the Saturday afternoon). The event was blessed with fine weather and deemed to be a roaring success. Look out for the next festival in August 2008.

If you cannot wait until then, the Royal Artillery is well worth a visit at any time of the year as there is always a fine range of real ales available in excellent condition. The pub is open all day, every day, and food is available for most of the day. There are regular themed party evenings, often based on significant historical events in the calendar. Access could not be easier: the regular 21/21A bus service (Burnham/Bridgwater/Taunton) stops right outside; alternatively, it is a brisk 15-minute walk along the A38 from Highbridge and Burnham train station (Bristol/Bridgwater/Taunton line).

Note that the last remaining cask of the Santa Fé from 2006 will be available some time in December. So, hopefully see you there soon?

Dave Graham

Brewdoku

Complete the grid below so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contain each of the following nine Weston-super-Mare and Worle pubs: **Dragon, Raglan, Off the Rails, Regency, White Hart, Waverley, Ebdon Arms, Night Jar, Lamb**.

Send your solutions to the editor. The first correct answer drawn at random after 1st February 2008 wins a copy of the new book *Somerset Pubs* by Andrew Swift and Kirsten Elliott.

Raglan		Off the Rails	Regency			Dragon		Waverley
		Ebdon Arms			White Hart	Lamb		
Lamb			Ebdon Arms	Waverley		Off the Rails		
Waverley			White Hart				Dragon	Night Jar
Ebdon Arms			Waverley		Night Jar			Off the Rails
White Hart	Raglan				Dragon			Regency
		Waverley		White Hart	Ebdon Arms			Dragon
		Raglan	Night Jar			White Hart		
Night Jar		White Hart			Off the Rails	Regency		Ebdon Arms

Somerset Pubs: Postcards from the Past

HAVING produced three books on Bath's pubs, past and present, Kirsten Elliott and I decided it was time to go a little further afield. The result: Somerset Pubs, this year's Christmas offering from Akeman Press. Subtitled 'Postcards from the Past', it is a 96-page survey of around 140 pubs throughout Somerset as they appeared on postcards from a century or so ago.

Looking at old postcards from before the First World War, it is easy for us to think of that period as a golden age. Whether people back then would have agreed is a different matter, however. The trade that had once sustained coaching inns may have long gone, but pubs in town and country still fulfilled the role they had done for centuries. Their customers almost invariably lived within walking – or riding – distance, and they relied on wet sales for the bulk, if not all, of their income.



Eli's, Huish Episcopi

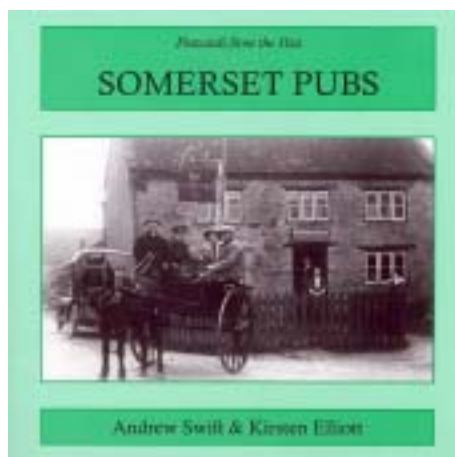
Since then, pubs in both town and country have undergone a revolution – a revolution, which in many cases has ended either in closure or in transformation into something our ancestors would struggle to recognise. While pubs such as Eli's at Huish Episcopi or the Seymour Arms at Witham Friary have seen relatively few changes, many others – from award-winning gastropubs to family-friendly eateries – now rely on food

Researching the book and writing captions for the pictures featured in it was a fascinating – and frustrating – exercise. Fascinating not only because of the sheer range of pubs we visited but also to see what had happened in the century or so since the postcards were published. Frustration kicked in because of the limited number of pubs whose hospitality we were able to take advantage of.

Admittedly, hospitality wasn't always on offer. Around a quarter of the 140 or so pubs



Lamb & Lark, Keynsham



featured were no longer trading. One of the saddest losses in the Bristol area was the Lamb & Lark in Keynsham High Street, opened in 1745 and pulled down without warning one Sunday morning in 1970 to make way for a supermarket.

Even where pubs had, from the outside at least, changed very little, their surroundings had been utterly transformed. The Queen's Head at Nailsea, for example, despite being rebranded Bragg's Wine Bar, still looks much as it did a century ago, but, instead of standing in glorious isolation at the side of the open road as it did in 1905, it is now hemmed in by urban sprawl.



Rose & Crown, Croscombe

The Good Beer Guide-listed Rose & Crown in Croscombe, despite being renamed the Bull Terrier, has, apart from the removal of the render on its walls, hardly changed at all. Its surroundings look much the same as well. The group of men and boys standing round the market cross beside it, however, make the picture in the book, dating from around 1907,



Selwood Inn

just as much a window onto the past.

The Queen's Head and the Rose & Crown, despite being renamed, were relatively easy to track down. Others proved more elusive. The picture on the back cover of the book is of a group of men ranged around a barrel of beer from Frome Breweries outside a pub identified as the Selwood Inn. A wonderful, evocative picture – but where was it? There was no trace of such a pub in early twentieth-century trade directories, indicating that it was a beerhouse. In 1902, there were around 700 beerhouses in Somerset, compared to over 1,000 fully-licensed premises, but, while the latter were identified by name in trade directories, beerhouses were only identified by the name of their licensees. As I didn't know the licensee's name, tracking the Selwood Inn down was somewhat problematic. Eventually, I resorted to the local paper, the Frome



Old Waldegrave Arms, Chewton Mendip

Standard, which published the picture with an appeal for information. After a few weeks, I received an email from a lady whose great-grandfather, John Wilcox, had not only run the Selwood Inn, but appeared in the picture carrying a tray of beer. He was there for over 40 years, from around 1890 to around 1930, and, when he left, the beerhouse, which stood at the Rodden Road crossroads in Frome, opposite the Vine Tree, was pulled down.

There were some unexpected surprises. I had an old postcard of the Waldegrave Arms, one of the best-known pubs on Mendip. It wasn't until we were driving through Chewton Mendip one day, however, that Kirsten suddenly announced that the pub on the card was on the wrong side of the road. Having stopped the car, we soon realised that it wasn't the same pub, and that the pub on the



Ring O'Bells, Hinton Blewitt

A Round with Robin

Doing the rounds

JUST too late for inclusion in the last edition of Pints West was the Weston CAMRA branch trip to Freshford in August. More than a dozen of us went by train to The **Freshford Inn** where I had halves of Box Blind House and the landlord's choice which turned out to be Moor Revival.

From there in the rain we walked by muddy country paths to the **Cross Guns** at Avoncliff where three Box beers were on, but many of us had the Northumbrian brewery beer Bombard. From there we took the Kennet & Avon Canal towpath to Bradford on Avon. The party by this time was rather fragmented, so some went to differing pubs in the town; I can only speak for myself, and a few others.

We stopped off for a Henry's IPA at the Wadworth pub the **Canal Tavern**, before going to the **Three Horseshoes** near the railway station. This appears to be a free

house as I was able to have Hop Back Crop Circle, the other beers being from Courage, Sharp's and Butcombe. Up the hill we came to the **Bunch of Grapes**, a Good Beer Guide-listed pub which had a good ambience; the main seating area is at the front of the pub with the bar at the back hidden behind the huge fireplace. As this was a Young's pub I had a Ramrod with Special bitter.

Moving on with just Mike and Graham, we went to the Good Beer Guide-listed **Rising Sun** where I had a new beer for me, Harviestoun's Ptarmigan. From the garden of this pub you have terrific view over the town towards the white horse at Westbury. With time running out we found the rest of the group eating at the **Castle Inn**; ales on offer here were mostly from the Three Castles brewery at Pewsey, but they also had Hidden Fantasy and Ramsbury Gold. Many of us considered that the Goodness Stout was the best beer of the day.

card had indeed stood on the other side of the road, where today there's just an open space. We subsequently learned that the old Waldegrave Arms had disappeared in 1935, an early victim of road widening, and its licence transferred to a beerhouse called the Rising Sun on the other side of the road.

Kirsten also came up trumps with another mystery picture, showing a group of soldiers outside a pub owned by Coomb's Brewery from Radstock. That narrowed it down, of course, but there were so many soldiers that they'd blocked out most of the pub, including its name and the name of the licensee. The chances of it being some long-lost hostelry deep in the Somerset coalfield seemed fairly high, but after one look at the picture she announced it was the Ring of Bells at Hinton Blewitt. As indeed we subsequently confirmed it was, on one of our more pleasant fact-finding missions. (The Butcombe was in tip-top condition, by the way.)

Somerset Pubs is, first and foremost, a nostalgic journey back to a time few if any of us can remember. Yet it is not just a wistful look at the past. After decades of rationalisation and standardisation, local pubs and breweries are making a comeback, while farmhouse cider is more popular than ever. As much as anything else, Somerset Pubs celebrates a tradition that, despite all the efforts of the multinationals, never quite went away. This virtual pub crawl into the past is not so much an exercise in nostalgia as an inspiration for the future – and for journeys in search of Somerset's pub heritage.

Andrew Swift

'Somerset Pubs: Postcards from the Past' by Andrew Swift & Kirsten Elliott is published by Akeman Press at £8.50. It is available from bookshops or direct from the publishers (post free) at 58 Minster Way, Bath BA2 6RL. For more details see www.akemanpress.com.

Isle of Man

Earlier that month I had been to the Isle of Man again, and I had hoped to write much about this but I would have been going over much the same ground as in the earlier article. However just to update that, the best country pub I had been to, the Farmers Tavern at St John's is now boarded up, but the choice of ales at most other pubs has increased. The **Sidings** at Castletown now has 15 beer engines and 11 were on tap as I was there, the best beers being Bushy's mild, Phoenix Monkeytown mild, and Crouch Vale Amarillo.

The **Creek Inn** at Peel has now joined the **White House** in the Good Beer Guide, and the **Highwayman**, though not yet in the same league, continues to sell good beer and I had the Okell's 1907 IPA (bottled but a proper IPA at 6.1%) brewed to commemorate 100 years of the TT races.

Bosun's Bitter continues to be brewed and drunk at the **Shore Inn** at Old Laxey which is well worth a visit.

Festivals

There have been many beer festivals this quarter but I'd only like to touch on a few I went to. The **Royal Artillery** at Highbridge had over 20 beers on gravity and seven on the bar. Prices varied considerably but the quality did not: everything was in excellent condition especially the RCH Santa Fé which had been laid down since brewed in 2006. Though the majority of the beers were from RCH, Bunces (Stonehenge), Cotleigh, Otter and Exmoor, they had one or two rarely seen ales including Burton Bridge Thomas Sykes Old Ale (10%) and Downton All Rounder.

The **Crown Inn** at Axbridge had one which coincided with the Somerset showcase in the town square. Twelve ales on gravity complemented two on the bar, and many folk thought the Woodforde's Wherry was in superb condition. I also liked the Lodden

Ferryman's Gold but there was a feeling of disappointment that no dark beers were on sale.

With Laurie Jackson I went by train to Southampton for the **Waterloo Arms** beer festival. This is a Hop Back-owned pub, and they continued to have four of their own beers on sale in the pub at remarkably reasonable prices whilst the 28 festival beers were in a marquee in the garden, along with four ciders. Elland IPA (6.5%) and the Entire Stout took the plaudits for both of us.

Beforehand we visited the ancient and attractive **Red Lion** in the High Street, near the old Bargate, which was a pub by 1415, although the cellar dates to Norman times. The Romsey IPA was a bit newer but in better condition.

The Somerset beer festival at Minehead railway station is always well attended from the Weston sub-branch and this year I opted to work the bar for a while to let the regular bar staff have time for breaks. Although 95 beers and 10 ciders on gravity were available, the bar was easy to manage. With such a choice it was almost impossible to have a favourite, but I must make mention of the Moor special Freddy in Port (7.9%), basically Old Freddy Walker with the addition of Port. Other new ales I adored were the Arbor Snuffly Jack's Old Ale (5.9%), Bowland Hen Harrier (4%) and Triple fff Summer is Iumin from Hampshire weighing in at 6%.

More recently I went to the **Hare on the Hill** in Kingsdown for their Halloween festival, where from nine guests plus Bath Ales I enjoyed the Hambleton's Nightmare Extra Stout Porter the most.

Belgium

Six of us from the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch went to Belgium for a long weekend, concentrating on Flanders this time. Visiting Ghent, Ostend and staying in Bruges, we drank at many bars in each city, which I won't bore you with details. I will say though, that from the many beers we had my favourite three were (if you like your beers strong, dark and complex, take note) Caracole Nostrodomus (9%), 't Smisje Dubbel which was also 9%, and Troubadour Obscura (8.2%). In De Garre bar in Bruges I would suggest trying their own draught beer (about 10%) which is rather unusual.

Elsewhere

Having just returned from Sussex and Hampshire, drinking fine ales from Harvey's and Ringwood breweries, I must make mention of Middle Farm where you can taste over 70 ciders and perries before buying, and which also sells over 150 bottled beers, some quite rare. I bought some Fallen Angel beers, as well as Harvey's Lewes Castle and Christmas Ale (8.1%), and you can find them at www.middlefarm.com as well as in East Sussex.

I also had for the first time Chameleon beer (4.1%) from Kelham Island at the **Swan Inn** at Barton Stacey on Guy Fawkes Day.

