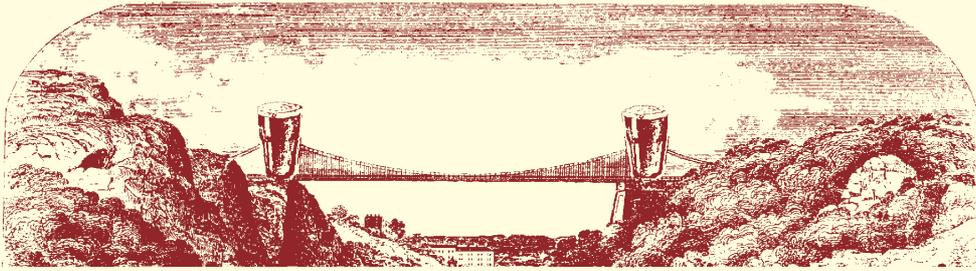




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# PINTS WEST

Multi-award-winning magazine of the Bristol & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale  
(incorporating the Bath & Borders Branch)



*Hunters Lodge, Priddy  
(photo by Richard Brooks)*

# Pub of the year presentations

Bristol & District CAMRA presented their 2008 Pub Of The Year award to the Duke of York, located in Jubilee Road, St Werburghs, Bristol, on Monday 28th April.

Pictured from left to right are Richard Brooks (branch chairman), Yosh Coe (licensee), Kate Stanley (assistant manager) and Jane Pow (licensee).

The Duke of York is a fantastic community pub and is a testament to what can be achieved when people support their local. Only a few years ago the pub was threatened with being redeveloped into flats, however local supporters rallied around and it is now a thriving pub with a unique appearance and appeal and even occasional art exhibitions.

Inside there are more quirky design features and the men's toilets have a very unusual colour scheme. The pub offers a changing range of excellent guest real ales plus some real cider.

As well as having an enclosed courtyard, the pub has retained its skittle alley and added an upstairs lounge/chill-out room and a games room in 2007. In addition to the main bar, this all gives customers a choice of different areas when deciding where to settle.



The runner-up for this year is the Hunters Lodge at Priddy, which also secured the runner-up position last year. Popular with walkers and cavers, the Hunters Lodge is definitely one for people who like pubs with a traditional feel, as can be seen in the pictures of the interior below.

Pictured in the group shot is Richard Brooks presenting the certifi-



cate to licensee Roger Dors and his wife, surrounded by Bristol & District branch members that traveled to the Hunters Lodge for the evening. Whilst there they enjoyed the fine range of real ales served on gravity straight from the barrel. Also popular was some of the excellent value bar food at the Hunters Lodge and the weekly live folk music jam session.

*Richard Brooks*

*Photos Tony Durbin, Lesly Huxley, Richard Brooks*



# New look Cambridge Arms

“EXCELLENT food, great wine and fine ales .... and the very best of service” – so reads the mission statement in the recently refurbished Cambridge Arms on Coldharbour Road, Redland. Although not able to speak for the food and wine, I can testify that the real ales and service are second to none.

Paul Frickling, the current manager of the Cambridge, arrived 20 months ago from a CAMRA Good Beer Guide-listed pub in Binfield, Berkshire. Paul is a Master Cellarman and since taking over has nearly doubled the sales of Fuller’s flagship beer, London Pride.



Paul also takes full advantage of the range of cask ales available to him and, on recent visits, the rarely seen Chiswick Bitter (a light 3.5% ABV refreshing hoppy bitter), Fuller’s 1845 (at 6.3% a rich fruity beer, more usually seen in bottles), Fuller’s IPA (4.8%, a delicious amber beer) and Gales HSB (premium bitter) have all graced the bar. It’s truly refreshing to see some of the not so well known ales from the Fuller’s range making an appearance in Bristol. It is also refreshing to see so much emphasis put on cleanliness – tables are usually cleaned as soon as they’ve been vacated and glasses cleared frequently.



The pub has been attractively refurbished in a contemporary style, and is a vast improvement on previous jobs. The two TVs are far less intrusive than they used to be and to the side of the pub, and much has been made of the outside patio. There is, of course, still the large beer garden and, during the summer months, Paul has plans for a hog roast barbecue.

Traditional home-cooked food is served from noon to 3pm and from 6pm to 9pm, Monday to Friday, noon to 9pm Saturday, and noon to 8pm Sunday. Apparently the “Cambridge Arms Burger” is



fast becoming a much-talked-about signature dish. The Sunday roast at £7.95 is also popular. A new summer menu and wine list is due out soon. Children are allowed in the pub until 8pm.

On Sunday evenings at 8.30pm a popular pub quiz takes place with up to 20 teams taking part.

So next time you’re in the vicinity or taking the air on Durdham Down, why not pop in and see for yourself.

*The Cambridge Arms, Coldharbour Road, Redland, Bristol BS6 7JS – 0117 9739786. Opening times 12 - 11 Sun - Thur; 12 - 11.30 Fri & Sat.*

*Ali Bridle*

# The Seven Stars - a great local in the City

THERE are precious few pubs like the Seven Stars in central Bristol. This is a real pub – forget the excess chrome, posy people, immoderate consumption of bottles of brightly coloured sugary fizz, or sham “music”. This is a pub for people to get together, enjoy quality beers in great condition, hold a conversation, play pub games and maybe listen to some live music.

Situated just off Victoria Street and next to the Fleece, the Seven Stars is hidden away in Thomas Lane. This pub is a survivor. It has survived the planners, the blitz when much of the surrounding area was destroyed, the trend to convert pubs into something else, the loss of the residential mass around the pub and recent redevelopment of the surrounding area.

This pub has, in fact, survived since at least the seventeenth century. In the Bristol Records Office, a reference is made to Sir John Hawkins who, while buying what was to become Georges Brewery and subsequently Courage’s, acquired the Seven Stars from the Saunders family brewing dynasty.

Enough of history for the moment. What is happening at the Seven Stars in this part of the twenty-first century? Well, it’s fair to say that the Seven Stars is having a stellar time. The pub has been run by Steve Niven and Katie Hardwick since May 2007. Under their stewardship, the Stars is going from strength to strength. The pub is friendly and well run, somewhere where customers are made to feel valued, service is excellent, and the range of beers has improved and is kept in superb condition. Live music features on some days and there are happy hours every day.

It is clear that the Seven Stars is a labour of love for Steve and Katie, who met while working at the Stag and Hounds in Old Market a couple of years ago. Since they met, they have both gained their Personal Licence to obtain managerial roles in the pub trade. Steve has experience in the licensed trade that covers work in hotels, clubs, pubs, and even theme bars! Steve also takes great pleasure in researching pub



The sight that greets you at the bar in the Seven Stars

history. Katie has six years experience in a sales and supervisory capacity in the hospitality trade before taking on the Seven Stars. Katie must be one of the youngest licences in Bristol at 22. Since taking over at the pub a year ago, Katie has taken the ales on board and enjoys sourcing new beers and taking pride in the selection and condition of the beers.

Regular ales feature from Otter, Bath Ales, Butcombe and Sharp’s. The pub also features guest ales and on recent visits I have witnessed beers from the likes of Stonehenge, Wickwar, Bristol Beer Factory and Hop Back. The pub is always open to suggestions for future guest ales and, in fact, all guests have resulted from customer recommendation!

My visits have become more frequent in recent times, such is the good quality of the beers on offer. I know that I am not in isolation in coming back time and again. Steve and Katie confirm the increasing popularity of the Seven Stars: “General trade has nearly tripled with the help of old and new locals spreading the word, along with our hard working staff, not to mention support from CAMRA and the Bristol Radical History Group. We are committed to making the Seven Stars a local pub within the city that the people of Bristol can be proud of.”

Not bad in a time of declining disposable incomes and a general down turn in consumer spending. This shows what can be achieved by hard work and customer focus. Also, the massive increase in sales of real ale shows that this can bring rewards for the consumer and the pub. Customers will stay longer, have an extra beer, come back more often and tell friends.

If that wasn’t enough, there are the happy hours. These happen every day between 2.30 and 6.30. Offers include (at the time of writing) ales for only £2 per pint (normal price £2.60). Every Wednesday there is a Sharp’s ale promotion which takes all draught Sharp’s ales down to £1.50 per pint all day! There is also a student discount every day with a valid student card.

Other attractions of the pub include a pool table, a quiz machine and a dart board – and yes, it’s one that can actually be used! How many have you seen that are placed above an occupied table?

Every Sunday between 3 and 6, four local acoustic acts play at the pub for a chilled-out afternoon with an open mic session following. The “Love-in” presented by Alan Tonge is every Saturday between 3 and 6. Four mainly acoustic acts perform to a friendly audience with cheap drinks and free nuts, cheese and chocolate fingers (not too many of those with the beer, mind!).

It is of note that the Seven Stars has just launched new ale, brewed by Sharp’s. It is called Abolition Ale to recognise Thomas Clarkson’s work there. The Seven Stars was visited by Thomas Clarkson who,

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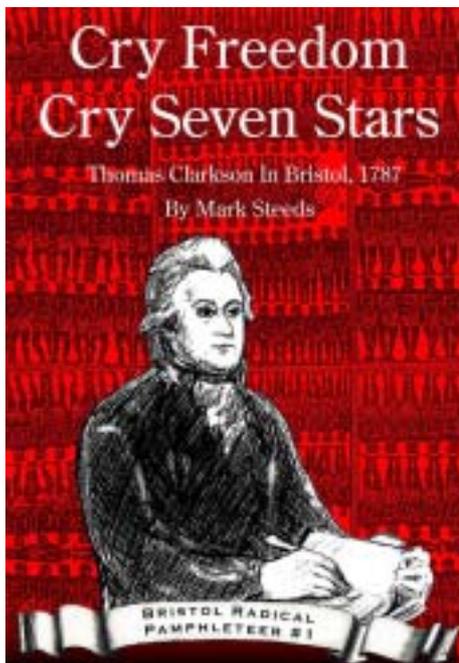
The Seven Stars

befriended by the landlord of the time was a major player in the abolition of the slave trade. The Seven Stars, and the help given by landlord Thompson, played a major role in enabling Thomas Clarkson to gather evidence which changed public opinion concerning the dreadful treatment of the enslaved and indeed of the sailors who travelled with them.

The impact that Clarkson had, on a global basis, is barely recognised in Bristol. There is a small blue plaque at the pub, but, given the monumental impact that resulted from Clarkson's visits to the Seven Stars, this needs greater recognition. Therefore, a lot of hard work has been undertaken to create a very informative pamphlet on the subject, "Cry Freedom Cry Seven Stars". This can be purchased at the Seven Stars for a mere £3 – less than the price of a pint in some pubs nowadays.

So, why not discover or rediscover this great little boozer in town? Buy and enjoy a pint or two of the superb beers on offer, and why not buy the pamphlet and find out a bit more about this fascinating piece of local history? Enjoy the read with your pint happy in the knowledge that proceeds will go towards an important new, large plaque (1000mm x 650mm) in aluminium alloy to be displayed in the Seven Stars.

Pete Bridle



# Alistair's not our Darling

WHAT'S wrong with a good honest pint down the local? That bastion of English tradition continues to be eroded away by the anti-alcohol lobby, who claim that Britain has become a nation of binge drinkers, and by the Government, who think that by slapping another 4p on a pint of beer (many times more than that to you and me by the time it hits the bar) it is going to stem this unwelcome tide.

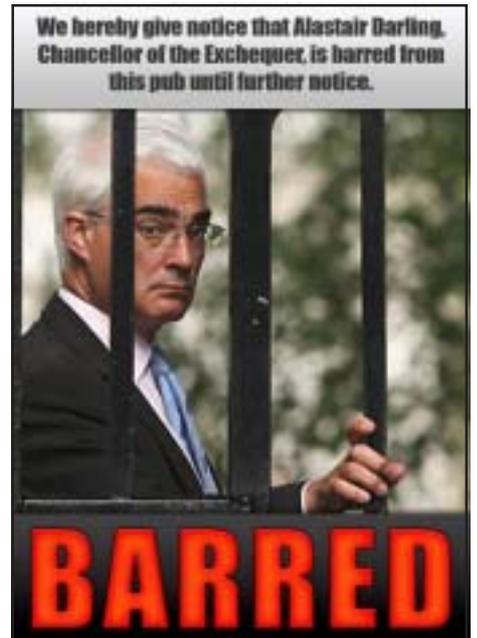
Well they've got it all wrong. It's a known fact that out of all the EU member states, the UK, Finland and Ireland pay the highest rate of duty on alcohol and yet are perceived to have the biggest binge-drinking culture, so clearly the strategy isn't working. Rather, it is fuelling the problem by driving people out of the controlled environment of pubs and into the deep-discounting supermarkets who don't pay beer duty and don't allow brewers to pass it on, so their rock-bottom prices will remain unaffected by this tax hike. So our binge drinkers will simply fill up on the cheap booze before hitting the vertically integrated drinking establishments, known as bars, in their local towns and city centres. Interestingly, if you think about it, we never had this problem 20 years ago and it's now those very planners/magistrates who granted the licenses in the first place who are now complaining and jumping on the anti-alcohol band wagon.

If you think about it, the problem is actually part of the solution. We need to look at the impact of retail price on consumption as opposed to the off-trade – there needs to be a more level playing field. We also need to look more laterally perhaps, at the viability of product taxation. The Chancellor claimed his budget was about reducing alcohol harm, but it seems strange that lower ABV products, such as real ale, suffered the higher tax rise – 4p on a pint of beer represents a 13% increase, 3p on a litre of cider represents a 14% increase,

whilst 14p on a bottle of wine and 55p on a bottle of spirits represents a 10% increase. Perhaps there should be a reduction in VAT on locally produced products, e.g. locally brewed real ales.

CAMRA has always maintained that the social and economic benefits of enjoying alcohol responsibly come from using your local community pub. It's what us Brits have been doing for hundreds of years. As for the recent duty increases on beer, our national drink, well they show a complete disregard for the 15 million people who enjoy a good honest pint. And why should the majority of us have to pay for the irresponsible actions of the few?

Ali Bridle



This poster made an appearance at numerous pubs across the country following the rise in beer duty in the latest budget



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# New look for Cheddar Ales

THE next time you visit a pub offering Cheddar Ales, you'll notice a distinctive new look on their pump clips, and a new name for their best bitter. You may need to do a double-take before ordering a pint of Gorge Best (4% ABV) to avoid asking for the legendary footballer; the beer is of course named to reflect the brewery's proximity to the equally legendary Cheddar Gorge.

Cheddar Ales has been operating from Winchester Farm on the edge of Cheddar Village for two years, producing two regular beers (Best and the golden Potholer) and seasonals that currently include Totty Pot porter for the winter, and Mild Cheddar for the spring.

Head Brewer Jem Ham, who set up the microbrewery, points to the rejuvenation that real ale is currently enjoying as one of the reasons behind the re-brand. The new look is intended to encourage people to try the beers by making them appear as inviting as possible, in traditional pubs and clubs, 'gastro-pubs' and restaurants.

But image isn't everything and taste matters; Jem believes that anyone wanting to try a new beer will find "something they will love within our range".

Unusually, the brewery's website features suggestions on which food is best served with their different beers, as well as the various



ways you can get hold of some to drink (bottle-conditioned beers and 9-pint mini-casks are available from some pubs and off-licenses; 18-pint beer boxes and 9-gallon casks can be collected from the brewery).

Jem hopes everyone likes the new look. What do you think? You can often find Cheddar Ales on the bar in a number of pubs in the Bristol area, including the Portcullis and the Victoria in Clifton, the Duke of York in St Werburghs and the Hillgrove Porter Stores in Kingsdown. The website includes a search feature to locate others selling Cheddar Ales permanently or as guests, so you have no excuse to miss out!

*Lesly Huxley*

# A bit of stability

NOT all real ale drinkers want to see a different line-up of beers on the bar every time they walk into their local pub. Some prefer to stick with what they know.

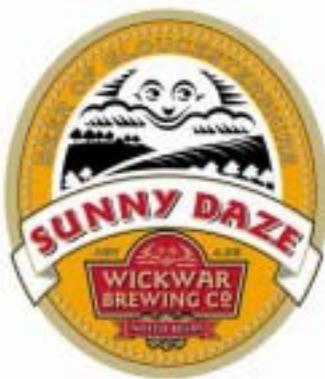
With this thought in mind, landlord Martin Hughes has decided to introduce some stability to the beer range at the Hope & Anchor in Jacobs Wells Road, Hotwells. Timothy Taylor Landlord is to make a permanent appearance on the bar. Maybe one or two of the other five handpumps will offer semi-permanent beers ("house ales") while the rest should continue to offer changing "guest ales". These often feature beers from the local area, or the wider south-west region, but not exclusively.

The pub has recently undergone a spot of refurbishment (when it was closed for a few days a month or two back) which, as well as a lick of paint, included replacing the ceilings and revamping the toilets. And putting a fresh lot of hops above the bar.

Whatever your indulgence here, the message from the management remains, "Don't spill beer".

*SP*

## Malt, Hops, Yeast & Water!



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# Local Pubs

Good news, bad news,  
and who knows what  
next . . .

SINCE the recent formation of the **Bristol Pubs Group** (a part of Bristol & District CAMRA), there has been several significant developments in our area.

There have in fact been some very positive changes. The **Barley Mow** in Barton Road, St Phillips – close to the *Temple Quay 2* development and only a few minutes' walk from Temple Meads station – reopened for business on the 21<sup>st</sup> May. This is great news: not only could this pub have been lost forever following its closure a few months ago, but also it is the Bristol Beer Factory brewery that has acquired it.

The Barley Mow is very much a pub; there are no pretensions here. Until recently, it was in the hands of Wadworth brewery and could so easily have been converted into something else. Do we really need yet more flats!? As well as being Bristol Beer Factory's first land-based pub (they also have the Grain Barge floating pub in Hotwells), it's a great pub to drop into with friends and enjoy a beer and conversation. I expect an awful lot of *Pints West* readers have never visited the place. Well, now is the time to discover this great little boozier.

In April, the **Robin Hood's Retreat** pub on the Gloucester Road, Bishopston finally opened its outdoor drinking and dining area. The garden has been totally decked in a split-level style with attractive lighting and garden furniture – it makes a really pleasant outdoor environment away from the busy Gloucester Road.

At the time of writing, the **Kellaway Arms** in Kellaway Avenue, Horfield has just reopened after a six-week refurbishment. It is fair to say that the "Kelly" was in need of a bit of TLC. This Enterprise-run pub has new management who are experienced in the trade. The pub also has a large garden, great for these (hopefully) long hot sunny days and evenings. The pub reopened with a good range of ales on, in the form of Cheddar Potholer, Felinfoel Double Dragon, Cotleigh Golden Seahawk, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, Wickwar BOB and Courage Best. (We hope to bring you a more in-depth article on this pub in the next issue.) This surely looks like another exciting development in the local real ale scene.

The **Portcullis** in Clifton also reopened a little while ago. Ned and Nat are enthusiastically managing this lovely little pub which is just a short stroll down from the Clifton Suspension Bridge. A good range of real ales is on offer including a dark beer. They have

## Want to maintain a good choice of pubs in your neighbourhood? Be afraid, be very afraid!

**INFORMATION has reached the Bristol Pubs Group that a local pub is currently on the market with a restrictive covenant. Upon completion of the sale, it will no longer be permitted to trade as a pub. This is surely outrageous!**

This is certainly not the first time this sort of practice has occurred in the UK. However, at a time when pubs are closing at an alarming rate around the country, why should the owner of a pub apply a restrictive covenant when selling a pub? By making a deliberate move to close a pub, does this show their commitment to maintaining the pub stock in the UK? Do they want to deprive the regulars of their local?

I do not believe restrictive covenants were ever intended to be employed this way. They were meant to prevent inap-

propriate changes of use of buildings or land, not to stop them continuing in their existing role. This appears to me to be a blatant abuse of the system.

If they can't make a success of the place as a public house, why not leave the option open for someone else to have a go? Well, perhaps it could be because the company that owns the pub also has other pubs in the nearby area. Maybe, just maybe, when they have flogged the pub, they do not want some other operator making a success of the place and taking trade away from the other pub or pubs that they own nearby.

