



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

**AWARD-WINNING**



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**No. 79**  
Autumn  
2008

CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

# PINTS WEST

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



# Getting Animated in the Orchard

AS well as their permanent range of excellent beers, Blindman's Brewery, based near Frome in Somerset, has been producing monthly specials. This year they took for their theme comedians' catchphrases, so there have been such offerings as *Nudge Nudge Wink Wink*, and *That's a Cracker*, with *Lovely Jubbly*, *Super Smashing Great* and *Just Like That* promised for September, October and November. That well-known Dickensian comedian, Ebenezer Scrooge, provides the catchphrase of December – *Bah Humbug!*

One of Blindman's specialities has been producing beers brewed uniquely for certain local pubs, such as *Raven* and *Raven's Gold*, for the Raven pub in Bath, and *Old Green Tree*, as well as the beers for their own pub, the Lamb. So Paul Edney and Lloyd Chamberlain were more than ready to oblige when the Orchard, a friendly little pub down near the SS Great Britain in Bristol, asked if they could produce one for them.

As the name tells you, this is really a cider house, but has some well-kept ales. Since Aardman Animations (of Wallace and Gromit fame) are close by, and frequent the pub, they got involved, designing the pump clip and beer mats. On Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> July, the beer was launched to great acclaim. Called Aardman Animator, it checked in at 4.3% and was a lightish bitter with a mellow flavour that was eminently drinkable. The first firkin went in forty minutes, and four went during the course of the evening.

The real Aardman animators were out in force, including one of the co-founders, Peter Lord, who was happy to pose with Lloyd and one of the Blindman's brewers, Richard Farley. Sadly the designer of the clip and the beer mats, Michael Salter, who had worked on



Peter Lord of Aardman Animations flanked by Richard and Lloyd of Blindman's Brewery

*Wallace and Gromit – the Curse of the Were-rabbit*, could not be present, but his handiwork was much appreciated. The pump clip had to be seen to be believed!

## Back in Frome

On a more cultural note, the function room at Blindman's Brewery's Lamb Inn, Frome, was the venue for an interesting talk, film and tasting in Frome Festival in July. Entitled "Quince, Venison and Peas", it told the story of how a group of Frome residents and local food suppliers had got together to recreate a meal of about 1685. They had then made a film of the final meal, shot in a seventeenth century house in Frome. Those watching were

then able to try some of the food which had been served at the feast, including jumbolds (a kind of biscuit), spiced sausages, quince and prune compote (which was delicious with the sausages) and fruit tarts. At the feast, Spanish wine was served, but English ale was also popular at this time, and samples of Blindman's own Lamb Ale were available for tasting.

Participating in local events like this is a good way of keeping a pub at the heart of the community, and it

brought many people into the pub who might not otherwise have come, and who certainly would not have tried out a real ale. There has been a change of staff at the Lamb, as the previous chef had left due to personal circumstances, and Paul and Lloyd have taken the opportunity to respond to some criticisms by adding bar stools and comfortable settees for those who just want a drink. The place was certainly busy the night I was there. So far, Blindman's Brewery seems to be putting up a creditable performance at running their first tied pub – let's hope the success continues.

*Kirsten Elliott*



Hugh pulls a pint of Aardman Animator



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# You can Bank on a good time here!

ONE of the smallest pubs to have come back onto the Bristol CAMRA radar lately is the tiny Bank Tavern in central Bristol.

The Bank Tavern is one of the Old City's most historic pubs, opening as it did in the 1750's to commemorate the opening of the first bank in Bristol (indeed, only the second outside London) on the corner of John Street and Broad Street. The architectural features of the pub reflect its long history (forgivable really – it is older than Australia!) and having been renovated significantly in the nineteenth century and again more recently in 1972, the Bank has undergone some change since its foundation. The changes add to the sense of history and character that mark an unusual find in an over-regenerated city such as Bristol. 250 years on, the Bank still provides a lively but intimate hub within the walls of the Old City.

Landlords Ed Lobbett and Sam Gregory have been drinking partners for some time and jumped at the chance to become business partners as



the Bank's most recent custodians. Both having other jobs, they opened the pub to enjoy it with the point being to provide an engaging, chatty space with quality beers and ciders. With pub experience that runs from country inns to student pubs to nightclubs, Sam and Ed were determined

the Bank would lose none of its character but would be a place to have fun with. No football, no fruit machines, but plenty to look at with the fake loo, chemical reaction of the week and universal truth (!) of the day. They even have their own brand of pickled eggs!

With plenty of seating outside it's a great space to enjoy the quality lunchtime menu with all meals homemade and a growing reputation for proper food at a reasonable price. If you're feeling confident you can enjoy what is possibly one of the biggest Sunday lunches in Bristol with three choices of meat and gravy ("Pig in cider", "Cow in red wine and ale" or "Hen in white wine"), a selection of six vegetables and potatoes and homemade Yorkshires. Meals are all around £5 to £6 during the week with Sunday lunch at £6.95 from 12 to 4pm.

Sticking with the theme of a small independent pub, the real ales are selected generally from small independent breweries. Mainbrace, a 4.2% amber beer with a rounded fruity start and hoppy finish, is the



mainstay. Brewed by "Hugh the Brew" at the Jollyboat Brewery in Bideford in Devon, Mainbrace hails from Ed's hometown and was first on the list when picking which ales would be on offer. The other two ales are guest beers and are picked again from small brewers, a recent selection being Branoc from Branscombe Vale Brewery, Devon; Pale Rider from Kelham Island Brewery, Sheffield; Bees Knees from the Great Western Brewery, Bristol; and O2 from Otley Brewery, Trefforest. Ciders tend to be local with Thatcher's Traditional on draft, a draft guest cider (Janet's Jungle Juice, Heck's Medium, Moles Black Rat and Weston's Old Rosie to name a few), with two varieties of the fizzy stuff – Kingstone Press and Thatcher's Gold – for those who like that sort of thing.

The pub is growing in popularity every week as more people manage to find it, not as easy as you might think being tucked away down a side road, but the slightly inaccessible location gives a sense of seclusion from the bustle of the centre. Having had some successful live music and tapas nights on Thursdays, the plan is to make live music a regular Thursday feature over the coming months to complement the DJ nights on Fridays when the friendliness is not lost but the tempo certainly increased!

This is a pub that has seen lots of changes of management in recent years. At the time of writing, Ed and Sam appear to be on the verge of signing a long lease. So, the future for the Bank looks good for the long term. And, judging by my recent visits, the beers are in cracking form as well.

At the time of writing, future guest ales were on order from RCH, Cotswold Spring, Great Western Brewery, Moor, Otley and, of course, a variety of beers from jolly old Jollyboat.

There is even a Nat West ATM outside so you can get more beer tokens when required!



A board outside the pub.  
An example of their quirky sense of humour?



# Golds for Butty Bach and Dorothy

MUCH to the delight of Wye Valley Brewery, Butty Bach, its 4.5% premium ale and one of their most popular beers, has been crowned West Midlands CAMRA Best Bitter of 2008.

The beer is described as a smooth and satisfying burnished gold premium ale. This award is one of over 50 won by Wye Valley Brewery in the last 23 years for the high quality of its cask and bottled beers.

Said Vernon Amor, managing director, "For Butty Bach to gain so many awards over the years is a testament to the dedication of the team here at Wye Valley Brewery, who achieve what every brewer dreams of: to brew consistently great beer time after time. We are really proud this achievement."

As if that's not enough, Wye Valley's popular bottled beer Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout has been crowned CAMRA Champion Bottle-Conditioned Beer of Britain 2008.

This award is one of many for Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout, but is the most significant so far, going one better than when it won Silver in the same competition last year.

Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout is a classic stout, described by Britain's foremost beer writer, Roger Protz as a 'full-bodied and memorable beer... the palate is smooth and creamy with overtones of roasted grain and bitter chocolate.'



**WYE VALLEY BREWERY**

**WYE VALLEY BITTER**

**HPA**

**Butty Bach**

Awarded Silver: West Midlands CAMRA Best Bitter of the Year 2007

Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout

Awarded Silver: CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival bottled conditioned beer category

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[www.wyevalleybrewery.co.uk](http://www.wyevalleybrewery.co.uk)

# Update on the Cornubia

THE Cornubia in Temple Street, Bristol (opposite the fire station), is now in the capable hands of Luke Daniels, the previous people having moved on. Luke has now been running the pub on behalf of Hidden Brewery for a couple of months or so now, with a mission to "turn the place around towards the path of its former glory." Although a temporary manager at the time of writing, there seems a very good chance he will become permanent. Luke has worked at the pub in the past so he knows what is required of the pub and its customers.

The pub should be stocking beers from Hidden Brewery (naturally) and from a changing selection of microbreweries. Luke says, "I intend to always have at least one dark ale on, and in the winter months I'm sure that this will increase. I currently serve seven hard-to-find continental lagers and beers. I am getting delivery of some unusual American ales and lagers, including 'Left Hand' Juju Ginger Beer, and Anchor Steam Porter."

The pub's new menu is up and running and in the coming months should feature classic English dishes such as toad in the hole and cottage pie, and in the near future they should be serving Sunday dinners.

The two function rooms have both been thoroughly cleaned and tidied, and continue to be available to use for events and meetings.

If time permits, later in the year Luke would like to stage an ale, cider and cheese festival in their outside area.

The pub's opening hours have changed slightly, the main difference is that they are now open all day on Sunday, from midday until 10.30pm. On this subject, Luke says: "I know there have been issues in the past with the pub being closed when it was advertised as open, but we now have our opening hours displayed in the window, and I guarantee that we shall stick to them, no matter how quiet the pub is."

SP

## Malt, Hops, Yeast & Water!



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# Champion Beer of Britain 2008

Alton's Pride, brewed by Triple fff Brewery in Hampshire, was declared to be the best beer in Britain by a panel of brewers, beer writers and journalists at the judging finals held at the Great British Beer Festival recently.

Alton's Pride, which has an ABV of 3.8%, is described in the 2008 edition of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide as, "Clean-tasting, golden brown beer, full-bodied for its strength with an aroma of floral hops. An initial malty flavour fades as citrus notes and hoppiness take over, leading to a hoppy, bitter finish."

The Hampshire brewed beer was chosen as the overall winner from over sixty finalists, including beers from tiny micros to major regional brewers.

Roger Protz, one of the finalist judges and editor of the Good Beer Guide, said, "This is a magnificent victory for a craft brewery that opened in 1997 with a five-barrel plant and has just opened a new brewhouse with a 50-barrel kit. It has grown due to consumer demand for its rich and complex beer and proves that the future for real ale in Britain is assured."

Graham Trott, head brewer of Triple fff Brewery, said, "We are over the moon and delighted to put Alton as a brewery back on the map. I would like to thank everyone who is connected with the brewery and we look forward to more people enjoying our winning beer."

The Silver award went to Black Dog Freddy from Beckstones (Cumbria).