Robin E wild

Bath & Borders Branch

Pub and brewery news

Cross Guns, Avoncliff

The Cross Guns has been refused planning permission to build an extension to house new toilets and disabled access to the pub, by district council officers under delegated powers. It was visited on 13 September by the branch. The entire range of five beers was sampled and found to be excellent. The range comprised Box Steam's Blind House, Reverend Awdry and Tunnel Vision, alongside Theakston's Old Peculier and a very highly rated Moor's Old Freddy Walker.

Filos, 1 Beaufort West, London Road, Bath

This popular former sports bar is under new management. Originally from Adelaide, Melina Salzone and her partner Brett Aveyard took over Filos in September. The new landlords have decided to drop the sports aspect of the business and place more emphasis on live music and the arts. Melina said, "We've cleaned the place up a lot. We'll be putting on food as well and there is a juke box on its way. Filos is going to be somewhere to come and relax, have a drink and listen to some music." The new landlords are also intending to open the pub from noon. (It had been 4pm under the previous owners.) They will also be encouraging local students to submit artwork to be placed on the walls and sold within the premises.

Forester & Flower, 172 Bradford Road, Combe Down, Bath

This pub, in its new guise and under its new name, was first visited by the branch in a very well attended social on 5 September. The beer range consisted of Butcombe Bitter, Bath Ales Gem and Newman's Mammoth. The new interior preserves the former Forester's Arms layout. The design and feel in both bars, however, have been utterly transformed. It is now very much a food-orientated pub and seems already to have attracted a popular following. One survivor of the original décor is mounted fish on the back wall of the left-hand bar.



You can always enjoy our three permanent ales:
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Green Park Tavern, Lower Bristol Road, Bath

This has been taken over by Myles Gallagher, who also has Flan O'Brien's, and there are now reported to be three cask beers available.

Former King Edward's School, Broad Street, Bath

A new policy to keep a lid on drink-related problems in the centre of Bath is on the verge of its first test. An application has been lodged that could pave the way for the long-disused former King Edward's School to be given a new lease of life as an up-market hotel. The Grade II listed building has stood empty since July 1990 and fallen into a state of disrepair. The building is owned by Samuel Smith Old Brewery, which floated plans for a twelve-room hotel there two years ago. The application was later withdrawn. Now an application for a premises licence for a hotel, complete with restaurant, lounge and a bar, has been lodged with Bath & North East Somerset Council. The application comes as firms wanting to open new pubs and clubs in the centre of Bath now have to prove they will not fuel anti-social behaviour. The new policy was agreed by the council after three years of discussion over the best way to control drink-related problems. The cumulative impact policy, also known as a saturation policy, has been fought for by pressure groups, residents and the police since 2004 when the council took over responsibility for alcohol licensing from the courts. The former school is on English Heritage's list of at-risk buildings.

King William, London Road, Bath

Several changes of management seem to have taken place here recently. There are, however, still four interesting cask beers available.

Old Green Tree, 12 Green Street, Bath

This favourite pub in Bath's city centre has been named *Town Pub of the Year* in the new *Good Pub Guide* published in mid-October. The annual guide says that this traditional hostelry is a "super little pub with a fine choice of real ales, enjoyable traditional food, lots of cheerful customers and friendly service ..." and adds "... much loved by our readers, this appealing pub is always busy, and sometimes packed ... a fine choice of six real ales on handpump, also ten wines by the glass from a nice little list with helpful notes, 35 malt whiskies, winter hot toddies and a proper Pimm's ... laid-back and cosy rather than particularly smart, though there has been some redecoration this year." Tim Bethune, who is joint licensee of the pub with owner Nick Luke, said the secret of its success was simple. "We keep it very traditional. It's all local ales and we buy all our own food and vegetables locally." Mr Bethune, who has run the pub for six years, said that the Old Green Tree appealed to all ages. The pub has won local CAMRA awards in the past but this is its first national accolade.

Red Lion, 468 Wellsway, Odd Down, Bath

Television legend Noel Edmonds hosted a pub quiz in Bath on Tuesday 2 October. The *Deal or No Deal* star was greeted by screaming fans as he appeared behind the bar at the Red Lion on Odd Down shortly before 9pm. Landlord Paul Wilkey introduced his special guest who took the microphone and walked out into the crowd to lead the first round of the quiz. More than one hundred fans surrounded Edmonds who had spent the day filming three episodes of his Bafta-nominated show *Deal or No Deal* in Bristol. The quiz was organised as a warm up for *Are you smarter than a ten-year-old?*, a show testing the nation's knowledge against that of ten-year-old children.

Barge Inn, 17 Frome Road, Bradford-on-Avon

Over 150 people came through the doors of the Barge over the weekend of Friday 28 September for its third real ale festival. There were eighteen different beers available and the all-inclusive ticket included a half-pint of each and a bowl of chilli. Live music was performed on all three evenings. An article on the event, along with photograph of landlords Shaun Dobson and Kirsty Brown, appeared in a recent *Wiltshire Times*. Another beer festival is planned for March next year. By coincidence the branch visited the Barge for a social on Thursday 4 October. The pub has a pleasant homely atmosphere and an

excellent canal-side beer garden. Four beers were available during our visit and, of these, the Hidden Quest and Wickwar Rite Flanker were reckoned to be of particularly good quality.

Plough, Bradford Leigh

This homely out-of-town roadside hostelry is under new management. The new landlords are Les & Carol Clayton, who formerly had the White Lion in the centre of Bristol, where they had increased the beer range from three to seven and held three beer festivals a year. The range almost always included one of Wickwar's excellent dark beers (Station Porter and Mr Perrett's Stout). Very often they would have guests from the likes of Tring brewery. The White Lion has been entered for the 2008 Good Beer Guide, which ironically was launched two weeks after Les & Carol had left for the Plough.

Olive Tree, Badcox, Frome

There has been a change of management at this pub. After four and a half years the previous landlords pulled their last pint and are heading for a new life in Greece. Adrian Moore and Nikos Andriakopoulos, owners of the Olive Tree, handed over the bar on Friday, 31 August and are now taking a holiday before deciding on their future plans. Mr Moore and Mr Andriakopoulos acquired the pub, previously known as the Ship, in 2003 and, with help from Scottish & Newcastle, had the place extensively refurbished and renamed the Olive Tree. The pair's decision to leave has saddened customers but Mr Andriakopoulos is confident the new owners will be just as popular. He said, "I miss my home country of Greece and so we are hoping to start a new life there. We have had so much fun here and the biggest challenge was getting the bar and clientele we wanted. The business has gone from strength to strength and I am very proud of the gardens."

Nettlebridge Inn, on A367 at Nettlebridge

This scenically located roadside pub, situated between Stratton-on-the-Fosse and Oakhill, has been re-named the George and is under new management.

Globe Inn, Newton Saint Loe, near Bath

There is a rumour that this famous landmark of a pub is about to close. No other information at present.

Oakhill Inn, Oakhill, near Shepton Mallet

This was recently taken over by the same people who own the leases on, and who have refurbished and improved, the King William on London Road and Garrick's Head in Bath.

Mill, Rode

This was visited recently by a branch member. Beers available were Butcombe Bitter, Marston's Pedigree and Blindman's Golden Spring.

Stumbles Inn, Town Street, Shepton Mallet

This was first visited by the branch on Wednesday, 19 September, and was found to be an excellent pub with two cask beers available, Matthew's Bob Wall and Newman's Mendip Mammoth, both in excellent condition. A genuine discovery for the branch.

Packhorse, Southstoke

There is a rumour, difficult in this case to believe, that this fine pub is about to close. No other information at present but I did visit the pub on behalf of the branch on the evening of Thursday, 25 October and trade seemed very healthy indeed.

Paxcroft Mead, Hilperton, near Trowbridge

It is believed likely that Marston Inns will be given the go-ahead to build a new pub on this large area of new housing on the eastern edge of Trowbridge.

Waterside Development, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge

Interest in this ambitious revamp of the area alongside the river Biss, currently occupied by the public library, council offices and former county record office, includes the possibility of a new Brewers Fayre pub among the retail outlets. The £90m scheme will include an eight-screen cinema, bowling complex, hotel, homes, offices, cafés and

restaurants. Premier Travel Inns, Pizza Express, Frankie & Benny's and an up-market Chinese restaurant have already been confirmed as some of the companies that will occupy the new development.

Weymouth Arms, 12 Emwell Street, Warminster

This seventeenth-century pub, which closed suddenly on Friday, 7 September, has re-opened under new landlords. They are Malcolm Brittain and Natasha Bidwell who formerly ran the Conservative Club in Boreham Road. They and their Newfoundland dog Barney have already moved in and the pub's doors re-opened on Thursday, 20 September. The new landlords, along with leaseholders Dave McCarthy and Simon Harvey, are to undertake a major refurbishment of the premises with the aim of regaining some of the Weymouth's old charm. Plans include new bed & breakfast suites, a conference room, the restoration of fireplaces and the creation of a quiet lounge area. Mr McCarthy said that they wanted to "put this place back to where it used to be when it was a thriving pub. We drank here thirty years ago and know its potential."

Westbury Hotel, re-named Lopes Arms, Market Place, Westbury

The bar area has been revamped as part of landlord's ongoing project to restore this early nineteenth-century coaching inn to its former glory. Landlord Paul Morris, a former director at Usher's brewery, took over the pub in March and has been busy refurbishing the premises since then. The pub has reverted to its former name of the Lopes Arms.

Poplars, Wingfield

This Wadworth-owned pub has won the brewery's 2007 Floral Display and Garden Competition. Wadworth Brewery chief executive, Charles Bartholomew, and former gardener to the Queen, Jim Buttress, presented the award to the winning landlords on Monday 17 September. Bernard and Carol Camish have been landlords of the seventeenth-century inn for the past six years. Their prizes included a £150 garden centre voucher, two barrels of 6X beer and some champagne.

Forthcoming events

- **Tuesday 27 November, starting at 8:30** – Monthly branch meeting at the *Cross Keys*, Corsley, near Frome.
- **Wednesday 5 December, starting at 8:30** – Branch social at the *Tollgate Inn*, Holt, near Bradford-on-Avon: a superb pub selling up to four well-kept ales.
- **Monday 10 to Sunday 16 December** – Organic Beer Week at the *Royal Oak*, Lower Bristol Road, Twerton, Bath. Around forty to sixty beers available over the course of the week with around twenty available at any one time. Live music every night.
- **Tuesday 11 December, starting at 8:30** – A mini-crawl in Warminster starting at the *Weymouth Arms* in Emwell Street and going on to the *Organ Inn* just round the corner on the High Street.
- **Thursday 20 December, starting at 8:30** – A social at the *Raven* in Bath: our Pub of the Year last year and as good as ever.
- **Friday 18 to Sunday 20 January** – *Bradford-on-Avon RFC* Winter Beer Weekend at the Club House in Winsley. As usual this is a free-entry event with twelve to fifteen seasonal beers, several ciders and perries, food available throughout, and no music (and no kids). Please note that, with numbers much lower than at the spring festival, there is no shuttle minibus for this event. Nominally the opening times are:

Friday	6:30pm – 11pm
Saturday	1pm – 11pm
Sunday	1pm – 4 pm

 There are two home games on Saturday afternoon so it may be a little busier with club members between around 4pm and 7pm.
- **Saturday 26 January, details to be confirmed** – We will be hosting a joint *pub crawl of Bath* to be attended by members from across all of the branches in the northern part of the southwest region. Details to be confirmed.
- **Thursday 21 to Sunday 24 February** – Winter Beer Festival at the *Royal Oak*, Lower Bristol Road, Twerton, Bath. Around fifty to sixty beers available over the course of the event with around twenty available at any one time. Live music probably every night.

A Few Swift Rambles

The **White Horse in Twerton** goes from strength to strength. Less than 18 months after reopening under new management it's established itself as a community pub par excellence. On 9th September, for example, five of the pub's regulars jumped 12,000 feet (with parachutes) for Bath-based charity, Ted's Big Day Out. The range and quality of the beer on offer is pretty good as well, and from 30th November to 2nd December they're holding a Winter Beer Festival, with bands playing every evening. (www.thewhitehorsebath.com)

On the same weekend, 1st to 2nd December, Charlie and Amanda Digney are holding a beer festival at the **Oakhill Inn**, which they only took over this October. Ten real ales and four ciders will be on offer, plus music on Saturday night and transport to and from Bath. Charlie and Amanda already run the Good Beer Guide-listed Garrick's Head and King William in Bath, so this should be one worth checking out. (www.theoakhillinn.com)

The Winter Organic Beer Festival at the **Royal Oak on the Lower Bristol Road** in Bath is being held from 10th to 16th December. Bands are scheduled to perform every evening throughout the festival.

Looking a little further ahead, the Royal Oak's Winter Beer Festival is taking place between 21st and 24th February. If you went to last year's festival you won't need any persuading to make a return visit to sample the superb range of winter beers on offer, which will undoubtedly include several new to Bath. (www.theroyaloak-bath.co.uk)



The George at Croscombe

The **George at Croscombe**, winner of the Good Pub Guide's award for New Pub of the Year, is holding a beer festival from 16th to 18th November. (www.thegeorgeinn.co.uk) A trip to the festival could be combined with a visit to the GBG-listed **Bull Terrier**, just up the road (www.bullterrierpub.co.uk) and the **Stumbles Inn** in nearby Shepton Mallet (www.stumbles-inn.co.uk). If you've got an understanding driver, that is.