Of course, there may be other more commendable reasons behind this practice. However, despite racking our collective brains, we cannot think of any. All suggestions welcome.

*Pete Bridle*

already run a successful beer festival. The pub is unusual in that the two rooms of the pub are on different floors. There are also plans to open a small garden. This is an intimate and charming place to enjoy your beer.

It has just been reported that the **Bell** in Kingsdown is up for grabs. This is a lovely little pub that was successfully run for several years by Anna Luke. A change of ownership about three years ago marked a different tack for the Bell. I cannot comment on how successful this change of direction was but this is a great location and, with the right customer offering, could surely be a successful pub business for someone.

The Greene King-run **Queen's Head** in Eastville is up for sale. This is a prominent street-corner pub. The internal layout of the pub was spoilt several years ago when internal walls were knocked through. We await developments with interest. (*See separate article.*)

There are far too many other pubs that have closed in recent times for me to mention here. Many have an uncertain future such as the **Printer's Devil** in Old Market. It is also well documented that pubs are facing challenging trading times. There are many issues that the on-trade has to deal with, not least the effects of the smoking ban. I, as a non-smoker, welcome the cleaner environment. However, the reality is that nearly all sectors of the trade acknowledge that turnover has fallen as a direct result of the ban. Where are all these non-smokers who indicated that they would not visit pubs in the past because of a fuggy atmosphere? They do not appear to have returned to the pubs in anywhere near enough

numbers to compensate for the smokers who have abandoned pub-going as a result of the ban. **Dear Reader, please bring your non-smoking friends back to the pub!**

Other challenges facing pubs are the ludicrously cheap price of drinks in supermarkets, the general downturn in the economy and resultant lack of disposable income, plus the absolutely outrageous increase in beer duty by the Government in the recent budget. The extra duty on a pint was a hammer blow to community pubs. The Government got this seriously wrong. It will be the pub trade that will be impacted by the massive duty hike. This will not curb binge drinking: the real source of the problem is the purchase of cheap booze from supermarkets with which people "pre-load" before going out, or which results in drinking on the streets. Community pubs are part of the solution where people can enjoy a drink in a controlled environment run by a professional licensee.

Despite the challenges faced by pubs, it is not all doom and gloom. Witness good news at the top of this article. Then there is Butcombe's Colston Yard, formerly the Smiles Brewery Tap. Also, look to what has been achieved at the Seven Stars. This is a simple pub hidden away in a side street not far from the city centre. Yet, in the space of one year, by simple enthusiasm, offering a decent range of real ales in first class condition, being friendly and interactive with the customers, this pub has tripled its turnover. No need to turn into a gastro-pub or some silly theme bar, just do the simple things well and see what can happen.

Support your local!

*Pete Bridle*

# Great British Beer Festival 2008

**Earls Court, London**

**Tuesday 5th to Saturday 9th August**

**(oh, and win some tickets!)**

EARLS COURT, London will again host CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival this year, running between Tuesday 5th August and Saturday 9th August.

65,000 people attended the 'Showcase for British Beer' last summer and we expect the same numbers to come along this year to participate in the festival fun!

Over 500 tasty tipples from the smallest microbreweries and large regional brewers have been hand-picked for visitors to try. These will include wheat beers, ciders, golden ales, stouts, porters, bitters, milds, bottle-conditioned beers, perries and traditional foreign beers from around the world.

The festival is not only about the ale! Visitors will also be able to enjoy food, live music, entertainment, games, tombolas, and quizzes in the comfort of a family-friendly atmosphere. Why not catch up and socialise with friends, unwind after work, or just soak up the festival atmosphere?

Other festival highlights include:

- **Family Room** (all those under the age of 18 must remain in the family room throughout the festival and must be supervised by a family member).
- **Tutored Beer Tastings.** Why not learn to appreciate the different tastes and flavours by attending one of our tutored beer tastings? But be warned, places sell out fast!
- **Corporate Hospitality.** For work colleagues or clients, we are able to offer a variety of packages to suit most tastes and budgets.
- **Hat Day** – Thursday 6th August. This will be the fourth year that we will be celebrating Hat Day! As usual we will be asking people to wear their silly hats on Thursday. So whether you have got one in the cupboard, or even better can make one for the day, make sure you remember those hats! The best hats will win some superb prizes.

For more information please visit [www.gbbf.org](http://www.gbbf.org).

## Win a pair of Great British Beer Festival tickets!

CAMRA is offering 25 lucky winners a pair of Great British Beer Festival tickets. All you need to do to enter this competition is email or post your answer to this overly simple question by Friday 4th July:

*How many people attended the Great British Beer Festival last year?*

Please email your name, address, email, telephone number and answer to [tony.jerome@camra.org.uk](mailto:tony.jerome@camra.org.uk) or alternatively post to Tony Jerome, Senior Marketing Manager, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Rd, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW. You will be charged absolutely nothing (now there's a refreshing change). Winners will be notified and sent their tickets before Friday 18th July.

## Opening Times

Tuesday 5th Aug	5pm – 10.30pm
Wednesday 6th Aug	12 noon – 10.30pm
Thursday 7th Aug	12 noon – 10.30pm
Friday 8th Aug	12 noon – 10.30pm
Saturday 9th Aug	11am – 7pm

Buy your tickets in advance by visiting [www.gbbf.org](http://www.gbbf.org) and receive a £2 discount.

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# News from Arbor Ales **Bristol goes Mild**

**BREAKING news of Arbor Ales comes from brewer Jon Comer who says: "I'm about to move the brewery and expand it."**

During the past six months, in spite of all the problems faced by the brewing and pub trades in general, sales of Arbor Ales' beers have steadily increased to the point where demand is outstripping the 2.5 brewer's barrel length (BBL) capacity of the existing plant, housed adjacent to the Old Tavern pub in Stapleton. Jon has had to look for new premises in order to accommodate a larger brewery.

According to Jon, most of this success is due to the efforts of his partner Megan who has taken over the sales side of the business, although he is perhaps being a little modest here. Since there has been a consistent improvement in both the range and quality of his beers over the same period, his contribution is probably equal. For example, his **Mild West** (3.6% ABV) available throughout May at the Old Tavern and at various other local outlets, has "simply flown out" in the words of the lucky landlords who have been stocking it. A truly tasty, refreshing and well crafted mild, it is one to try – if you're fortunate enough to get there before it sells out!

Jon is about to sign a lease on new premises in Kingswood into which he intends to install a new 5.5 BBL plant, hopefully to be up and running by September. This should take care of the production of the regular range of beers while the existing 2.5 BBL set-up, to be installed alongside, will add the additional flexibility required for bespoke beers and "one-off" brews.

Further good news is that Megan's brother, Namaya Reynolds, is joining the business thereby adding a welcome extra pair of hands in the brewery. Namaya, who is Canadian, will be spending a lot of time on the road drumming up sales as well as delivering orders.

Clearly busy times ahead for all at Arbor Ales!

*Henry Davies*

MAY has seen massive support for mild ale in the Bristol, Weston and Bath areas as breweries, pubs and drinkers have indulged in the month-long campaign to promote this style of beer. Although mild ale is rarely seen in our region, we have enjoyed a whole month of mild as over 50 pubs have offered a choice of 60 different milds, many of them from the South-West. This tremendous achievement was made possible by the enthusiastic support of the pub managers and landlords who sourced the ales and committed to the events. For many, it was their first venture with this type of ale, and on behalf of real ale drinkers everywhere we'd like to thank them all.

Local brewers have been very supportive, with some brewing mild for the first time this year and, due to demand, brewing more than once. Locally-brewed mild this year was from Abbey Ales, Arbor Ales, Blindman's, Cheddar Ales, Cotswold Spring, Cottage, Moles, Moor, Severn Vale, Wadsworth, Wickwar and Zero Degrees.

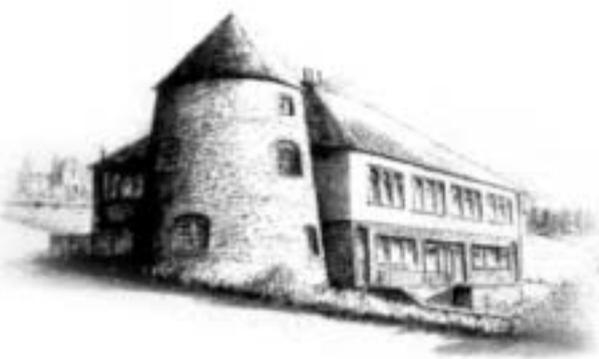
The month celebrated May Day with a tutored mild tasting session at the Robert Fitzharding in Bedminster and a mini Bedminster mild crawl, followed on the Saturday by a trail around the docks in Hotwells and the city centre, where the Commercial Rooms had six of its twelve pumps serving milds. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, the New Inn opened for the start of the South Gloucester Trail despite having no power due to the previous nights electrical storms and the following Saturday saw great fun at Weston-super-Mare with their trail starting at 11am in the railway station bar, Off The Rails. The 23<sup>rd</sup> was the most ambitious trail with eleven pubs in the Clifton and Kingsdown area taking part, and the month finished with a trail around Bath on the 31st.

This is Bristol's second year of running the 'Mild Month of May' campaign and its success guarantees that next year will be even better, with some pubs already talking of doubling the range of milds they will offer next year. Pub groups that have played a significant part in supporting these events are Wetherspoon, with over 25 milds in four of its pubs, and Dawkins Taverns with 30 milds and a Mild Trail of their own, where you could win a T-shirt for drinking milds in all four of its pubs.

*Colin Postlethwaite (Bristol and District Rare Ales Group)*

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---

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# To Mayshill and beyond (in search of Mild)

IT was Saturday 10th of May and time for the South Gloucestershire and North Bristol 'Mild Trail'. Another very warm day saw us gathering at the **New Inn** at Mayshill for lunch, but the previous night's spectacular thunderstorm had knocked out the power to the pub. With no electricity, landlord Dave McKillop had opened especially for us, but the food fridges had to remain firmly closed and the cellar temperature was being closely monitored.

This old pub was lit by candles, which gave it a nostalgic feel as we drank the *Cottage Black Prince* and the *Cotswold Spring Old Sodbury Mild*, at 3.7% a dark mild with a roast malt taste and hints of coffee and a dry aftertaste. The *Severn Vale Monumentale* was a 4.5% ABV, dark, warming mild with plenty of hop aroma and roast malt flavour.

Unable to do much until the power was back on, Dave closed up and joined us at the **Lamb Inn** in Iron Acton for an *Old Sodbury Mild*, as did Nic Milo, the brewer for Cotswold Spring.

The next stop in our search for mild took us to Fishponds where the **Cross Hands** was selling *Cottage Black Prince*. The **Van Dyke** on Fishponds Road had *Wickwar Penny Black*



Mild seekers gather at the New Inn

(photo by Tony Durbin)

and *Marstons Merrie Monk* which, with an ABV of 4.5%, was an amber coloured hoppy ale with a sulphurous nose and hint of

caramel, reminiscent of a toned down Pedigree and more akin to a light bitter rather than a mild.

The **Old Tavern** served us an excellent *Arbor Ales Mild West* as we sat in the garden to soak up the afternoon sunshine. It was a dark 3.6% mild bursting with rich, sweet flavours and hints of coffee and dark chocolate. They also had an excellent *St. Austell Black Prince* with a strong malty character, sweetish caramel flavour and a dry fruit finish at 4.0% (not to be confused with the Cottage mild of the same name). Our trail leader decided to go one up on the mild drinkers and try the *Arbor Ales General Sherman* at a head-thumping 7.1% (he thought it was a strong mild but others thought not).

A short bus ride got us to the **Miners Arms** in St. Werburghs. This is part of the Dawkins Taverns group which were featuring 30 different milds across their four pubs throughout May. Here we sampled the *Elgood's Black Dog*, a 3.6% mild with a reddish black colour and hints of liquorice and roast malt, and a dry, slightly bitter finish, which was accompanied by an out-of-tune tickling of the ivories from famous mild drinker and jazz pianist Henry Davis.

The **Duke of York** was next – Bristol & District CAMRA's pub of the year 2008 – serving *Banks's Dark Mild* tasting of sour fruit balanced with malt at 3.8%. This is believed to be the 'original' Banks's mild before the lighter coloured and weaker 'Original' was marketed. The *Cheddar Ales Mild Cheddar* at 3.6% was a dark brown coloured ale with a rich roast malt and light hop bitterness without a hint of cheese.

The **Chelsea Inn** at Easton had *Jennings Dark Mild*, 3.1%, dark brown and with a strong roast taste with a slight bitter finish.

Finishing in the **Commercial Rooms** before getting buses home, there was the famous *Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild*, a 6.0% strong ale with a good balance of fruit and hops and with a malty end. *Marstons Merrie Monk* was also on offer. This Wetherspoon's pub has been outstanding so far: only recently at a BADRAG monthly meeting they served *Beartown Black Bear* (5.0%), a dark well-balanced fruity mild, and *Moor Milly's Mild*.

Another enjoyable wobble through the 'Mild Lands' of Bristol.

Colin Postlethwaite

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# Pub news

LET'S start with some good news. A number of pubs that had been closed for a while were all due to reopen just before or after we went to press.

The **Queen's Head** at the bottom of the hill in Willsbridge was due to reopen on May 23rd. Meanwhile, over in Downend, the **Leap** has been completely gutted and refurbished inside. The bar has been reshaped, the pool table has gone and they are hoping to open at the end of May too. In Old Market, the **Punch Bowl** was also due to reopen on May 27th after a long period closed. I can't be certain, but the word on the street was that it was planning to sell Theakston's XB, Courage Directors and something from Fuller's. Not far away, the **Barley Mow** has just been reopened by the Bristol Beer Factory.

Down by the banks of the Avon at Hanham Lock, the **Old Lock And Weir** is on great form. Bath Gem, Otter Ale, Wadworth 6X, Wickwar Cotswold Way and Thatcher's Cheddar Valley Cider on draught. By the way, if you are tempted by the Thatcher's Gold on tap, please note that it will be served with an 'ice top'. The 'ice' comes direct from the pump, and is frozen cider, not water.

The **Three Sugar Loaves** at the bottom of the Christmas Steps was, when I popped in recently, selling not only Sharp's Doom Bar,

but its much less familiar Cornish competitor, Skinner's Cornish Knocker.

Sharp's attempt to annexe the whole of Bristol's pub scene (only joking!) has reached the **Farm** in St Werburgh's, where the Doom Bar is doing very well, as is the more local Bath Gem.

Maiden Voyage and Classic Gold, two beers from one of the area's newest breweries, the **Great Western Brewery**, have been enjoyed in a number of pubs in Bristol recently. If you haven't managed to try any yourself yet, your best bet is of course at the **Rising Sun** in Frampton Cotterell. (The pub and the brewery are run by members of the same family.)

Contrary to recent rumours that had come my way, I'm pleased to say that the **Volunteer** in New Street, St Judes is very much open and trading. This is a pub which had previously had a run-down but quaintly charming look, and had seemed on its last legs for some while. However, it was nicely spruced up a while ago. Although it doesn't serve any real ale, it does offer a nice drop of real cider in the form of Thatcher's Traditional and Black Rat. It even has a garden and three cats.

The **Jolly Cobbler** in Kingswood is now serving an excellent pint of Butcombe Bitter.

We've had reports that the **Friendship** in Filton is currently closed – though it wasn't clear whether this was a permanent or temporary position.

The **Charlton** in Keynsham (tucked away

just off the road out towards Whitchurch) has undergone a complete refurbishment, and is now offering as many as four real ales at a time.

Up in Kingsdown, the **Kingsdown Vaults** has been taken over by the same people who run the Picture House (formerly the Dog & Duck by the old cinema on Whiteladies Road). The Kingsdown now offers Bath Gem, but sadly no more traditional cider.

The **Willy Wicket** just off the Ring Road at Downend is currently serving a particularly nice pint of St Austell Tribute to complement the London Pride and Butcombe Bitter.

In Pucklechurch, I found a good selection of well-kept ales on a recent visit to the **Fleur De Lys**. Bass, Courage Best and London Pride were all topped by a beautifully crisp Cotswold Spring Old Codger.

The **Bell** in Redcliffe is another pub which was due to reopen in May. This is a lovely old building and we're delighted to see it back in action. Just round the corner, you can get a lovely pint of Moles' Black Rat cider in the **Golden Guinea**, where a changing ale also from Moles is usually available.

Another **Bell**, this time in Stapelton, is the subject of what Scottish & Newcastle Pub Enterprises call a "major project planned for the premises which will see the Bell transformed into an up-market Urban Inn which will have scope to introduce some food to the business".

*Duncan Shine*



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## THE BELL

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Stoke Lane, Westbury-on-Trym  
0117 9623715

## THE LAMB

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PRIDE IN EVERYTHING WE BREW

# News from Butcombe

BUTCOMBE'S refreshing, zesty Blond is again available in the non-chilled cask version, replacing their Brunel IPA for the summer season.

Having won the Tesco bottled beer challenge this year, Brunel is now selling in all Tesco's South-West stores.

The **Colston Yard** is currently undergoing some work which will enable the provision of an al-fresco seating area to the front of the building. Let's hope the present (as I write, anyway) warm spell continues!

The weekend of the 25th to 27th April saw Butcombe landlords Steve & Jess White of the **Cross Keys** in Rode hosting their first mini beer festival, which, with food and music also being provided, was judged to be a great success.

The Butcombe-sponsored Arthritis Research Campaign's Mendip charity walk, which took place on Good Friday, was also very successful with £3,500 being raised by the participants. This event now looks set to be repeated next year if another two Butcombe pubs can accommodate up to 100 walkers! Well done to those who contributed to this year's fine total.

Not to be outdone, managers Mark and Andy, from the **Swan** at Rowberrow and **Queen's Arms** at Bleadon respectively, have recently completed all six legs (47 miles and six pubs) of the Butcombe Trail. This must set some kind of challenge to others!

Finally, the **Malt Shovel** at Cannington, one of the latest pubs to join the Butcombe estate, has been closed for complete refurbishment. It is expected to re-open in early June.

*Margaret Evett*

# National Mild Day celebrations

TO celebrate the CAMRA National Mild Day on Saturday 3rd May the Bristol & District branch held a 'Mild Ales Trail' around the harbourside and central area of Bristol. This was the second of six different trails planned around the Bristol, Weston and Bath area, and followed a successful tutored tasting and mini crawl around Bedminster that took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> May to kick off the launch of Mild Month.

The Mild Month events have all been organised by the branch rare ales group (BADRAG) that seeks to promote endangered beer styles amongst drinkers and licensees across the area, a task that has recently gained

national recognition when they took the gold award at the CAMRA Olympics.

The National Mild Day trail started at the **Orchard**, a pub close to Brunel's famous steam ship, the SS Great Britain. We waited in the sunshine for the doors to open at noon in this working area of the old docks, with its chandlery and boat repair yards, and the harbour steam train dragging its truck loads of visitors along the bank of the river Avon, back to the Industrial Museum. The Wickwar Penny Black mild with an ABV of 3.9% went down quickly as we waited to see how many people would turn up for the start of this event. With ale drinkers arriving in dribs and drabs by

river ferry, train, bus and on foot, our guide (and BADRAG leader) Laurie Gibney decided we had assembled enough to set off to our next destination.

Walking along the harbourside, we made the ten-minute walk through small dockside housing estates and marinas, past the Harbour Master's Office, and picked our way through the Underfall Yard, where craftsmen were working on the many boats in this Victorian maze of workshops and pumping houses, to arrive at the **Nova Scotia** pub. Built nearly 200 years ago, this seafarers' pub would not look out of place in a Cornish fishing village, although with views of the Clifton Suspension Bridge and the harbour where river ferries and pleasure craft cruised, it could only be Bristol. The Nova Scotia also offered us a good pint of Wickwar Penny Black, dark with a good balance of malt and slightly sweet with hints of chocolate.

Our next stop was the **Adam & Eve**, a small community pub nestled in the old Hotwells area at the bottom of the Avon Gorge. Here the houses appear to be stacked on top of each other as they climb the steep slopes on their way up to Clifton at the top. The Adam & Eve served Cottage Black Prince mild (ABV 4.0%), slightly drier than the Penny Black with coffee hints and more of a black malt bite, but still a well balanced mild. The food was good here too.