Bronze went to CAMRA's current National Winter Beer of Britain winner, Station Porter from the Wickar Brewery in Gloucestershire.

## Local success yet again

Wickwar Brewing Company, Gloucestershire's largest independent brewery, brew some of the best beer in the land. Not only was their Station Porter voted the Supreme Champion in the CAMRA Winter Beer of Britain competition, but the same beer has been given Bronze in the latest Champion Beer of Britain awards.

Ray Penny, Wickwar's founder and managing director, said: "This is turning out to be a fantastic year for all of us at Wickwar. To be awarded such a prestigious award for a supposedly winter beer, in the middle of summer, just epitomises the total drinkability of our beers, combined with the unique taste profiles and the combination of quality local ingredients."

"We are the only brewer in our region to have won these prestigious awards; we have a heritage brewery, where there has been brewing on the same site since circa 1860. Unlike some other brewers, our beers are truly hand crafted; there is no automation involved. As a regional brewer we have very strong local profiles that are reflected in the sales at our brewery shop, which is open six days a week selling our draught and bottled beers to our customers who prefer the taste of authentic, hand crafted acclaimed beers."

"We only operate a quality ale brewer and these awards, given by CAMRA, are gratefully received and they give us great confidence that our ales will grow in popularity."



Wickwar managing director Ray Penny and head brewer Philip Downes celebrate Station Porter's successes

## The results in full

### Champion Beer of Britain:

**Gold:** Triple fff, Alton's Pride (Hampshire)

**Silver:** Beckstones, Black Dog Freddy (Cumbria)

**Bronze:** Wickwar, Station Porter (Gloucestershire)

### Category winners

#### Mild Category

**Gold:** Beckstones, Black Dog Freddy (Cumbria)

**Silver:** Rudgate, Ruby Mild (York)

**Bronze:** Rhymney, Dark (Merthyr Tydfil)

#### Bitter Category

**Gold:** Triple fff, Alton's Pride (Hampshire)

**Silver:** Lees, Bitter (Manchester)

**Joint Bronze:** Jarrow, Rivet Catcher (Tyne & Wear); Surrey Hills, Ranmore Ale (Surrey)

#### Best Bitter Category

**Gold:** Skinner's, Betty Stoggs (Cornwall)

**Silver:** Highland, Scapa Special (Orkney)

**Joint Bronze:** Cairngorm, Nessies Monster Mash (Highlands); Timothy Taylor, Landlord (West Yorkshire)

#### Strong Bitter Category

**Gold:** Thornbridge, Jaipur IPA (Derbyshire)

**Silver:** Fuller's ESB (London)

**Bronze:** Highland, Orkney Blast (Orkney)

#### Golden Ale Category

**Gold:** Otley, O1 (Mid Glamorgan)

**Silver:** Loddon, Ferryman's Gold (Oxfordshire)

**Bronze:** Skinner's, Cornish Knocker Ale (Cornwall)

#### Speciality Beer Category

**Gold:** Otley, OGarden (Mid Glamorgan)

**Silver:** Wentworth, Bumble Beer (South Yorkshire)

**Bronze:** Nethergate, Umbel Magna (Essex)

#### Bottle-Conditioned Beers

**Gold:** Wye Valley, Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout (Herefordshire)

**Silver:** Fuller's, 1845 (London)

**Bronze:** Wells and Young's, Special London Ale (Bedfordshire)




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# Bristol Pubs Group demands that the Bell, Redcliffe, is saved!

**Enterprise Pub Company slammed for imposing restrictive covenant as condition of sale of Bristol pub**

The Bristol Pubs Group (part of Bristol CAMRA) has slammed Enterprise Inns, the largest of the UK's pub-owning companies, for imposing a restrictive covenant as a condition of sale meaning that new owners will not be able to operate the premises as a pub in future.

The pub, which is for sale through property consultants James A Baker of Bath, is believed to date from around 1750. It is on the market for £225,000 (plus VAT) for the freehold.

The sales particulars from the selling agents state that **"the property will be sold with a restrictive covenant prohibiting its use as a public house."**

Commenting on the sale conditions, Bristol Pubs Group member and Bell local Michael Chappell said: "The Bell used to bring business into the area, being on a prominent road in Redcliffe. It also benefited from walk-through trade, especially at weekends. Enterprise is not doing this pub or

the area justice. This pub is one of the few surviving Redcliffe pubs out of many which once dotted the area. It has a historic connection back to the times when Redcliffe was awash with pubs and industry. Bristol Pubs Group will make sure that the Bristol City Council Planning Department are aware that there is anger regarding this restriction so that change of use is not granted. We want to see this pub reopen as a pub!

"We believe that this could be a successful pub in the right ownership. We also believe that Enterprise are imposing the covenant as they run other pubs in the area and do not want the competition from another operator running a former pub of theirs nearby.

"Restrictive covenants were never intended for this purpose. They were there to ensure that inappropriate use of a building was not sought once sold. Clearly, as Enterprise has run this as a pub, this cannot be the case here. The decision to impose this restriction is a disgrace."

# Keynsham Brewing acquisition

KEYNSHAM Brewing Company has been acquired as a going concern by a new investor from Cheltenham. The new investor, who wants to remain nameless for the time being, told Pints West that "purchasing the Keynsham Brewing Company as a going concern was the perfect way to enter this exciting industry at a very progressive time for micros."

The new owner was also very pleased with the support and guidance provided by John Firth, Keynsham's previous owner, commenting of the importance of being able to transfer key knowledge such as recipes and know-how to operate the plant. The new owner is sure that this will prove essential in getting Keynsham back on its feet.

The plan is that the Keynsham Brewing Company will be up and running just in time for the Christmas rush, when the new owners will make a fuller statement on the exciting future plans for the brewery.

Although remaining nameless for the moment, they can be contacted by email, [Info@patchmatch.co.uk](mailto:Info@patchmatch.co.uk).



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# A pilgrimage to Tom Copley Tavern, Spreyton – Mecca for real ale drinkers

BEING a writer of non-fiction can be a rather lonely job – if you're not actually writing, you may be out researching – and it's not a job that encourages socialising. Fortunately, that is not the case if, like Andrew Swift and I, one of your favourite topics is the history of pubs. Not only that, but sometimes, in the interests of research, we get to have an interesting holiday that is also tax-deductable.

This was the case in May, when we went down to Devon to spend some days researching our next venture into the world of historic pubs, Devon pubs in old postcards and photographs.

East Devon is easily accessible by car or by



rail – there are amazing bargains if you book online – but with a list of pubs to visit in the Dartmoor area, we needed to stay somewhere. Was there a real ale pub that might be a good place to go?

There certainly was. The Tom Copley Tavern at Spreyton, right in the heart of the area we wanted to visit, had been the National CAMRA Pub of the Year in 2006 and local Pub of the Year in 2007. The Good Beer Guide described it as having an exceptional beer range, with six on handpump and more on gravity. In fact, the landlord, Roger Cudlip, has eight regular beers and, while we were there, an extra fifteen real ales from the tap, as well as a couple of ciders – and all beautifully kept.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Since they offered accommodation, and all the reviews were encouraging, I phoned up and booked us in. We arrived quite late in the afternoon on the first day, having done some research *en route*. We had always intended to eat there the first evening, but weren't sure what we do for the other two. In the event, the extraordinary range of beers and the wonderful food – all home cooked by Carol Cudlip – meant there was no competition. We were there every evening.

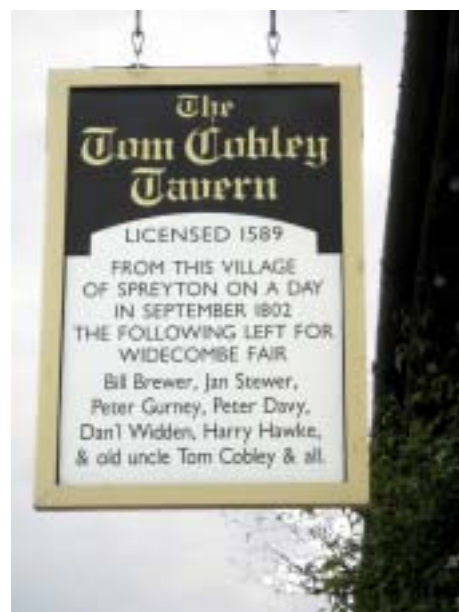
The Tom Copley is named after the chap in the song – of course – and the most likely claimant to that honour is buried in Spreyton churchyard, just a short walk down the road. Spreyton is some distance from the main road, so it's a quiet place to stay, and you wake up to beautiful views in the morning. But, we asked ourselves, could the beers really match those of our favourite pub – and the Bath & Borders Pub of the Year for 2008 – the Royal Oak at Twerton? They certainly could. You might

think that 23 real ales is an impossible total to keep going – and Roger admitted to me the other day, when I gave him a call, that he has had to reduce the number just recently – to 22. They are all West Country beers – from Dorset, Somerset and Cornwall, as well as Devon. Amongst our favourites was Jurassic Bark from Cottage at 5.2%, a beer so rich and so dark Roger was afraid no one would drink it – till we walked in the door. “You saved my bacon with that one,” he said. Druid's Fluid, from Wizard Brewery at Ilfracombe (5%) ran it a close second.

Although the Tom Copley is very much a local's pub, it's not just local voices you hear – there are enthusiasts from just about everywhere that real ale is appreciated. People make a pilgrimage to this Mecca for real ale drinkers from all over the country. No surprise, then, that the Tom Copley tavern has completed the hat trick and is once again the Pub of the Year for the district.

But I'm sorry to say I am ending on a slightly sad note. The Tom Copley, like the Royal Oak, is clearly exceptional. But Roger has been told he can't enter for the local competition next year – because he has won three times on the trot. There is something wrong here. If a pub is the best, it is the best. It is up to the others to raise their standards and compete. I am aware that there are pubs that win year after year and perhaps shouldn't. The Tom Copley, like the Royal Oak, is not one of them. I think CAMRA has to get this sorted out. Is it there simply to support the best in real ale, or is the award to celebrate all-round excellence? Is it just to highlight a good pub every year?