It's that time of year again: the second



Mr Perrett's Traditional Stout being delivered to the Old Green Tree

Thursday in December is traditionally the time for a couple of barrels of year-old Mr Perrett's, which have been quietly maturing in the cellar of Bath's **Old Green Tree** since last Christmas, to be tapped. If you're a fan of this superb traditional stout from Wickwar, you won't want to miss the chance to savour the vintage version. If you've yet to sample it, you'd be well advised to come along and see what all the fuss is about. But be warned: Mr Perrett's has an ABV of 5.9% – or at least it did have when it was laid down twelve months ago. The festive season starts here – oh, and I'm sure Tim, the landlord, won't mind if you drink to the Green Tree's Good Pub Guide accolade of Town Pub of the Year (see centre pages).



The bar at the Pig & Fiddle

Despite not featuring in the 2008 Good Beer Guide, the **Pig & Fiddle** is still getting in some unusual beers and keeping them in excellent condition. A recent visit found Hidden Potential and Marston's Wicked Witch (definitely worth checking out) alongside Butcombe bitte, Abbey Ales Bellringer and Bath Ales Wild Hare. Bulmer's Traditional Cider is also on tap, and the Pig has one of the best real pub fires in Bath.

The **Ale House** at the end of York Street, facing the fountain on Bog Island, is also winning increasingly favourable comments for the quality of its beer and its relaxed ambience. On a recent visit, Butcombe Bitter, Butcombe



The Ale House

Gold and Bath Ales Gem were on offer.

Tim Perry from the **Raven** in Queen Street, Bath, is, as anyone who's chatted to him for more than a few minutes will know, a mad-keen cyclist. He's also one of the driving forces behind a plan to open a shared-use cycle and footpath south of Bath along the old Somerset & Dorset railway line. If you know anything about Bath, you'll know it's surrounded by hills. The Somerset & Dorset solved the problem by driving tunnels deep below Combe Down, and it's those tunnels – one of them over a mile long – that the cycle track will go through. Which is going to cost quite a lot of money.

From a real ale drinker's point of view, the advantages of such a route are obvious. Put simply, it would link the Royal Oak in Twerton with the Hope & Anchor at Midford and the Fox & Badger at Wellow.

The project is one of 79 Sustrans projects across the UK which are currently under consideration. To find out more and to vote for the 'Two Tunnels' project visit www.sustransconnect2.org.uk. Alternatively drop into the Raven, sample one of their excellent beers, and ask Tim to fill you in on the details himself. (www.theravenofbath.co.uk)

The **Lamb** in Frome, once the tap for the Lamb Brewery but lately fallen on hard times, is still on track to be reopened as **Blindman's Brewery's** first pub. It was initially planned to have it open by this September, but unforeseen problems with the building have set that back a bit. A few weeks ago, new windows were installed on the ground floor and the place now looks as though it's set to reopen pretty soon. For more details see www.blindmansbrewery.co.uk.

Andrew Swift

Not so much the Great Bath Pub Crawl – more the Widcombe Wobble

If you fancy a Bath pub crawl with a difference, instead of heading into town next time you come to Bath, turn right out of the railway station, go through the arches under the line, cross the river, cross the road and turn left. If you haven't been this way before, you're in for a treat; if you have, most of the pubs you'll be visiting have seen significant changes over the past year or so – and they all serve a decent pint.

First off is the **Ram**, a Good Beer Guide favourite when Simon Wynne was landlord but now under new ownership. The layout's been altered slightly, the entrance moved, the bar cut back, and stairs to a new upstairs bar installed, but it's still very much the same old Ram, a friendly, traditional boozer with Bass, Bellringer, Otter and Doom Bar on offer.



The Ring of Bells in the early twentieth century, from Bath Pubs by Andrew Swift & Kirsten Elliott

Across the road is the **Ring o'Bells**, once Bath's top folk venue, but now a popular gastropub. Food is very much the priority here, with all the tables laid up for diners, but there are two handpumps serving beer from Milk Street Brewery in Frome – Funky Monkey and Nicks – both in good condition. The freehold of the Ring o'Bells, plus two flats upstairs, is currently up for sale. Offers in the region of £1,000,000 are invited. Widcombe is definitely a place that's coming up in the world. (www.ringobellsbath.com)

A little further along is the **White Hart**, another dining pub, but with a bar area for

drinkers and a terrific walled garden at the back. On a recent visit, Wye Valley Butty Bach and Butcombe Brunel IPA, both in excellent condition, were on offer.

(www.whitehartbath.co.uk)

Cross the road at the pelican crossing and head out of Widcombe past the Baptist Chapel. On the corner just before the Canal Bridge, the inscription over the door of the Baptist schoolroom – 'instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree' – is a reference to two pubs – the Canal Tavern and the Prior Park Tavern – that once stood on this spot, but which were bought up and pulled down by the Baptists in 1908.

Suitably admonished, carry on over the canal, cross the road at another pelican crossing and carry on away from Widcombe. A little way along on the left a more cheering message is chiselled into the stonework – 'The Golden Fleece: Lamb Ales and Stout'. Cheering, perhaps, but the Fleece has been shut for over seven years now and there's little hope of it reopening.

Just beyond it, however, is the **Royal Oak** – not to be confused with the one on the Lower Bristol Road – which was taken over by Simon Wynne, formerly of the Ram, earlier this year. Not surprisingly, the Royal Oak, which has seen several changes of management in recent years, looks better than ever – clean, bright, with an excellent new terraced area at the back. The Butcombe Gold I sampled on a recent visit was one of the best I've tasted.

Carry on along Pulteney Road, under the railway bridge, crossing at the lights, following the main road across the next roundabout, and crossing the top of Great Pulteney Street before turning left down Sutton Street to find one of Bath's premier rugby pubs, the **Pulteney Arms**, now back in the Good Beer Guide after several years absence, thanks to the efforts of the new landlord, Ash McMorris. Butcombe, Gem, Young's, London Pride and 6X are among the regular offerings here. (www.pulteneyarms.co.uk)

On leaving the Pulteney Arms, turn left out of the front door and then right into Daniel Mews, at the end of which you'll come across the **Barley**, with a new landlord, all the way from a Good Beer Guide-listed pub in Surrey. On a recent visit, Butcombe Bitter, Butcombe Gold and Spitfire, all in good condition, were on offer. The Barley's first beer festival was held on the last weekend in October, with twelve beers on offer. A good time was had by all and more festivals are planned for next year.

Turn left out of the Barley and head along Bathwick Street to the **Curfew**, another pub that's taken great strides forward in the last year. A Wadworth's house, it was taken over by Heidi Hunt and Anna Livesey last December, since when it's been gradually refurbished. They're celebrating their first twelve months



The Curfew

at the pub on 8th December, a celebration Bath's real-ale drinkers will assuredly want to join them in.

From here, you have a choice. If you've not been to the **King William** on the London Road, a tiny gastropub but with three or four real ales on offer (a recent visit found Palmer's Dorset Gold, Cottage Wessex Red, Newman's Red Stag, all in excellent condition), it's worth a visit. (www.kingwilliampub.com) Otherwise, head back up the hill past the late-lamented Hat & Feather to the **Star**, a fitting climax to any pub crawl. (www.star-inn-bath.co.uk)

Note: unlike pubs in the city centre, many of the pubs mentioned in this pub crawl close in the afternoons, especially on weekdays, so it's worth checking with them or scheduling your visit accordingly.

Andrew Swift



The Star: a fitting climax to any pub crawl

Island in the sea

By your Nailsea correspondent
Laurie Gibney

Courage Best is back

In the last *Pints West* I reported that “the **Sawyers Arms** had ceased stocking Courage Best since Wells & Young’s took over brewing Courage cask brands from Scottish & Newcastle.” Ron had been an “ambassador” for Courage Best for more than thirty years, and is much respected throughout the South West having been deeply involved in the Licensed Victuallers Association.

But Courage Best, now from Bedford, is back at the Sawyer Arms! In the interim the Sawyers stocked two cask ales including Bath Ales Gem from Warmley, Moles Best Bitter 4% from Melksham, and also Eden Pure Ale and Doom Bar from Sharp’s of Rock, Cornwall, alongside the regular Butcombe Bitter from Wrington.

When the locals at the Sawyers Arms in the High Street, Nailsea, declared Courage Best was not up to standard, landlord and landlady Ron and Joyce Peters were left with five eighteen-gallon casks of Courage Best in their cellar. Scottish & Newcastle eventually took them away but obtaining a refund from them was another story, involving protracted negotiations! Additionally, at that time Ron spent some time in hospital having an operation.

Jim Robinson, the head brewer of Wells & Young’s, contacted Ron and explained that the company was going through a four-phase matching process that, at the time Ron returned the casks, was not complete. The phases included adding less yeast, more finings, improved malt, and then different finings. When this matching process was complete Ron agreed to give the “matched” brew a go, and it went down well with his customers. Ron and Joyce are now able to offer the improved Courage Best and have four or five eighteen-gallon casks delivered every week!

Ron and Joyce have kept the Sawyers going for many years through thick and thin, offering drinks and food at very reasonable prices. It is a small two-bar local typical of the archetypal English pub. The smoking ban has hit such pubs hardest: they are not able to make up for lost wet-sales revenue with food sales. Ron has provided a small smoking shelter in the garden with a heater which he trusts his regulars to turn on and off as required. Enterprise Inns, which owns seven thousand pubs including the Sawyers Arms, has spent very little on the Sawyers for many years despite Ron and Joyce’s five-year rolling tenancy agreement requiring Enterprise Inns to look after the fabric of the building. I hate to think what would happen to the Sawyers Arms when Ron and Joyce eventually decide to retire. Long may you remain in charge of the Sawyers!

Another Enterprise Inn in Nailsea’s Silver Street is the **White Lion**, where local girl Louise Thomas is the licensee landlady. It is another small two-bar local, but with a bigger garden. Louise has spent over five thousand pounds on an all-weather smoking shelter with seating, heating and lighting. Again, Louise is not able to make up for lost wet-sales revenue with food sales. I was please to find that the guest beer had recently changed to Newman’s Wolver’s Ale (4.1% ABV), supporting Courage Best and Butcombe Bitter. Also, a cask of Thatcher’s Cheddar Valley cider is now on the bar back counter!

CAMRA is determined to protect such pubs from closure or a worse fate. **Use them or lose them** – it’s up to you!

Other Nailsea pub news

The **Star** at Tickenham has now settled down to a regular pattern of times when food is available, which is Monday to Friday, 12 noon until 2:30pm and 5:30pm until 9pm; Saturday, 12 noon until 9pm; and Sunday 12 noon until 8pm. They may be contacted by phone on 01275 8588836 or by email to kiantibristol@aol.com. Three or four well-known brands of cask ale are regularly on the bar.

The **Ring of Bells** at St Mary’s Grove, Nailsea, has a new chef whose imminent appointment was mentioned in the last *Pints West*. The main menu is cooked entirely from fresh produce sourced mainly from local suppliers, and special dietary requirements will be catered for upon request. Food is

served lunchtimes from 12 noon until 2pm Monday to Saturday, and evenings from 6pm until 9pm Tuesday to Saturday. Sunday lunches are from 12 noon until 4pm. Phone 01275 790009 for reservations.

The Ring of Bells has an extensive range of pub games and teams, an outdoor adventure playground for all ages, an extensive covered smoking heated canopy, and a large function room. The four cask ales available are Bass on gravity from the cellar, Courage Best and two guests from a range of locals’ favourites.

Regrettably, Richard Beaton lost his business partner recently and has had to put the lease of **Braggs Wine Bar and Restaurant** in the High Street, Nailsea, up for sale, with or without Richard as a partner. Restaurant opening times have reduced to lunchtimes, with evenings by prior arrangement only (phone 01275 819007). But, a DJ on Friday evenings, karaoke on Saturday evenings, and open mic nights on Sunday evenings are proving popular. Richard would like to hear from anyone who would like to organise jazz evenings at Braggs. Addlestons cider is now available on the bar and the real ale is Greene King Abbot Ale.

Away from Nailsea

Local girl Lesley Butler is the licensee of the **Old Inn** in Walton Road, Clevedon, another Enterprise Inn. She told *Pints West* that the Old Inn has weathered the smoking ban reasonably well. A large and inviting canopied and heated outdoor smoking area has been created, and the smoke-free bar has attracted an increase in food sales and drinks.

Lesley has been at the Old Inn for only four years and has succeeded in getting into the prestigious CAMRA Good Beer Guide for 2007 and 2008. Regular cask ales are Courage Best and Otter Head (5.8%), plus two guests. Lesley tells me her customers enjoy the stronger beers.

Real ales are sourced through Enterprise with many guest ales being supplied directly from small local micro-breweries through the Society of Independent Brewers scheme. Thatcher’s Traditional Cider and Stowford Press Cider are available. I enjoyed Gales HSB (now brewed by Fuller’s) on a recent visit.

The Old Inn Rebels and the “Cons” darts teams are based at the Old Inn, as are the two Kenn Valley football teams.

Breakfast from £3 is available from 7am until 10:30am, which is enjoyed by another resident team before they go fishing, the Clevedon & District Freshwater Angling Club. Coffee is available all day, so even if you are driving by you can always stop, maybe before or after a drive on the nearby M5 motorway. Additionally, the Old Inn has six twin and family letting rooms available from £45 to £75 per night per room for B&B (see www.theoldinn-clevedon.co.uk or telephone 01275 340440 to book).