A fifteen-minute stroll along the harbourside brought us to the Bag o'Nails, a small pub renowned for its range of always different ales from micros around the country. The Dunham Dark (3.8%) from the Dunham & Massey brewery was a dark mild with a dry finish similar to the Black Prince, but the star here was the Brampton Mild from the Brampton Brewery, a dark ruby mild with an

GRANDDAD was *always*  
a bit of a practical joker.

So I should have known better when he took me down his local. Especially when he blindfolded me. Hand on elbow he steered me to a chair and sat me down. "Here, sup on this," he ordered, holding a glass to my lips. "What is it Grandad?" I CHUNTERED, apprehensively. "Never you mind," was the stern reply. "Just get it down you." I sipped, timidly, then again, bravely.

Then again, with NARY a care in the world. It was smooth, hoppy and dry. "It's delicious!" I exclaimed, ripping the blindfold from my eyes to reveal my Grandad's laughing face. "Theakston's Mild," he chortled. "I can tell it with my eyes closed. Now you can too." "But, even my dad says Theakston's Mild is only for pensioners," I protested. "Aye, your father's just not old enough to appreciate it," said Grandad, his eyes twinkling merrily. "But I reckoned his son would be."



PECULIERLY  
FINE COMPANY



Alex at the Albert Inn, Bedminster, likes it mild  
(photo by Richard Brooks)



Six mild ale pumps at the Commercial Rooms (Photo by Dave Jane)

ABV of 4.9% and a fruity aroma. The smooth balance of dark malts and ripe red fruits with a slight nutty taste made this the best mild of the day in my opinion. (*The Wickwar Penny Black sampled earlier was pretty special too - Ed.*)

A walk along College Green past the Cathedral brought us to the centre of Bristol, where we crossed the road by the Hippodrome (no actors auditioning for Casualty today) and headed for the **White Lion**, a Wickwar-owned pub built into the original city wall. Alas the Penny Black had sold out, so with a thirst to quench we marched into the old city, up Corn Street to the **Commercial Rooms**.

The Commercial Rooms is the old Chamber of Commerce building with a large glass-domed roof and a massive compass dial on the wall that shows the wind direction. The wind was definitely in our favour today, for as we approached the horseshoe-shaped bar we were faced with six handpumps, all serving a different mild! Nirvana – we were in Mild Heaven. Where to start?

Luckily, the Commercial Rooms is a Wetherspoon pub and sells third-pint measures. With a Wickwar Penny Black, Coach House Gunpowder (3.8%), dark and roasty with a slight sweetness, and an Elland Brewery Born to be Mild (3.7%), a ruby coloured mild with a pleasant balance of fruit and malt, we find a table to sit and discuss our awe. Steve Binns, the manager of the Commercial Rooms, achieved Good Beer Guide status for the 2008 guide and has just been named as the joint winner of the JD Wetherspoon Real Ale Pub of the Year competition – a recognition well deserved.

Our second round of milds here saw Cottage Black Prince, Bank Top Brewery

Dark Mild (4.0%), a dark, dry roasted taste with hints of fruit, and Archers Strong Dark Mild with a well balanced hop character and a rich malty roast taste at 5.0%.

Our final pub selling mild was the **Famous Royal Navy Volunteer**, situated in ancient King Street opposite the Old Vic and now a free house. The Moor Beer Milly's Mild (3.9%) was a dark mild with a smooth mouthfeel and a slightly roast finish, and completed the trail.

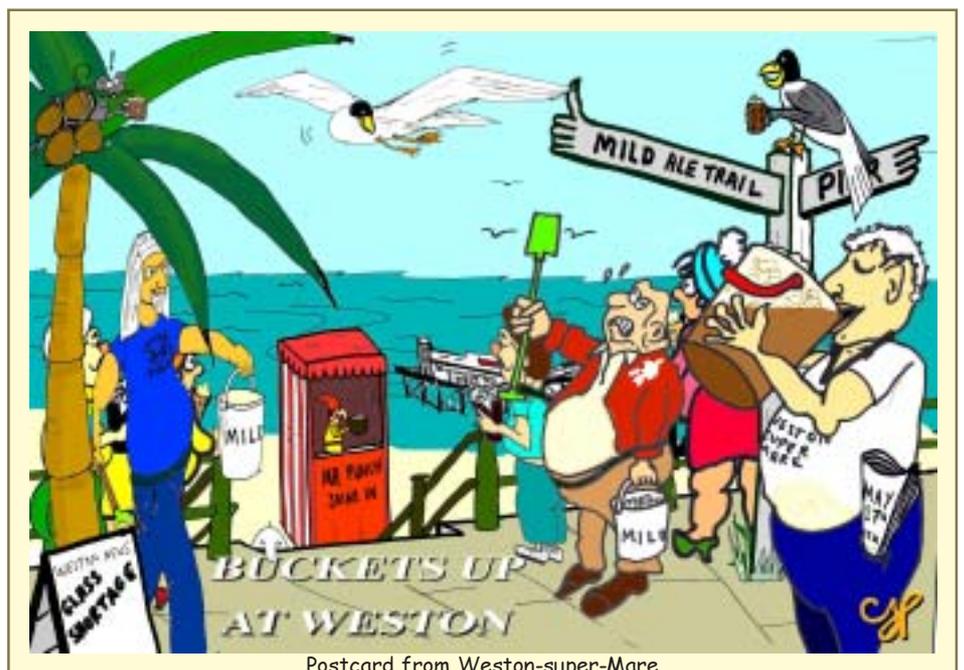
With over 55 different mild ales in at least 50 of the pubs in the Bristol and Bath area during May, it looked like there could be some tasty times ahead.

*Colin Postlethwaite*

Many other such events took place during the month of May, including 'Mild Trails' in Clifton and Kingsdown, in and around the harbourside and city centre, in Bedminster (starting off with a tutored mild tasting), in South Gloucestershire and North Bristol (reported elsewhere), in Weston-super-Mare (see the 'postcard'), and in Bath.



*Mild for the time of year, wouldn't you say?*



Postcard from Weston-super-Mare

# Young's relaunch bottle-conditioned beers

THE Wells & Young's brewing company is relaunching the Young's beer range in the off trade as bottle-conditioned beers. And *Red Tractor*, the symbol to shoppers that their food can be traced back to the farm where it was made, has awarded the Young's flagship brand, Young's Bitter, with its stamp of approval – the first major beer to receive this accolade.

The premium range will also see Young's Bitter, Young's Special London Ale and a new beer, Young's Kew Gold, all undergo a redesign to match their new status.

Chris Lewis, director of marketing for brewers Wells & Young's says: "This is really exciting for Young's beers and for the premium bottled ale category. Bottle-conditioned beers are the nearest things to cask ale that you can get because the yeast remains in the bottle which means that the beer enjoys further fermentation resulting in a fresher taste for our consumers."

Independent research has shown that consumers are moving towards the premium sector of many markets, and indulgence, pleasure and quality ingredients are key drivers in many markets.

Commenting on the news that Young's Bitter will be the first beer from a major brewer to receive the quality assurance mark from *Red Tractor*, Lewis says: "Young's



Bitter is unique in the beer world and we are proud of this enviable position. It is incredibly important to us that we work with our farmers and suppliers and know for certain the exact

source of our raw materials. It is a wonderful feeling to be able to stand in a barley field in North Norfolk and know that the barley grown there will be used in a pint of our Young's Bitter."

Jonathan Tipples, Vice Chairman of Assured Food Standards (AFS), the organisation behind *Red Tractor*, says: "Wells & Young's is one of the leading suppliers of speciality beers in Britain and we welcome their commitment to what is a new arena for the *Red Tractor* scheme. Young's Bitter is one of the fastest growing national brands in the UK and the *Red Tractor* logo on the pack will give consumers complete confidence about the strict standards of production upheld by the scheme. The Union flag also means they can be absolutely sure the ingredients have been farmed in the UK."

The *Red Tractor* logo now appears on over £7 billion worth of fresh food and drink in the UK and is an independent verification that the product has been made to the highest standard using UK farmed ingredients.

Well & Young's are kindly donating three cases of their bottle-conditioned beers as prizes for Pints West readers. Just complete the *Brewdoku* below to be in with a chance to win yours.

## Brewdoku

Complete the grid below so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contain each of the following Young's pubs and beers: **Highbury Vaults, Horts, Lock Keeper, Ropewalk, Bristol Ram, Bitter, Waggle Dance, Special London Ale, Kew Gold.**

Send your solutions, and name and address, to the editor. The first three correct answers drawn at random after 1st August 2008 win a case of one of the Young's bottle-conditioned beers.

Ropewalk		Lock Keeper	Kew Gold			Special London Ale		Bristol Ram
		Highbury Vaults			Waggle Dance	Horts		
Horts			Highbury Vaults	Bristol Ram		Lock Keeper		
Bristol Ram			Waggle Dance				Special London Ale	Bitter
Highbury Vaults			Bristol Ram		Bitter			Lock Keeper
Waggle Dance	Ropewalk				Special London Ale			Kew Gold
		Bristol Ram		Waggle Dance	Highbury Vaults			Special London Ale
		Ropewalk	Bitter			Waggle Dance		
Bitter		Waggle Dance			Lock Keeper	Kew Gold		Highbury Vaults

# Inn and around Portishead

## The George Inn, Abbots Leigh

This pub is much more “around Portishead” than “inn” it, being situated on the main road out of Bristol towards junction 19 on the M5. However, this place is frequented by residents of “Posset” and well worth a visit. The George is the only pub in this historic village split in two by the busy road and is a great place to start or finish one of the stunning walks available in the local countryside.

When I looked in at the George the other lunchtime, accompanied by my personal trainer, we were pleasantly surprised to find there are four real ales on tap - Courage Best, Sharp’s Doom Bar, Bath Ales Gem and Caledonian Deuchars IPA. Now, Deuchars is a favourite of mine, so this was a particularly welcome site. A pretty decent line-up I reckon.

Richard and Wendy Carr run the pub for Enterprise Inns and have now been in place for five years in total, having had a bit of break in between. There are no real ciders available. We sampled the food which certainly seems a cut above the average.

## Cider Crawling, Part 1

Having had a pretty good look at what my locals can offer on the real ale front, it was time to look at what is available in the way of cider. I started with **The Albion** on the Bristol Road. Owned by Greene King and relaunched just over a year ago with an expanded list of draught real ales, Black Rat - £2.40 a pint- has been added by landlords, Andy and Dawn, to satisfy the cider lovers. Made by Thatcher’s for Moles Brewery, it has a medium sweet taste. The one I tried the other day was bright and refreshing and went down a treat. A good start! Keg Blackthorn is also on tap at £2.40 a go.

It has to be admitted that my drinking skills are no more than light to welterweight and I had no chance of covering all the locals in one crawl. As a result, the prices were noted over a period of three or four weeks and may have since altered. So, on Day 2, I trotted down to see Young Vic at **The Ship**. Only keg cider on with Thatcher’s Dry being featured. It tasted good enough to me with a distinctive apple flavour. £2.50 a pint.

Another day, another date with cider. This time just out of town at Weston in Gordano on the main Clevedon Road. **The White Hart** offers real cider in the shape of Thatcher’s Traditional at a very reasonable £1.90 (since increased to £2.20 I believe). A bit difficult to judge because, with the luck of the draw, I got the end and then the start of a barrel. Keg Blackthorn also on tap.

Next up, **The Royal Inn**, Pier Road. On offer, Thatcher’s Gold Keg (£2.70) and Blackthorn (£2.60). The Thatcher’s was sampled and went down no problem.

A mini crawl followed, starting with **The Poacher**, High Street. Landlord, Mark, being a bit different, offers Thatcher’s Heritage at £2.20. Nice to have a change. Sparkly cider lovers can choose from Ashton Press (made by Thatcher’s for Butcombe Brewery) and Blackthorn, both at £2.60. Over the road then to **The Phoenix** which was particularly busy. There I sampled the Thatcher’s Medium which seemed to gain from being fetched “from out the back”. This hit the spot and was a reasonable £2 a pint. Blackthorn was also available at £2.45. Last up on that night, **The Royal Oak**, West Hill. This featured still Thatcher’s Dry at £1.90 a pint, plus Blackthorn, £2.55. A good little night this. The best thing about it was that I had had a stinker of a headache all day and night, but woke up next morning without it and feeling good. Have I found a headache cure? More research needed.

On to another day and off to **The Windmill Inn**. Thatcher’s Dry was on offer at £2.10 a go, or else Blackthorn for £2.60 for those who like their apple juice fizzer.

## Going Clubbing

We’ve got our share of social clubs in this here town. So it was time to investigate in more detail.

First off, we’ve got **Clarence House** at the end of the High Street, tucked off the main road with a generous car park and conveniently located next to the Spicy Aroma Restaurant. The building is thought to date back to the 1870s. Nigel Foster is the landlord and he owns the lease with his partner, Trish, who provides the catering. I met Nigel

again the other day and got the usual friendly welcome. He had two regular real ales, Courage Best and Butcombe Bitter, at £2.30 and £2.35 respectively. The Clarence has a decent-sized lounge with Sky Sports available and provides regular events and entertainment. Next to this is another room with pool tables and three skittle alleys (booked for league matches in the week but available for hire at weekends). The Club is the meeting place for the many of town’s clubs such as Rotary, Lions and British Legion. Membership of the club costs £16 in the first year with discounts available from the second year onwards.

In addition, there is a good-sized function room, the Gordano Suite, which can cater for 120 people sitting at tables and 180 standing. Mindful of this, I have been encouraging Nigel to hold a real ale beer festival in the Gordano Suite and I am pleased to say the aim is to hold the first one around February next year. More details, including how you can get your tickets, are expected before the end of



Clarence House

the year. The hope is that some of the beers appearing at the festival will then reappear as guest ales. Nigel struck me as open and friendly and I am sure the beer festival will find him some more customers, especially if he follows this up by adding a changing guest ale.

## Meet The Landlord

*Name:* Nigel Foster, landlord of Clarence House Sports and Social Club, Portishead.

*Age:* 54.

*Where from:* Nigel originates from Bradford, West Yorkshire and now lives in Clevedon.

*Previous life:* Trained as a navigational officer and spent his early working life in the Merchant Navy. The last 20-odd years have been in the licensed trade, including managing the Royal Oak, Portishead for the previous landlords and also managing Clarence House before taking on the lease two years ago.

*Interests:* He enjoys golf but his efforts are restricted to taking an active part in the club’s Golf Society which plays half a dozen times a year.

*Favourite other pubs:* Couldn’t think of one. Like many landlords, Nigel spends so much time behind the bar, he is not looking to get the other side of them.

*Neil Ravenscroft*



Clarence House’s landlord, Nigel Foster



Richard Brooks

## Bristol Beer Festival

THE eleventh annual Bristol Beer Festival took place at the Brunel Passenger Shed, Temple Meads, Bristol, on Friday 14th and Saturday 15th March 2008. Once again a great time was had by all with the fantastic selection of real ale, cider and perry proving as popular as ever. There was an excellent beer range maintained throughout the festival and we have received lots of positive feedback from customers.

The 'Beer of the Festival' was Cairngorm Trade Winds. It would have been a rather long trip to Aviemore make the presentation in person, so we posted the certificate to them and brewery manager Sean Tomlinson responded: "We have just received the Beer of the Festival award through the post and on behalf of all of us at the brewery I would like to thank you all. It really does mean a lot to us to get this sort of recognition for the beers and we also appreciate the time and effort put in by yourselves to run a festival such as this and give us the facility to showcase our beer.

Please pass this on to all at the branch and thanks again."

The runner-up was local favourite Bristol Beer Factory Milk Stout, which continues its impressive run as it has already been the winner for the previous two years. Fortunately we were able to present this award in person.

Simon said, "We know the Milk Stout is a good beer, but we never in our wildest dreams would have believed that it could have been champion beer of Bristol for two years running followed by getting runner-up in 2008. We are absolutely delighted."

It's strange that the continuing popularity of Milk Stout at the beer festival does not seem to be fully reflected in public demand, so unfortunately there are still only a few brews of this fine and distinctively styled beer produced each year.

The cider/perry of the festival was Westcroft Janet's Jungle Juice, another local favourite with a track record of winning awards at the Bristol Beer Festival.

A total of £1,734.30 was collected for charity at the festival, mostly in the form of donated beer tokens. This means cash amounts of £867.15 to both SPACE Trust and Children's Hospice South West.

Due to the hard work of the unpaid volunteers that make the festival happen and improve over the years, the popularity of the event has grown to the point where some potential customers were unfortunately disappointed as there only a fixed number of tickets available. This year a new method of ticket sales was trialled and overall this proved a lot less problematic than the approaches used in previous years. Of course if an appropriate larger venue in the right location becomes available it would certainly be considered by the organisers. However there don't appear to be any other viable options on the horizon so we are currently looking forward to returning to Temple Meads again in 2009.

*Richard Brooks*

## Meet the Brewers

THE Portcullis in Clifton, not far from the Suspension Bridge, is to host a "Meet the Brewers" evening on June 18th.

The event will follow similar lines to one held last year at the Hillgrove in Kingsdown, another pub in the Dawkins Taverns estate. It will include beer tastings and a chance to meet three of the finest brewers in the land, namely Andrew Roberts, co-head brewer from the Box Steam Brewery in Wiltshire; Jeff Curd, head brewer from Cotleigh in Wiveliscombe, Somerset; and Vernon Amor, managing director of Wye Valley in Herefordshire.

Jem Ham of Cheddar Ales in Somerset, and Stuart Matthews from Matthews Brewery in Timsbury, near Bath, are also expected to put in an appearance.



Glen Dawkins, the man behind Dawkins Taverns  
(photo by Richard Brooks)

SP

# Bristol Beer Factory news

THERE is plenty of news from the Bristol Beer Factory in addition to their Milk Stout being voted runner-up at the 2008 Bristol Beer Festival (this is the 5th award for Milk Stout and this year it has also won silver in the SIBA Tuckers Maltings bottle competition).

Chris Thurgeson has moved on from the Bristol Beer Factory to a new role as head brewer at the new Zero Degrees in Cardiff and he will be missed by both the brewery and the local CAMRA branch. Duncan Lash is the man who has stepped in to fill his rather large shoes as head brewer. Fortunately Duncan apparently has great passion for beer and some international brewing experience and things are indeed going well.

The BBF report that they have just had their busiest period of cask sales ever and on top of that they have fitted in two bottling runs. In fact they would have brought out a special beer to celebrate brewing their millionth pint in April, but they were too busy to do so at the time!

Another big item of news is that they have just opened their first pub on dry land - the Barley Mow in St Phillips. After being alerted to the closure of the pub by the Bristol Pubs Group the BBF bought it from Wadworth and set about the task of fixing, painting and cleaning the pub. After receiving a much needed face lift it will once again be providing the Dings community with a traditional pub.

Simon Bartlett of the BBF said "The pub has a fantastic amount of history with the first



Simon Bartlett (first from right) of the Bristol Beer Factory receiving the certificate for Milk Stout from Richard Brooks supported by branch members

licensee registered in 1828. There are some beautiful features in the pub which we will retain. The building was built to be a pub & it must stay that way. The cellar is directly below the bar so providing the best way to serve real ales. We intend to put food on once we have the place up and running and the kitchens refitted."

And finally the Grain Barge (the BBF pubs that isn't on dry land) is going to be

included in the Harbour Festival this year. It has been agreed with the council to close the car park in Mardyke Wharf and use it as a Jazz and Blues music stage. There will be live music on both Saturday and Sunday afternoons. The Barge staff will also be putting on a mini beer festival featuring local real ales. Please check with the Grain Barge for more details.

*Richard Brooks*

*"The acquisition of the Barley Mow by the Bristol Beer Factory should be viewed as a great success for the Bristol Pubs Group, as it was the Group that alerted us to the fact that it was closed and in danger of possible redevelopment. Due to the fact that there is so much development in that area and the need for an infrastructure, what better than a traditional pub!"*

*Simon Bartlett, Bristol Beer Factory*

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**BRISTOL BEER FACTORY**



Images of the Barley Mow by Tim Belston

**READERS' LETTERS**

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

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

**Beer mats**

Steve,

I am a real ale drinker of 30 years standing (!) and regularly read Pints West at the Merchants Arms in Hotwells.