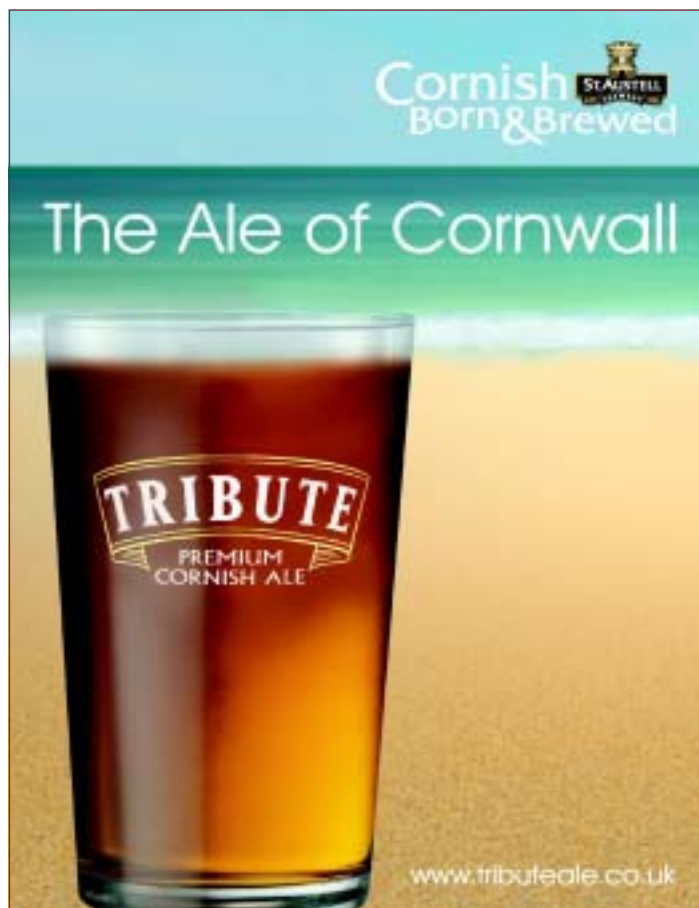
Let's be clear – Exeter CAMRA has some great pubs. Another favourite of ours, the Bridge at Topsham, for example, could pip the Tom Copley to the post – it's insulting to them to remove the Tom Copley from the competition. If they win when the Tom Copley isn't there, are people going to think they don't really deserve the prize? We in CAMRA need to set national rules, and specify if we are looking for something other than range and quality of beer, so that all branches are sticking to the same



guidelines. It would be a pity if such a well intentioned and highly regarded award turned sour. These are my views and I'd like to hear yours.

Anyway, we're going back to Spreyton in September – all the time Carol and Roger Cudlip are in charge at the Tom Copley, we'll keep making the pilgrimage.

Kirsten Elliot



# Hidden Heritage Pubs of the West

WHEN Alan 'Bad News' Morgan took over the **Star Inn** in Bath, he knew exactly what he was doing. The pub had CAMRA's full National Inventory status and was just waiting for a sensitive owner to clean it up and propel it into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

This was exactly what Alan did; shrewdly realising that the fixtures and fittings were unique, he capitalised on the fact and the pub is now many people's favourite when in Bath. The character and atmosphere of the place has been retained and customers love the pub for it, the perfect flagship pub for his acclaimed Abbey Ales. You can't get in the doors sometimes, especially when thousands of rugby fans flock to the city for Bath's home games. When tourists think of the Roman Baths, beer lovers think of the Star and its Inventory stablemate the **Old Green Tree**.

This is one of the reasons why the recently reopened **Queen's Head** in Willsbridge has been such a disappointment. Instead of capitalising on the pub's steady evolution for the past two hundred years, the new owners went for a sort of poor man's 'Changing Rooms' refit, totally ruining the pub's character. Why? It doesn't even make good business sense. It'll take some very hard work to regain its coveted N.I. status.

All is not lost though. When talking to Geoff Brandwood and Mick Slaughter (members of CAMRA's Pub Heritage Group) about the sorry fate of the Queen's Head, Mick said that they were looking at the South

West for more candidate pubs in the Bristol and South Gloucestershire area.

For those who don't know, CAMRA's National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors was set up to "identify and protect the most important historic pub interiors" and "the main aim of the N.I. has been to list those pubs that have remained much as they had before the Second World War. They need to be protected and cherished in order that future generations can enjoy them along with good beer".

Mick identified a few possible candidates to augment the South West Regional Inventory – which is very much a work in progress at the moment – and is keen to find other pubs that may meet the criteria. Possible candidates include the **Nova Scotia** (which he felt shouldn't be missed off the list), the **Cross Keys** (Hanham), the **Three Crowns** (St George) and the **Bridge** at Shortwood, South Glos.

Full details about the Inventory can be found on the web at [www.heritagepubs.org.uk](http://www.heritagepubs.org.uk).

On Mick's suggestion I popped into the **Nova Scotia** the other day and was spell-bound: if some pubs are gems, this one's a 'Bristol Diamond'. The first thing that hits you is the glorious back bar, rumoured to be from a classic liner such as the Mauritania. The landlord could tell me it was in fact made in the twenties by those famous bar and shop fitters, Parnall's of Narrow Wine Street in Bristol. They were so skilled that they went on to make aircraft for the war effort!

The next thing you see is an old wood and frosted glass partition with the legend "Private Bar" in the glass panels on its access doors, nowadays resplendent with an additional sign saying "Captains Cabin". Is there another survivor such as this in our area? Even the cast iron tables are original, with my favourite being one with images of King Edward VII and "Prize Bar Fittings" cast into the shelf underneath. If that isn't enough, the walls are covered with old charts, maps and genuine sea-going paraphernalia. The beer was excellent Bristol Beer Factory Sunrise and my mate Nathan had a ginormous mountain of meat in his reasonably priced mixed grill. Well worth a visit.

Another pub with genuine historic credentials is the **Rhubarb** in Barton Hill, forever associated with Queen Anne's visit to Bristol. It has in fact a splendid and much loved Charles II fireplace dated 1672. Like a lot of pubs in Bristol, the pub has a single storey Edwardian extension and an unusually shaped first-floor window. Uniquely, it still bears witness marks to where it was once painted with the "Rhubarb Tavern" sign above a slogan for "Georges Fine Ales etc". A possible candidate for the Brewery History Society?

The chimney piece is of particular note because Victorian historians insist that it came from Sir Thomas Day's country house (it has T.D.A. before the date) in whose town house the Queen dined. This [country] house was



## Chimera India Pale Ale

Voted Beer of the Festival Bristol 2005  
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Images of the Nova Scotia

sited nearly opposite the country retreat of Sir John Hawkins' father, another Bristol brewer from the Temple District. This was where in 1702 Queen Anne is reputed to have rested on her journey from Bath to Bristol.

The visit of Anne was quite a seminal moment for Bristol, when she was hosted by the aforementioned brewer John Hawkins (whom she knighted). War against France had just been announced and incredibly there was great rejoicing. The cost to the citizens of Bristol was a whopping great £466 6s 7d and some of the expenses make for interesting reading:

<i>Sir Thomas Day's apartments</i>	£22 19s 0d
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<i>Cyder</i>	£ 0 11s 0d
<i>Alderman Blackwell and Co. vintners for wine</i>	£110 0s 0d
<i>To entertaining the Guards at White Hart, White Horse, White and Red Lions and the Bell</i>	£40 7s 6d

It tickles me to think that a fireplace that once hosted the great and the good has for centuries now been enjoyed by the proud working class citizens of Bristol. I must



The Rhubarb fireplace

confess to a soft spot for the Rhubarb, as my grandfather was captain of the whist team there before the war.

Sir John Hawkins' story is an interesting one; he purchased what was to become the Georges/Courage Brewery in 1694 and at the same time bought the **Seven Stars** in St Thomas Street, perhaps one of the country's first tied houses. He also co-sponsored Captain Woodes Rogers' famous circumnavigation of the world which influenced such literary greats as Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, the Rime of the Ancient Mariner and, of course, Treasure Island. The voyage started from Bristol on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1708, and there was hardly anything in Bristol to mark this historic event – strange, quite strange.

I digress, another pub that might be considered as a candidate for the Inventory would be the **Ship Inn** at Keynsham. It too

has an Edwardian extension, and it features one of the longest 'low' bars in the country along with a splendid back bar, complete with those wooden barley twist columns that used to be so popular. The pub has been modified, but these two features remain and how far do modern changes influence a pub's status? Surely customers deserve decent loos.

Years ago, female visitors to the Ship used to ask for assistance when they tried to use the ladies' privy in the garden. It was inhabited by a toad that was always reluctant to leave! When the gents toilet was given a tiled makeover, one local complained to my dad that it made "his c\*ck look shabby". What can you do?

Anyway, I hope this article demonstrates some of what's out there and if anyone has any further suggestions for the Inventory please get in touch.

Mark Steeds

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# Hobsons and Hobdens

THE Champion Beer of Britain 2007 was **Hobsons Mild**, a remarkably tasty brew at only 3.2%.

Hobsons don't use wholesalers to distribute their beers, and like to keep their business local, but it would be unthinkable not to have "CBOB" at our Bristol CAMRA beer festival. Fortunately, as I grew up within ten miles of the brewery, I was able to arrange a delivery of 18 gallons of Mild to my family home.

After chatting to the main man at Hobsons, Nick Davies, he very kindly agreed to break with brewery practise and let us visit the brewery on a weekend. So it was that a Saturday in May saw a bus of Bristol CAMRA members heading to the Worcestershire-Shropshire border to the sleepy market town of Cleobury Mortimer.

We were warmly welcomed by Nick himself, and found that he had on for us to try Hobsons Best, Mild, and a new experimental brew on which he welcomed our thoughts. But the beer we found most interesting was Postman's Knock, a 4.8% dark beer in the style of an old ale or strong mild, with the subtle flavouring of vanilla pods. Normally only available in bottles, this was a rare treat in a cask. A locally sourced pork pie also went down very well before we toured the brewery.

The brewery belies its rural location, and is a recently enlarged modern plant, with a purpose-built bottling line. Interestingly, the bottled beer is brewed in the usual manner, then filtered and reseeded with yeast so it is still "Real Ale in a

Bottle" (sometimes known as RAIB or bottle-conditioned). The bottles are then stored in a warm store to encourage a secondary fermentation. Many of us have visited cold stores at breweries, but I don't think any of us had been in a warm store before! Nick's hospitality was way beyond duty, and hopefully we've persuaded him to let us have some Postman's Knock for the 2009 Bristol beer festival. Thanks for a great time Nick!

It was with some difficulty I persuaded our party to reboard the bus but we had to get to our next stop before it closed for the afternoon – the *Bell* at Pensax, near the famous National Trust-owned Witley Court. A serial award-winner, the *Bell* has just been named local CAMRA pub of the year, an accolade also given by Worcestershire Life magazine. Six cask beers were on, with local offerings complemented by brews from Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. Beer quality was excellent as usual here. As it was a rare sunny day we sat in the garden, which commands spectacular views of the countryside. It was a bit of a surprise that someone was cutting the grass whilst we were there, especially as the pub was due to close in 20 minutes!

Next we headed towards Worcester and visited the *Fruiterers Arms* at Uphampton, home of Cannon Royal brewery. An unpretentious country pub in a lane just off the A449, with distinctly different bar and lounge areas, we enjoyed three beers priced very economically, as



Inside the Three Kings

were the filled rolls. We were fortunate to catch the brewer on site and he gave us a tour of his remarkable brewery, crammed behind the pub. A true micro brewery!

Then we had a diversion to Worcester, where we split up to allow people to do their own thing for a while, and many different pubs were visited (some of us were fortunate enough to find in the *Plough* a fantastic 6.6% stout, Mud City from Windsor Castle brewery).