And finally

When in Bristol do visit **The Famous Royal Navy Volunteer** where David Lee and Sue Leigh-Lovell took over the lease in July and are very keen to promote real ale. The property is not owned by a pub company but by Bristol City Council. It comprises two long bars that are kept very clean and tidy with a good mix of lounge and dining furniture. One bar is kept closed on quiet nights but is available to be booked for meetings or private parties, as is the function room upstairs.

Sue, ably assisted by Lauren, serves a selection of food at lunchtime and for functions. £5.95 will buy you haddock, chips and peas or lamb and mint burger with chunky chips; £4.60 will buy brie and cranberry on multigrain bap; jacket potatoes or ciabatta sandwiches with various fillings including steak, onions and relish, tuna mayo, chicken Caesar, BLT and prawn Marie Rose; or for only £1.95 enjoy beans on toast.

You could wash this all down with one of five real ales including regulars Bath Ales Gem, Cotleigh Golden Sea Hawk and Cotswold Spring’s Codrington Codger, and guests which on my recent visit were Wychwood Hobgoblin and Arbor Ales Old Knobbly (a delightful ale brewed locally in Stapleton). I had just missed Cotleigh Old Buzzard, which flew out of the cask!

Bath Beer Festival

At first, the possibility seemed so remote it wasn't worth bothering about. The experts said that England stood no chance of reaching the quarter-finals. The logistics of a clash between the second night of the Bath Beer Festival and England defending their title in the Rugby World Cup final didn't need to be worked out.

As so often happens, the experts got it wrong, and, although England ultimately went down before the onslaught of the South Africans, they went down fighting, as the assembled throng who witnessed their defeat on the twelve-by-twenty-foot screen at the Bath Beer Festival can testify.

Running up against a major sporting fixture is one of the things most event organisers will do anything to avoid. As it turned out, however, the clash was a fortuitous one. Not only was the Pavilion probably the best place in Bath to watch the game; memories of the 2007 Bath Beer Festival, with its unique combination of real ale and rugby, will linger on long after memories of other festivals are a hazy blur. Standing in a large hall with hundreds of people drinking real ale and working your way through some of the varied delights on offer while watching the England team give their all is not the sort of thing you forget in a hurry. It may have been a game of two halves up on the big screen; it was a game of many more halves than that down on the floor of the Pavilion.

The Bath Beer Festival celebrated its thirtieth birthday this year – making it a good deal older than many of the punters who turned up to support it. It would be nice, for the record, to be able to report that the average age of those who turned up was 37.2, and to go on to draw all sorts of far-reaching conclusions about how real ale isn't a generational

thing, and so on – but, of course, I can't. No record was kept of the ages of the people who turned up, and, if they'd been asked, I'm sure a lot of them would have lied – if they could have remembered in the first place.

Some figures I can give you, however. 2,100 people attended the festival – 820 on Friday night, 589 on Saturday lunchtime and 691 on Saturday night. Alcohol consumed was as follows: 6,356 pints of British cask beer, 264 pints of German cask beer and 694 pints of cider. As far British cask beer goes, that's an extremely abstemious three pints per customer.

A total of 85 British cask beers were on offer. Local breweries were, once again, well to the fore. Bath's only brewery, Abbey Ales, chose the occasion to launch Maximus, a strong hoppy bitter with an ABV of 5%, to mark ten years of brewing in Bath. Campa-nologists will doubtless pick up the bellringer theme – Maximus is the technical term for a peal of twelve bells, so called because it's generally regarded as the maximum number that can be rung. I am reliably informed that the number of combinations that can be rung on twelve bells is 479,001,600, which would take about 37 years to ring. Another interesting fact, seeing that I've already wandered way off the topic, is that there are only three pubs called the Twelve Bells in the country and they can all be found within 50 miles of Bath – at Witcombe near Gloucester, at Trowbridge, and on Lewis Lane in Cirencester. I don't know the first two, but the Twelve Bells in Cirencester is a cracking real-ale pub, and, as Abbey Ales are sometimes on offer there, the oxymoronic experience of drinking Maximus in the Twelve Bells is a distinct possibility.

I digress.

Other local ales included Old Knobbly

from Arbor Ales, the excellent new brewery in Bristol; Gem and Festivity from Bath Ales in Walmley; 30 Special and Rocket Fuel from Blindman's in Leighton near Frome; Blind House and Figgy Pudding from Box Steam Brewery in Colerne; Sunrise from the Bristol Beer Factory; Cheddar Best; Codrington Royal from Cotswold Spring; Hedgemonkey from Glastonbury; Brassknocker and Honey Mine from Matthews of Timsbury; Funky Monkey and Witching Hour from Milk Street in Frome; Rucking Mole from Moles of Melksham; East Street Cream and Special from RCH in Weston-super-Mare; and Rite Flanker and Mr Perrett's from Wickwar.

As for the rest, there were, as always, some old favourites, some pleasant surprises, and some beers well worth looking out for in the future. I was particularly struck by Yates Fever Pitch (3.9%), a light beer brewed with lager hops, from Wigton in Cumbria. As far as Beer of the Festival goes, however, the five that made the shortlist were Atlas Latitude (3.6%), a golden-style pilsner beer with a citrus touch from Argyle in Scotland; Hidden Depths (4.6%), a stout from Dinton in Wiltshire; Oakham JHB Extra (4.2%), a hoppy beer with a peppery finish from Peterborough; Thornbridge Jaipur (5.9%), a pale gold beer from Derbyshire; and the one that eventually emerged as Beer of the Festival, Oakleaf Hole Hearted (4.7%), a strong amber beer with fruit and citrus notes and a dry finish, from Gosport in Hampshire.

There was also an excellent range of ciders and perries on offer, including Old Monty Rum Cask Cider from Montgomery, Double Vision Medium and Impeared Vision Perry from Maidstone, and Malvern Magic Dry and Perry from Worcestershire.

Although advance ticket sales were buoyant, this year tickets were also available on the door throughout all the sessions, so nobody had to queue. The new, superbly laid-out all-colour programme also proved very popular. Two bands serenaded the punters – Sirius on Friday night and Dragsters after the rugby on Saturday. £320 was raised for the Alzheimer's Society in unused tokens and cash.

Who would have thought, 30 years ago, when 20 or so cask beers were delivered to the Pavilion – beers such as Wadworth's, Courage's and Usher's – in the hope that people would be tempted to come along and see what the real-ale revival was all about, that one day there would be dozens of great microbreweries within a few miles of Bath, or that, 30 years on, we would be celebrating the tenth anniversary of brewing returning to the city? Grotney's Red Barrel was still being advertised on the telly, pubs shut in the afternoon, the Thatcher Years lay before us and Space Invaders was the latest pub craze. It all seems a long time ago. That's because it was. But, despite all that's happened – the pub closures, the Beer Orders, the pub makeovers – you only have to wander into one of Bath's real ale boozers or go to an event like the Bath Beer Festival to realise that real ale's future is brighter than it's ever been.

Andrew Swift

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BACK in the “summer” we were wondering where we might go for our regular September holiday. After looking at the usual hotspots and exotic places we decided upon Inverness! Well the Black Isle just north of Inverness to be precise. The inspiration behind this was a small piece in *What's Brewing*, CAMRA's monthly newspaper. It featured a hotel in Fortrose specialising in real ales, Belgian beers, malt whiskies, wine and good food. Pretty much all I could desire in a hotel – plus there was the promise of dolphins regularly sighted nearby which got Marilyn's interest straight away!


The establishment concerned is called **The Anderson** in Union Street. It is named after its owners – Jim, the self confessed “beer geek and international beer writer”, and his wife Anne, a talented chef. To add extra interest they are Americans now settled in Scotland. A quick look at their website (see below) and I knew we had to pay them a visit. Onto Easy Jet's site and we had return tickets for a six-night stay for about £40 each. A phone call to Jim established that their normal room rate is £75 per double or twin per night, including full cooked breakfast. As we were booking for six nights Jim offered us a discount. Indeed from 2 December 2007 until 30 March 2008 they are offering all CAMRA members their second night's accommodation free. I was aware that Phil Cummings and Tim Proudman had ambitions to do this kind of trip and they took little persuading to join us! Sadly

they could only get free of work long enough to stay the first two nights. We booked a hire car from the airport and our plans were complete. The intention was to use the Anderson as a base from which to explore as much of the Highlands as possible, whilst seeking out good beer and whisky on the way.

Our trip started well as draught Butcombe Bitter was available at Bristol Airport (see previous articles!) and reported as in good form by Tim and Phil. Things looked even better when about two miles before Fortrose we saw a sign saying “**Black Isle Brewery** this way – free tours all day every day”. That was our afternoon plans sorted then! The Anderson was easily located on the main road through Fortrose. Jim greeted us and advised that whilst the bar does not normally open until 4pm we were welcome to come down for a drink as soon as we had settled in. This we did and it gave us a chance to peruse the hugely impressive Belgian beer and whisky lists, conveniently arranged in a menu-style folder. The pub sells two or three ever-changing real ales – on our arrival these were *Burton Bridge Golden Delicious* and *Country Life Golden Pig* (you travel all that way and get a beer from Devon!). They were joined by Harviestoun Ptarmigan the next day. And so, off to the Black Isle brewery it was. This is a very progressive, organic brewery just outside the village of Munloch. The welcome was excellent and we were immediately ushered

around the tiny brewery whilst it was in action, shown the very amusing small bottling plant and then taken to the brewery shop. Small free samples were offered here of each beer, and there was no pressure to buy – so we did anyway! Marilyn then drove us on to the **Clachnaharry Inn** on the edge of Inverness – a frequent winner of the Highland CAMRA pub of the year award. This had on a good selection of five or six independent beers, and tasty food too. Whilst there we picked up copies of the local CAMRA newsletter called “*What's Yours Then?*” This turned out to be more than a little useful as it routinely lists all pubs and hotels in the Highlands known to sell real ale and we made great use of that list over the following six days.

Upon leaving the Clachnaharry we decided to drive around the north edge of the Black Isle and approach Fortrose from the other side. This took us to Cromarty (one of those places you have heard in shipping forecasts but have no idea where it is) – using the list from the newsletter, we located the **Cromarty Inn**, which served up a sadly tired pint of *Cairngorm Trade Winds* on this occasion. We followed the coast round almost back to Fortrose, but stopped in at the Good Beer Guide-recommended **Plough Inn** at Rosemarkie. This was a wonderful little pub full of character and characters. We were made very welcome and enjoyed good pints of *Cairngorm Trade Winds* and *In the Shadows* – the beers change regularly. The landlord told us that the




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Cairngorm head brewer lives in the village and uses the pub regularly. It was a short mile and a half drive back to the Anderson from there. We had booked dinner in the hotel restaurant and went on to enjoy some very fine cuisine indeed – the menu shows a lot of imagination and the food is superbly sourced and prepared. You should expect to pay around £20 to £25 for three courses or £10 to £18 if you just want a main course. The Anderson claims to serve “high quality wine at plonk prices” but if I was asked those prices for plonk I would be very upset indeed so we never got to try any wine! It turned out to be our only dinner at the hotel as our travel plans were expansive and we never knew when we would get back. After eating we settled down in the whisky bar for a couple of beers and some whisky (well quite a few actually!) – it really is a tremendous collection of interesting and rare whiskies and Jim is indeed very knowledgeable on the subject. For the beginner you can do much worse than try one of his recommended combinations of malts served on a kind of tasting platter and called “flights of malt”.

We were a little disappointed when closing time at the bar (11.30 or 12 at weekends) meant closing time for us too as we had hoped residents might get a little more leeway, but I guess having to get up to prepare breakfast makes that more difficult in a family-run hotel. It also surprised us that we needed to specify what we wanted for breakfast and at what time each evening. You were allowed four cooked items from the list, or only three if you also wanted porridge, which seems a little mean really. That said the breakfast was superbly cooked and we all agreed that the bacon (“cooked over an open fire”) was the best we had ever experienced.

We asked Jim how two Americans had come to settle in this part of Scotland, to which he said that they had spent some years running restaurants and bars in their home area of Central Philadelphia. When they had their son they decided that they wanted to bring him up somewhere “calmer”. After considering the Canadian and American sides of the Great Lakes

and Southern Belgium, they plumped for the Scottish Highlands. In 2003 they had a list of six available small hotels with bars and restaurants attached spread over the Highlands and set out to see them all in one day. Whilst they were between two of these they took a wrong turn into Fortrose, and came across “Fawltly Towers”, otherwise known as the Royal Hotel. Jim describes it as in a poor state and certainly not fit for any royalty to stay in! He even suggests that a night in his car might have been preferable! However the sight of the local horse farm, a links golf course and the Moray Firth convinced them that their 18-month search was over, and they made an offer for the hotel, despite it not being on their list! Oh the fickle hand of fate! They renamed it the Anderson to “get away from the crusty old Royal Hotel image”.

Anyway, after breakfast it was time for a full day out in the car – Tim and Phil had expressed a wish to visit Skye and the **Talisker** malt whisky distillery. We enjoyed a lovely drive along the north shore of Loch Ness then up into the mountains and over to Skye via the road bridge from the Kyle of Lochalsh. We were pleasantly surprised to find that this was now toll-free. Unfortunately as soon as we reached Skye we found ourselves directly behind a very slow-moving, extremely wide load with no hope of overtaking. This went on for about 20 miles until we were finally allowed past. Our arrival at the distillery coincided with some light rain and dark clouds which slightly spoiled what must be a wonderful view over the adjacent loch. This was the first time at a distillery for us and it proved absolutely fascinating. After paying our £5 entry fee we were given samples of the famed firewater – very nice too, but sadly I had to consume Marilyn’s too as she was driving! The tour then took place – whisky-making bears a marked similarity to brewing up until the actual distillation, when the liquid is turned into vapour and the back into liquid to put it into a nutshell. The result is then matured for many years with much of it evaporating away – enough to make a grown man cry surely?