I also have a collection of over 1,000 different beer mats for sale, many old, foreign, defunct brews. Is there anyone who might be interested? Offers invited.

Andy Leighton

Email: [Andy@hartleysas.co.uk](mailto:Andy@hartleysas.co.uk)

Tel: 07845-175425.

**How many million pints a day?**

Dear Sir,

In the article "Pubs in Peril" in issue 77, Andrew Swift makes the claim that the "British Beer & Pub Association (BBPA) has attributed a 7% fall in sales in 2007 directly to the smoking ban, with 14 million fewer pints being served every day."

That implies that 200 million pints a day were being served: over 4 pints every day for every adult in the UK. This seems implausible.

Could you please ask Andrew to provide the source for these figures, and clear up the apparent anomaly?

Yours,

Oliver Humpage

(by email).

Andrew replies:

*Just had another look at this – at least it shows that some people read Pints West very scrupulously – and I have to agree that it's misleading. What the BBPA actually said was that 14 million fewer pints a day are being served than when beer sales were at their peak over 20 years ago, and in cutting the article to remove extraneous material I inadvertently cut the bit about the 20 years! Oops. The source for the quote was a press release dated 14 February which should be accessible via their website ([www.beerandpub.com](http://www.beerandpub.com)). Have to be more careful when cutting stuff down in future!*

**Pub reviews for non-smokers only?**

As always I am reading the latest issue of Pints West. But I find it missing some.

The pub reviews are great, but in no terms do they say how the pub accommodates smokers. It would be nice to include a write-up on the outside smoking area. Is it covered? Heated? Seats outside? Or are we just left standing in the rain and wind, freezing?

Also, recently I was listening to BBC Radio 4. Someone from CAMRA was on the programme, talking about the bad prognosis

about the pubs. In no words did he talk about the smoking ban and what affect it has on the pubs, although the analyst did. He just kept blaming it on the supermarket. Now, that is just so wrong. More people stay at home because they cannot smoke! It absolutely has some to do with it! Stop blaming it on the supermarket alone, start blaming the smoking ban and keep up the pressure on the politicians to find a compromise, so all people can really enjoy a visit to the pub!

By the way, if you want to see a real good pub with an excellent outside smoking area, visit the Bell in Banwell. A pub with real ale, like Butcombe, permanently on, and on top of that, as a smoker I am not treated like an outcast. The landlord really tries to cater for smokers and non-smokers alike, and that should be rewarded.

Felix Mathais

(by email).

**Pro-smoking bias?**

Dear Pints West,

I am a keen real ale and cider drinker and regular reader of Pints West. I have often considered becoming a member of CAMRA, but have increasingly been put off by the pro-smoking bias of Pints West. There are thousands of real ale drinkers like me who were delighted when the smoking ban came into force, yet the magazine gives the impression that drinking real ale goes hand-in-hand with opposing the ban. The fundamental reasons behind the ban (the health of non-smokers and smokers) is completely lacking from your otherwise well-written articles, and demonstrates a lack of impartiality and responsibility.

I feel very sorry for those in the licensed trade who face ever-increasing threats to their livelihoods through tax, property speculating, chain pubs, etc. I also empathise with smokers who feel that they are being punished for a perfectly legal pastime. However, the smoking ban is the culmination of a society that has moved on, and seeks to preserve the health of all its citizens. Like motorcycle helmets, seatbelts and drink-driving legislation, it is common sense that unfortunately needs to be enforced. Rather than living in denial and whingeing about a supposed loss of civil liberties, it is time that to accept that smoking is a harmful, anti-social addiction that needs to come to an end.

Hiding behind apocalyptic statistics that show that less people are going to pubs is defeatist and unconstructive – everyone needs to take some personal responsibility for improving the situation. The ban isn't going to go away, we all like going to the pub, and good pubs need our custom, so let's do something positive! Clearly this will involve the greatest amount of effort from smokers themselves, but non-smokers and publicans have a role to play in supporting and encouraging them. And the minority who still refute the benefits of giving up (including the full appreciation of the taste of a pint!) will only have the inconvenience of a short trip outside every so often.

Full, convivial, smoke-free pubs serving good beer are what we should all be aiming for. Complaining in cold, wet pub gardens, or harking back to the 'good old days' of passive smoking will not help anyone.

Sincerely,

Kevin Donaldson

(by email).

*Admittedly there has been plenty of mention of the smoking ban, as we could hardly ignore it. However, I wasn't conscious of a pro-smoking bias in Pints West. It wasn't intended. Did it really come across that way? I did contact the author of the above letter to ask, and he said:*

*"I just felt that the most recent issue seemed to have a very pro-smoking thread running through the articles and letters page. Everyone's entitled to their own opinions of course, I just find it frustrating that people prefer to finger-point rather than take some positive steps to make things better. The 'community pubs' campaign is an excellent example of constructive campaigning which will hopefully have a real effect on the future of local pubs, and perhaps there could be a campaign to encourage smokers into or back to smoke-free pubs. I have no idea what form that might take, but it has to be better than moping at home or freezing on pavements! Keep up the good work."*

**Photos or info required**

Dear Steve,

I am writing the history of Thornbury pubs both past and present and am seeking some photographs of bottles or bottle labels from Bristol United and Georges breweries. Failing that, any information as to where they may be located such as in individual pub memorabilia.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

George Ford,

195 Gloucester Road,

Patchway,

South Gloucestershire

BS34 6ND.

Tel 01454 614221.

**The City Arms, Wells**

The City Arms in Wells is under new management (Penny Lee) and seems, at long last, to have got its act together. The beers on sale on a visit recently were Butcombe Blond and Gold, Sharp's Doom Bar, Greene King IPA, Abbot and Old Speckled Hen, and Butts Barbus Barbus. There is also Adlestons Cloudy cider.

The beers were in perfect condition and the Barbus Barbus was excellent.

Food prices have been reduced to a far more reasonable level and the toilets have been transformed from arguably the worst in Wells to maybe the best. The atmosphere is very friendly and service totally efficient.

The Sherston, also in Wells, is under new management but I have not yet had time to visit.

Regards and thanks for a first class publication.

Richard Stevenson

(by email).

**The Charlton**

I thought you might be interested to hear that the Charlton in Long Meadow Road, Keynsham has had a refit and is now selling five real ales. At the moment, they have Courage Best, Abbot, Old Speckled Hen, Spitfire and Bombadier, and the landlord intends to bring in other brews as and when he feels it necessary.

Regards,  
Steven R. Kemp  
(by email).

**The Eldon House**

Forgive me if you have already featured this wonderful hostelry, but I have only just discovered the Eldon House, and it is like a mini-Hope & Anchor, and within a few minutes walk from it.

I guess the USP, as the marketing luvvies would say, is that it is run by three young women which is rare for any pub, and surely unique for a real ale pub?

Cheers,  
Philip Howells  
(by email).

**Save our community pubs? Pull the other one!**

Dear Steve,

I'm a regular at The Mouse, Waters Lane, Westbury-on-Trym. A few months ago, you and some of your CAMRA mates came in during the course of a "Westbury 8" crawl. You all seemed happy with the pub and its beer and some of us hoped it would get a favourable mention in the next Pints West. When I picked up my copy of the latest edition, I saw the headline "Save Our Community Pubs" and hoped for the best. Alas, no mention, but I couldn't fault anything which had been written. Then I turned to the letters page, where I saw the letter about Westbury RAF club. Nothing wrong with the letter, but the response made my blood boil. "To get to it (the RAF Club) is easy. From Westbury village, go up past The Mouse and take the third turning on the right...worth a visit and only £2 a pint."

Well thanks a bunch. Walk past a perfect example of a local community pub of the type you claim to support and which, unlike some of the others reviewed in the latest edition, serves three real ales, to go somewhere because "it's only £2 a pint" at a time when most pubs are struggling to keep their heads above water. Why not go the whole hog and recommend Tesco's value lager? Hey, it's only 23p a can (or however much the foul muck costs).

What price community pubs? I'm very, very disappointed in Pints West and I hope you will take the opportunity to put matters right in your next edition.

Bill Jones  
(by email).

*Oh well, can't please all of the people all of the time. Just for the record, there was a pub news piece on the Mouse two issues ago with colour photo and mention of its refurbishment and beer range. Ed.*

# Palace Hotel update

THE Palace Hotel in Bristol's Old Market closed in June 2005 and has failed to re-open as a pub ever since. It was bought by its current owner in the spring of 2006. In order to secure the building's long-term viability he made a planning application to use the ground floor as an office and the upper floors for six flats.

A barrage of opposition to this plan resulted, and the plan was subsequently withdrawn. The good news for pub-goers is that the owner is now inviting interest from prospective pub operators that would wish to run the ground floor of the Palace Hotel, once again, as a public house.

This represents a great opportunity for this iconic Bristol landmark pub as its future has recently been in doubt. The pub is listed on CAMRA's National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors, one of only two Bristol city pubs so listed.

Anyone interested in running the Palace Hotel as a pub should contact the author via Bristol CAMRA or via the editor.

*Mike Jackson*



Dear Sir,

I am a member of CAMRA, as is my wife, and we went to the recent Bristol Beer Festival. We had a thoroughly enjoyable time and thought it was very well organised. Consequently I put together the enclosed poem "Brunel-n-Beer" (see below), bearing in mind it was held in Brunel's original train station in Bristol. I offer it to you as something you might consider putting in the next publication.

Thank you once again for having such a festival and for giving the time to read and consider my verses.

Yours sincerely,  
Martin H. Perry,  
Staple Hill,  
Bristol.

**BRUNEL-N-BEER**

The noise of chatter and of cheer from men and women supping beer engulfs each arching wall and beam: ale frothing at the festival, the merriment of carnival, they rise like engines' rising steam,

the broad-gauged monsters of Brunel awaiting drivers to compel their trains to surge with London-bound long-skirted ladies and their swains, top-hats, frock coats and silver canes, plus trunks their servants humped around.

But now in Brunel's terminus is found a mood unanimous: a jovial spirit wide prevails through crowd of people gathered there, by common liking drawn to share in large array of barrelled ales.

**From SPACE**

On behalf of the Trustees and all who work at The SPACE Trust I would like to thank you and all who organised and attended the CAMRA Bristol Beer Festival very much for the recent donation of £867.15.

This generous gift will be instrumental in ensuring we are able to carry on helping homeless families in Bristol.

We will keep you updated on our activities over the next year to let you understand how we have benefited from your gift.

With best wishes and thanks,  
Catherine Rodmell,  
Operations,  
The SPACE Trust.

*The Prince's Motto*

*Public House, Barrow Gurney*

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# Act now to save brewing museum

COORS, the giant American-owned multinational brewing company that owns the former Bass breweries in Burton on Trent, plans to close its visitor centre in June. The centre was better known under its original name of the Bass Museum.

The Bass Museum was set up in 1977. Its galleries include an exhibition on how beer is made, a collection of vintage vehicles used for transporting beer and an interactive display about Burton's history.

Coors acquired the Carling and Bass brands, and all of their holdings, including the museum, as part of a £1 billion deal in 2002. As well as the museum, the visitor centre includes a pub, a gift shop, meeting rooms and the White Shield microbrewery. Everything but the microbrewery will close. The complex employs 34 workers and 55 volunteers.

Three hundred people marched through Burton on Trent on Friday 4th April 2008 to protest against the planned closure. Coors' employees were told not to greet the marchers but in an open act of defiance they led the dray horses stabled in the museum onto the streets as the marchers went by.

Coors' proposed action in Burton contrasts with its investment in its museum in Golden, Colorado, where its American brewery is based.

Coors would be very happy to talk to anyone who would be willing to look at the site to run it as a museum. But time is very short.

Local MP Janet Dean has put together a large and impressive group of people intent on saving the site. A working group has been established to consider various options.

But even to draw up a list of possible ideas will take weeks, not days, and then to attempt to achieve the necessary funding will take months, not weeks. Coors says that it will mothball the site; but once the doors are closed, exhibits including the unique collection of brewing vehicles, will need maintenance or else they will deteriorate. Surely in time they would consider selling off parts of the collection rather than let them decay further, and that will diminish the value of what remains.

What can we do? Write to everyone you can think of – to Coors, to politicians, write in your blog, broadcast about it, tell anyone

who you think can help that they too must do something. Tell everyone about the threat to the museum and call on Coors to delay closing it until alternative ways of running it have been discussed.

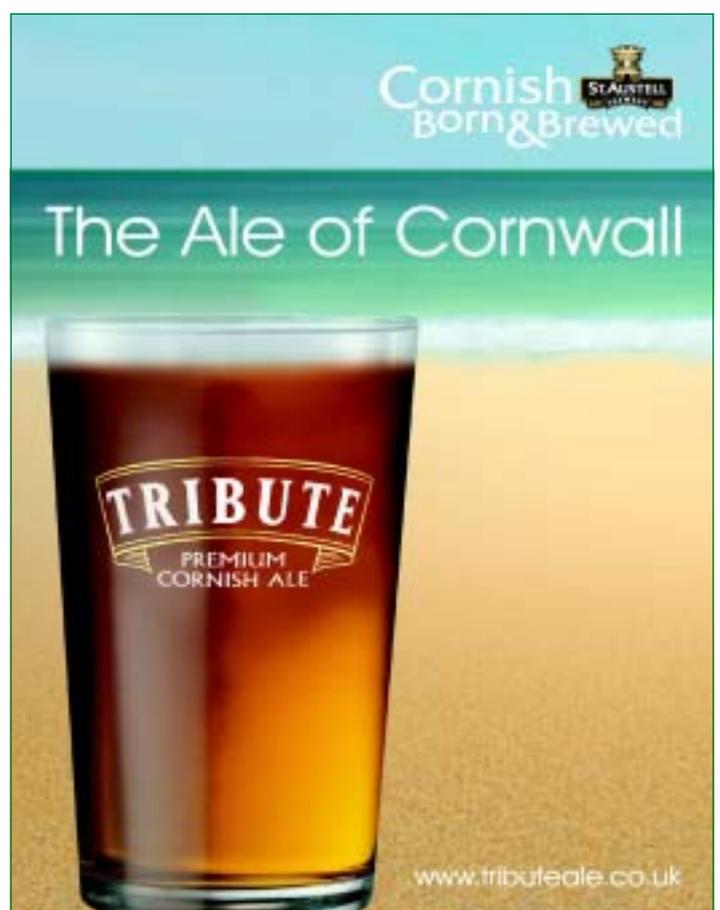
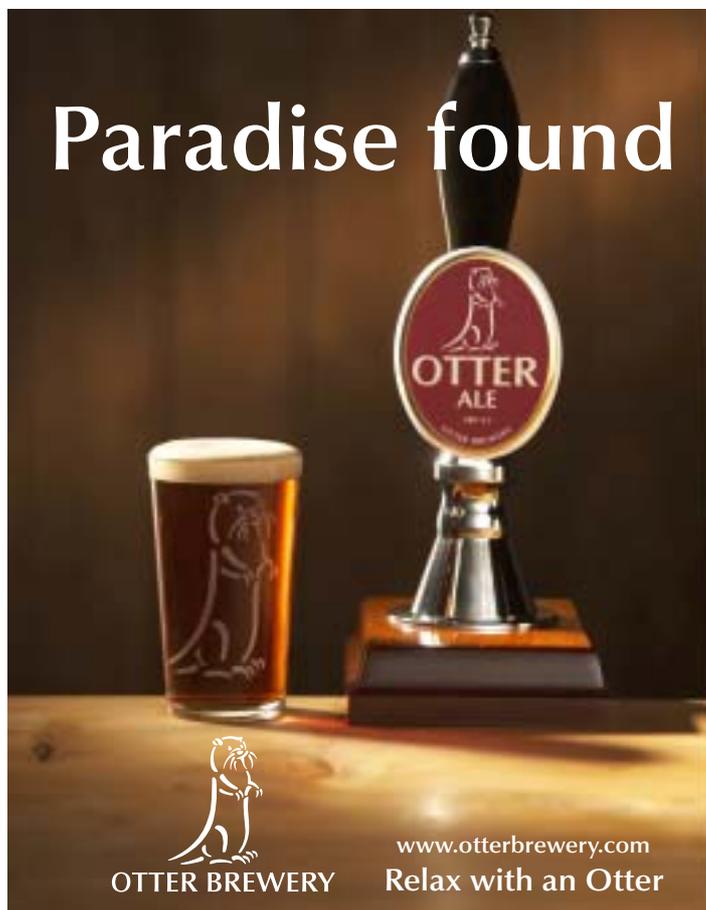
We take our beer seriously in this country – let's show how seriously we take it by being part of a movement that establishes a national museum of brewing in Burton on Trent.

Anyone who cares about the history of brewing in Britain should try to visit the Burton Centre before the end of June and sign the employees' petition.

It is important to make your views known to Coors and to ask them to extend the June deadline while alternative methods of ownership are sought: send your emails to [john.polglass@coorsbrewers.com](mailto:john.polglass@coorsbrewers.com) or write to John Polglass, Coors Brewers Ltd, 137 High Street, Burton on Trent, Staffs, DE14 1JZ.

*The Visitor Centre is in Horninglow Street, Burton. Current opening hours are 10am to 5pm, with last entry at 4pm. There are on-site catering and family facilities.*

*Norman Spalding*



# The Bass Museum - Britain's Brewing Mecca

WAY back in 1995, Ian Cryer contacted me at the Beaufort in Hawkesbury Upton to see if I and any of the regulars would be interested in accompanying him to an exhibition he was holding at the centre of Britain's brewing culture – the Bass Museum.

I immediately contacted the Beaufort Art Studying Society (or BASS suppers) to see if they were interested in joining the long trek to Burton on Trent, and to a man they were, and plans were drawn up for a visit by motor charabanc.

It has to be said that Ian's artwork on pub interiors is some of the finest you'll find anywhere, and it was no surprise to know that he had been chosen to do the exhibition which was entitled 'Local' Scenes – A Celebration of the British Public House.

The opportunity to view Ian's work combined with a visit to one of the greatest museums in the world was too tempting, and the coach was full. The notion that there was a good chance that copious pints of Bass would be flowing was purely a secondary consideration although, at this time, Bass was the number-one selling beer in the country, and a brand with an international reputation (what has happened to it?).

The day of the trip duly came round, and an excited bunch of art enthusiasts boarded the bus that Ian had laid on, and within no time we were approaching drinker's heaven, heralded by the massive Marmite factory. Within moments we were whisked off on a brewery tour and, although interesting, was not very inspiring. From a technical viewpoint, cans of Bass flashing in front of your eyes so quickly they're just a blur is an amazing feat, but it was not what we wanted to see, we were interested in cask ale production, but unfortunately this was denied us.

We were however allowed to view the brewer's office and this was a marvel, more like Ground Control at Houston than the sedate surroundings that I was expecting, all flashing lights and computer controls – making my eight-foot-long Oakhill Brewery mash tun dip stick appear to be a throwback to the Stone Age.

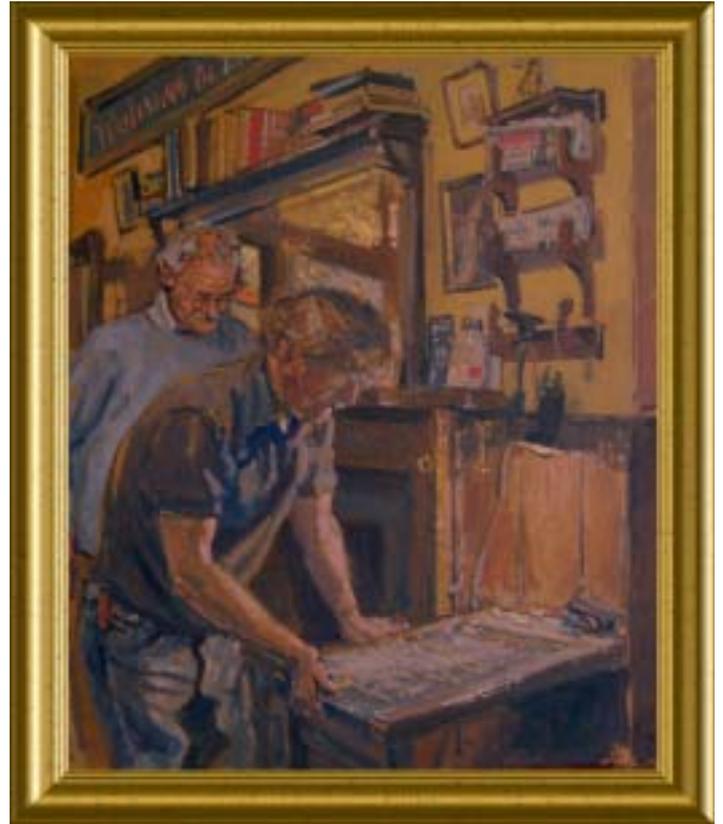
Then the museum! An absolute treasure trove for those of us who enjoy breweriana; Bass was one of the foremost companies in the country for using promotional items and their advertising wares included water jugs, match strikers, menu holders, posters, pictures, stained glass panels, even a whole car shaped like a bottle.