We headed south for our final stop, the *Three Kings* at Hanley Castle. This legendary 15<sup>th</sup> century pub has been a winner of CAMRA's greatest accolade, National Pub of the Year, and has been in the same family since 1911. In a classic English village setting, with a green in front and a Norman church adjacent, this unspoilt pub always serves Butcombe Bitter and Hobsons Best plus several guest beers. A must-visit pub. Oh, and thanks to the landlady who kindly opened early for us, essential as we were on a schedule!

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The Three Kings

After the great success of our trip to Worcestershire, for our next brewery visit we headed to Wiltshire. **Hobdens** brewery, formerly known as Wessex brewery, is in the safe hands of Chas Hobden, a true master of the brewing craft, and one of the best of the many characters the brewing industry seems to attract.

Located in a farm at Longbridge Deverill, Wiltshire, Chas brews a wide range of beers and is adept at all styles. For several years he has supplied the Bristol beer festival with his mighty Russian Stoa, a dark 9% monster, which is always highly popular. But we were in for a surprise – as well as two of his more standard brews, and the Stoa, we were also able to imbibe a tremendous example of the brewers art, a barrel of Golden Gerbil, a 10% pale beer matured for 18

months. This beer would stand up very well in comparison with the finest Belgian Tripel beers, and was much enjoyed, especially by the ladies amongst our party, perhaps explaining the interesting singing on the bus we experienced later on our journey! We were most interested on Chas's views on the brewing scene, and his many recollections from the past, all of which he is always happy to expound upon. Chas's hospitality is legendary, so it was again that only with the greatest difficulty I persuaded our party to re-embark so we could visit the Good Beer Guide-listed *Fox & Hounds* at Warminster.

About 15 minutes' walk from the railway station and the main drag, the Fox is most definitely worth a visit. Chas had suggested that the landlord would put on a buffet for us, but we were unprepared for an amazingly bountiful spread of food of the highest quality. The beer was in great nick too, as was the cider, and it was some time before we could drag ourselves away.

Next we visited the *New Nut Tree* at Mere, a newly built freehouse which, in addition to three hand-pulled beers, seems to do a roaring trade in food, although we were of course all far too full to sample it.

From here to the *Horse & Groom* at Westbury, formerly home to Westbury brewery and a place where Hobdens beer can often be found on the bar. This large multi-roomed pub has something for everyone, the large garden

proving very popular with families on our visit.

So passing through Bradford upon Avon, on to our last stop, the *Cross Guns* at Avoncliff. At this point I would like to apologise again to our driver, Brian, if he's reading, for taking him down a lane which proved unsuitable for coaches – we didn't spot the sign to this effect until we were on our way back! After Brian had showed his considerable manoeuvring skills we walked across the viaduct and down to a pub in surely a unique location. On the banks of the babbling River Avon, with the Bristol to Weymouth railway line alongside and the Kennet & Avon canal adjacent, the Cross Guns is in a truly picture postcard location. A steeply terraced garden leads down from the 16<sup>th</sup> century inn down to the river, where the urge to feed the swans and ducks may prove irresistible.

Now owned by the local Box Steam brewery, we were amazed to find three dark beers on out of the four available. Be warned, if you visit at peak times the Cross Guns is very busy – the best bet to get there and back is the train service from Bath – just remember to tell the guard when boarding and, as Avoncliff is a request stop, hold your hand out to stop the train when going back to Bath!

So in this idyllic setting another trip came to an end. Now, which breweries to visit next...

Phil Cummings  
(Photos Tony Durbin)

## The Red Lion, Ampney St Peter

IT had long been an ambition of Phil Cummings to get out to the Red Lion at Ampney St Peter, on the A417 near Cirencester (mentioned in Pints West in the past by Andrew Swift).

In the first week in August, in a moment of supreme self-sacrifice, Phil offered to drive Marilyn and me there, before going on to dine at the Five Mile Inn at Duntisbourne Abbots nearby (superb food in a tremendous building and three real ales too but that's another story). We jumped at the chance to visit this CAMRA National Inventory pub described in the Good Beer Guide as a time warp run by a veteran landlord. It only opens from 6 to 10 pm (not Sunday) and from 12 to 2 on weekends and bank holidays.



Nothing can adequately prepare you for the surprise you get upon entering the "public bar" – you find yourself in a tiny room with seating for around 15 to 20 people, mostly on wooden benches arranged so that conversation between strangers is the natural result. In one corner is the

"bar" which consists of two hand pulls and a small collection of bottled drinks – there is no counter, and no lager or other fonts.

The landlord, John Barnard, who would appear to be well beyond normal retirement age, waits there to greet you warmly, offer you a seat and ask you what you would like to drink. The permanent beer is Timothy Taylor's Landlord at £2.54 per pint, with a second beer likely at weekends. John explains that this unusual choice for the area is "because it is the best beer I ever tried."

He is extremely proud of a visit he received from the Head Brewer at Taylor's several years back and the hand-written letter that he received from him praising the quality of the beer he served. On the evidence of our trip the beer was in absolutely perfect condition.

We spent a wonderful hour chatting to John and the other customers – both locals and other first timers like ourselves. John has been in residence at the Red Lion for 43 years and in charge for the last 33 – a tremendous record. It is clear that not a thing has changed in that time and this pub is a rare gem that has survived against all



odds, thanks to John. When I asked what he said to those who ask for lager he said, "No call for that yellow fizzy stuff here – try some Landlord." He also sells South African wine at a mere £5.10 a bottle – surely the lowest price around in a pub? There is another small room for when the pub is busier and log fires for the colder months.

What a superb pub and reminder of time gone by – we will be returning and seriously suggest that you do too. Well done John – long may you continue to delight strangers and locals alike.

Vince Murray  
(Pics Marilyn Murray)

# Butcombe Brewery's 30th Anniversary

WHAT a long journey Butcombe Brewery has had since its inception in 1978. Simon Whitmore, then aged 45 years, and his wife Maureen could have had little idea of how successful a future it would have. Simon had previously spent ten years with Guinness, the last five as Commercial Director for Guinness Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, before moving to Courage in 1972, firstly as General Manager of their brewery in Australia, then for the last three years, as Managing Director of Courage Western, based in Bristol.

Unexpected redundancy in December 1977 forced a difficult career re-think and the conception of starting their own micro-brewery, then a relatively new concept, was born. The classification of the latter as a rural craft was necessary in order to obtain planning permission on green belt land, but once granted, the redundant and derelict farm buildings behind their farmhouse in Butcombe, which they had purchased in 1975, were put to good use. Redundancy money financed starting-up costs, including equipment sourced from Allied Breweries' surplus plant department, and even some second-hand casks from Whitbread.

The two initial brews were a failure due to suspected yeast autolysis, but thanks to advice from John Wilmot, Whitbread's former head-brewer, plus a helping hand of fresh yeast from Peter Austin, who was then setting up the Ringwood Brewery, the third brew was proffered for tasting to local publicans who had expressed interest in selling a local brew.

Much to Simon's surprise, approval was given and Butcombe Bitter – with an original gravity (OG) of 1039 and alcohol by volume (ABV) of 4 per cent – was born.

On September 17<sup>th</sup> 1978 Butcombe made its first commercial sale. The initial brew length was 10 barrels and the first week's sales of 8.75 barrels were to 14 outlets including the Hunters Lodge (Bristol CAMRA's Pub of the Year runner-up for the last two years), the Fox (sadly no longer a pub), the Darlington and even the Grand Hotel in Bristol (now the Thistle).

By 1983 the brew length had increased to 20 barrels and annual sales had risen progressively from 1,637.5 barrels in the first year to 6,293 barrels in 1983, thus necessitating an expansion. Further building conversions were carried out, updated design and equipment again being provided by Allied with an increased brew length of 45 barrels. Butcombe Bitter was certainly spreading its wings with Simon even receiving, in January 1981, a letter from the Catering Officer on St. Helena recounting their enjoyment of the beer at the BBC's Atlantic Relay Station!

Simon had bought his first pub, the Ring o' Bells in Compton Martin, in August 1978, followed by the Swan in Rowberrow in February 1986 as pension security for Maureen who has provided such adaptable and constant support throughout the good and bad times in the brewery's history, becoming a very accomplished tele-sales lady!

The Lamb in Axbridge was bought in 1987 for the brewery company before, in 1992, the continuing success of Butcombe Bitter deemed another, final, expansion of the brewery to be necessary. This time, with a newly purchased barn and strip of land, consultation and design by Peter and Richard Shardlow, a much updated brewery, with almost all new equipment and a brew length of 85 barrels, came into play in 1993.

In 1996 a second beer called Wilmot's Premium Ale, with an OG of



1048, was introduced, named after John Wilmot who had given earlier advice. Unfortunately this beer was not a great success. However, in 1999 another beer named Butcombe Gold, with an ABV of 4.7 per cent, was produced. This was a golden coloured, medium bodied fruity beer with mellow bitterness, which received instant acclaim at CAMRA's Bristol Beer Festival.

By now another three pubs had joined the company, the Bell in Stokes Croft, the Old Crown in Kelston and the Red Tile in Cossington. Output had increased to 13,000 barrels and deliveries were being made to 350 free-trade outlets within a 50-mile radius.

As 2003 and retirement approached, Simon was investigating possible buyers, always mindful that the business, plus loyal staff, who by then numbered 15 (an increase from the one lad employed at start-up!), should be passed to experienced and caring owners. These turned out to be Guy Newell and Paul Horsley, close business friends and ex-owners of the Beer Seller, as Managing Director and non-executive Chairman respectively.

They had the necessary experience of the brewing industry and would, Simon believed, carry the brewery forward in the same manner as he and Maureen had done.

Initial plans to move the brewery half a mile away to the site of the Bungalow Inn did not proceed due to local objections, but a new site on an industrial estate in nearby Wrington proved to be an ideal solution, with room also for offices, warehouse, visitor centre and shop.

Richard Shardlow of Brewing Design Services, who also runs Tring Brewery in Herts, was commissioned to design and build the plant on a very different scale to his previous involvement with Butcombe in 1992/93. This state-of-the-art brewery was to be the largest new-build brewery in the UK for over twenty years, with a 3.5-ton mash tun, two 75-barrel copper/whirlpools and five 150-barrel fermenters, with a brew length of 150 barrels, providing a capacity of 40,000 barrels per annum. Brewing commenced there in early March 2005 with Simon in a consultative capacity to oversee the brewing transfer.

Butcombe had, meanwhile, brought out another beer, Butcombe Blond, a zesty fruity refreshing pale bitter with an ABV of 4.3 per cent. This had made its first tentative appearance in Sept 1999 at their 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary party, was then tweaked, appeared again in their 2003 Silver Jubilee year, and was finally launched at the 2004 Bristol Beer Festival.

Another pub, the Queen's Arms at Bleadon, had been purchased in summer 2004, followed by the Prince of Wales in Westbury-on-Trym in early 2005.