Then it was back to reception where a staff change had taken place and we were given another round of samples – we were not sure if this was meant to happen, and decided to accept graciously!

Our plans for the rest of the day had to be revised after the earlier delay, so it was off to the nearby **Sligachan Hotel** which houses the recently opened **Cuillin Brewery** from which three beers were available. An impressive building, it has the feel of a place all out to attract the tourist trade and coach parties in particular. The food and the house beers were all adequate but no more really. Tim persuaded the barman to take him around the brewery, then off we went again. Back over the bridge to the mainland and a visit to the picturesque coastal village of Plockton. This has one Good Beer Guide-listed pub, the **Plockton Inn**, which the local newsletter told us had begun brewing its own beer, and another pub, the **Plockton Hotel**, which had also got a mention. Sadly there was no sign of the house beer at the Inn (which was later described to us by another landlord elsewhere as having been a bit of a disaster taste-wise!) and the two beers on were *Fuller’s London Pride* and *Greene King Abbot* – in good condition but not quite what we were after! The Hotel had two Scottish beers on but the Isle of Skye brew that we tried was cloudy and unpleasant. Not a great visit beer-wise but a wonderful village with views to die for. It was then on, via a twisting and scenic route, to Lochcarron and the Good Beer Guide-listed **Rockvilla Hotel**. Four Scottish brews on here and a warm welcome too – I enjoyed my *Orkney Red McGregor* and the views of the loch just a few yards from the pub. We then made a dash back over the mountains to Fortrose and the Anderson. We decided to repeat our visit to the Plough at Rosemarkie, which, as the landlord had predicted, was a much livelier affair on a Friday night. Then a couple more whiskies at the Anderson before bed.

(continued on next page . . .)



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(... continued from previous page)

About a week earlier I had just finished Ian Rankin's latest Rebus novel "The Naming of the Dead" in which several references were made to a "cloodie well" on the Black Isle, a bizarre place where for centuries people have hung old clothes worn by those who have a serious illness. The book was a little vague about the exact location and nature of the well – so I had resolved to get to it and find out more. After two days driving around almost all of the Black Isle we were no wiser. Thankfully the landlord of the Plough told us it was no more than a couple of miles from the Anderson near Munloch. So Saturday morning was dedicated to finding it – but only after checking out the stories of dolphins in the Moray Firth. We drove the one mile to the waterside and spent about ten minutes looking forlornly out at the water whilst being attacked by a bitter wind. Just as we were about to give up they appeared! At least five bottle-nosed dolphins started leaping out of the water. We watched for about 15 minutes and then headed for the cloodie well. If you drive along the right road you really can't miss the enormous collection of clothes and rags hanging from the trees – a most bizarre and macabre sight indeed. Apparently ancient superstition has it that if an item worn by a sick person is hung there, as it rots then so does the illness die away! Unfortunately many people have apparently hung up more modern fabrics that are not biodegradable and will never rot!

It was now time to get nearer the airport so Tim and Phil could catch their 15.30 flight

home. We parked in central Inverness and checked out the local Wetherspoon (dreadful) whilst waiting for the **Castle Tavern** to open – this is now run by the same team as the Clachnaharry Inn and not yet in the Beer Guide, but very good indeed. It had three changing guest beers on from *An Teallach*, *Cairngorm* and *Isle of Skye* breweries. Then it was on to a bar called **Hootananny**, which had on a seasonal honey beer from Black Isle Brewery, and finally the Beer Guide-listed **Blackfriars**, which was serving about six beers, including the mighty *Hebridean Berserker* at 7% ABV – we left that one to Tim! A very good lunch was enjoyed here as was the humour of the splendidly gruff landlord! Sadly Tim and Phil were then dropped at the airport and we waved goodbye.

A drive through Speyside followed including a brief stop at the **Ben Mhor Hotel** at Grantown on Spey where a decent pint of *Cairngorm Stag* was on offer. We had by now realised that if we wanted to see the rest of the Highlands then being based in Fortrose was not ideal geographically, so we had a word with Jim and he kindly had no objection to us reducing our stay to four nights and departing on Monday morning. It being Saturday night we decided to catch the bus into Inverness – it only runs every two hours but was very cheap at £3.70 return for a ten-mile-each-way journey. After about five miles I had just remarked how pleasant and peaceful the bus was compared to those at home, when a crowd of about 25 young people got on and proceeded to transform it into the bus journey from hell! They were extremely drunk, or similar, and made an incredible relentless

racket all the way from there with very colourful language. I have endured many unpleasant bus journeys in Bristol but nothing on this scale. It was quite a relief to reach Inverness where we had planned to visit a few pubs. The streets were filled with similar youngsters to those from the bus so we simply proceeded back to the **Castle Tavern** and stayed put until the bus back two hours later. I was ready to pay for a taxi if necessary but it was apparent that those waiting for the bus were a much more civilised bunch and the journey home was fine.

On Sunday we set off to explore another area – this time heading for Gairloch and the remote Applecross Peninsula on the West Coast. Our first stop was at the **Dundonnell Hotel** in a beautiful area adorned with many waterfalls. Although this was listed in the newsletter as selling real ale, the only handpump was dispensing *Weston's Perry* from Herefordshire! Perry is almost impossible to find at home so to find it as the only offering in a remote Highland hotel was somewhat unexpected! A fairly average Sunday carvery was consumed and we moved on. Sadly we experienced the worst weather of the week on this day and much of the scenery was obscured but it was a wonderful drive anyway. Next stop was the **Old Inn** at Gairloch, a splendid hotel and bars overlooking the harbour. Four beers were on and I got my only pint of *Orkney Dark Island* (a personal favourite) of the trip here. We then moved on to the **Applecross Inn**, which can only be reached by two roads – "a 15-mile single-track road over Britain's highest vehicular ascent or a longer coastal route". As we were approaching from the north,



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the latter made sense. This was a beautiful route with lots of stray sheep in the road, and very narrow roads indeed – a challenging drive – so how bad could the higher road be? We were to find that out soon enough! After what seemed an eternity we found the Inn at what must be one of the most scenic pub locations anywhere. The pub was warm friendly and very busy. They were happy to serve us with just soup and desserts and the two beers that day were *Isle of Skye Red Cuillin* and *Blaven*, both in cracking form. The wild mushroom soup was amongst the best soups I have ever tried. After two pints I handed the car keys to Marilyn and suggested we ought to get over the mountain road before nightfall, which was about an hour away. Little did I know the situation I had put her in! We picked up the road and within a couple of miles had gone up high enough to be in low cloud with visibility down to a few yards most of the time. The single-track road just kept climbing with ever more sudden hairpin bends and sheep popping up in the road at random. The drops on both sides looked sheer and there was no form of barrier at all. Marilyn was seriously questioning my sanity now (I swear I heard the word “divorce” muttered a few times!). Incredibly fortunately, not a single car came the other way during the entire 15 miles (they probably knew better!) because neither of us knew how anybody could contemplate reversing out of the way in those conditions. We were more than relieved to get to the end of the road in one piece and the phrase “never again” was repeated all the way home by my long suffering wife!

Monday morning arrived and it was time to say goodbye to the Anderson after one more hearty breakfast, when we were surprised to realise that we seemed to have become the only remaining guests. Our verdict? Great food, superb beer and an almost unsurpassed Belgian beer and whisky range. Where there is some room for improvement is on the hotel side – the room furniture is old and random in nature (we had no shelves in either wardrobe and no drawers for our clothes!). I would say that Jim’s heart lies very much with the food and drink side of the operation, but we are not a hotel guide so let’s move on.

Our plan now was to head for the northeast corner of Scotland, drive along the top, and back down the northwest coast. We stopped in the **Sutherland Arms** in Brora, a new entry in the 2008 Good Beer Guide and a nice, friendly hotel bar serving one beer, which was a tasty pint of *Isle of Skye Red Cuillin* on or visit, and with a very impressive whisky list. From there we “did” John O’Groats, which consists of a shop, a café, much windiness and little else, so it was on to Thurso. Here we looked for a hotel for the night and found the **Holborn Hotel** – a nice modern place with a restaurant attached and decent value at £60 for a double. We quickly discovered that there is not a lot to do in Thurso and only a handful of shops. The only proper restaurant we could find was the one in our hotel which turned out to be extremely good indeed. The soup of the day was Cullen Skink (creamy smoked-haddock soup) and was possibly the best soup I have ever tried (*better than the wild*



Jim at the Anderson, complete with Pints Wests behind the bar

mushroom soup at the Applecross Inn? Ed.) and a real snip at £2.95 for a huge bowl! The CAMRA newsletter informed us that two nearby bars (both within 100 yards) offered real ale so off we went. The **Central Hotel** had a bit of a run-down feel to it but served a cracking pint of *Orkney Best Bitter*, with *Theakston’s Grousebeater* also on. The **Commercial Hotel** just down the road was smarter and served the best quality beer we had all week – *Orkney Red McGregor* in quite superb form. A nice friendly pub too. A phone call to the **Melvich Hotel** about ten miles away which was home to the **Far North** brewery had revealed that the hotel had been sold and no longer served real ale at all. The outgoing owner and brewer did say that he planned to reopen somewhere else though.

Our final full day started with a wonderful drive around the northwest coast stopping often to admire the view, and meaning that we arrived at Scourie too late to catch the lunch session at the Good Beer Guide-listed **Scourie Hotel**. Our destination for the night was Ullapool on the west coast, leaving us a 65-mile journey to the airport next day. We booked in at the **Caley Hotel** which at £70 was a mistake. This is a big hotel frequented by many coach parties. The water in the room came out a dirty brown colour, we were disturbed all night by creaking floorboards above, and breakfast was a disgrace – most of it was totally inedible. We ate dinner in the adjoining restaurant, which offered *Isle of Skye Hebridean Gold* as its only real ale. The beer was sour – when I spoke to the manageress she took a swig out of my pint, agreed with me and offered to replace it saying, “I won’t have time to change the barrel tonight”. Then five minutes later she recommended it to the bloke on the next table!

We drove out to the **Morefield Motel**, about a mile away and another new Good Beer Guide entry. We were asked if we wanted to eat

(wish we had waited!) and when we said no were pointed to a bank of three reserved tables and told “they are reserved for people who just want a drink” – what a wonderful change! Three Scottish beers were on – *Red Cuillin*, *Cairngorm Glen Ample* and *An Teallach Bitter* – all in great condition. They were due to stage a beer festival of many Scottish brews in a few weeks too. Then it was back to drop off the car and walk to the **Ferryboat Inn**, Ullapool’s other Beer Guide pub. This is a warm, busy and friendly little bar on the harbour side and was serving *An Teallach* and *Black Sheep* from Yorkshire. Our final port of call was the **Seaforth Bistro** opposite our hotel where we enjoyed a pint of *An Teallach Beinn Dairg* followed by a couple of whiskies from their fine list to toast the end of a great trip.

I would wholly recommend this kind of trip to you so long as you like good beer (and/or whisky), great scenery and proper driving. We clocked up over 1000 miles in six days without going more than ten miles south of Inverness at any point. All journeys take twice as long as planned because of the type of roads and the frequent urge to stop and admire the scenery. The Anderson makes a cracking base to see the Black Isle, Inverness and the East Coast and just to enjoy the food and drink offering, which is outstanding. Taking advantage of the second-night-free offer may also be a shrewd move. The Morefield Motel would seem to be a good option for accommodation and dining in the Ullapool area. Also be sure to pick up a copy of “What’s yours then?” as soon as you arrive – it helps fill in the gaps when the Good Beer Guide pubs are often 50 miles apart!

Vince Murray

Websites:
www.morefieldmotel.co.uk
www.theanderson.co.uk
www.blackislebrewery.com

The BADRAG story

THE idea of BADRAG was born about a year ago and the 'babe' is doing OK. It is a campaigning group within the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale.

The Bristol and District Rare Ales Group, to give it its full title, seeks to campaign for bar and cellar space to be given to rare styles of real ales such as **stouts, porters, mild ales, old ales, barley wines** and **low ABV bitters**. Often such ales are only found at beer festivals, where they sell very quickly, but are rarely found in most bars.

Thinking about joining CAMRA for many years was translated into membership in 2001, when Hamish Halliwell introduced me to the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch of the Bristol & District branch. I had been campaigning for canals since I was a schoolboy, when canals were not a popular idea, so campaigning for real ales came naturally and initially my home area of Nailsea was where I concentrated my energies.

Being a mild ale devotee, I have always been rather disappointed that bitter beers dominated in the area where I have spent most of my life, the *Pints West* area. The fact that not enough local campaigning was taking place for the rare styles of real ale in the *Pints West* area was niggling me. One pleasant September evening in 2006, whilst sitting on the balcony of the Bristol micro-brewery, **Zerodegrees**, supping our Black Lagers, overlooking the rooftops in the centre of Bristol city, Dave Jane and I decided to get a campaigning group going. The discussion continued across the road at the **Ship** in Lower Park Row, then one of the only pubs in the area to always stock mild and old ale, in the form of Theakston's Mild and Old Peculier (one of my favourite beers).