And then there were the dray horses and drays, massive but graceful aids for our drinking pleasure. It was great to know that the museum cared about them and looked after them for everyone's enjoyment. Every year there was a 'Bass Parade' and, in 1995, not only was Ian exhibiting his paintings, he also took part in the parade with his horse Truman.

Of the exhibition itself, the paintings featured masses of pub interiors complete with that vital pub ingredient, people, with glimpses of Ian's sense of humour evident on the picture titles: 'Heavy Drinkers' was self-evident, but who would have known that 'Tripod Tommy' referred to the hidden contents of his trousers? Pub portraits personified.

As soon as the exhibition tour was over, we all settled down to some lovely Bass hospitality; in fact, some of us settled down to too much Bass hospitality, and Ian's friend Paul from the Queen's Head in Willsbridge managed to do an unannounced swallow-dive over a load of tables laden with Burton's finest. Could this be the real origin of the phrase 'going for a Burton'? Even some of the Beaufort's most seasoned campaigners succumbed to the delights of Bass: Glynn and Glenn ended up in with the dray horses, despite the danger signs instructing them to stay away.

Even though the museum maintained levels of interest by putting on events like these (and keeping the place 'fresh') the new owners of Bass, Coors, want to close the best museum of its kind in the United Kingdom. The writing was probably on the wall when they renamed the museum (to the Coors Visitor Centre), however their latest action is a complete travesty; not content with running down a world-wide brewing



Shove Ha'penny at the Star – a typical example of Ian's work

brand, they now want to erase its name from history all together, or so it seems.

I found the Bass Museum inspiring, and come the dreadful day

when time was called at the Courage Bristol Brewery, I and others asked for a similar approach in Bristol as they had done in Burton on Trent - a brewing museum and micro brewery, smaller in scale perhaps, but telling the thousand-year history of brewing in Bristol.

But despite Bristol's Capital of Culture bid, the thought of another museum was considered too ambitious, and with the subsequent demise of Harvey's Wine Museum and the ill-starred Commonwealth Museum, perhaps this was the right decision.

Fortunately, plans for a micro-brewery on the site were sought and approved, so

well done Bristol City Council and the developers, although I never thought I would ever approve of that last mentioned group. If you would like to consider running a brewery on the old Courage site, please contact Hartnell Taylor Cook at the marketing suite on Finzels Reach (0117 3020100).

The developers also commissioned a group of archaeologists to excavate the site, and they have uncovered thousands of 'finds'. There's hope that these will be displayed some day, if not in East Tucker Street, then at the new Museum of Bristol.

If the Bass (Coors) Museum closes, the finest collection of Britain's brewing past will be broken up forever. Surely the museum must be saved - with all of its history Burton on Trent deserves it, and so do the rest of us. Please see Norman's piece and register your concern.

Mark Steeds



The site of Courage Bristol Brewery today

# Bath & Borders Branch

## Pub and brewery news

### Belvoir Castle, 32-33 Victoria Buildings, Lower Bristol Road, Bath

This pub, which is Grade II listed, was under threat of closure. A letter of objection to the permission sought by the owners to convert it into three residential units was sent by the branch at the end of March. We have since learned that the planning application has been withdrawn by the owners. This may, however, be only a temporary reprieve. This may well be a case of 'use it or lose it'! (See *Kirsten Elliott's article elsewhere. Ed.*)

### Hop Pole, Upper Bristol Road, Bath

This Bath Ales pub is under new management. The new landlords are enthusiastic and there is a good atmosphere at the pub.

### Olde Farmhouse, 1 Lansdown Road, Bath

It is with great sadness that I have to report the recent sudden death of the new landlord Barry Thomas. Mr Thomas, who also ran the Robin Hood on St Michael's Hill in Bristol, took over the Olde Farmhouse shortly before Christmas. He was beginning to revive the fortunes of the pub, which had been closed for several months beforehand, by bringing to it a very strong emphasis on live music. The pub is, we believe, currently closed.

### Lamb, Christchurch Street East, Frome

Following a major renovation, the Lamb re-opened on Friday 18th January. The official opening was held on Monday 11th February with an excellent attendance by the branch. There were seven beers available, including the two brewed exclusively for the pub and Matthew's

Bob Wall as a guest, all in excellent condition. An eighth handpump offered Rich's Farmhouse Cider. Attendees were shown around the guest rooms. Meanwhile a first-class buffet lunch was provided.

### Red Lion, The City, Melksham

The controversial attempt by owners Enterprise Inns to sell this historic pub to a private property developer has now hit the press. An article on the possible closure appeared in the 15 February edition of the *Wiltshire Times*. The pub is in fact slightly outside the branch's area but the local branch, North West Wiltshire, is clearly already on the case and fighting the closure. Local member Richard Putley says in the article that "Enterprise have made no attempt to sell it as a pub. They can't claim it is unviable because the landlord tried to buy it off them to run as a pub but was told that he couldn't. Throughout the country people are selling off pubs as houses."

Richard is urging people to write to the planning department of West Wiltshire District Council to oppose the pub's closure. He went on to say that he had been visiting the pub on a twice-weekly basis since the campaign began and has noticed that it had always been quite lively. It is believed that there has been a pub on the site of the Red Lion since around 1220.

### Organ Inn, 49 High Street, Warminster

The front window, which following vandalism had been boarded up for several months, has now been replaced. The landlords are planning a mini-beer festival for later in the year. Local member Phil is intending to help out.

### Weymouth Arms, 12 Emwell Street, Warminster

We gather that new landlords, who took over this pub in September, have now left. At the time of writing there is no further information on the current management situation here.

### Yew Tree, 174 Boreham Road, Warminster

Briefly visited on 14th February. Seems to have been acquired by Marston's. On the two handpumps were Marston's Bitter and one of the brewery's seasonal beers, both in reasonably good condition, whilst traditional cider continues to be the mainstay of the pub. The interior has been thoroughly re-decorated and a new carpet has been laid but otherwise there is no change.

### City Arms, 69 High Street, Wells

This city-centre hostelry is under new management according to a correspondent to *Pints West*. The new landlord is Penny Lee. Beers reported to be on sale on 14th April were Butcombe Blond, Butcombe Gold, Greene King IPA, Abbot, Old Speckled Hen and Butts Barbus Barbus. Quality-wise the Barbus Barbus was considered to be excellent. Food prices have been reduced to a reasonable level and the toilets have been transformed from arguably the worst in Wells to maybe the best. The atmosphere is friendly and the service efficient.

### Sherston Inn, Priory Road, Wells

This pub is also under new management but our Wells correspondent has not yet had a chance to check this one out.

### Prince Leopold, Upton Lovell, near Warminster

This nineteenth-century pub in the Wylve Valley, which was originally a village shop, general store and post office, has recently been sold to a Nash Keshwala from Hounslow in Middlesex.

### Red Lion, Woolverton

This Wadworth-owned roadside tavern on the A36 is currently closed for refurbishment.



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Steve Hunt

## Bradford-on-Avon

At least five licensed premises, including four pubs, in the picturesque town of Bradford-on-Avon are potentially up for sale after their owners say they are struggling from a lack of trade.

Landlords at the **Riverside Inn**, the **Georgian Wine Lodge**, the **Beehive**, the **Bunch of Grapes** and, it is believed, the **George**, are all either selling up or not renewing their leases.

We gather that a combination of a lack of trade and recent hikes in costs has simply made the landlords' positions untenable. Among recent developments they cite the smoking ban, the rise in tax on beer and mounting running costs.

The Riverside, adjacent to St Margaret's Hall, is the only pub in the town with a late license. Landlord Peter Eveleigh says in an article in the local newspaper, "It's government bureaucracy like the smoking ban and overhead costs – it's just not the business I entered into twelve-and-a-half years ago. We have all been hit by the smoking ban. People aren't going out to pubs in the evening in the numbers they used to." He has various initiatives to make the business more profitable, like hosting live music events in the Black Cat function room and acting as a venue for various meetings for clubs such as the Wine Appreciation Society. But despite it all he has finally decided to sell up.

Mark House, landlord of the Beehive in Trowbridge Road, said, "We have just put the pub on the market because we are that close to going bankrupt." He said he had been fighting for a rent reduction with owners Punch Taverns but has got nowhere.

He added, "I had to put 15p on the price of our beer after the Budget. I've been in the trade for ten or fifteen years and never done that before."

The lease for the Bunch of Grapes in Silver Street is up for renewal with Young's whilst the Georgian Wine Lodge in Bridge Street is also up for sale.

It is to be hoped that none of these licensed premises will close but it is worrying that so many landlords feel that they must quit the pub trade in such a well-heeled and touristy town as Bradford-on-Avon. If it can happen here of all places, then what hope anywhere? The town has already seen the loss of the Masons Arms and the Bear in the last three years.

*Steve Hunt*

## BoA RFC beerex

OVER seven hundred enthusiasts braved extremes of weather conditions over the weekend of 9th to 11th May (dramatic thunderstorm and torrential rain briefly on the Friday night, warm or scorching thereafter) to join the scrum at the fifth Bradford on Avon Beer and Cider Festival, which was once again held at BoA Rugby Football Club.

With a large fenced-off grassy area, a patio, a verandah, and a marquee (for the evening music) there was plenty of space into which to venture from the clubhouse, where the 36 beers, seven ciders and three perries were on offer, gently dripping from the constantly wetted towels that were successfully employed to counteract the unseasonably warm weather. Discussions with the tickers confirmed that the beers from breweries ranging from Wakefield, to Haywards Heath, to Shepton Mallet provided ample opportunity for targeted sampling, noteworthy being a large cluster of beers from Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire, three milds, a porter, a stout, one real lager (two more were no-shows!) and a firkin of Moor Brewery's JJJ IPA which had lain in the club cellar since January!

The Rugby Club is still developing this out-of-town festival (a shuttle-bus is provided from and to BoA station) and will subtly tweak its ticketing and token systems next year (and will in future prevent the evening bands from sound-checking during the afternoon!), but with the quality of its collection of goodies (Thornbridge Jaipur IPA and Wild Swan, Milk Street The Usual, Oakham Bishop's Farewell and Wilkins dry perry all spring to mind), its enthusiastic staff, its glorious location, and acres of space for camping, things can only improve further for next year, especially with the enthusiastic support of Bath and Borders CAMRA (James Honey and Denis Rahilly were staffing volunteers).

*Dave Bethell*

## Box Steam Bottle



ON Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2008, Box Steam Brewery officially launched their award-winning ale "Tunnel Vision" in bottles. Named after Isambard Kingdom Brunel's famous tunnel in the village of Box, the launch of Tunnel Vision coincided with the legend that the light of the rising sun can only be seen directly through the tunnel on one day of the year – April the 9<sup>th</sup> – Brunel's birthday.

This is the first of the Box Steam Brewery beers to be bottled and is currently available from selected independent retailers, the Cross Guns at Avoncliff, the Inn at Freshford and the brewery direct. It should also be available for purchase online from the brewery website ([www.boxsteambrewery.com](http://www.boxsteambrewery.com)).

Head brewer Andrew Roberts said, "I'm extremely excited to have got our leading brand into bottles – it now allows a much wider range of ale drinkers to enjoy our hand-crafted local ale at home as well as in the pub."

Marketing manager Gordon King agreed, adding, "With more and more people beginning to discover real ale, we felt it was important to offer our consumers a bottled product in addition to our successful 'Beer in a Box', which is really better suited to parties."

The Box Steam Brewery was founded in 2004 and has been under current family ownership since 2006.



## Forthcoming events

### Bath and Borders Socials and Meetings Diary

● **Wednesday 4th June**, 8:30 pm.

A social at the Castle, in Bradford on Avon. A worthy new entry into the Good Beer Guide.

● **Tuesday 10th June**, 8:30 pm.

The Branch AGM at the Royal Oak, Lower Bristol Road, Twerton, Bath.

● **Wednesday 18th June**, 8:30 pm.

A social at the Bell, in Buckland Dinham. An enthusiastic landlord keeps a host of fine beers!

● **Tuesday 24th June**, 8:30 pm.

Branch meeting at the Prince of Wales in Dilton Marsh.

More details on our web site – [www.bathandborderscamra.org.uk](http://www.bathandborderscamra.org.uk)

**Branch contact** (for all non-socials matters):

James Honey - 01373 822794

**Branch socials contact:**

Denis Rahilly - 01225 791399 or 07711 004501

# A Few Swift Rambles

*Andrew Swift*

## The mighty Oak

The Winter Beer Festival at the Royal Oak in Twerton was, as anticipated, superb. There were around 40 beers on offer, and, apart from a few choice ales from local breweries, most of the beers were new to the area. Even the local beers – Arbor Ales General Sherman and Snuffy Jack’s, Cheddar Totty Pot Porter, Downton IPA, Matthews Hayeswood IPA and one-year-old RCH Firebox – weren’t the sort of thing you see every day. Too many beers to mention individually, but special mention should be made of the stunning JJJ IPA from Moor Brewery, weighing in at 9%!; Orange Wheat (self explanatory and a superb combination) also from Moor; the Lagonda IPA from Marble Brewery in Manchester; Bottlebrook Russian Imperial Stout (8%); Old Bear Honey Ginger (also self explanatory); and Otley 08 (8%). But then I didn’t try them all, and I’m sure other people would come up with a different list of favourites.



The Folk Festival at the Royal Oak

If you were there, you won’t need any telling how good the beer – and the entertainment – was. If you weren’t, then you’ve got another chance to sample the best that the Royal Oak has to offer on 17-20 July when they hold their annual beer and folk festival. Entry is free, with music all day, and even more beers on offer. And the music is top class, with many performers also appearing at other, rather better known, festivals – the sort where you have to pay, camp out in a muddy field and are faced not only with a somewhat less enticing range of beers served in plastic glasses but also with a queue for a chemical toilet when nature takes its inevitable course. Sunday 20 July will be Family Day, with Matt’s Magic from noon and a visiting sheep from Bath City Farm. All proceeds will go to Mentoring Plus.

You don’t need to wait till July, of course. The Oak hosts a weekly Irish session on Wednesdays and every other week there’s live music on Saturday evenings. The Saturday evening bash on 26 April was especially memorable, kicking off at 5pm and hosted by Jimmy Mac, with a dazzling array of musicians and a total of £348.62 being raised for the Parkinson’s Disease Society.

And, just in case you don’t know, the Royal Oak, despite being a mile out of Bath city centre, is actually one of the easiest pubs

in the area to get to by public transport. It’s only a couple of minutes’ walk from Oldfield Park station, with hourly trains not only from Temple Meads but also from Yate, Filton Abbey Wood, Stapleton Road, Lawrence Hill and Keynsham, as well as Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge and Westbury, with some continuing to Frome. The last train to Keynsham and Bristol from Oldfield Park is at 23.13 (Monday-Friday) or 23.12 (Saturday). The last train to Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, Westbury and Frome is at 23.30 (Monday-Friday) or 23.23 (Saturday). (All times should of course be checked prior to setting out, especially at weekends when buses may replace train services – visit [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) or phone 08457 484950.

## The Raven - still beguiling (and a talk on the mild side)



The spring beer festival at the Raven in Bath was also a cracking event, with ten different beers on at any one time. The range and quality of the beer on here continues to get better and, as with the Oak, a visit is almost certain to produce at least one beer you’ve not come across before, probably more. Unlike the Oak, which has no regular beers, you’ll always find two regulars on at the Raven – but when they’re as good as Raven and Raven Gold, both brewed exclusively for the pub by Blindman’s, who’s complaining?

The Raven also entered wholeheartedly into the spirit of the Mild in May celebrations, with a superb selection appearing over the month. The Royal Oak and the Old Green Tree also had an excellent of unusual milds on offer, giving Bath drinkers a chance to discover the range of milds available. It really is an undervalued beer style, certainly in this



Inside the Raven

part of the country, and the campaign to increase its profile is to be applauded.

At the same time, we should not forget why mild fell out of favour. It was part of a general trend away from darker beers – Guinness being the major exception. It’s a sad truth that people today tend to judge a drink with their eyes rather than by smelling or tasting it. Just as many people will condemn a pint of bitter as being ‘off’ because it’s a bit cloudy, without tasting or even smelling it, so they will have a preconceived idea about what a dark beer tastes like.

The really successful new beer styles of the past few years have been those brewed to capture the lager market, often using lager malt and hops. Golden ales and blonde beers have what it takes to pass the ‘sight test’ unconsciously imposed by many drinkers. Mild beers – even the lighter ones – don’t. And therein lies the problem. Many’s the time I’ve heard people say that ‘you can’t drink dark beer in the summer’. Utter nonsense, of course, but, just because the customer’s wrong, it doesn’t mean you can ignore their views.

Which is why – brilliant though the Mild in May campaign is – I have the uneasy feeling that it’s a little mistimed. Several landlords I spoke to during May – not just in Bath – as well as a leading local brewer expressed concern that stocks of mild were sticking around, not because they were no good, but because they were dark, and people don’t do dark beer when it’s hot – and much of May was very hot.

Weaning people away from their familiar tittle and getting them to try something new is never easy. If they try it and like it, then the chances they’ll ask for it again, but you’ve got to get over that initial hurdle. And if that means pandering to prejudices – irrational though they may be – then so be it. I know that some mild beers are just about the most refreshing thing you can drink on a hot day. As most of them are low in alcohol, that’s another recommendation if the heat makes you that bit more thirsty. But most people don’t. Decades of advertising has instilled into the collective consciousness the myth that the only thing to drink on a hot summer’s day is lager – or something very much like it. Prejudices like that can’t be swept away overnight. So – if I may be allowed to be so bold – perhaps Mild in March or some other less balmy month might stand a greater chance of success. Me, I’m happy to drink it any time, but I’d like to

encourage more people to give it a go – if only to stand a better chance of finding it on sale in pubs – and running the campaign when they’re more disposed to give a darker beer a go might stand a chance of even greater success.

## Nineteenth century values

For a somewhat less energetic day out, why not take a trip into Bath’s industrial past. The Brewing Museum in Burton on Trent may be shutting up shop, but a museum in Bath, with strong links to the brewing trade and housed in a former malthouse, is very much in business.



Beer and mineral water crates in the Museum of Bath at Work

If you’ve visited the Museum of Bath at Work, you’ll know it’s not your average museum – and if you haven’t you’ve got a treat in store. The core of the collection is a brass foundry and mineral water bottling plant which still looks more or less as it was when production ceased in 1969. But if you’re thinking Swinging Sixties, forget it. Bowler’s Works, founded almost a century earlier, hadn’t really changed in the meantime and was a museum piece long before it closed.



Bath Brewery Flagons in the Museum of Bath at Work

Jonathan Burdett Bowler, after running a pub in Walcot Street for a time, set up in business in Corn Street in Bath in the 1870s. He died in 1911 but the firm remained a family business until the end. It continued to run on the principles laid down by its founder – and nothing was ever thrown away.

The mineral water factory – with its barrel for generating the carbonic acid gas, a pump for aerating the water, a wonderful array of bottles, catalogues, price lists, labels and advertisements – looked like a stage set for a Dickensian costume drama. The recipes – kept locked away in the office safe – hadn’t changed a jot. The one thing common to all of



One of the workshops in the Museum of Bath at Work with a beer engine receiving attention

them – Bowler’s secret ingredient – was something called Twaddle, consisting of a hundredweight of sugar, four ounces of refined saccharine and four pounds of tartaric acid stirred into 50 gallons of water.