It was also in 2005 that the brewery set up the Long Ashton Cider Company with Thatcher's producing for them a medium-dry keg cider with an ABV of 4.8 per cent called Ashton Press.

The brewery was commissioned in 2005, by the Bristol Brunel 200 committee, to brew a new official beer to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, during the year-long celebrations. This was called Brunel and was a full-bodied IPA with an ABV of 5 per cent. Its popularity persuaded the brewery to retain it as their regular seasonal winter beer, brewed between October and March.

The pub estate grew rapidly in 2006 with the addition of five new houses – the Ring o' Bells in Hinton Blewitt, the Queen Victoria in Priddy, the Woolpack in St Georges near Weston-super-Mare, and



Owners old and new: Simon Whitmore (right) and Guy Newell





The new Butcombe brewery

ending the year with the Rose & Crown in Hinton Charterhouse and the Cross Keys in Rode. Sales were around 21,000 barrels by this time.

2006 also saw a different approach to the market, with the introduction for the first time of a keg version of one of their beers, aimed at the lager-drinking youngsters – a chilled version of Blond, brewed to the slightly higher ABV of 4.5 per cent, then chilled, cold-filtered and served around 5° cooler than cask.

As reported previously in Pints West, Bristol's CAMRA members, and quite a few other Bristolians, were extremely pleased to hear in July 2007 that Butcombe had bought the site where Smiles Brewery Tap had stood, before its destruction, and that plans were in hand to turn it back into a modern pub/grill with a large choice of beers. This major build was not without problems, but it opened at the start of Christmas week and has proved to be quite an attractive addition to Butcombe's estate.

As a complete contrast, the Malt Shovel in Cannington, a 300-year-old, multi-roomed inn, also became part of the Butcombe family at the year's end.

The ABV of Butcombe Gold was reduced last year from 4.7 per cent to 4.4 per cent, giving them a premium bitter to compete directly with beers such as Bass and Pedigree. Sadly, the lovely Blond is now only available in cask from April to September, but is bottled, as are Gold and Brunel.

Production at the brewery is now up to 24,000 barrels per year and direct outlet numbers are around 450, plus other outlets served by wholesalers and pubcos.

The first 30 years have seen many changes, with difficulties along the way, but dedication to quality and consistency have contributed to Butcombe's large, loyal customer base. Guy Newell and his team are committed to carrying on the cask ale tradition well into the future. Here's to the next 30 years!

Margaret Evett



## Annual Cider Summer Saunter

**THE Apple** on Bristol's Welsh Back has been on my list of places to visit for quite a while. The Annual Cider Summer Saunter on 26th July was therefore a great opportunity to sample the Apple's offerings as well as other cider-selling establishments in the Bristol docks area.

The Saunter started at the Apple. This converted Dutch barge sells approximately 40 ciders and cider-related drinks so the choice on the chalk board was bewildering. I plumped for *Hecks Medium*, which was on the dry side of medium while husband, Steve, started with *Old Bristolian*. The *OB* was too sweet for his tastes – served him right for picking an 8.4% at that time of day. *Thatcher's Traditional* was rated "good as ever" and the *Richs* seemed to be going down well.

After an hour sitting in the sunshine on the quay, it was time to move on. The stroll to the next venue took us through elegant Queen Square, across Princestreet Bridge and alongside the Floating Harbour. We took a left just before the SS Great Britain, through a back street or two and then were into the cool of the **Orchard Inn** in Hotwells. The *Cheddar Valley* was a lovely shade of orange and the *Thatcher's Traditional* was apparently "better than at the Apple". *Legbender* was described as "bland" whereas the *Black Rat* was "quite sweet". The one mistake purchase was a half of Thatcher's Gold. Oh dear. It was fizzy and slightly metallic in taste. (We'd not realised we were getting a keg cider.)

The walk to the **Avon Packet** in Coronation Road took only a few minutes. On entering the pub my initial thoughts were that this was a pokey little pub. How wrong could I have been? Beyond the public bar there was an extensive lounge and then outside a fine beer garden complete with duck pond and feathered inhabitants. On offer here was cider from *Thatcher's*. It slipped down very well and people seemed to keep going back for more. The Saunter had been underway for three hours or so at this point and I am sure it was the hot weather that was causing chins to start nodding onto chests! It seemed a pity to move on from such a pleasant spot, but a number of us led the way to the **Coronation** in Dean Lane with others following on eventually. There was only *Old Rosie* on offer. I was happy with it, but some of the party swapped to the excellent Hop Back beers at this stage.

Plans were afoot to return to the Apple or perhaps go elsewhere. Steve and I had to head back to Temple Meads instead. Yate enjoys a limited train service at the best of times and Saturday evening is definitely not the best of times. It had been a good day out and thanks must go to Rich Walters for organising the Saunter. He could not have arranged better weather.

Kathy Matthews



To sample perfectly kept Butcombe Bitter, Gold and Blond, plus numerous guest beers, why not visit a Butcombe pub...

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### THE SWAN

Rowberrow (off A38 south of Churchill)  
01934 852371

### RING O'BELLS

Compton Martin (A368 between Blagdon & West Harptree) 01761 221284

### THE BELL

Hillgrove Street, Bristol  
0117 9096612

### PRINCE OF WALES

Stoke Lane, Westbury-on-Trym  
0117 9623715

### THE LAMB

The Square, Axbridge  
01934 732253

### QUEEN'S ARMS

Celtic Way, Bleadon, near  
Weston-super-Mare 01934 812080

### RING O'BELLS

Upper Road, Hinton Blewitt  
01761 452239

### WOOLPACK INN

St George's, near Weston-super-Mare 01934 521670

### CROSS KEYS

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01373 830900

### ROSE AND CROWN

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### MALT SHOVEL

Bradley Green, Cannington,  
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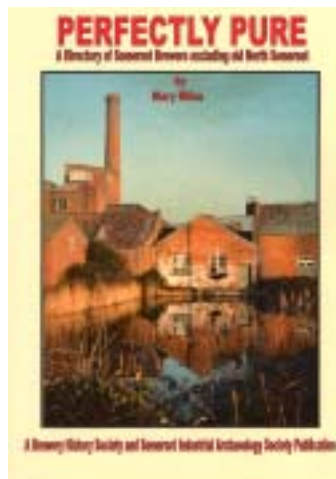
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# Book reviews

## Perfectly Pure: A Directory of Somerset Brewers excluding old North Somerset

by Mary Miles. Published by the Brewery History Society and the Somerset Industrial Archaeology Society Publication, 2008. £10.95 (£12.05, including postage & packing from Beer in Print, Long High Top, Colden, Heptonstall, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 7PF (Tel: 01422 844437; [www.beerinprint.co.uk](http://www.beerinprint.co.uk))



My feelings when I heard about this new book were, I suspect, similar to those many *Pints West* readers will experience when they see the title – pleased that someone's written a guide to Somerset's brewing history, disappointed that they've left North Somerset and B&NES out.

It's become increasingly common, since local government boundaries were redrawn in 1974 and Avon came onto the scene, for books on Somerset's history to exclude Bath and the northern part of the county. But, if history teaches us anything, it is that Somerset is of very ancient foundation – dating back to at least AD845, which makes it older than England. And,

although bureaucrats and politicians may seek to rob us of our heritage, Somerset at least survives as a ceremonial entity, with a Sheriff and a Lord Lieutenant. And its history, pre-1974, is as a unified county. To be partitioned off just doesn't seem right. Apart from anything else, it would mean that Adge Cutler (born in Portishead) wouldn't be from Somerset.

But enough of that. I've seen several county brewery directories before, but none better than this. Superbly laid out, with copious archive photographs, adverts, beer labels, letterheads, etc, it covers breweries that operated between 1638 and 1966. It is comprehensive, fascinating and full of anecdotes that illuminate the often turbulent history of breweries and pubs. Naturally, there's loads on Oakhill and the Anglo-Bavarian in Shepton Mallet and no less than nine pages on the numerous breweries in Frome, including home-brew pubs. The research is impeccable (and fully documented should anyone want to dig a little deeper), it's ideal for reference or just dipping into, and the pictures make an ideal starting point for trips in search of Somerset's brewing history.

Quite simply, it's a 'must have' for anyone remotely interested in the subject. All we want now is for someone to compile a similar guide to North Somerset and B&NES. Any takers?

Andrew Swift

## Real England: The Battle Against the Bland

by Paul Kingsnorth, Portobello, 2008. £14.99

If you think Tesco's great, enjoy drinking in Wetherspoons or All Bar One, like shopping at Cribbs, and have no qualms about rural pubs and post offices closing or thousands of new houses being built on greenfield sites, you probably won't like this book. But if you're increasingly concerned with what's happening to this country, with the disenfranchisement of ordinary people by unaccountable agencies and big business, then you really can't afford to ignore it.

It includes a long chapter on what's happening to England's pubs (which I draw on for my article on pubcos elsewhere in this issue), in which Paul Kingsnorth chats to a number of people, including Roger Protz of CAMRA, the customer service manager of Punch Taverns and several publicans. Much of what he says may be familiar to *Pints West* readers, but rarely have the issues been expressed so clearly or so succinctly.

Kingsnorth is scrupulous in looking at all sides of an argument. Not content, as many would have been, in writing big business off as irredeemably evil, he goes and talks to the head people in organisations he's uneasy with and listens to their side of the argument. At the same time, he finds some of the people he is broadly in sympathy with – anti-supermarket campaigners and groups fighting to protect rural communities, for example – a little worrying. It is this willingness to look at all sides of the picture and report what he finds honestly that makes this book so refreshing – and so scary. Kingsnorth is as far away from a knee-jerk reactionary as you're likely to get. He welcomes and embraces change – but not the sort of change that's going on at the moment. The theme of the book is summed up in its opening pages:

*In the name of economic efficiency, investment, growth, development, or just simply money – whatever words are used – the complex web of intimate relationships between people and communities and the landscape they inhabit is being dismantled, with nobody's permission.*

The rest of the book examines how this is being done, with suggestions as to how local communities can fight back. It may make you angry, but it will inspire as well, especially when you come across passages like this:

*A good local pub, serving good local beer, is the ultimate antidote to placeless globalisation. At its best, it can be the perfect representation of a rooted, human scale institution serving good-quality local produce, which results in good-quality local enjoyment. It's hard to know what more to ask for.*

Andrew Swift



# Matthews Brews

EVEN if our summer hasn't been very summery, Stuart Matthews of Matthews Brewing Company, Timsbury, has been producing some special beers each month to help quench our thirst on the odd hot day we have had. During May – when we actually had some sunshine – you could have been drinking Tims Bier (4.6% ABV), which Stuart describes as a *Mai Bock*-style beer, pale amber in colour, and brewed with Munich Malt and a single variety of German hops, Tettnang.

In time for the summer solstice in June, Stuart came up with Midsomer Pale (4.5%), a copper-coloured pale ale, intended to be refreshing and light on the palate with, says Stuart, a moreish flavour of biscuity malt. The combination of English hop varieties used in this ale provides both its delicate aroma and its well-rounded bitter finish.