The support of the Bristol & District branch committee, and of members attending the monthly branch meetings, was obtained, and a date was set for the first meeting to discuss the formation – and a name for – the group. The plan was to provide local support for CAMRA's national 'LADS' (Light and Dark Supporters) committee, details of which may be found on the national CAMRA web site at www.camra.org.uk (click on *Campaigns* then *Endangered Beer Styles*).

The first official meeting was held in January 2008, appropriately at the aforementioned Ship in Lower Park Row, Bristol. Those present on that momentous occasion, when the name of the group was agreed, were Pete Bridle, Henry Davies, John Firth, Colin Postlethwaite, Norman Spalding and myself. (Norman was destined to become our voice on the branch committee as Campaigns Officer.) Since then the group has grown to about forty members – including some from Weston-super-Mare (but none from Bath yet) – of which about eight gather for one or two hours at 8pm on the second Thursday of each

month, mostly in Bristol, at various bars which support rare styles of ale. I like to think that we achieve a reasonable balance between progressing campaign business and having an enjoyable evening out!

In February BADRAG met at Wether-spoon's **Commercial Rooms** in Corn Street, Bristol, an event which included a tour of the cellar. In March we were at the **Hillgrove Porter Stores**, Dove Street, Kingsdown. In April we met at the **Robin Hood**, St Michael's Hill, where we were able to enjoy Wadworth's Pint Size Mild. (In May the planned meeting at the **Cornubia**, Temple Street, was cancelled due to illness.) In June the **Old Tavern**, Blackberry Hill, Stapleton was the venue, where we enjoyed Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby (6% ABV) and Arbor Ales Old Knobbly (4.5%), with a visit to the on-site Arbor Ales brewery thown in. July found us at the **Cross Hands**, Fishponds, enjoying Bristol Beer Factory's Old Smokey (4.5%) and O'Hanlon's Royal Oak (4.8%).

Our meeting day in August clashed with the branch trip to the Great British Beer Festival, so we encouraged members to go on that instead and enjoy many of the rare styles of ale available there, including the newly-crowned Champion Beer of Britain, Hobson's Mild (3.2%).

Back to the normal schedule in September found us at the **Grain Barge**, Hotwell Road, drinking Matthews 40 Yard on draught and, in bottles, Bristol Beer Factory's Milk Stout. In October we were back at the **Robin Hood** on St Michael's Hill enjoying Wadworth's Pint Size Mild again, and in November revisiting the **Hillgrove Porter Stores** where, it being 'Old Ales Month', we savoured Green Jack's old ale Loucher (5.9%) and their barley wine

Ripper (8.5%) ... after which I hope I can decipher my notes and convert them into the monthly BADRAG newsletter, my next task after writing this article!

For details of future gatherings see the branch diary elsewhere in this *Pints West*, or the members' monthly *What's Brewing* newspaper, or the branch web site at www.camrabristol.org.uk.

BADRAG campaigning has taken many forms, starting with a press launch at the Bristol Beer Festival in March. During the 'Mild Month of May', there was an extremely successful 'Mild Ale Trail', with many pubs being persuaded (not unwillingly) to stock one or more milds, and with a good report in the *Evening Post*. The event was led by Henry Davies, and there was also a 'Mild Ale Tasting' evening which was organised by Andy Pike and held at the **Victoria** in Southleigh Road, Clifton. We are, at the time of writing, promoting November as 'Old Ales Month'. There is also the on-going gathering and publishing of details on the branch web site of bars offering BADRAG style ales, led by Colin Postlethwaite. All of these initiatives have been supported with CAMRA leaflets and posters, some designed and printed by our local group, and taken to pubs and other points of sale by a large number of members and other volunteers, where many licensees have welcomed and supported our campaign.

Finally, a very big thank-you to BADRAG volunteers who helped get things going in the first year, to those who are going to get involved in 2008, to the licensees who have given us their support and hopefully will in the future, and not least to the drinkers who keep asking for and drinking **stouts, porters, mild ales, old ales, barley wines** and **low ABV bitters**!

Laurie Gibney

Have a BADRAG Xmas

ON behalf of Bristol & District Rare Ales Group, BADRAG, I would like to thank all of you who have emailed me with pubs serving the rare styles of ale. This worked particularly well with the Mild list and the November Old Ales list that was loaded onto the web site www.camrabristol.org.uk and used by many.

What we now want to do is try and keep the Rare Ales Pub List more up to date, particularly as we approach Christmas, and pubs are serving some of the winter beers. There must be thousands of drinkers and landlords out there indulging in one of these ales right now – please tell me what it was and where you drank it, so that I can update

the list. All I need is a simple email with the beer name and pub name and date it was found – I can usually fill in the other details. Please email badrag@camrabristol.org.uk.

If any readers out there would like to be added to the BADRAG email circulation list, where we send out occasional info that may be of interest to readers, please send me your email address to badrag@camrabristol.org.uk – you do not have to be a member of CAMRA to do this, just be interested in Milds, Stouts, Porters, Old Ales or Barley Wines. Once again, thank-you to all those who have supported BADRAG and have a very merry Christmas.

Colin Postlethwaite

Smarme at the Bell

PINTS WEST isn't normally a listings magazine, I know (apart from beer festivals of course), but there's one gig that real-ale drinkers really shouldn't miss. The fact that it's held in the Good Beer Guide-listed Bell on Bath's Walcot Street, with ten beers – including two locally sourced and generally unusual guests – is even more reason to head down to the Smarme's Arms on the lunchtime of Sunday 16 December. For that is when part-time pub landlord, part-time jobbing builder, part-time Elvis impersonator and full-time Twerton sex god, Bill Smarme (he of the faux-leopard-skin guitar) takes to the stage, along with his smashing band, the Bizness, for a couple of hours of down-home picking.

If all this seems a trifle confusing, I should explain that, in a parallel universe, it's always opening time in the Smarme's Arms, Bill's wife (the lovely Lola) is Miss Brentford Nylons 1957, Elvis has just left the building and Bill always manages to score. In the real world, sadly, none of the above is true (except the last bit of course), but for a couple of hours on the 16th you might just imagine you've stepped through that invisible curtain into a world where Smarme is King.

Anyway, as I was saying, you can get to hear Bill singing his signature tune, 'Have a Pint, My Friend', along with many others timeworn classics smarmed up good and proper, including a heavy bluegrass version of

Hit Parade of Love, the Hokey-Cokey a la Elvis, a scrumpy and western version of the Sex Pistols' Pretty Vacant and a personal and deeply felt (in more ways than one) take on My Favourite Things. Bill's favourite things, unlike Julie Andrews', include custard, pork pies, chips and, of course, beer. If you want a taste of what you'll be letting yourself in for, you can log on to www.billsmarme.moonfruit.com, where you can not only hear – and see – him in action, but also pick up some useful hints and tips on lifestyle.

Bill's act has been described as the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band meets the Wurzels, although that only goes part way to solving the enigma that is Smarme. He's sometimes billed as Twerton's answer to Elvis, even though there's no record of Elvis ever asking Twerton a question – unless it was 'where's Twerton?' Seriously though, one of Bill's claims to fame is that he once worked with Elvis in the 70s – Elvis Thompson from Devizes that is. Not a lot of people remember his show-stopping budgerigar act these days, more's the pity.

Anyway, there are few better ways to spend a Sunday lunchtime than downing a few pints in the company of one of the original good-time boys. Oh, and by the way, the gig's free, although I'm sure Bill and the band would appreciate you putting something in the pot.



See you there. All right?

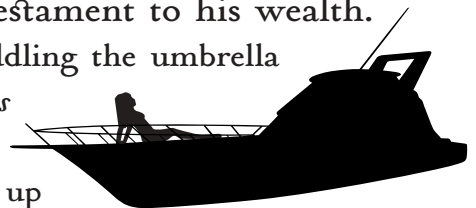
Bill Smarme and the Bizness play the Bell in Walcot Street, Bath on Sunday 16 December at 1pm. If you can't make it along, you can catch him at the Bath Christmas Market between noon and 2.30 on Saturday 8 December.

Andrew Swift

“He was the man who had everything, except *Theakstons* OLD PECULIER”

We'd been muçkers at sçhool. Then he went into property and made so many millions they ran out of multi's to describe them. Some years later and here I was in the Med, a guest aboard this floating testament to his wealth.

“Aye, I've got plenty of ACKERS,” grumbled my friend, twiddling the umbrella in his coçktail, *“but no bloomin' pub and no bloomin' Theakstons Old Peculier, that's for sure.”* *“Why don't you just go home and get some?”* I asked. He snorted, glancing at his trophy wife soaking up the rays beside him, *“It's the missus, won't go anywhere it rains.”* *“Ah, I see.”* I replied, wondering how the leggy Latino lovely liked being referred to as the MISSUS. Then, wistfully, I thought of my very own sçpecial rain-sçattered corner of Yorkshire. The lady I loved would be there now, behind her bar serving pint after pint of Theakstons Old Peculier, dark, rich, and deliciously strong. With my return tiçket burning a hole in my poçket, I turned to my mate in exile. *“Fancy another Pina Colada?”* I enquired, smugly.



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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.)

○ Wed 28th November - Branch meeting at the Naval Volunteer, 8pm.

○ Wed 5th December - Survey trip to mid Mendips. Depart 6.45pm from the Cornubia.

○ Mon 10th December - Bristol Beer Festival meeting at the Cornubia, 8pm.

○ Wed 12th December - Branch committee meeting at the Old Fish Market, 8pm.

○ Thurs 13th December - BADRAG meeting, at the Famous Royal Navy Volunteer, King Street, Bristol, 8pm.

○ Sat 15th December - CAMRA Christmas social, Cornubia, from 7pm.

○ Tues 18th December - Lower Hotwells crawl. Meet at Lion, Clifton Wood, 7.30pm.

○ Sun 6th January - Westbury Wobble. Meet at the Post Office Tavern at midday.

○ Wed 9th January - Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia, 8pm.

○ Thurs 10th January - BADRAG meeting at the Adam & Eve, 8pm.

○ Sun 13th January - Bristol Beer Festival ticket sale session at the Commercial Rooms, Bristol, 11am-4pm. CAMRA members (and on-the-day joiners) only, 2 tickets per CAMRA card.

○ Wed 16th January - Branch meeting at Horts, Bristol, 8pm (Good Beer Guide forms to be issued).

○ Tues 22nd January - 'Meet & Greet' at the Lion, Clifton Wood, 7.30pm.

○ Wed 23rd January - Survey trip to Keynsham/Saltford area. Depart 6.45pm from the Cornubia.

○ Sat 26th January - South West Regional CAMRA social crawl of Bath. Details to be confirmed.

○ Sun 27th January - Bristol Beer Festival ticket sale session at the Old Fish Market, Bristol, 11am-4pm (4 tickets maximum per person).

○ Wed 30th January - Survey trip to Weston-super-Mare fringes. Depart 6.45pm from the Cornubia.

○ Tues 5th February - Survey trip to East Bristol. Depart 6.45pm from the Cornubia.

○ Wed 13th February - Branch committee meeting at the Old Fish Market, 8pm.

○ Thurs 14th February - BADRAG meeting at the Commercial Rooms, Bristol, 8pm.

○ Wed 20th February - Survey trip to Bristol suburbs. Depart 6.45pm from the Cornubia.

○ Wed 27th February - Branch meeting, 8pm, venue to be confirmed.

○ Sun 2nd March - GBG selection meeting, start midday. Venue to be confirmed.

Weston diary

○ Wed 19 December - Annual Seasonal Ales Crawl. Start at the Major From Glengarry at 7.30, then Raglan at 8.00.

○ Sun 13 January - Bristol Beer Festival ticket sale session at Off The Rails, 11am-4pm. CAMRA members (and on-the-day joiners) only, 2 tickets per CAMRA card.

○ Wed 16 January - Stout and Porter Social. White Hart 8.00, Dragon 9.00, Off The Rails 10.00.

○ Sun 27 January - Bristol Beer Festival ticket sale session at off The Rails, 11am-4pm (4 tickets maximum per person).

○ Wed 20 February - Worle Crawl. Start at Nut Tree, 8.00.

Non-members welcome at the above events.

Weston contact

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

Bath & Borders

See centre pages for forthcoming events of the Bath & Borders branch.

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The Good Beer Guide is more than just a pub guide. Britain's longest-running and best-selling guide contains 4,500 of Britain's best pubs for real ale, but for beer lovers it also gives up-to-date information on the country's beers and breweries. It's compiled by thousands of dedicated volunteers in the Campaign for Real Ale. There are no fees for listings, and every pub is checked many times a year.

The Good Beer Guide offers:

○ The best pubs in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man that serve cask-conditioned real ale in tip-top condition.

○ Full details of the real ales served, as well as details about food, entertainment, family facilities, history and architecture for the pub entries.

○ The unique expanded Breweries Section that lists all the breweries – micro, regional and national – that produce cask beer, with tasting notes compiled by CAMRA-trained tasting teams. There's also information about the growing number of organic beers. The Guide lists new breweries, closed breweries, mergers and takeovers, and keeps track of the new, powerful pub groups.

Available from good book shops, or from CAMRA (www.camra.org.uk), there is a pub for everyone in this indispensable book.

"Put together by CAMRA, it's the definitive rundown of the best places in the UK to get a pint of real ale, from cosy country inns to up-market style bars." – *Time Out*





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Join CAMRA today and help us make a difference!

56 community pubs close every month!