The engineering department was just as much of a museum piece, albeit one that functioned as a valued part of Bath’s economy until the end. Virtually all the machines dated from the 1870s and the stores were stacked with items long obsolete but invaluable to people looking for parts for old bits of equipment. Bath’s pubs and breweries were regular customers. When a beer engine needed servicing or a problem sorted out it was to Bowler’s that they automatically turned.

After the firm closed, a trust was formed to conserve and display the contents of the factory. The redevelopment of the site (it’s now occupied by Bath’s new bus station) meant that they had to find another home for them. They eventually took a lease on a building that had itself narrowly escaped redevelopment on the north side of the city.

Built in 1777 as a real tennis court, this had seen a variety of uses over the years – including a school, a malthouse, a soap factory – before becoming home to this remarkable collection.

Since the Building of Bath Museum opened in 1978 many other items have found a home there – old inn signs, stone quarrying equipment, and – in pride of place – a vintage Horstmann coupé, made in the city in 1914, and one of only nine Horstmann cars still in existence.

It’s many people’s favourite museum in Bath, and a world away from the Georgian elegance generally associated with the city. Rick Steves’ UK Guidebook – carried by virtually every American visitor – awards it a coveted three stars, an honour shared by only a handful of other attractions in the city.



The Star Inn, still with its nineteenth-century fittings

And, after visiting the Museum and touching base with Bath’s industrial and brewing heritage, it’s only a couple of hundred yards to that other temple to Dickensian Bath – the Star Inn, refitted in the late nineteenth century and hardly changed since.

*The Museum of Bath at Work is on Julian Road just west of the junction with Lansdown Road. It’s open seven days a week from 10.30am, with last entry at 4pm. Admission: £4; £3 concessions; £2 B&NES residents. (www.bath-at-work.org.uk).*

*The Star Inn is open from noon to 2.30 and from 5.30 to midnight Monday to Friday; all day from noon on Saturday & Sunday (www.star-inn-bath.co.uk).*



Paul Waters, landlord of the Star Inn, behind the bar

## The Farmhouse

Shortly after the last Pints West went to print, with an upbeat report about the reopening of the Old Farmhouse on Lansdown Road in Bath, Barry Thomas, the new landlord, died suddenly. He’d only been there three months, but in that time he’d re-established the pub not only as one of Bath’s top music venues, with popular open-mic nights, but as a genuine community pub. His untimely death is a great loss, and, despite the short time he was at the Farmhouse, he will be much missed by those who got to know him in that time. The Old Farmhouse, owned by Wadworth’s, is currently closed.



The Old Farmhouse in the late nineteenth century

# A Few Swift Rambles

Andrew Swift

## Widcombe Rising

Another date for your diary – Widcombe Rising takes place this year on Sunday 15 June from 1.30pm to 7.30pm, with the whole of Claverton Street, just over the river from Bath Spa station, given over to a street party with three stages, market stalls, a hog roast, street theatre, a camera obscura, wandering musicians, a 51 foot Ferris wheel – and three real ale pubs – the Ram, the White Horse and the Ring of Bells (with another one, the Widcombe Royal Oak, just a short walk away).

Entrance will be by programme available at the gate for a suggested donation of £2 per adult. More information can be found on [www.widcombe.net](http://www.widcombe.net).



Widcombe Rising, with the White Hart in the background

## All change at the Weston

The Weston pub at Lower Weston in Bath reopened in April after an extensive refurbishment. After a somewhat chequered recent career (including a session as a pole-dancing venue) this enormous turn-of-the-century pub (that's nineteenth century by the way) has been transformed out of all recognition, with four real ales on tap, including Wickwar BOB and Greene King IPA, and an extensive menu. In contrast to its previous incarnation, there are no giant TV screens and the décor can be described as restrained minimalism. Roger Baker, who's run pubs in the Bath area for over 20 years, is running the Weston with his daughter Karen Thomson. Opening times are currently 11.30am to 11pm.



The Weston Hotel in Bath



Widcombe Rising

## Spot on

The problem with country pubs (unless you happen to live near them, of course) is the necessity of having to get to them by car, which rather defeats the object. Fortunately, the Old Spot in Dursley in the heart of the Cotswolds, the new CAMRA National Pub of the Year, is, unlikely as it may seem, a doddle by public transport.



The Old Spot Inn, Dursley

Cam & Dursley station is less than three miles north of the town and is linked with it – during the daytime – by bus (the last bus back to the station is at 17.38 but trains run much later so there's always the option of a taxi). Through trains from Frome, Westbury, Trowbridge, Bradford on Avon, Bath, Oldfield Park, Keynsham, Bristol and Yate run hourly, and, if you feel like making a day of it, there is superb walking country all round. In the June issue of the *Bath Magazine* I describe an eight-mile walk, starting from the station and ending at the Old Spot – an ideal way to build up a thirst (and an appetite – the food's great too). If you can't get hold of a copy of the magazine, you can download the latest copy at [www.thebathmagazine.co.uk](http://www.thebathmagazine.co.uk).

The Old Spot is a cracking pub with excellent beer, and well worth the trouble of checking out. For information check out their website [www.oldspotinn.co.uk](http://www.oldspotinn.co.uk).

## No smoke without fire

Finally, and somewhat reluctantly, I return to the subject of the smoking ban. Reluctantly, because I thought I'd said all I wanted to say on the subject – and thought I'd made my views clear.

It appears I haven't. Two correspondents – from either side of the debate – have accused me, it seems, of unreasonable bias. For one, a committed smoker, I am a shameless apologist for the ban; for the other, a non-smoker who supports the ban, I am the champion of a lost – and very unpopular – cause.

Perhaps I should have made my personal position a bit clearer.

I don't smoke. I haven't done for almost 20 years, although when I did I was what is euphemistically referred to as a heavy smoker. So I know all about enslavement to the dreaded weed – and the health implications – and am glad I packed it in when I did.

I'm not a big fan of smoky pubs – or of smoky rooms generally, come to that. I don't like putting a jacket on in the morning and finding it smells of stale tobacco smoke. I also don't like people who blow smoke into my face (although thankfully such behaviour was very much the exception in the pubs I tend to visit). I didn't like those idiots who waved lighted cigarettes around in the air, a particular hazard when there was a band playing and they wanted to show their appreciation by waving along to the music or attempting a primitive form of dance.

But there are lots of other things I don't like. I don't like dangerous drivers. Should we ban all cars? I'm not that keen on inconsiderate cyclists. Should we ban cycling? I don't like people who get tanked up of a weekend and go round looking for a fight or, failing that, smashing a shop window. Should we ban drinking – a position some politicians seem to be inching ever closer to? Come to that, should we ban politicians?

The smoking ban is part of what can be termed Stalinization by stealth. Increasingly, the British people cannot be allowed to conduct their affairs by exercising their good sense – or lack of it. This is generally referred to as 'the nanny state' syndrome, although its implications are far more sinister and far reaching than the rather comforting image that tends to evoke. 'Gauleiter' would seem a fitter analogy.

Taken in isolation the smoking ban may not seem that big a deal. But it doesn't exist in isolation. It's one of a raft of measures that threaten not only our civil liberties but our very sense of identity and community.

We are 'sleepwalking into a surveillance society' – not my words, but those of Richard Thomas, the Government's Information Commissioner. Last year, he highlighted the need for the public to be more aware of the 'creeping encroachment' into their civil liberties. Even that wouldn't be so bad if governmental incompetence didn't increase exponentially as governmental control tightens. The rule of thumb these days seems to be that if the government has some information on you sooner or later they'll lose it.

As a drinker, my problem with the smoking ban is not so much that some of my fellow drinkers have to go and stand outside in the rain to indulge their guilty pleasure, but that I'm next on the hit list.

Drinkers are already regarded by many as

social aberrants, thanks to a Government-backed smear campaign. Although not as irredeemably damned as smokers – at least not yet – they really have no place in the Brave New World envisaged by Mr Bean. But it's only a question of time. The savage hike in alcohol duties can leave us in no doubt about that. The government bleats on about the rises being a way of discouraging teenage binge drinking. To which the only response is the surname of a government minister – and we're not talking Miliband here.

If the government were serious about tackling teenage binge drinking they'd legislate against supermarket drinks promos, but, with supermarket bosses now doubling as government advisers, that's about as likely as a reversal of the smoking ban. Come to that, if the government really wanted to tackle teenage binge drinking it would look a little deeper. Binge drinking is a symptom of a deeper malaise, along with drug taking, knife crime and the rise of anti-social behaviour. The 'band aid' solution of adding a few pence to the price of booze will have absolutely no impact on the underlying problems, although it will almost certainly reduce the number of people drinking in pubs – and hence the number of pubs.

Raising the price of booze is, from the government's point of view, an ideal strategy – easy to implement, guaranteeing an increase in revenue, while giving the impression of being seen to be doing something. And another step towards the demonisation of the drinker.

The smoker is already a pariah; the drinker is well on the way to becoming one. Smoking is bad for you and bad for those around you – therefore it must be progressively outlawed. Drinking in moderation – something the government never seems to mention – is a harmless and pleasurable activity. Medical

research has even shown that moderate amounts of alcohol may actually be good for you. No matter. Heavy drinking is bad – not only for the person doing it but also for those who have to deal with the fall-out. Therefore, the thinking seems to be, it must be progressively outlawed as well – with the demonisation of the drinker a necessary prelude to get public opinion onside.

So that's why I'm opposed to the smoking ban. Not because I'm particularly in favour of smoking (I'm not) but because it represents another limitation on our freedom of choice, another instance of government diktat being substituted for common sense and individual choice.

As Rod Liddle, the former editor of the Radio 4's Today programme, has said, the smoking ban "*sums up everything that's rotten about New Labour; the meddling, nanny control-freakery; the perpetual obeisance to fashion and susceptibility to the outrageous claims and demands of single-issue pressure groups; the piety and self-righteousness; the notion that they can live our lives for us better than we can. And the recourse to downright lies when the fatuity of their position is exposed. Only an imbecile would swallow the statement that our pub trade has not been catastrophically reduced as a direct result of the smoking ban ... Of course, one shouldn't drop a policy simply because the pubs are having a rather hard time of it as a result. But in which case, don't bother to pretend that they're not, that actually there are queues all down the street consisting of shiny, happy people who wish nothing more than to drink in a new, healthy, smoke-free environment. Stop lying. Say, instead, that the smoke ban is putting pubs out of business but actually we couldn't give a toss.*"

Andrew Swift

## National Cider and Perry Championships

**Green Valley Farmhouse Vintage Cyder**, produced in Exeter by Green Valley Cyder, and **Gregg's Pit Perry**, produced by Gregg's Pit Cider and Perry in Herefordshire, have won the Gold Awards at CAMRA's National Cider and Perry Championships held at the Reading Beer and Cider Festival over the May Bank Holiday weekend.

The best ciders and perries in Britain were sampled over two days by judges at the festival. The judging panel described the winning Green Valley Farmhouse Vintage Cyder as having "a lovely 'proper cider' aroma, like an Autumn morning. It was easy drinking with a pleasant lingering aftertaste."

Chris Coles, of Green Valley Cyder said, "We are over the moon about this award. We didn't expect to be on the rostrum again. It's a great accolade for the orchard in Woodbury Salterton, where the apples came from, because it was this same orchard which won us bronze last year. We must be doing something right!"

Gregg's Pit Perry, winner of the award for the best perry, was described by the judges as having "a balance of citrus aroma with a winery aftertaste ... fabulous."

James Marsden, of Gregg's Pit Cider and Perry said, "We are delighted to have won this accolade from CAMRA whose members have been great supporter of our products over the last 14 years. It's a tribute to the quality of the fruit we use, the care we devote to our perry-making and to the wonderful lady who taught us much of what we know now, Jean Nowell, the former owner of Lyne Down."

Full results:

- Gold Cider Winner – Green Valley Farmhouse Vintage Cyder (Devon)
- Silver Cider Winner – West Croft Janet's Jungle Juice (Somerset)
- Bronze Cider Winner – Blaengawney Cider (Gwent)
- Gold Perry Winner – Gregg's Pit Perry (Herefordshire)
- Silver Perry Winner – Ross-on-Wye Cider and Perry (Herefordshire)
- Bronze Perry Winner – Hartland's Perry (Gloucestershire)

Phil Kempton, CAMRA's Director of Cider said, "I would like to congratulate all of the producers that won awards at CAMRA's National Cider & Perry Championships. Britain is currently producing a superb variety of real ciders and perries and I would urge anyone who has perhaps tried a mass-produced fizzy cider or perry in the past to try a drop of the real stuff. You will not find anything better and will not be disappointed!"

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# The Old Green Tree presentation

THE Old Green Tree in Green Street, Bath was even more crowded than usual on 5th March this year, as regulars and visitors packed in to see Dr Andrew Swift – yes, that’s the same Andrew Swift who contributes to this magazine – present the certificate declaring the pub to be Town Pub of the Year 2008 in the Good Pub Guide.

It was quite an evening, as in addition to the usual selection, which that night included Stonehenge Ales’ Sign of Spring and Butcombe’s Brunel IPA, there was a special beer created by Blindman’s Brewery. Called Daniela’s Delight – a blonde beer at 3.8% – it was named after Daniela Nadalon, the blonde Italian barmaid.

There was also a chance to sample for the



Andrew checks he is presenting the certificate to the right pub



Landlord Tim shares Daniela’s delighted

first time Classic Gold from the Great Western Brewing Company, prior to its official debut at the Bristol Beer Festival. This was a real winner – described as clear, crisp and refreshing, with lots of body and a delicate aroma, it was popular with those who tried it. It has an ABV of 4.6%.

Kevin Stone from Great Western Brewing Company was among those present, as were others from the pub and brewing trade, including another Pints West contributor, Mark Steeds, and Jamie Matthews from the Bell in Walcot Street.



Anna Luke with her bouquet of flowers, accompanied by husband Nick

Andrew Swift was delighted to make the presentation of the framed certificate to landlord Tim Bethune, as well as a bouquet of flowers to Anna Luke who owns the lease. Far be it from me to suggest that Andrew was selected to do the presentation because he is famous for keeping his speeches short and to the point. Suffice it to say that before, too long, everyone returned to tasting the beers, enjoying delicious food cooked by the Green Tree’s chef, Teresa Foley, and listening to music from guitarist and singer Henry Ray. All in all, it turned out to be a memorable occasion. Congratulations go to all at the Old Green Tree.

*Kirsten Elliott*

# The Queen’s Head, Willsbridge

THERE are only three pubs local to Bristol that are listed on CAMRA’s National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors. Two are closed at present. But the good news is that one of them, the Queen’s Head on Willsbridge Hill, was due to re-open on 23<sup>rd</sup> May (as *Pints West* is at the printers) following a six-month closure.

Unlike the two city centre National Inventory pubs, the Kings Head in Victoria Street and the Palace Hotel in Old Market (currently closed) whose interiors exude Victorian elegance, the Queen’s Head’s interior is very traditionally plain and functional and boasts a rare pub layout these days – three separate rooms leading off of a central corridor.

It pleasantly harks back to a time when drinkers used their local as a community asset where the multi-room layout may have been favoured by different social groups. The benefit of multi-room flexibility is still enjoyed by pub users and operators.

The pub dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century though a front extension was added in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There is a good-sized car park less than 100 yards up the road. James Dicks and Tony Howell have taken the pub on and are making some improvements. The place is undergoing a redecoration and new floor finishes but will retain the charm of the building and its interior.

Up to four real ales will be offered along with a traditional real cider, probably Addlestones. Keg fonts will dispense further ciders, three lagers



and Guinness. There is no kitchen at the Queen’s Head at present but bar snacks will be available.

The Queen’s Head is on the main A431 and opposite the Avon Wildlife Trust Willsbridge Mill nature reserve, and not far from Avon Valley Railway and Hanham Court. So if you are visiting any of those places this summer then pop in to the Queen’s Head for a pint.

Such National Inventory pubs are rare in our area (and in any other area!) so go along and see for yourselves, and if you live nearby, then support your local.

*Mike Jackson*

# The Battle of Belvoir Castle

WHEN Andrew Swift and I attended the inaugural meeting of the Bristol CAMRA Pubs Campaigning Group, dedicated to preventing the closure of pubs vital to the community, we little thought we would soon be engaged in a battle on our own doorstep. The Belvoir Castle, on the Lower Bristol Road in Bath, has been a pub since about 1850. It is a typical street-corner pub, which once had its own brewery. This has gone and has been turned into a skittle alley – one of the best in the area. It has its own clientele who are happy with the way it is – serving the usual keg beers and ciders plus a couple of unexceptional real ales. That is the way they like it. Unfortunately, in recent years, it had become rather run down. The situation was not helped by a lack of input from the pubco. That should, perhaps, have put people on their guard, but a new manager, Eric Bendell, immediately began to put a lot of energy into improving matters. This included tidying up the garden as well as giving the premises a good spring clean. Having past experience in the pub trade, he made sure that his two ales, Courage Best and Shepherd Neame's Spitfire were kept in good condition. Things were looking up for the future of the Belvoir Castle, particularly with the scheme for Bath Western Riverside having been passed (somewhat controversially) by the council – it means thousands of new homes with not a pub on the estate.

So it came as a shock when suddenly, in April, a planning application was put in by the pubco, Bankside Pubs, to close the Belvoir Castle and convert it into two houses and a bungalow. Research soon revealed that Bankside Pubs, who had owned the building since 2003, was not a true pubco at all, but a property company which specialised in buying up failing pubs, running them down, and converting them. Hitherto, the company had met with little opposition, but made several mistakes here. First of all, the new manager did not continue the sorry decline, but started to put things right – simply because he enjoys running a pub. Secondly, Bath, because of its architectural heritage and because the Sack of Bath is not forgotten or forgiven, has a population very clued up on planning matters. Thirdly, it chose a moment when CAMRA was launching a campaign to make communities aware of the importance of their local pubs. Finally, when submitting a case to close a pub, it's a good idea to get your facts straight – this pubco did not. One amusing little detail was that, having stressed how the absence of a car park was a disadvantage – though not one that seems to affect the Charmbury Arms or the Hop Pole – the company, then, in its enthusiasm to show the building in its worst light, captioned a picture of the garden as the car park.

They said that the pub was no longer able to sustain a viable trade – but Eric Bendell was now doing sufficient business to prove that it could. One reason they gave for closure – and one for campaigners to watch out



Belvoir Castle - saved, for the time being

for elsewhere – was that it might be opposite a proposed primary school and would thus be a bad influence on children. In fact, the primary school relating to the proposed Western Riverside development is still very much in the melting pot of discussions, and even if it is built, the site is not opposite the Belvoir Castle but the Royal Oak.

The community rose as one to object. A community letter was very quickly produced by a local resident and signed by many in the area, stressing the value to the community of the pub. Once Andrew and I found out, we went into rescue mode – our technique honed by months of campaigning against the demolition of the Stothert and Pitt works further up the Lower Bristol Road. We contacted the two local CAMRA branches, Bristol and Bath & Borders, who sent objections, while two new campaigning groups in Bath, Bath Heritage Watchdog and Protect Bath, also went into overdrive.

June Player, of Protect Bath, was particularly active. She found that Bankside Pubs had been taken over by a genuine pubco, GRS Inns, so she contacted this company. Their spokesman said they might consider putting some money into the pub – but were concerned about the garden. They did not feel they could invest in it. June was ready for that. If you pass through Oldfield Park Station you may notice its garden – that's nearly all down to June who does most of the work herself. So she simply said that she would tackle the pub garden herself if necessary.

At last, partly because of the strength of the objections against the applications but also thanks to June's efforts, the applications were withdrawn, but with the proviso that they would let the situation go on for another six months and then might re-apply. In the company's experience, said the spokesman, the community did not support pubs like these. June has therefore continued her good work. She is organising events at the pub, such as charity quiz nights, and arranged a photo shoot for the local paper on the day the good news came through. Bath & Borders CAMRA is holding a social there at the end of May, and other community groups are having meetings there in the function room. The company has sent down surveyors to look at the cost of doing some much needed renovation and decoration. Bath Heritage Watchdog website ([www.bathheritagewatchdog.org](http://www.bathheritagewatchdog.org)) carries the full story, with more details of the pub and planning applications, as well as the advice 'use it or lose it'.