Perhaps the one with the most intriguing name was the beer for July – Perrink (4.9%). It's named after one of the seams at the nearby coal mine and is a full-bodied premium bitter, chestnut-red in colour, brewed with English Goldings hops.

The August offering is called Conygre Gold (5.0%), after another coal mine which was almost in the heart of Timsbury. It's a golden ale, full-bodied yet with a soft finish and a delicately fruity German hop aroma. Historians might like to know that the Conygre Hall now stands across the road from the site of the coal mine, and the history of the hall and one or two other mining-related sites in Timsbury can be downloaded from the Conygre Hall website. Worth a look!

I'm looking forward to September's offering, which sticks to the colliery theme, being called Honey Mine (4.7%). Stuart is returning to experimenting with German-style beers, as he did with Tims Beer, and is promising a *Dunkel Bock*-style beer, brewed with Munich Malt, German hops and plenty of added honey.

Kirsten Elliott



# Inn and around Portishead

## Cider Crawling, Part 2

Clarence House social club has no still cider so the Blackthorn was tried (£2.55). I can't say Blackthorn rings my bell. It tasted sparkly enough if that's how it's judged. Moving on to the **Plough** almost opposite The Poacher in the High Street, this place is rarely visited by me because of its lack of real ale. However, it does sell Thatcher's Traditional at £2.10. Tasted good enough to me and much appreciated after the previous Blackthorn, which the Plough also offers for £2.60.

Moving on. It's a couple of years since I took a look at the **Brewers Fayre**, Gordano Gate (on the way in to Portishead from the motorway junction). The cider on offer was Strongbow keg at £2.62. I also noted that they had a pump for cask ale in the shape of Speckled Hen (£2.83) but this was settling and not available. Essentially, this is a food pub with children's play areas but as you enter the place there is a nice little lounge to drink in. The girl on the bar was very friendly and this was not an unpleasant experience at all – although by now the fizzy cider was beginning to unsettle my insides a little.

Next up was the **White Lion**, High Street where I met landlord, Paul. Paul and Tracey bought the lease last year – it's an Enterprise pub – and refurbished the place. There are now no real ales on draught but the place has a more friendly feel than before. Although there are no real ciders available there was a choice of three keg ciders; the usual Blackthorn and for a pleasant change, Gaymers apple and pear ciders. (*"Pear cider" is perry - Ed.*) The Gaymers were both tried and went down very easily. All keg ciders were £2.70 a pint. Paul gave the news that he was adding a Magners tap the following week. Food is available 12 till 4.

The "daddy of them all" for local cider drinkers is undoubtedly the **Black Horse** in Clapton in Gordano. To do it justice, an evening was set aside and I was joined by my commander-in-chief and some of her support staff. As usual, the atmosphere here was great and the bar staff were as friendly as ever. The place was busy inside and out and it looked like half of them were drinking real cider. I joined them for Black Rat and then Thatcher's and topped up with some keg Kingstone Press. Their prices were Thatcher's £2.15, Black Rat and Kingstone Press £2.20, and Blackthorn £2.55. Good prices, great place, great cider. Have you been yet?

So what can we conclude from this cider review? Well, all the real ciders on draught locally seem to be made by Thatcher's – they make the Black Rat on contract for Moles. Nice though it is that such a local outfit is dominating, it would be refreshing to see an alternative on offer. Is there a local landlord up for the challenge?

## Milestones Passed

Three of the town's landlords reached personal milestones in recent months. They are Vic Long of the **Ship**, Jeff Churchill of the **Windmill** and Mark Hazelton at the **Poacher** who between them reached 40<sup>th</sup>, 60<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> birthdays. I'll leave you to work out whose was which.

## The Come Back Kid

Welcome back to Craig Roper who has just returned as landlord of the **White Hart**, Weston in Gordano, after a year's break. He is joined by talented chef, Mike Brand, who was with him in his previous stint. With Craig's partner, Rhea Palomares also expected to lend a hand, there is a touch of youth again in the local landlord scene.

## Meet The Landlord

● **Name:** Jimmy Pelengaris, landlord of the **Royal Inn**, Portishead for the past three years. It's a freehouse.

● **Where from:** Jimmy is a Greek Cypriot who still has a house just north of Nicosia, near the old airport, which is now in the Turkish occupied area. Interestingly, he visits occasionally and is invited around by the current occupants. Jimmy left Cyprus the year of the civil war in 1974 to start a new life in Crete in the bar and restaurant business. Here he met his wife, Frances, who was a tour rep from Birmingham. In 1984, Mike and Frances moved their young family to Weston-super-Mare. Until buying the Royal, Jimmy was in the restaurant business in Weston.



Landlord of the Royal Inn, Jimmy Pelengaris

● **The Royal Inn:** The Royal is a listed building dating back to 1830 and has had an interesting life, having been a thriving hotel for trans-Atlantic passengers amongst other things. It no longer operates as a hotel. Instead, the upstairs provides staff accommodation and a separate dining area mainly used for events such as christenings and wakes. Jimmy's son and daughter, Mike and Sara, head up the management with him.

● **Style:** Jimmy makes it his business to get to know all of his customers, who often come from outside the local area. With the new marina just down the steps next to the pub and with woodland walks leading off it, many of the patrons arrive by boat or by walking and there is a bit of nautical feeling around. As far as the food goes, Jimmy strives to be a bit different from his local competitors and I was pleased to see mezes and Greek salad on the evening menu, which had an upmarket feel.

● **Favourite other pubs:** He tends to concentrate on the food side when sampling other pubs, and said he did like the Robin Hood's Retreat, Gloucester Road, Bristol, when he visited recently.

● **Favourite tipple:** Jimmy is a wine drinker and looks to provide wines not normally available in local shops at reasonable prices. This doesn't stop him, though, being keen to serve real ales. There were four available on my visit and the Exmoor Ales guest ale I tried was tip top.

## Portishead Beer Festival

The fourth Portishead Beer Festival takes place on the nights of Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> November at Redcliffe Bay Hall (on the main Bristol to Portishead bus route). Emphasis will be on local, independent breweries. However, beers from another area in the UK will also be featured. The aim is to have over 30 real ales and three or four ciders on tap. Proceeds will go to the charity, the Children's Hospice South West, though the event is run by local CAMRA members who take their beer seriously. Tickets for each night will be £10 which will cover entry, live music on Friday, tasting notes, a commemorative glass and your first five half pints on the Friday night and your first six half pints on the Saturday night. Food will be on sale both nights. In order to offer the variety of beer offered to as many people as possible, seating is not available in the evenings. A Saturday lunchtime tasting session is also being offered from noon till 2.30pm. At this, numbers will be restricted and everyone will be able to sit comfortably at tables. For £10 you will get a commemorative glass and tasting notes and then all your drinks will be included for this price.

Tickets are available by writing to me, Neil Ravenscroft, at 27 Denny View, Portishead, BS20 8BT, with your cheque payable to the Children's Hospice South West, plus a stamped, addressed envelope. Tickets for the evenings are expected to run out by the end of September so you may want to check first with me on 01275 849558 if you try after then. No tickets are available on the door.

Neil Ravenscroft

# Watering Holes in the Desert

*brought to you from Weston-super-Mare*

## Weston Whispers (pub and beer news)

As reported in Pints West 76 the Great British pub is in dire straights, with around 60 closing each month. In Weston there is plenty of evidence of the precarious nature of running a pub, with a seemingly endless stream of them changing hands. The **Ashcombe**, **Market House**, **Oak House**, **Waverley**, **Golden Lion**, **Observatory**, **Bristol House**, **Criterion** and **Major From Glengarry** have all had the "Under New Management" signs up in recent months – in some cases more than once in recent times and in the case of the Market Tavern and Oak House there were lengthy periods of closure which made some of us doubt whether they would ever open again. If a bar like the Market House struggles to be viable when it is situated in the middle of town opposite the Playhouse Theatre, you have to be seriously concerned about the future of public houses. The threat of developers is hanging over **Scallys** and the **Captains Cabin**. Who knows when or if the **Chalice Bar** will ever re-open.

If you are reading this, you are probably not part of the problem. But how about your friends, neighbours and work colleagues? Do they regularly visit pubs or have they deserted them for their armchairs? Why not do your bit and encourage people to use them more? If they haven't been to pubs for a while they might be pleasantly surprised by what they find.

Despite the gloom, there are some positive stories out there and I hope to cover some of these in this edition of "Watering Holes....."

The Oak House (nee the Ancaster) on Drove Road, has undergone a major transformation under new ownership. It is now called the **Jug and Bottle** and has had a Tudor-ish refurbishment. A major improvement – it feels like a proper pub again. Sharps Doom Bar is the real ale on offer.

Sandra Murphy at the Greene King-owned **Old Inn**, Hutton has been awarded the "Cask Marque" which is given for the quality of cellarman'ship and dispense.

The Weston CAMRA branch helped support CAMRA's annual Mild campaign in May by organizing an excellent crawl. "Gunner" Graham Teague took charge and managed to get several pubs in town to stock a mild ale. This took some persuading in some places, as Weston is not exactly in mild's heartland. However, those visiting the **Major From Glengarry**, **Raglan Arms**, **Red Admiral**, **Royal Hotel**, **White Hart** and **Off The Rails** during the course of the 17th/18th

May weekend enjoyed a range of milds including Cheddar's Mild Cheddar, Archers Strong Dark Mild, Arbor Ales Mild West, Moor Milly's Mild, Wadworth's Pint Size Mild and Black Bess.

The following Wednesday, Weston CAMRA's monthly social was held at the **Red Admiral**. This was a great evening for us fans of dark beers as they were selling the aforementioned mild from Arbor Ales and Moor Peat Porter along with Butcombe Bitter. The local CAMRA members and Pints West readers who could not be bothered to support this social at a pub run by a CAMRA member, who is trying hard to develop a successful ale-centred pub, missed out on some good beer, a warm welcome and a free buffet.

More good news for dark beer fans is that for the past few months **Off The Rails** has been running a "Porter Pump," with one of the handpumps permanently given over to a porter – a rare beer style, much loved by most people who are prepared to forego their usual tippie and try something a bit different. The porter has often been RCH's fantastic Old Slug Porter or Matthews Pithead Porter.

Weston CAMRA's June social was an excellent night in Highbridge visiting the runner-up in this year's Somerset CAMRA Pub of the Year, the **Royal Artillery** at West Huntspill. A superb range of beers, all in excellent condition – if you haven't been, do yourself a favour and get along. The evening was rounded off with RCH Old Slug Porter at **Highbridge Social Club** and a visit to the nearby **George**.