Join CAMRA's crusade to save Britain's pubs

OVER the last thirty-six years, CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has been campaigning on all sorts of beer and pub issues. We have helped to save breweries and pubs, helped to introduce more flexible licensing hours, run numerous beer festivals, created the environment for new breweries to open and thrive ... but our work doesn't end there!

Research in February 2007 showed that we are losing more pubs now than ever before. A staggering 56 pubs close every month and CAMRA needs your help to campaign and save the pubs that are under threat from closure in the future before it is too late.

CAMRA now boasts over 90,000 members and we are striving to reach 100,000 members to help us with our current campaigns that include getting legislation that makes sure the consumer gets a full pint, reducing beer duty, promoting localism and supporting breweries and pubs.

By becoming a CAMRA member you can help to make a difference.

Join CAMRA today by completing the form included in this newsletter, visiting www.camra.org.uk/joinus or calling CAMRA HQ on 01727 867201.

CAMRA membership represents great value. For just £20 a year, that is less than 39p a week, you can join our organisation and benefit from the following:

- **A monthly copy of our colour newspaper 'What's Brewing'** – this includes news on the pub and brewery industry, information on what is happening in your area, lists of CAMRA beer festivals around Britain, features on different real ale breweries, plus much more!
- **Free or reduced entry to over 150 CAMRA beer festivals**, including the Great British Beer Festival.
- **Discounts on CAMRA books** including our best selling Good Beer Guide.
- **Discounted membership of the CAMRA Beer Club** – The CAMRA Beer Club has been set up to provide a home-delivery service to enthusiasts. As a member you will discover and enjoy a whole range of bottle-conditioned beers that are not widely distributed. All CAMRA members receive a £5 discount on each mixed case of 20 beers. For more information visit www.camrabeerclub.co.uk.
- **The opportunity to become an active member of the organisation** – All members are welcome to attend branch meetings, socials, sign petitions to save pubs and breweries that are under threat from closure, and survey pubs and bars, etc. CAMRA membership means different things to different people.
- **Complimentary Clubs** – These clubs are exclusive to CAMRA members and are free to join. Clubs currently running include Fuller's, Hook Norton, Everards and Woodforde's. Complimentary clubs offer members a variety of promotions including free pint vouchers, brewery trips, competitions and merchandise offers. Please visit www.camra.org.uk/joinus to find out more.

CAMRA's highlights over the last 12 months:

- CAMRA launched a new full-pint campaign, 'Take it to the Top', in April 2007. This was the first time CAMRA had advertised a campaign in a national newspaper. Over 20,000 people have now signed the petition. If you haven't signed the petition yet and believe that consumers should get what they pay for then support this campaign today (see www.camra.org.uk).
- Our annual Parliamentary reception in Westminster gave us the opportunity to lobby over 100 MPs, Lords and researchers.
- CAMRA awarded their Pub Design Awards in March 2007 which gives recognition for innovative and imaginative design. The awards went to The Prince of Wales (Herne Bay, Kent), Three Pigeons (Halifax, West

Yorkshire), The Works (Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire).

- CAMRA announced their National Pub of the Year in February 2007. The award went to The Tom Copley Tavern, Spreyton, Devon.
- Community Pubs Week, replaced National Pubs Week, and focused on reducing the closure of community pubs. Over 2,500 pubs participated in the event by organising and promoting events throughout the week to raise the profile of community pubs.
- Manchester hosted a successful sell-out National Winter Ales Festival.
- CAMRA presented the Cider and Perry Pub of the Year award to Old Poets Corner, Derbyshire. Prince Charles visited this pub at a later date to sample their fantastic ciders.
- CAMRA has launched a number of books including the Good Beer Guide 2008; Good Beer Guide Prague; Beer Lovers' Guide to Cricket; Beer, Bed and Breakfast; Good Bottled Beer Guide.
- CAMRA has helped develop the new Cyclops tasting initiative with approximately 40 breweries on board. This scheme is aimed at new real ale drinkers and helps to demystify real ale by using easy to understand terms to describe what a beer looks, smells and tastes like.
- CAMRA has organised over 150 beer festivals around Britain in the last 12 months including the Great British Beer Festival at Earls Court that was visited by over 65,000 people.

Where do I join?

You can join by completing the membership form in this newsletter, calling CAMRA HQ on 01727 867201 or visiting www.camra.org.uk/joinus.

CAMRA Membership makes the perfect birthday gift!

Do you have a friend or family member's birthday coming up? If so, then CAMRA membership offers something completely different to the usual socks you buy Dad or flowers you buy Mum!

If your friend or family member enjoys their beer and pubs then a year's CAMRA membership is the ideal present. Your present will consist of the benefits already mentioned earlier in this article and can be delivered to your address or direct to your friend or family member. If you want to find out more then please visit www.camra.org.uk/joinus.

The Bag O'Nails

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Update on Bedminster

MUCH has been happening in BS3 to the pub scene, with closures, openings and refurbishments – so here is a quick rundown on some of the more significant changes.

North Street

Wedlocks: closed (planning sought for conversion to flats).

Bar BS3: Enterprise Inns, formerly the Rising Sun, opened on 25 October following a major refurbishment. Landlords Rob and Sarah (previously from the Ship & Castle) have two real ales, Butcombe Bitter and Wells Young's Courage Best, with live music Saturday nights.

Tobacco Factory: Still only selling three real ales, Bristol Beer Factory's No.7, Sunrise and



Bar BS3

Red. The Octoberfest beer festival was very successful with over 20 beers on.

Hen and Chicken: Re-opened September after major refurbishment by Julian and James of



Hen & Chicken

Westcountry Inns. This pub has been completely modernised with food and five real ales on offer: Greene King Ruddles County, Wychwood Hobgoblin, Deuchars IPA, Wells Bombardier and Greene King Old Speckled Hen. Managers Pete and Darren say these will be rotated approximately monthly with beers from the Punch Taverns list.

Full Moon: Closed. Sign in window says until further notice.

Robert Fitzharding: Wetherspoon's. New manager Ricky is very keen on real ales and in



Robert Fitzharding

the months since he arrived, the beer quality has improved and there is a much more interesting choice of guest ales. The November beer festival went very well with the pub having the full range of festival beers.

West Street

White Horse: New managers, with four real ales: Wychwood Hobgoblin, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Bass and Courage Best.

Albert: Reopened October – live music on at weekends with three real ales, Bristol Beer Factory's Exhibition and No.7, and Courage Best. (See separate articles for more info.)

East Street

Apple Tree: New owner Oliver Holden has been modernising the facilities and giving it a sympathetic makeover and will keep it as a traditional cider pub. The old garden has been cleared and a large covered drinking/smoking area created. It is hoped to keep the pub open during the refurbishment. This is the third Bedminster pub that Oliver Holden has rescued from developers (the first was the Rising Sun in



Apple Tree

Windmill Hill, and the second was the Albert in West Street).

Windmill: Now in this year's Good Beer Guide for the first time. Three real ales, Bristol Beer Factory's Red, No.7 and Sunrise.

Assembly: Barracuda Group. Manager Ian Newbold hopes to install two new handpumps (taking him up to six) in the near future with



Assembly

additional stillage to help cope with demand. Currently four real ales, Bass, Wells Bombardier, Wye Valley Bitter and St. Austell Tribute. Ian hopes to hold a beer festival early next year.

Bell: Reopened as Quinns Café Bar. No real ales (just Theakston's keg bitter).

Colin Postlethwaite & Dave Jane

Snippets

AS I write this the **Bag O'Nails** in Hotwells is hosting one of its twice-yearly beer festivals, and it looks set to be another success. Already Paul and Manda are planning their next one for 17th to 20th April. In the meantime they are intending to have lots of seasonal specials in the run-up to Christmas.

We've just been advised that the **Robert Fitzharding** pub in Bedminster is planning to hold a winter ales festival to run from 7th to 14th January that will feature at least 15 different winter ales.

The Gales family, who run the **Squire Inn** in Chipping Sodbury, are big fans of promoting their beers to their customers; they run regular brewery trips and have built up a strong relationship with Wickwar Brewing Company whose beer they stock.

The lads from Wickwar (Ray Penny and Dominic Hale) suggested to them that they do a "Food & Beer Evening" where they would discuss their beer in the context of different types of dishes served in the pub's restaurant.

The resulting event will be held on the evening of Wednesday 23rd of January, when both Ray and Dominic will be present to discuss their beers and their company in an informal, relaxed setting.

Greg Gales said that, primarily, they are hoping that it will be a chance to show beer lovers and food lovers how well these two things mix, and what type of beer goes best with which type of food. This would seem very much in keeping with the current trend of portraying good beer as a premium product, where a little bit of thought can really enhance the overall enjoyment of a good pint.

Greg added, "We are also hopeful that the evening will provide an opportunity for consumers of good beer to quiz the owner of a top local brewery on aspects of his job, his view on changes in the industry and for him to discuss the challenges and future for the industry. To book a table all people need to do is to ring the Squire Inn on 01454 312121 or visit our website www.thesquireinn.co.uk."

The pub-owning company **Pubfolio** is offering for sale 100 pubs, including the Good Beer Guide-listed **Pied Horse** in St. George.

Another Pubfolio package of 27 freehold pubs is on the market through Christie and Co with a total asking price believed to be in excess of £6.5m, while a third package of 340 tenanted Pubfolio pubs was withdrawn from the market in October when no one offered the £100m asking price.

Pubfolio's estate of 800 pubs includes 545 which were bought from Punch Taverns in January 2005. Punch had bought them from the InnSpired Group in September 2004 for £165m. Pubfolio is owned by Peter Shalson, who made his original fortune transforming a coat hanger company into a packaging business.

Cider Month

OCTOBER was designated as National Cider and Perry Month by CAMRA, so Bristol & District branch members got together for a social evening of cider and perry sampling at the Apple Barge, Welsh Back, Bristol on Thursday 18 October.

As the cider market enjoys unprecedented growth, CAMRA asked pubs to stock real cider and perry. CAMRA carried out an on-line survey to mark the beginning of National Cider Month in October. This revealed that:

- 69% of pub-goers will be inspired to drink real cider and perry in a pub when it is available.
- 81% of women pub-goers said they would drink real cider or perry in a pub when it is available.
- 22% of people that have tried real cider did so because they heard it was tastier than fizzy, mass-produced ciders.

Unlike real ale production (which can happen at any time of the year) real cider and perry can only be made when the fruit is ripe. It is a 'producer' rather than a 'brewer' that makes cider and perry. They may use a mixture of bittersweet and bittersharp cider apples or sweet dessert apples, or a mixture of the these, to make cider; but perry can only be made from specialized perry pears, which are high in natural tannin.

The choosing, pressing and blending of the fruit to make cider is just as much of a craft as making beer and produces a vast range of tastes, styles and aromas, similar to those produced in fine wine. Like wine, each year's fruit produces a unique vintage, so much so that cider and perry have been sometimes called 'The Wine of the West'.

October is a very active time for producers, especially for those who make only a small amount of cider. Harvest time for cider fruit is roughly from September to November and by October production is in full flow.

We say, don't drink the cold fizzy stuff – try something tasty and natural. And remember that the real versions can be on the strong side, so consume it responsibly!

Richard Brooks

[illegible]

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Pub news



Mouse

The **Mouse** in Westbury-on-Trym has recently undergone a major refurbishment. An often under-appreciated pub in WOT, it now boasts an improved selection of real ales. On a recent visit I found Hook Norton Old Hooky, Sharp's Doom Bar (which these days seems to be seen more often than traffic on Whiteladies Road) and Theakston's XB. The decidedly doggy pink exterior has gone too.



Westbury Park Tavern

Not far from there, and hardly news but worth mentioning anyway, the **Westbury Park Tavern** (in Henleaze) is decidedly upmarket these days, but offered an excellent pint of Butcombe on my last visit.

Head across the downs to what was once the **King's Arms**. It has been Bohemia, Babushka and was St*rk for a while. Currently closed and surrounded by scaffolding, there is a mysterious handwritten sign in the window saying 'The Black Bear'. Whether



Eagle



Printers Devil

this is this pub's next name we don't yet know, but watch this space.

Elsewhere in Bristol, the **Eagle** in Old Market appears to be back under its original name. It had spells as Tamu and the Orchid, and for a long while was closed. No real ales yet, but we can hope...

Just around the corner on Broad Plain, the **Printer's Devil** is closed but the owners are trying to re-lease it as a going concern. Let's hope they find a suitable manager/tenant. Given all the development in this area, I can't



Live and Let Live

help thinking there must be a market for a pub like this in the area.

Out in Frampton Cotterell, for those who haven't visited for a while, two pubs are doing very well. The **Rising Sun** – a frequent and current Good Beer Guide entrant – is on top form: Bass, Butcombe Bitter, Sharp's Doom Bar and 6X, plus a changing guest all available, plus Mole's Traditional Black Rat cider. Also, and just a thinned seven-iron away, the **Live And Let Live** is now thriving as a Bath Ales



Huntsman



Rising Sun

pub. We're at that time of the year when you might see Rare Hare or Festivity on hand-pump, so it's well worth checking out.

In Downend, the **Hunstman**, all but destroyed by fire earlier this year, is well on the way to reopening with building work progressing fast. I reckon they're pushing it to be open for Christmas, but an early 2008 return will be very welcome.