Of course, Eric has to buy his beer through the pubco, with all that that implies. However, after I had a chat with him about real ale, and suggested that the more real ale pubs there were in the area, the better it was for all of them, I understand he is looking into putting another ale on. From what I can gather, Eric has been keen for some time to put more real ales on and it would be nice to think that the pubco would help out, if it genuinely wants to see the pub succeed. Perhaps the fact that Bankside is no more, after being submerged into GRS, may mean that there is now a more sympathetic management, although only allowing six months to turn a pub around does not look very encouraging. The battle for the Belvoir Castle shows that in planning manoeuvres like this, winning a battle does not mean the war is over. But it also shows that a determined community can fight off the threatened loss of a local pub.

Kirsten Elliott



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# Island in the sea

by your Nailsea correspondent Laurie Gibney

FOR many years the pub on the corner of High Street in Nailsea was known as the **Queen's Head**. In September 2006 it changed to **Braggs Wine Bar and Restaurant**, and in Spring 2008 it has changed again to the **Corner House**. The licensee Debbie Hicks tells me that they plan to do food at lunchtimes but not in the evenings. There are also plans to install a pool table. The real ale being dispensed at the moment is Bass.

The original wine bar in Nailsea, a little way up the road, is the **Courtyard Wine Bar** which is thriving, thanks to licensee Maureen Buchally and her staff. The Courtyard has recently undergone a refurbishment with reupholstered bench seating around the walls. Maureen tells me she has no plans to cease stocking real ale, which alternates between Bass and Marston's Pedigree. Opening times are 9.30am (for speciality coffees) until 3pm and 6pm until 11.30pm on Mondays to Saturdays, and 12 noon until 3.30pm on Sundays,

during which time there is a meat raffle!

Rose has returned to the Courtyard Wine Bar to take charge of the catering, serving from 9.30 until 2pm Mondays to Saturdays, full breakfasts at £5 or a small breakfast for £4. The extensive home-made lunch menu starts at £4.25, and if you are in a hurry you may phone your order though in advance on 01275 810137.

## And away from Nailsea ...

There has to be compensation for dragging a bloke shopping I tell my wife Mary, that is to visit a couple of pubs. Along with some friends and relatives we decided to make a day out of the shopping trip, so boarded a train at Nailsea & Backwell and went to Cheltenham for the day using the Groupsave fares that save you up to 50% off the normal fares. Our friends were most impressed with my organisation when we arrived at Cheltenham Spa station to find a six-seater taxi waiting, just the number of seats we needed!

The taxi took us to the **Swan** at the Eastern end of the High Street where we had lunch. The CAMRA Good Beer Guide said that it catered for a cosmopolitan clientele, which we agreed with. The three ever-changing real ales were all similar styles premium bitters Cotleigh Harrier Lite, Goff's White Knight and Thwaites Lancaster Bomber, so some of us plumped for the Thatcher's Heritage Cider. The whole of the afternoon was spent enjoying the excellence of Cheltenham's shops, slowly progressing along Cheltenham's High Street with sojourns into the odd arcade and along the Boulevard where there are out of door stalls and as we arrived the heavens opened – the only wet time of the day.

The town was busy, but we escaped into the relative peace of the Everyman Theatre Café for tea, where there is a closed circuit television depicting what was on stage, Dads Army at the time.

We continued walking for fifteen minutes along the High Street in search of sustenance, and visited the delightful **Adam & Eve** in Townsend Street. An Arkells pub with their 2B (3.2% ABV) which I found very thirst-quenching after a hard day's shopping, others enjoyed 3B at 4% and Moonlight, 4.5%. The landlady who has been there for about thirty years made us very welcome, and impressed us by throwing out the only others in the lounge who were a little the worst for wear and made the fatal mistake of using a swear word in her hearing. The landlady apologised to us for their behaviour when they had gone. Her pub appeared to be unchanged since the fifties and was spick and span, including the highly polished brass pipework in the gents off the back yard decorated with plants in pots.

The Adam & Eve does not do food, only crisps, so we plodded the mile or so to Cheltenham Station where we found a cafe and takeaway for solid refreshment before boarding our train home. Altogether not a bad way to spend the day shopping!

## And finally ...

Make a note in your diary for the Nailsea Beer and Cider Festival. Now in its fifth year, this ever-popular festival takes place at the Nailsea and Backwell Rugby Club from Friday 11th to Sunday 13th July.

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# Queen's Head freehold

THE freehold of the Queen's Head in Upper Eastville, opposite Eastville Park, is for sale at £600,000.

Details can be found on the web site of James A Baker, Property Consultants, at [www.jamesabaker.co.uk](http://www.jamesabaker.co.uk). Though the pub business is described there ("The Queens' Head is a substantial detached two-storey Victorian licensed premises located on a prominent corner at the junction of Fishponds Road and Royate Hill."), there is also a statement which rings alarm bells and reads: "Potential development site subject to permissions."

One wonders why Greene King want to offload this fine building. It is probably 'under-trading', but they've never really promoted the pub in the local area and beyond.

The building is a major landmark, one of the few yellow-bricked buildings anywhere this side of Bristol, and the exterior is almost all original Victorian. It has a large interior with a decent sized garden and huge potential if it can find the right market. The surrounding area has a big population, the pub is surrounded by houses and there is quite a high density of population in the area as there are a lot of flats nearby as



well. It would make a brilliant performance venue for music, theatre, etc. I don't know what the upstairs is like, but it would probably lend itself to flat or even office conversion.

It looks to me as if this is crying out for a mixed-use development to maximise the use of the building, and I'm sure there must be views over the park from the upper floors.

*Steve Comer*

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*Bill Bryson (Travel Writer)*

# A Round with Robin

ON Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, just too late for inclusion in the last Pints West, a few of us from the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch of CAMRA went to the **Tewkesbury Winter Ale Festival**. With 64 beers, seven ciders and three perries there was plenty of choice. We had only intended to go for the lunchtime session and take in a few local pubs before catching the train back, but changing circumstances meant that that we could attend two hours of the evening session, so we had more excellent beers than we were hoping for. We also managed to obtain takeaways of the *North Cotswold Arctic Global Warmer* (15%) for the journey home. I marked this beer, the *Beowulf Grendel's Winter Ale* (5.8%), the *Coastal Erosion* (7.6%) and the *Kinver Over The Edge* (7.6%) as my favourites on the day.

The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of February were consecutive "community pub crawls", and the first, in the Kingsdown area of Bristol, began at the **Highbury Vaults**. My favourite beer on the crawl was at the **Hare on the Hill**, where they had an unusual guest beer, *Greene King Fireside*; but the *Wickwar Station Porter* at the **Hillgrove** was as attractive as ever. The crawl the following evening saw a few members from the Weston sub-branch visiting Worle pubs the **Nut Tree**, **Old King's Head**, **Woodspring** (a nice drop of *Otter Ale* here) and **Lamb Inn**.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February, half a dozen of us made our way to Twerton for the **Royal Oak** Winter beer festival, some going via the **White Horse** for a drop of *Moor Confidence* and the **Golden Fleece** where we were happy to sample a *Hidden Pint*. At the festival itself there was one beer which I hated, but which others liked, this being the *Moor Orange Wheat*, but five exceptionally good ales were *Arbor Ales*, *General Sherman*, *Bottlebrook Russian*

*Imperial Stout*, *Moor JJJ IPA*, and *Moor Old Freddy Walker*, but best to my mind was the *Durham Benedictus*, with not dissimilar flavours to the liqueur, but still a honeyish barley wine style of beer.

The **Bristol Beer Festival**, although reported on elsewhere, is worth my mentioning in that I worked two sessions as a steward and one on the beer bar, and I can rarely remember having a happier time for working without pay! I say this because I'm always surprised more members don't volunteer and the quality of the beers, especially the *Spire's Sgt Pepper Stout*, was unsurpassed. I was even called on to work the cider bar for a short time on Saturday night, but I didn't drink any cider.

The week before that was the **White Lion** beer festival, in that tiny Wickwar pub in the centre of Bristol. We had a few half pints including *Dark Star Winter Meltdown* and *Old Mill Black Jack*, but the best for me was the new brewery *East Hoathly's* beer *St George*.

Good Friday saw some of us bus to the **Raven Spring Beer Festival** in Bath, though with a small detour to visit the **Salamander** before heading off to the **Raven**. With two floors and normally the same beers on at each bar, the festival meant they could have about half the beers on at one time from the 30 featured in the well-produced programme. One particularly worthy of mention was *Glastonbury Spring Loaded*, which I followed with the unusual *Bateman's Eggs-B*. I couldn't resist the *Dark Star Equinox* (I don't think I have ever had a less than great beer from that brewery), followed by *Arran Ale* (smoky grapefruit flavour!) and *Wyre Piddle in Colchester* (stewed apple and custard flavour). We also managed a few games of Jenga.

As we were now quite a party we decided on a mini crawl with the **Volunteer Rifleman's Arms** the first to go to. This was followed by the **Crystal Palace** and a hailstorm whilst drinking our *Jennings Cumberland* in the garden, and then to the **Hobgoblin** where I had the *Wychwood Mad Hatter*.

We stopped off in Bristol between buses at the **Bank** in John Street, for *Jollyboat Plunder* and *Mainbrace* beers, and then the bus back to Weston-super-Mare's **Red Admiral** and **Off The Rails**.

On the Saturday before Easter, the **Old**

**Inn** at Hutton, near Weston-super-Mare, had a small beer festival which some of us got to. With three beers on handpump, four on stillage and a selection of ciders, it was a good effort with *Elgood's Cambridge Bitter* the most unusual guest beer along with the *Highgate Whiskey Ale*.

For Easter Monday we planned a bus trip out to the **New Inn** at Mayshill, which we could combine with the **Rising Sun** at Frampton Cotterell, both pubs having featured in articles in Pints West 76. Mike said he'd worked out what buses to get and the times, so we agreed we'd go on the next day – bank holiday! Leaving Weston, we arrived in Mayshill at the bus stop opposite the **New Inn**, to find three bitters and one of my favourite mild ales on, *Severn Vale Monumentale*. We had no sooner ordered when Dave (the landlord) said, "I imagine you are all CAMRA members – you'll be having the beer on offer." How could we refuse? (As their advert states: "All real ales £1.75 a pint on Sunday & Monday evenings to CAMRA members – please show card.") We were even more delighted when we found the Jenga; Graham and I reached our record height so far, 32 layers – it might have been more, but we wanted to get the bus to Frampton, so we agreed on a draw. We decided to try the **Star Inn** on the way; no exceptional selection of beers here, but friendly, and definitely a community pub, and the beer was tasty enough. So we went on to the **Rising Sun**, where I need say nothing more about the pub as Pete Bridle said it all in Pints West 76. Although only having the two *Great Western* beers and *Courage Best*, all three were in good condition. A walk of a mile and a bit brought us to the Bristol Road north of Winterbourne, where we caught a bus to Stapleton, changing buses at a suitable point – the **Masons Arms**! A quick *Wickwar Cotswold Way* seemed ideal, before getting a bus to Mina Road to see what delights the Bristol pub of the year, the **Duke of York** would have. We arrived just as the doors were opening and the next two in after us were Vince Murray and Phil Cummings, two other regular contributors to Pints West. Needless to say the beers were as different as only the Duke can make 'em; I had the *Caledonian Easter Chocolate Drop* and *Jollyboat Hart of Oak*. After playing the students at friendly skittles, we made our way by bus back to Weston-super-Mare for a pint of *RCH Old Slug Porter* at **Off The Rails**.

The recent Wetherspoon real ale festival has been the subject of interest to some of the local CAMRA members, some of who wanted to have all 50 on the programme within the time, and others who just wanted to try some beers not had before. I fell into the trap of starting on the latter and finishing on the former! I won't go into details of all the times I went to different pubs to find the missing ingredients, but on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March we set out to try to have a beer in all the Wetherspoon pubs in Bristol (by bus). We started at the **Dragon Inn** at Weston (*Hydes Trojan Horse*),



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then by bus to the **V-Shed** by the docks (*Cain's Bock*), and strolled to the **Commercial Rooms**. Here from a choice of twelve, I had thirds of *Freeminer Shake Mantle Ginger Ale*, *Elgood's Old Wagg*, and *Nehergate April Fool*. The **Berkeley** was next on the list with my old favourite *Harviestoun Old Engine Oil* from a choice of ten others including *Kelham Island Pale Rider*. Then a bus took us to Temple Meads and we walked through the station to the **Knights Templar** for a beer. We walked in a fine drizzle to the **Robert Fitzharding** in Bedminster, where a good choice offered at the bar resulted in thirds of *Everards Sunchaser*, *Stone California Double IPA*, and *St Georgen Brau Keller Bier*. We ate here, before getting the bus to the centre and a 43 bus to **St George's Hall** in Redfield where I drank *Welton's Old Cocky* and the very odd Polish *Namyslow Plum Beer*, which though plummy tasted nothing like beer. We walked in the rain to **Colliers** at Kingswood for contrasting *Okells Eastern Spice* and *Roosters Outlaw*, before ending up at the **Van Dyck Forum** for the Belgian *Ecaussinnes Cookie* beer. A bus took us back to the centre and, after a diversionary *Mauldon's Blackadder* at the **Commercial Rooms** whilst waiting for the last bus back to Weston, I eventually got home after midnight.

The sub-branch had a crawl around Yatton on the 16<sup>th</sup> April. The **Railway Inn** had a decent *Butcombe Bitter*. The **Butchers Arms** (much revamped since I last visited it) had a bigger choice, but I settled for a *Wells & Young's Courage Best*. The **Prince of Orange**, having the biggest selection, also had the best beer, *Cottage Vulcan* bitter. On our return by train to Weston-super-Mare three quarters of the crawlers stopped off at **Off The Rails** for the *Matthews Pit Head* stout.

No pub in Weston appeared particularly to celebrate St George's Day except the **Red Admiral**, which offered customers real ale at £2 a pint for the day, though a few others did hang the English flag up.

The day before I wanted to go the **Bag O'Nails** in Bristol for their beers, but I made the mistake of thinking that they opened at noon. (*Just for the record, opening times are 5.30-11 Mon-Wed, 12-2.30 & 5.30-11 Thurs, 12-11 Fri-Sat, 12-10.30 Sun. Ed.*) It was another fine day so I was determined not to waste it, so set about a little trip around Clifton. First stop was the **Eldon House**, where I was able to sit outside in the sun supping a *Bath Gem* and re-reading *Pints West*, only briefly disturbed by the Editor who also popped in. From there I walked up to the **Portcullis**, my first visit there, and had halves of *Matthews Bob Wall* and *Great Western Classic Gold*. After a stroll around Clifton Suspension Bridge, the Downs and Observatory, I wandered down to the **Berkeley** for a lasagne and drinks of *Yo-Ho Tokyo Black* and *Hampshire Ironside*. Just time then to browse around "Focus on the Past" collectibles shop in Clifton (and buy another piece of Bakelite for my collection) before arriving at the **Bag O'Nails**

just as they opened at 5.30pm. My diversions were rewarded by eight beers being new to me, with my favourite being *Brewdog's Trashy Blonde* (far too hoppy for mild campaigner Laurie Gibney).

On Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March a handful of us travelled by bus via Bristol and Bath to Frome specifically to visit the **Lamb Inn**, as featured in *Pints West 77*. From eight beers I chose the *Lamb Ale* and *Blindman's Eclipse*, both dark. We had to rush to catch the hourly bus to Beckington where we wanted to visit the new Abbey Ales pub, the **Foresters**. With three pump clips turned around we were left with the *Abbey Bellringer*, common enough in Bath, but good for all that, and sadly never seen in Weston (yet?). We considered visiting the *Woolpack* too, but the idea of a couple of hours at the first real ale festival at the **Cross Keys** in Rode seemed preferable. When we arrived there we were made very welcome by all, given the programme (10p off a pint for CAMRA members was a nice touch), found a table, and settled down to drink our choice of ales. Suddenly, a young lady (Jess, the landlady) arrived and welcomed us to the pub, asked us about our favourite beers, and the local scene at Weston-super-Mare, before rushing off to feed a whole menagerie of animals. As we could vote for our "beer of the festival" all four of us did, but all for different beers; it being a sunny warm day, *Hopback Summer Lightning* was my choice, narrowly defeating *Wickwar Station Porter* and *Goddard's Ale of Wight*. After two hours here, we bussed back to Bath where the majority decision was to visit another Abbey Ales pub, the **Coeur de Lion**, to make up for the lack of choice at the **Foresters**. My beer of choice here was *Abbey Maximus*, and although the front of the pub was crowded with folk enjoying the sunshine, we easily found seating inside. No Bath visit would be complete without having a "Raven good time" playing games of Jenga, so we popped into the **Raven** and I drank the *Blindman's Raven Ale*.

As we knew that the **Bag O'Nails** had some of their beer festival ales still available, we decided to break our journey back in Bristol. The nine beers on tap included *Idle Sod*, *Leadmill Nobgoblin*, and *Wirksworth Cruck Beam* which I hadn't had before. I regret to say that for three of us that was not the final whistle as we went to Becky's

birthday party at **Off The Rails** in Weston on our return. The *Matthews Pit Head* stout provided a fitting end to the day.

It should be noted that Colin at the Good Beer Guide-listed pub **Off The Rails** has made a decision to have at least one dark ale, one bitter and the RCH IPA on at all times (subject to delivery, floods, etc). This is the reason why we seem to finish so many of our "tours" there.

Other local news for pubs in Weston-super-Mare I have is that the **Criterion** has re-opened but with real ale only in polypins; that the **Oak House** is currently closed for a make over; the **Raglan** is going well with up to six ales on (usually from the south-west); you can still get *Flowers IPA* at £2 a pint from the **Regency** (between 5 and 7pm Monday to Friday); and the **White Hart's** good choices of ales means that the great ale you had today may not be on tomorrow! And watch out for the **Red Admiral** midsummer celebrations.

On Mayday this year the Chalice Morris Men danced at the Glastonbury pub, the **Who'd Have Thought It**, which had all *Palmer's* beers on including the *Tally Ho*, and where we met Americans from near San Francisco who really were enjoying the English ales. One, Gwen, even bought your scribe a *Palmer 200* on the strength of me offering them snuff!

Incidentally, I wonder how many people at the Bristol Beer Festival knew that on Saturday lunchtime no less than three Morris men were serving at the beer bar.

Robin E Wild

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# No fog on the Tyne, but plenty of good beer!

BACK in January, some of us received an email from former Bristol branch member, Gary Parsons (who moved to Cumbria some years back), inviting us to join his wake to mark his 40th birthday by attending Newcastle beer festival with him in early April. Having not been to that city for about 15 years, I was keen to return and quickly gathered quite a few mates to join me. Easyjet flights can often be obtained for as little as £20 each way if booking in advance, so that part was easy. Cheap accommodation proved trickier so we ended up at a number of different addresses. I managed to secure a cheap room at the waterfront Travelodge in the centre, but others were less lucky and had to stay further out of town.

We flew out on a Thursday evening – surprise, surprise, no Butcombe Bitter on at the airport again, but the cold filtered Blond (not real ale) was available. (*Perhaps Butcombe could advise just how serious they are about making the real thing available there as it is so rarely found on?*)

My distant memories of Newcastle were of

a friendly place, with a handful of great ale pubs but most selling keg only, and Keegan mania going on. The only thing that had changed was that there were now a lot of pubs selling quality real ale ... now that's what I call progress!

On arrival at Newcastle airport, you just hop onto the metro (all-day passes are cheaper than a return bus ticket in Bristol and cover a huge geographical area) and you are in town in about 25 minutes. So we were straight off to our first pub, the **Centurion Bar** inside the main railway station, an astonishing place with a hugely ornate interior, live music playing and about six real ales on. We enjoyed pints from the local Mordue and Jarro brewers before moving on.