July saw our annual Seaside Summer Saunter. As is so often the case, a mid-July evening gave us dull, drizzly weather. We started, as usual, at the **Captains Cabin**. The usual beers were on here – Courage Best and Bass. The latter was in good condition. We were very pleased to see members of the

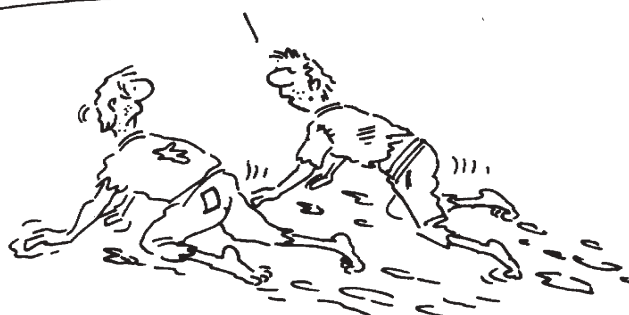
Weston Lions who were able to update us on progress with their beer festival (see "A Round With Robin"). Next stop was the **Claremont**. Bass, Fuller's London Pride and Theakston Best Bitter were the available ales. The latter is rarely seen in these parts, so most people plumped for it. It was heartening to see quite a lot of people in the Claremont, particularly on a dreary midweek evening. The **Raglan** was next. Most enjoyed the excellent Great Bustard from Stonehenge brewery. Hidden Quest was among the other available beers. We then headed down to the seafront. Someone mentioned that the **Old Colonial** might be worth a look. Indeed it was. As with the Claremont, it was good to see plenty of people eating and drinking there. Marstons Pedigree and Jennings Cumberland Ale (well, kind of, Marstons own them) were on offer. Everyone went for the latter and although it was very drinkable, one or two people disputed that it was, in fact, Cumberland. Despite the drizzle we were determined that we would spend part of the "summer's" evening drinking outside, so we stoically sat out the front getting wet and cold. On to the **Cabot**. Here, we had a choice of a very good Exmoor Ale (and very expensive at £3.10 for two halves of a 3.8% ABV beer), Bath Ales Gem, Courage Best or Bass. Last stop was the **White Hart**. Nowhere near the seafront, but we wanted a good beer to round off the evening. Cheddar's Mild Cheddar was waiting for us.

Just to prove that we do occasionally consider solids as well as liquids, I would urge people looking for a good-value lunch to give The **Regency** a try. Most hot meals are less than a fiver and there is a superb mixed grill (rump steak, gammon, lamb, sausage and liver) for £6.50. They also do Sunday roasts and "Grill and Curry Nights" on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 6.00 and 8.30. Butcombe Bitter is the pick of the beers to wash down the quality food.

*Tim Nickolls*



*You sure this is the way to the  
seaside summer saunter?*





# The White Hart

A long-standing favourite amongst local CAMRA members is the White Hart on Palmer Row. I suspect that many readers will never have heard of it, let alone been there. It is off the beaten track, close to the Boulevard, but tucked away on the corner of Palmer Row and Hopkins Street. It that increasingly rare species – an old-fashioned backstreet boozer. There is no external signage, so there is no “passing trade” – if you go there it’s because you know its there.

The White Hart can hardly be called a real ale paradise. There is usually only one real ale on offer (a second occasionally appears, such as when the CAMRA branch holds its annual skittles tournament) and it doesn’t have a “hardcore” of ale drinkers. It also can only be described as basic. This is probably why we like it so much. In a time when town centre pubs are so often large garish affairs with little or no character, aimed at the weekend teen or twenties market, it feels great to be able to go to a simple, unpretentious pub for a drink and a chat.

Lou and Nigel have been running the White Hart for eight years. They had previously been at the Brewers Arms, Banwell for two years and 15 years at Cheers before that. Lou says that the attraction of the White Hart was the ability to buy the freehold and thereby have the freedom to run it how they wanted. A happy benefit of this from a CAMRA perspective is that Lou and Nigel can choose which beers they stock. Therefore, although they only do one ale, this is usually a good quality one. They have a link with the excellent Church End brewery of

Nuneaton, which sees their beers appear fairly regularly. Hidden, Wickwar, Everards, Archers and a wide variety of others including some very unusual beers can be found.

It is quite refreshing to go into a pub that doesn’t have the smell of food hitting you as soon as you walk in. For one thing there isn’t a big enough kitchen, but Lou says that she has “been there, done that” at the Brewers and was happy to take on a food-free pub which focused simply on being what I call a proper pub.

There are two small bars. One has a pool table. The other has a dartboard, skittles alley and jukebox. Both have TVs and a big screen is brought into use for major events. There are men’s and women’s skittles teams, two pool teams and cribbage and darts in the summer. Occasional day outs are organized. The men’s skittles team – the White Hart Harriers – has been gradually infiltrated by CAMRA members in recent years and members now make up a good proportion of the team. If you are interested in playing, contact CAMRA member Mike Coleman on 01934 631441.

I have always found the White Hart to be very friendly. It is very much a locals/regulars pub, with more than its fair share of characters and I don’t think any newcomers would feel at all uncomfortable visiting for the first time – I have always found it to have a very laid-back atmosphere. Lou says that she is very happy for it to remain as it is – a quiet back-street pub, not attracting the attention of the stag/hen/binge crowd. I’ll drink to that.

*Tim Nickolls*

# The Windsor Castle

Long-standing readers of Pints West may recall me singing the praises of the Windsor Castle back in early 2004. The pub appears to be bucking the trend in these post-smoking ban days and continuing to flourish. I visited the pub to have a chat with Dave Gough to find out more.

Dave has been in the trade for 26 years and his previous pubs have included the Imperial and Bristol House. He is known by many for his rabid support of Bristol Rovers. The Windsor is known as being the home of “The Gas” in Weston and Dave has been absent from the pub on the last home game for the past five years, due to sponsoring the match ball. He does stress, however, that City fans are most welcome (as we were getting on so well, I declined to inform him that I had just purchased my first-ever season ticket for Ashton Gate).

The Windsor is leased from Enterprise Inns. This puts some restrictions on the choice of beers available, but there is a SIBA list to choose guest beers from. The regular beers are Courage Best and Greene King Old Speckled Hen. Bombardier is often also available. The guest beer is currently Sharp’s Doom Bar. Dave says that as soon as it was introduced it was so popular that he has been unable to take it off. A similar thing happened with the previous guest, Butcombe Gold, which became more of a resident than a guest, staying on for many months.

At the time the smoking ban was introduced, some people may have thought that the right course of action was to play safe and not invest – not Dave, who decided to expand the rear of the premises, more than doubling the size of the eating area. The result has been very satisfying for everyone – customers and owners alike. The eating area had previously been a bit too small and rather claustrophobic when busy. The expansion has provided a much more comfortable, airy environment and meal sales have doubled as a result, with Dave reporting new faces coming to the pub. Overall Dave feels that the smoking ban has had little impact on the pub – perhaps fewer people in during the week.

It should be stressed that the Windsor is not a food-dominated pub. It offers something for everyone. The front bar is popular with those wanting to watch TV, play pool or just have a chat. The pub is used by a wide range of people and groups. These include football, cricket and rugby clubs and even the local operatic society. It has a Golf Society, Diners Club and has pool and darts teams. There is occasional live music and quizzes.


Dave brought in James Carter as his manager last November and Dave feels that James has brought new energy to the pub. In my

experience a key feature at the Windsor has been that the staff are always attentive and friendly – unlike many pubs where you get the feeling that the staff would rather be anywhere else in the world than serving you. James has successfully kept these high standards going.

The Windsor is an excellent community pub, attracting a wide range of people from the local community and being successful at what it does. Long may this continue.

*Tim Nickolls*

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# A Round with Robin

AS the **Raglan Arms** in Weston-super-Mare has been having a superb range of beers this year, I celebrated my 60th birthday there with a party, at which over 100 guests attended, and Freddy, the landlord, told me after it was so successful that they ran out of clean glasses.

The wonderful Cherry Pickers band played, and the Chalice Morris men danced in the street outside. Guests enjoyed the *Cheddar Potholer*, *Moor Merlin's Magic*, *Exmoor Beast* and *Butt's Mudskipper*, and Freddy's mum provided a mixture of Singapore and English food.

On most Friday evenings Nigel, Derek and Vince, aka Uncle John, welcome well-behaved acoustic musicians to join them there from around 9pm. As well as beers sourced mainly from the south-west, draught cider and recently draught pear cider (i.e. perry) are obtainable. This is a cracking little corner pub and a visit is recommended, though during the week the pub doesn't open until 4pm and usually only two real ales are on sale.

I quite often mention the **White Hart** in Palmer Row in this column, but many drinkers even from Weston have trouble finding it. This is a pity, as recently we had a choice of *Everards Sunchaser* and *Hazy Daze*, the latter a BADRAG-style wheat beer, on at the same time instead of the usual changing one ale. The pub is best found by locating Boulevard which runs east to west from the library towards the Royal Hotel. On the south side is King's Lane, go down this and turn right into Palmer Row, and the pub is on the left.

This is not the place to mention all the ales which they've had this year, but suffice to say Lou, Ash and others have been sourcing beers from all over the UK which we've been drinking at about two firkins a week.

This pub opens at 11am and though a real local's pub, visitors are welcome. It comes with a skittle alley, darts, pool, sports TV and a jukebox, and as they don't serve food you can bring your own, if you ask at the bar.

The Good Beer Guide-listed pub at Weston-super-Mare railway station, **Off The Rails**, has recently been selling more cider than beer. This is not altogether surprising, given that they have a choice of *Rich's* and *Thatcher's Traditional*, and occasionally *Wilkins'* is available. The *RCH IPA* is still the best-selling beer, but the guest bitter comes from far and wide, though the dark ales tend to be more local.

The "Rails" gets very noisy on Saturday nights when you are likely to hear karaoke, with Ruth and Colin, the landlord, both starring, but during the week it is quieter. The pub opens early as it is also the refreshment bar for the rail travellers.

The **Regency** pub has always been one of my favourites in Weston-super-Mare. It has a big local following and is popular within the age range 18 to 100. This is situated opposite Weston College and during term time students often pop in for a bite to eat and use the pool table. Four ales are normally on sale, and a delightful sheltered quiet garden is located at the rear of the pub. Food is served lunchtimes and the Sunday roast is very popular. Opening time is 11am.

The **Red Admiral** opposite Tesco's continues to serve three real ales, but due to lack of support the "Liquid Allsorts" shop has closed, though snuff is still available for sale at the bar. Food is available and daily papers complement the sports TV.

There are at least another 60 pubs and bars in and around Weston-super-Mare, but this has been a glimpse of the ones I regularly visit.

I haven't been to many beer festivals this last quarter, but the few I have attended have been good. On the 18th July I went to the **Star Inn** at Bath for the Cornish ales *Spingo Special*, *Doghouse Wet Nose*, and *Skinner's Heligan Honey*. We decided to visit the **Royal Oak** at Twerton as there was the summer music festival. Unfortunately six beers were not available, but twelve new ones had been bought in as replacements. As we had skittles that evening at the White Hart, I only had four half pints but the first two were magical, the *Bottle Brook Oblivion*, a pale beer with smokiness on the palate, and the *Downton Chocolate Orange Delight*, a full-bodied dark ale that you'd expect to drink at Christmas!