Over in Ashton, the **Rising Sun** has undergone a major refurbishment (and, no offence guys, but it needed it!) and has



King's Head

reopened as **Bar BS3**. Courage Best is the real ale, but more importantly it is great to see community boozers not only staying open, but making the investment as well. Bear in mind you have to prove you are a Bristol City Fan to get in on matchdays. Mind you, I just showed my lobotomy scar and that was fine (just kidding, my whole family are City fans).

Somewhere else that has received welcome investment is the **King's Head** in Whitehall. A major refurbishment both inside and out has



Golden Lion



Spotted Cow

left it looking terrific. They have started with Bath Gem and Courage Best on handpump, but would like to add more if the demand is there.

In Fishponds, the **Golden Lion** has also undergone something of a renaissance lately. No external refurbishment, which actually it needs, but

a real focus on traditional ciders. Ben Coleman is making real progress there, and when I popped in, he had Traditional Black Rat, Cheddar Valley, Thatcher's Traditional and Weston's Old Rosie all on draught. I don't remember leaving.

On the Lodge Causeway, the **Spotted Cow** is currently closed. Again, it says the lease is up to run the pub as a business, but there's always a worry that if the numbers don't stack up, another pub will be lost to the City. Also currently closed and presumably under threat are **The Seven Ways Inn** in St Judes, the **Punchbowl** in Old Market, **Bar 64** in Park Row, and far too many others. Please read the articles about campaigning to save pubs elsewhere in this issue, and support local pubs as best you can.

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

Duncan Shine

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Clifton Hop House re-opens



WADSWORTH has re-affirmed its commitment to real ale in the Clifton area with the transformation of the **Hop House** in Clifton village into a stylish and welcoming real ale bar and restaurant. Tucked into a corner on King's Road behind WH Smiths, the Hop House looks particularly inviting on a cold, rainy evening (although with glazed doors across the frontage that can be opened up in summer, it's welcoming any time). The interior has had a considerable make-over, with tired Edwardian-style upholstery and pool table replaced with a 'cool' mix of modern lighting, dark wood, interesting artwork and elegant fabrics that give a sense of style without over-whelming the fact that this is still, on the ground floor at least, in essence a pub.

The bar is well-stocked with the Wadsworth range on draught, including 6X, Henry's IPA, seasonals such as Malt & Hops, and the relatively new Horizon, a beer full of delicious hop flavour and only 4 per cent ABV. An occasional guest may also feature. A reasonable wine list (with some interesting tasting notes!) is also available. The upstairs is dedicated to food, with an à la carte menu (12-3pm and 6pm-10pm) complementing the bar menu. Sky Sports is available on LCD screens, but with the sound turned down, these are fairly unobtrusive.

The Hop House is one of four Wadsworth pubs in the wider Clifton area. The others are the **Clifton Wine Bar** on Queens Road, the **Grapes Tavern**, Sion Place in Clifton Village, and the **Penny Farthing** on Whiteladies Road. All have had some degree of redecoration in the past couple of years, but so far style hasn't replaced the essential substance of the pubs – comfortable, pleasant places to enjoy a drink and good conversation. Some will no doubt miss the Hop House's pool table, but I for one very much welcome the sophisticated new Hop House.

Lesly Huxley



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**Manchester
Evening News**



Come in from the cold and grab some winter warming

Fun at the Factoberfest

THE beer festival dubbed 'Factoberfest' was back at the **Tobacco Factory** in Bedminster in October and, in a brave move, the event was held outside with the beers in a marquee and served straight from the cask. Fortunately the weather stayed dry and a very pleasant afternoon was had by customers, who were able to sample from the range of over 25 real ales from 12 breweries in the region



Bristol Beer Factory's featured ales included **Milk Stout** (winner two years in a row of the prestigious 'Beer of the Festival' award at the Bristol Beer Festival) and **Bristol IPA**. The latter was created by head brewer Chris Thurgeson in the style of a traditional IPA, which should be strong and full of hops to help preserve it on its voyage to India. Weighing in at 5.5% ABV and with a beautiful blend on



Challenger and Bramling Cross hops, it was the first beer to sell out at this year's Factoberfest. It has also gone down a storm at the **Hope & Anchor** in Hotwells and is available at the Grain Barge.

Other fine local brews included Trendlewood from Arbor Ales, Mendip Mammoth from Newman's and, for those of a stronger constitution, Monumental from Severn Vale. Speciality beers included Zero Degrees' Wheat Beer and Black Lager, and Matthews' Honey Mine.

Simon Bartlett, production director of



Simon Bartlett of the Bristol Beer Factory commented: "Factoberfest is intended to be a showcase for local micro-breweries in and around the Bristol and Bath areas, and we were absolutely delighted that so many people came. There are some great, quality beers being produced in this region, but due to the many ties on pubs and the strength of



marketing and branding by the bigger brewers, a lot of these micros do not get the chance to show what quality products they can produce. We want to help spread the word by holding successful events like Factoberfest every year."

In other Bristol Beer Factory news, the BBF have teamed up with Artspace – the Pro-Cathedral Arts event in Clifton. Whilst the



developers are preparing the site, an arts group have moved in and scrubbed, cleaned and painted the disused cathedral and vaults, and are using it to put on exhibitions and shows between October and January 2008. A bar has been set up in the vaults to provide all of the visitors with some true Bristol ale and any other tipples they fancy. The BBF created a strong dark ale perfectly suited to the Mortal exhibition (with a death theme!) and this was given out to all the visitors on the opening night.

Totterdown recently held their Front Room Arts Trail and as usual the focal point was the **Shakespeare** in Henry Street. Once again BBF's Trail Ale was supplied to get the artistic juices flowing.

The BBF will very soon be brewing their 300th brew. Chris has never been busier and plans are being made to ease the workload by creating a separate cask-washing area.



The **Grain Barge**, the Bristol Beer Factory's own floating pub in Hotwells, now has a full food menu available and this includes sausages and pies made with BBF's Red beer, fish in beer batter made from BBF's Sunrise and also brownies made from BBF's Milk Stout. Live music is being put on every Friday night, so do check out the forthcoming listings at the boat.

And if you're looking for some Christmas beer at home, you can contact the brewery for a selection of presentation packs, mini-casks and boxes of beer on 0117 9026317.

*Richard Brooks
(all photos were taken at the Factoberfest)*



The Rising Sun at Frampton Cotterell

Celebrating 25 years under the ownership of the Stone family

THE Rising Sun at Frampton Cotterell, a genuine free house, was bought by Roger and Pauline Stone back in December 1982. Son Kevin joined as a partner and, when he later married Sandra, she too joined the business. With Roger and Pauline now retired, Kevin's son, Ashley, is now on board.

Real ale has always featured highly at the Rising Sun; in fact it has featured regularly in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide since 1983 and proof, in the form of framed stickers, are displayed above the bar.

In 1995 the pub was voted Pub of the Year by the Bristol & District of CAMRA (then known as Avon branch) – an accolade the Stone dynasty were so proud of that they had a splendid wooden plaque produced that is still displayed on the wall to the left of the bar.

Six regular real ales – Brakspear Bitter, Bass, Butcombe Bitter, Cotswold Spring's Codrington Codger and Wadworth 6X – are on offer, plus a changing guest ale, with over 70 featuring each year. Beware any gassy beer lovers: no keg beer has been sold here for over 15 years! Beer here is purveyed through hand pumps from an underground cellar.

The pub is split-level, has stone and carpet flooring, and the walls are adorned with brewery mirrors and prints of the local area. It also has a skittle alley. In 1999 a conservatory was added and now a wide-ranging menu is offered seven days a week – good beer and good food (in that order)! A garden at the back has just been added and, for smokers, a smart cast-iron shelter with a glass roof is on the cards.

The Stones are embarking on an exciting new venture, a brewery called Great Western



Brewing Company (you can read more about this else where in *Pints West*). Kevin and Sandra will therefore be devoting much of their time to this, while back at the pub, new managers Tony and Lou Merryfield will be running things on a day-to-day basis. Apparently, upon their arrival, they just couldn't believe how much real ale is sold.

The Rising Sun is the epitome of a traditional community pub serving great real ale in top-notch condition. Bristol & District

CAMRA congratulate all involved on their 25th anniversary.

Pete Bridle

The Rising Sun, Ryecroft Road, Frampton Cotterell, BS36 2HN. Tel: 01454 772330. Opening hours: 11.30 to 3 and 5.30 to 11.30 (Monday to Thursday); 11.30 to 12 (Friday and Saturday); 12 to 11.30 (Sunday).

The Rising Sun – Stoned for 25 years!

Meet the Brewer

THE Wetherspoon chain of pubs held their Autumn beer festival from 1st to 18th November and leading the way was the Commercial Rooms in Corn Street, Bristol.

This new entry to the CAMRA Good Beer Guide normally averages 2,300 pints of real ale a week, 1,400 of which are guest beers from around the country.

Despite ordering in a full range of guest ales for the festival, demand proved so high that manager Steve Binns had to seek several emergency resupplies to keep the ale flowing to the pumps.

In addition to providing over 70 different real ales during the festival, the Commercial Rooms also held a "meet the brewer" evening where customers had the opportunity to speak to representatives of Bath Ales, Butcombe and Cotleigh breweries, and even try a few free samples.

Richard Brooks



Meet, from left to right, Stephen Heptinstall of Cotleigh, Richard Dempster of Bath Ales, Steve Binns of the Commercial Rooms, and Neil Armstrong of Butcombe.

The Duke of York

A work of art and a drinker's delight

It was only a year or two ago that the Duke of York in Jubilee Road, St Werburghs, really came to our attention. It had recently been saved following a campaign by the locals and a veritable public outcry when the previous owner attempted to turn this pub, like happens with too many others, into a block of flats.

On visiting and seeing the amazing mural outside, which looks something like an enchanted forest, and venturing inside, we knew that we had been missing an absolute gem. We entered what appeared to be a grotto-like interior with hops and unusual memorabilia adorning the walls and every nook and cranny, plus the all-important hand pumps serving interesting real ales, and a plethora of Weston's ciders, and even a perry. The range of real ales changes frequently, and the beer is always of the highest quality. There is also a good range of bottled beers and ciders.

As well as the main bar, downstairs there is to be found one of Bristol's few remaining skittle alleys. Upstairs, following one of the murals that starts downstairs and winds its way up to the next floor, can be found a sports room and a "chill out" room. Outside there is an enclosed courtyard featuring yet more of the artist's handiwork.

The pub is not open lunchtimes, but you can visit it between 5pm and 11pm Mondays to Wednesdays, 5pm to midnight Thursdays and Fridays, 4pm to midnight Saturdays, and 3.30pm to 11pm Sundays. To our mind Duke of York is now a "must visit" pub, which we are sure will not disappoint.



Some directions in case you have difficulty finding the Duke of York:

- From the Miners Arms on Mina Road, walk towards James Street, which is closeish to a bus stop on the left, then walk across the main road and find Mina Road Park. Walk diagonally across the park (you will find a noted Victorian toilet to your left) and Jubilee Road is at the end.
- From the centre, I'd recommend a swift walk along Newfoundland Road, turn left into Lower Ashley Road, via a short incline at the end of the underpass, first right into Conduit Road, a very brief right into Conduit place, and you really shouldn't miss the mural that should now be in front of you.

*Adapted from the words of Richard Walters
Photos by Lesly Huxley*



The Great Western Brewing Company, Hambrook



SATISFYING the upturn in demand for locally brewed beer continues with the creation of Bristol's newest brewery, the Great Western Brewing Company based at the Old Turners Bakery in Hambrook.

The brewery is the new business venture of the Stone family who run the highly successful free house, the Rising Sun at Frampton Cotterell. Kevin Stone has wanted to get into brewing for the last ten or twelve years, but the problem has been finding the right site ... then the Old Bakery in Hambrook became available.

Following extensive restoration of the building – which, believe it or not, uncovered a well – brewing equipment was purchased from all over the country. One vessel was bought from the Leek Brewing Company in Staffordshire, which had quite literally fallen off the back of a lorry. It was full of dents and holes but has now been modified and is now the hot liquor tank. Two more ten-barrel maturation tanks were bought from Wadworth and converted into a mash tun and a copper. Fermentation vessels have been manufactured to their specifications by Wellen fabrications of Stroud, who also carried out all modifications to the other vessels. A Fulton steam boiler has also been bought.

All design work has been carried out by Brian Rides, who was a founder member of Wickwar Brewing Company. Brian's knowledge has been invaluable in getting this project off the ground. The brewing team include head brewer Bob Soper, Kevin and his son Ashley, with initial consultancy provided by Brian. Kevin's wife, Sandra, will be dealing with the sales side of the business.

As well as selling through the Rising Sun, direct sales are planned to local pubs. In addition, the beers will be available from a wholesaler and through the SIBA (Society of Independent Brewers) direct delivery scheme.

The first brew, appropriately called



Maiden Voyage, is named after Annie Taylor, the first woman to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel. To complement it, there will be a second beer called Old Higby, named after a great, great grandfather who liked his ale. A third mainstream brew plus seasonal ales are also planned.

So, with the creation of the Great Western Brewing Company in Hambrook, you will be seeing ales brewed by the Stone family on sale both at the at the Rising Sun and at other outlets in the area. Also, an application has been submitted for an on-licence to allow sales in a shop at the brewery site.

This is another exciting development in the local real ale scene bringing more choice for local people. We wish everyone involved in this new venture every success and have no doubt ale fans throughout the area will be eagerly

anticipating the first brews!

Pete Bridle

*Great Western Brewing Company.
Telephone: 0117 9572842.
(Brewery visits are planned in the New Year.)*