Next stop was the historic **Bodega** pub in Westgate Street, a few hundred yards away. This friendly and simply furnished bar has a huge ornate dome in the ceiling. Amongst the array of local beers, we spotted **Thornbridge Halcyon IPA** at a mighty 7.7% ABV. We ordered that at an incredibly cheap £2.80 a pint and before even taking a sip Richard

declared that it would be “the beer of the weekend”, and he was right! What an incredible beer, from a great Derbyshire brewery, and a proper IPA to boot. If you don't like hops then stay well clear!

Tempting as it was to settle for the night, we soldiered on to **Tilley's** just a few doors away. This was another nice place with a good choice of local beers.

Moving back to the station area, we popped in to the **Head of Steam** which had a good choice and in good condition and might be unlucky not to be in the current Good Beer Guide. A brief beer in the massive Wetherspoon's by the station was truncated as they were closing at midnight and keen to get us out. The Guide stated that the Centurion is open until 2am but it was closed before midnight both nights, so we headed off to the **Cooperage** on the river bank almost under the Tyne Bridge. More good local beer was had here before we were asked to vacate at 1am. No choice but to head for the hotel then?

On Friday we checked for fog on the Tyne (no sign of it!) then ambled over towards the university, home of the local beer festival. The festival opened at noon and became busy quickly. Impressively, all 120 or so beers were served via handpump across the widest bar I



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have seen (I am six feet tall and could only just reach my pint!). The beer was good and the festival popular but we felt that the range could have been more adventurous; there was only one genuinely strong beer (Lees Moonraker) and this had predictably sold out by Thursday. At about 3.30pm we decided to check out a few more pubs, but the festival was impressively busy and getting more so.

To clear our heads we decided to walk out to Byker rather than take the metro. Our first stop there was the **Cumberland Arms** in James Palace Street, recently featured in *What's Brewing* as a National Heritage pub. A friendly old place with three changing independent beers and, to our surprise, a big range of West Country cider! It then became apparent that Gary was responsible for this! Despite living in Cumbria he has been regularly collecting cider from small producers like Hecks, Westcroft and Wilkins, and transporting it to pub in Cumbria and Tyne & Wear. He barely covers his costs and does it to spread the word up North! What a true campaigner – well done Gary.

A short walk down hill brought us to the **Cluny** in Lime Street, my idea of the best pub we visited all weekend. A conversion of an old industrial unit, it is now a major music venue for the area as well as a very popular and comfortable pub. They serve about eight changing guests plus many draught and bottled foreign beers, and great food all day at fair prices. It was incredibly busy at 5pm on a Friday given that it is a little off the beaten

track.

Finally, in Byker, came a ten-minute walk to the **Free Trade Inn** in St Lawrence Road, quite a contrast as a very basic boozier, with great views along the Tyne to the centre. More local beers here too. We then took a leisurely stroll back into the centre along the riverbank – still no fog though!

Back in the centre we visited the famous **Crown Posada** in Side, a hugely ornate, long, thin bar with around four beers on – a must-see pub when in town. Half of the party went off to eat and were not seen again that night (shame on you Gary on your birthday!) but the rest of us soldiered on gamely. Next came three pubs in very close proximity, **Fitzgerald's** in Gray Street (packed with a very middle-aged crowd) serving local beers, followed by the excellent **Duke of Wellington** and the more modern **Bacchus**, both in High Bridge. Plenty of good beer in all three. Next came the superb **Bridge Hotel** in Castle Garth, where I particularly enjoyed my pint of Orkney Red Mcgregor, and a repeat late night visit to the Cooperage – and yes the rumour is true, I did resort to Diet Coke there – well a man does have his limits!

We had a few hours to spare on Saturday but were aware that Newcastle were playing at home so headed out to the suburbs. First up was the **Benton Ale House** in Front Street, near Four Lane Ends metro stop. We were the only customers in what was a nice comfy pub with a choice of four beers. Then a long metro ride to the **Wheatsheaf** in Felling, the original

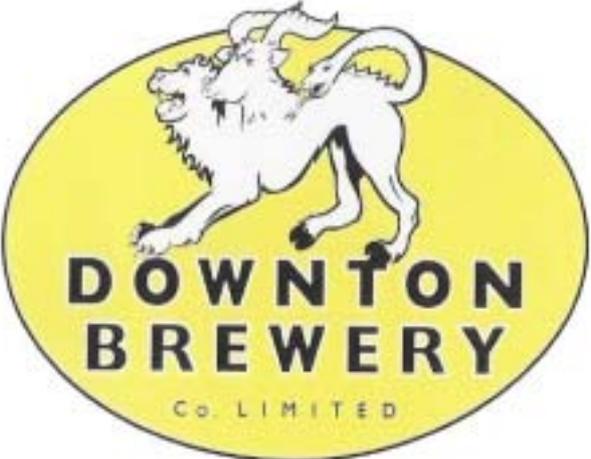
Big Lamp brewery pub. We had hoped to sample some of their famed strong brews, but three of the weaker beers were on offer – nice pub though! Then a couple of stops further on came the **Albion** at Bill Quay, a remarkable old place about seven or eight minutes' walk from Pelaw metro stop, in a residential area but almost totally isolated by the river. Beers were mainly from the local Jarrow brewery and the pub has amazing views along the Tyne (no fog alas).

Our plan from there was to time our return into the centre to coincide with pubs emptying for the match. We got to the **Newcastle Arms** (next to the ground) at 2.45 and were astonished that so many fans were still there, many with full pints! By 2.55 it had indeed emptied leaving a mass of dirty glasses, and a row of about eight handpumps with beers from all over.

On the other side of the ground was the **Strawberry**, a pleasant place devoted to Newcastle United and with a bank of four handpumps. Before heading back to the airport we stopped off at the **Hotspur** in Percy Street to witness the loss of our remaining pennies on the Grand National. Sadly, this was the only pub to let the side down all trip with some less than brilliant quality beer.

Of the 19 Good Beer Guide pubs we had targeted, we had got to 18 of them (and walked past the other!) and were mightily impressed with the local ale scene. I would heartily recommend the city as a great place for a beery short break.

Vince Murray



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# Milk Street Brewery

A FULL mini-bus of local CAMRA members set forth in early April to visit the Milk Street Brewery located at the back of the Good Beer Guide-listed pub, the Griffin Inn in Frome.

After a minor navigational delay, we soon arrived at the pub and were most impressed to see six Milk Street brews on hand-pump along the bar. Genial landlord and joint owner Rik Lyall warmly welcomed us all by pouring us a pint of our choice.

The brewery was originally commissioned in 1999 by Nick Bramwell, with Rik joining in 2001. The pub then was in a derelict state prior to being renovated, whilst the brewery itself was constructed in an outbuilding which in a previous life was a small cinema showing X-rated films! We just managed to squeeze into the brew house amid all the brewing equipment, as Rik explained the current set-up. It was recently expanded around 18 months ago, but has now reached the limits of the building it is located in, and new, local premises are being sought.

Rik told us that the six-barrel plant typically brews three times a week, rising to five in summer, with national distribution via

specialist cask ale supplier Brewers Wholesale in Stourbridge. In addition, Milk Street Brewery Ltd (to give it its full name) also delivers to their pub in Poole called the Brewhouse, and also have a franchise at the Cheese & Grain music venue in Frome.

Rik had been interested in brewing since his school days at the age of 13, using whatever ingredients he could get his hands on! Perhaps, not surprisingly, he went on to become head brewer at Bunces (now Stonehenge), then Hop Back, followed by Cotleigh brewery before joining Milk Street.

All beers are brewed to traditional recipes brewed using malt, hops and water, and although they produce a number of special, seasonal and one-off brews, their leading brands called *Nick's*, *Beer* and *Funky Monkey* are excellent examples of their style. On occasions, they do experiment with unusual brews, and none more so than their increasingly popular *Elderfizz*, a naturally effervescent wheat beer – unfiltered and unpasteurised – made using locally grown elderflowers. It's served through a chiller at 5 degrees (and purists had better look away now!) using a

keg dispense. In addition, new brew *March Madness* has proved very popular indeed, and will soon be brewed on a regular basis and re-badged as *The Usual*.

Back in the bar, we very much enjoyed sampling the extensive range of Milk Street ales available. As well as *Nick's* and *Beer*, we were also able to sup *Bobbled*, which had been brewed as far back as October for the Christmas period, and had been specially kept back in the cellar. At around 6.5%, it was absolutely delicious indeed, having matured well! Not forgetting *Zig Zag Stout* and *Mells Bells* too. Rik pointed out that no keg lagers or stouts were sold in the pub either.

All too soon it was time to leave, popping in briefly to the recently opened Blindman's pub, the Lamb, before setting off back to Bristol.

Our thanks must go to Rik for his hospitality – we all appreciated the brewery tour as well as the partaking of the excellent ales made there. We'll keep an eye out for your beers in Bristol Rik – we don't often spot them, so do let us know which pubs may be stocking them in the future.

Tim Proudman

## Join CAMRA today and help us make a difference!

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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.

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](http://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](http://www.camra.org.uk/joinus) to find out more.

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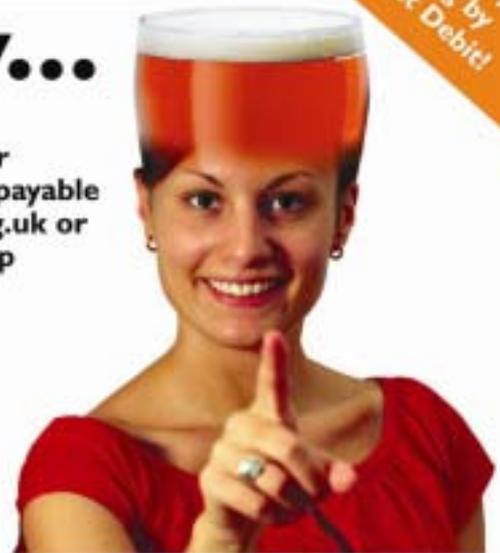
If your friend or family member enjoys their beer and pubs then a year's CAMRA membership is the ideal present. Your present will consist of the benefits already mentioned earlier in this article and can be delivered to your address or direct to your friend or family member. If you want to find out more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

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# Keynsham brewery up for grabs

SADLY, the decision has been taken to try and sell the Keynsham brewery “lock stock and barrel” as a going concern.

John Firth, the founder, feels physically unable to carry on but is desperately keen to see someone take on the business and make a success of it. He and his partners are happy to pass on all aspects of the business. Meanwhile Stockwood Stout is still available from the brewery.



I simply cannot carry on!

All in the Bristol branch of CAMRA would like to thank John for his major contribution to the revival of local independent brewing in recent years, and for some fine beer that he produced. I will always remember with great fondness a magical pint of Stockwood Stout that was sold at the Miners Arms beer festival last summer – a pint that showed the fine potential that Keynsham has, and will hopefully have again in the future.

*Vince Murray*



Star Gazy Pie – one of the special treats at the Cornish Beer Festival held on St Piran’s Day at the Star Inn, Bath.

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entirely by  
unpaid volunteers

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

**LETTERS:** please email correspondence to: [steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk) or post it to:

**Pints West Editor, Steve Plumridge,  
Garden Flat, 6 Royal York Villas,  
Clifton, Bristol BS8 4JR.**

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

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

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# Diary

**Diary of the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale.** (For more information on local events either attend our branch meetings or check the diary section on our web site at [www.camrabristol.org.uk](http://www.camrabristol.org.uk).)

- **Thurs 5<sup>th</sup> June** - Meet & Greet at the Robert Fitzharding, Bedminster, 7.45pm.
- **Wed 11<sup>th</sup> June** - Branch committee meeting at the Old Fish Market, 8pm.
- **Thurs 12<sup>th</sup> June** - BADRAG gathering, Old Tavern, Stapleton, home of Arbor Ales, 8pm. (No. 5 bus from Bristol city centre.)
- **Tues 17<sup>th</sup> June** - Explorer/GBG trip to Almondsbury, Thornbury & district.
- **Wed 25<sup>th</sup> June** - Branch meeting at the Commercial Rooms, 8pm.
- **Sat 28<sup>th</sup> June** - Trip to Wessex brewery, depart from the Cornubia 10.30am.
- **Tues 1<sup>st</sup> July** - Crawl of Bedminster & locality. Meet at the Windmill, Windmill Hill, 7.30pm.
- **Wed 9<sup>th</sup> July** - Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia, 8pm.
- **Thurs 10<sup>th</sup> July** - BADRAG gathering, Off The Rails, Weston-super-Mare, 7.30pm. (18.55 train from Bristol Temple Meads.)
- **Wed 16<sup>th</sup> July** - Explorer/GBG trip to Regil/Churchill areas.
- **Wed 23<sup>rd</sup> July** - Branch AGM at Horts, Broad Street, Bristol, 8pm.
- **Wed 13<sup>th</sup> August** - Branch committee meeting at the Old Fish Market, 8pm.
- **Thurs 14<sup>th</sup> August** - BADRAG gathering, Royal Oak, Bath, 7.30pm. (18.49 train from Bristol Temple Meads.)
- **Wed 27<sup>th</sup> August** - Branch meeting, 8pm, venue to be confirmed.

# Beer festivals

- **Claverham Village Hall** - 13th to 15th June.
- **Chipping Sodbury Rugby Club** - thirteenth South Cotswold Beer Festival, 11th and 12th July ([www.bs37.com/beer](http://www.bs37.com/beer)).
- **Nailsea and Backwell Rugby Club, West End, Nailsea** - Nailsea Beer & Cider Festival, Friday 11th to 13th July ([www.applefest.co.uk](http://www.applefest.co.uk)).
- **White Horse, Twerton** - Summer Beer Festival, 11th to 14th July.
- **Royal Oak, Twerton** - Beer and Folk Festival from 17th to 20th July.
- **Star Inn, Bath** - Summer Cornish Festival from 17th to 20th July.
- **Pensford Memorial Hall** - Pensford Beer Festival, 18th and 19th July ([www.pensfordbeerfestival.co.uk](http://www.pensfordbeerfestival.co.uk)).
- **Earls Court, London** - Great British Beer Festival, 5th to 9th August ([www.ggbf.org](http://www.ggbf.org)).
- **Miners Arms, St Werburghs** - Summer Beer Festival, 21st to 25th August.
- **Ubley Parish Hall** - Chew Valley Beer Festival, 12th and 13th September ([www.chewvalleybeerfestival.co.uk](http://www.chewvalleybeerfestival.co.uk)).
- **The Hillgrove, Kingsdown, Bristol** - Organic Festival, 11th to 14th September.
- **Beeses Riverside Bar & Tea Rooms** - 12th to 14th September ([www.beeses.co.uk](http://www.beeses.co.uk)).

# Weston diary

- **Wed 21 May** - Red Admiral, Alexander Parade, 8.30pm onwards.
- **Wed 18 June** - Highbridge Crawl (featuring the Good Beer Guide-listed Royal Artillery, West Huntspill). Train from WSM at 19.30. Return train from Highbridge leaves at 23.05.
- **Thurs 10 July** - Bristol & District Rare Ales Group (BADRAG) social at Off The Rails, 7.30pm onwards.
- **Wed 16 July** - Annual Seaside Summer Saunter, visiting 6 or 7 pubs on or very near the seafront. Start Captain's Cabin at 8pm.
- **Wed 20 August** - Congresbury Crawl - 19.35 bus from town. Bus back from Congresbury at 23.35.

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

## Weston contact

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

## Bath & Borders

See page 23 for forthcoming events of the Bath & Borders branch.

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○ Views expressed in Pints West are those of the individual authors and not necessarily supported by CAMRA  
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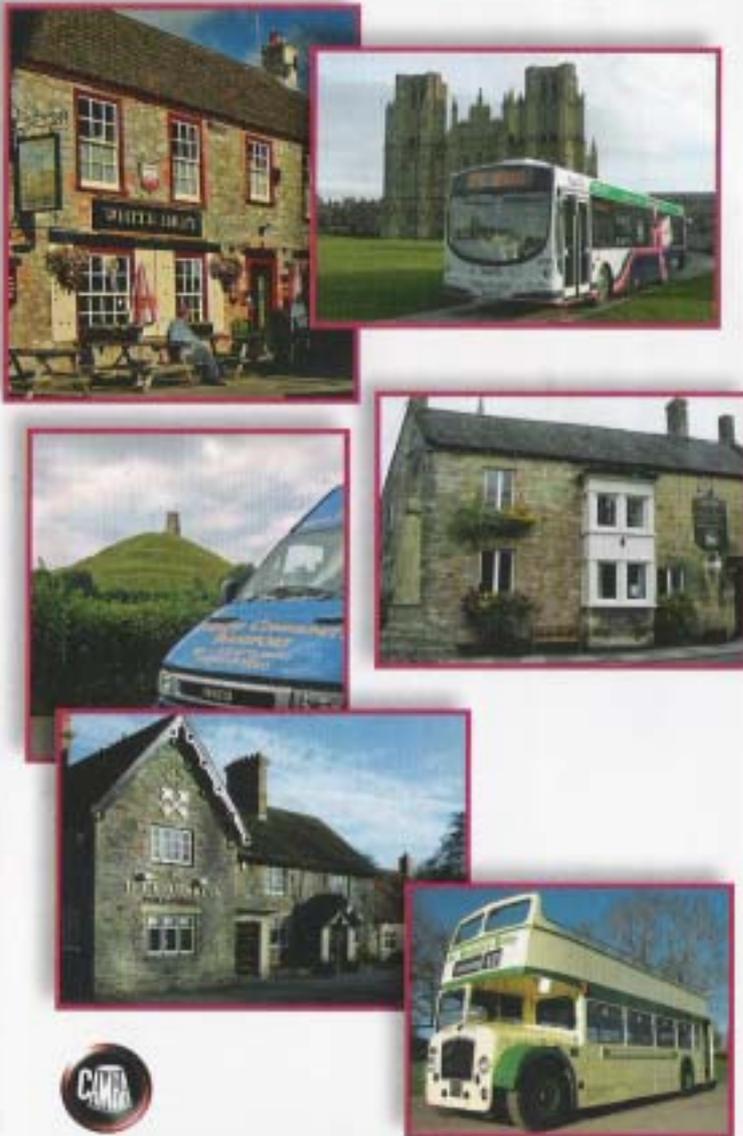
The 2008 edition of the Somerset guide to Sunday and Public Holiday Bus Services has recently been published.

The guide, produced in conjunction with the Somerset branch of the Campaign for Real Ale, includes a large, easy-to-follow map showing bus routes and pub locations, as well as a

comprehensive bus timetable. Thirty-six Somerset pubs offering great real ales are featured.

Anyone who would like copies will find Somerset County Council only too pleased to send them to you – phone 0845 345 9155 or email [transport@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:transport@somerset.gov.uk).

## Sunday and Public Holidays Bus Services 2008



with details of 36 CAMRA pubs and 19 Somerset Attractions that can be visited by Bus.

Transporting Somerset



Valid from April 2008

### SUNDAY AND PUBLIC HOLIDAY BUS SERVICES IN SOMERSET

Welcome to the 10th edition of the Sunday and Public Holiday timetable leaflet. Produced by Somerset County Council in conjunction with CAMRA (Campaign For Real Ale), this leaflet provides timetable information for all Sunday and Public Holiday services throughout Somerset. In addition, 36 CAMRA pubs and 19 Somerset tourist attractions are listed - a great way to discover Somerset by bus!

All listed pubs/attractions have weekday equivalent services. Please see area timetables produced by Somerset County Council for the following areas: Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset, Taunton and West Somerset. These are available upon request from the Somerset County Council contact address below. If you have any enquiries, comments or suggestions about this leaflet or any other services, we would also like to hear from you.

Transporting Somerset,  
Somerset County Council, Room A1,  
County Hall, Taunton, Somerset. TA1 4DY  
Tel: 0845 345 9155  
e mail: [transport@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:transport@somerset.gov.uk)

#### OPERATORS AND ENQUIRY NUMBERS

Eurotaxi	0871 250 3333
First (Weston-s-Mare)	0845 606 4446
First (Taunton)	01823 272033
Mendip Community Transport	01749 330100
Quantock Motor Services	01823 251140



traveline  
public transport info  
0871 200 22 33  
[www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info)

BT numbers charged 10p per min plus 1p setup fee per call. Mobile and other providers' charges vary.

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RNID typetalk

This document is also available in Braille, large print, on tape and on disc and we can translate it into different languages. We can provide a member of staff to discuss the details.