At the **Bitton** beer festival this year, which was very well attended and where the beer started to run out at about 4pm, I especially enjoyed the low-gravity *Barnegates Moth Bag* which didn't taste of camphor, and the *Fat Cat Top Cat* which didn't taste of cat either.

In June the usual suspects visited the **Halfway House** at Pitney before proceeding

by bus to the **Canal Inn** festival at Wrantage. The former was a little disappointing as not many new guest ales were listed but I tried the *Teignworthy Strawberries & Cream* (4.5%) which was neither a fruit beer nor creamy! However, the new landlords at the Canal Inn had 22 ales and eight ciders, which was an improvement in choice over last year. My favourite was *Red Rock Inseine* (4.8%) and there was much discussion on the spelling of this new ale from Red Rock, given that Devon is far removed from Paris. The *Atomic* brew *Fusion* was a close runner-up, and I was able to purchase Bryher Simmons' new CD. On our return through Taunton, we called in at the **Plough**, which has replaced the Good Beer Guide pub **Harpoon Louie's**, which closed a year or so back. I imagine that the Plough will soon be in the GBG as the quality of both beers and ciders were exemplary, and the layout of little snugs gives privacy to parties.

The biggest news to come out of Weston-super-Mare this summer is not the pier pavilion burning down, but that the **Weston Lions** held a beer festival on the beach lawns that was an unqualified success, and will almost certainly be repeated next year; look in Pints West for details.

I lent a hand on Thursday, and on Friday when I was interviewed on the local Star radio station regarding some of the drinks which John Holland and I gave their reporter to try. *Moor Old Freddy Walker*, *Bath Wild Hare*, and *RCH Pitchfork* (and *Rich's* medium cider) were tasted and commented on. These were chosen as local ales, but there were more than 40 others to choose from, all sourced by the RCH brewery. The festival ran from Thursday to Sunday, when most of the beers were running out.

Next year's festival will be billed as a Beer & Cider Festival as they got through 16 five-gallon barrels of cider and seven polypins of the Bristol Beer Festival's top cider, *Westcroft Janer's Jungle Juice*.

As to be expected in the Weston CAMRA sub-branch, there was a great difference in who preferred which beer, but the *Anglo Dutch Ghost on the Rim*, *Derventio Venus*, and *Hornbeam Golden Wraith* were among the tastiest. Predictably the *Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild* and the *Moor Old Freddy Walker* were the first to sell out.

On a visit recently to Exeter and Crediton, I called at the **Crediton Inn** (runner-up to the **Bridge** at Topsham in the Exe Vale CAMRA branch pub of the year) for an excellent *Cotleigh Honey Buzzard*. At Exeter St Thomas I went to the **First & Last** pub recommended to me as a *Hop Back* pub, like the **Coronation** in Southville. I'm glad to report that the Coronation is much friendlier and better all round.

Now I have my free bus pass I hope to be reporting on more pubs out of my usual sphere.

Robin E Wild





## 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)

### No smoke without fire

I have recently read Andrew Swift's article 'No smoke without fire' in Pints West 78. I am also a non-smoker who agrees entirely with Andrew's concerns about the smoking ban, and the reasons behind it. Well done to Andrew for voicing this so well.

Conor O'Neill (by email).

### Thanks

I am writing to say a very special thank you for the wonderful donation of £867.15, that was kindly raised at your recent Beer Festival. Your thoughtful and kind support for the life-limited children of the South West is truly appreciated.

Your gift ensures that we can offer support to up to 400 families from across the South West, each and every year.

Little Bridge House has been operational now for nearly 13 years and provides a real home from home for many families from across the South West. It is vital that we can continue to provide this service for so many

families. Without your continued support this would not be possible, and for this we are very grateful.

With the opening of our second hospice, Charlton Farm, over a year ago and plans for a third hospice in Cornwall, it is only with your generosity that we can continue to provide and grow our much needed service.

If you would like to find out more about how you can further support Children's Hospice South West please visit [www.chsw.org.uk](http://www.chsw.org.uk) or contact me [jane.powell@chsw.org.uk](mailto:jane.powell@chsw.org.uk), 01275 866600 or 07500 081978.

Thank you once again for helping Children's Hospice South West make the most of short and precious lives.

With very best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Jane Powell, Community Fundraiser.

### Thanks

In reply to my earlier letter asking for help in obtaining some bottle labels from the old Bristol breweries of Georges and Bristol United, I was delighted to recently receive a letter (obviously from a reader of Pints West) enclosing fifteen assorted bottle labels.

Unfortunately the sender did not enclose a name and address, so I cannot thank them personally. May I therefore, through your column, thank this unknown donor and assure him (or her) that their contribution is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

George Ford,

Patchway, South Gloucestershire.

## The Rising Sun

THE bar at the Rising Sun in Grove Street, one of Bath's hidden gems, is now being run by Nick Ethridge and Jamie Mealing, formerly at the Rummer and until recently at the Old Green Tree. A traditional two-room locals' pub, with one of the best skittle alleys in town and a superb walled garden, the Rising Sun is one of Bath's oldest pubs. It opened in 1788, one of the first buildings east of the river, on the other side of the newly-built Pulteney Bridge, and was the embarkation point for boat trips up to the long-vanished Grosvenor Pleasure Gardens. Things have changed a bit since those halcyon days but the Rising Sun is still that increasingly rare thing – a traditional boozier.

At the time of writing, beer choice was limited to Greene King IPA and Abbot – both well kept – but there are plans to introduce "an interesting range" of guest beers. The next few weeks will also see some refurbishment and a revamp of the garden (to take advantage of any good weather that might come along!). To start off with, food is only being served on Sunday lunchtimes, but it is hoped to have the kitchen fully up and running by the start of September. If you haven't been to the Rising Sun for a while (or at all), it's worth checking out. You can find it by crossing Pulteney Bridge and taking the first left.

Andrew Swift





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## ***Bath & Borders Branch***

### **Pub and brewery news**

#### **Bear, 6-10 Wellsway, Bath**

This pub, which is owned by Punch Taverns, looks likely to re-open in August. It had been closed since around the beginning of the year a note in the window claiming "staff illness". The pub, famous for the life-size polar bear statue above the door, has a new licensee and is currently undergoing refurbishment.

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

This pub had been threatened with closure but the planning application to convert it to residential use was withdrawn in April. Ownership of this pub has been acquired by a new pub owning company. We gather that the new company is attempting to restrict the range of beers the landlord can sell.

#### **Cross Keys, Combe Down, Bath**

Interesting guest beers are served at this two-bar cosy roadside inn. Landlord Cliff has three beers available: Butcombe Bitter, Courage Best and a succession of unusual guest beers. During a visit by some branch members on 15 July the guest was a very pleasant Okell's Eastern Spice from the Isle of Man. Subsequent guests included Wickwar's Long John Silver and Mordue Workie Ticket.

#### **Garaging, off Lansdown, Bath**

Planning permission is being sought for the conversion of garaging, just off Lansdown and adjacent to Mandalyn's, into an entirely new pub.

#### **Olde Farmhouse, 1 Lansdown Road, Bath**

This locally famous music venue has recently re-opened under new landlords. It remains a major venue on the pub circuit for live music.

#### **Northend Inn, 41 Northend, Batheaston**

This pub closed suddenly on Friday 30 May. The landlady, who owns the pub, is seeking planning permission to convert the Northend Inn to residential use.

A public meeting was held on Tuesday 8 July to rally support against the conversion. Two of our local members attended and addressed the meeting. Around sixty local residents attended. There is clearly a strong local feeling of loss at the pub's closure and the campaign against conversion is well organised. Northend, which is on the eastern outskirts of Bath, is a distinct community for which the Northend Inn was a crucial focal point. A total of at least 87 objections had been logged by the deadline of Thursday 24 July.

*Stop Press:*

*The owners of the Northend Inn have been refused permission to convert the premises to residential use by Bath & North East Somerset Council.*

#### **St Christopher's, 9 Green Street, Bath**

This large pub, formerly named Oliver's, is to close for a month for a major refurbishment and re-open as Belushi's.

#### **Weston Hotel, 1 Newbridge Road, Bath**

Re-opened on the 21 April after an extensive refurbishment. It now has a more sophisticated atmosphere with restrained decor and no TV screens. Food is served every lunchtime and every evening except Sunday.

#### **Plough, Bradford Leigh, near Bradford-on-Avon**

Les and Carol Clayton, who took over the Plough less than a year ago and who, with an excellent range of Wickwar beers, brought the pub up to a Good Beer Guide standard, left on Wednesday 16 July. We understand that the pub's owner has taken over as landlord.

#### **Beehive, 265 Trowbridge Road, Bradford-on-Avon**

We understand that the current landlord has decided to leave. The lease

is up for sale.

#### **Bunch of Grapes, 14 Silver Street, Bradford-on-Avon**

The current landlords are likely to stay despite impression to the contrary given in recent local newspaper article.

#### **Riverside, 49 St Margaret's Street, Bradford-on-Avon**

The current landlord, fed up with the incessant increases in the cost of running a pub and the general downturn in pub use, has quit the trade. The lease is up for sale.

#### **Eagle Inn, Highbury Street, Coleford**

This pub was found to be closed when a branch member visited on Friday 4 July but it should have re-opened on the weekend of Friday 11 July.

#### **Cross Keys, Corsley, near Warminster**

Fraser and Wayne, the landlord and chef of this Wadworth's owned village pub, are to take over the George at Nunney.

#### **Silk Mercer, St John's Street, Devizes**

This entirely new Wetherspoon's pub, formerly Beale's hardware store, should be opening soon.

#### **Waggon & Horses Inn, Doultong Beacon, near Shepton Mallet**

This pub had been closed for an unknown period but has now re-opened. It was visited by a branch member on Friday 4 July. The garden was thought to be very nice and Exmoor Stag was available.

#### **Farrington Inn, Bristol Road, Farrington Gurney**

Has recently opened following several months of closure.

#### **Miners Arms, Main Street, Farrington Gurney**

This pub has been converted into an Indian restaurant, a fate that befell the nearby Camerton Inn a few years ago.

#### **Angel, 1 King Street, Frome**

This pub has recently closed. Its future is uncertain but, given the number of other pubs nearby, this closure could well be permanent.

#### **Farmers Arms, Spring Gardens, Frome**

We believe that this pub, attractively situated on the very northern edge of Frome, has recently closed. Its future is uncertain.

#### **George Inn, Gurney Slade, near Radstock**

A new landlord took over this pub towards the end of May. He wishes to expand the beer range and is aiming for a Cask Marque. This could be a pub to watch. Otter was on handpump when a branch member visited on Friday 4 July.

#### **Duke of Cumberland, Edford Hill, near Holcombe**

This roadside pub to the south of Holcombe was found to be closed when a branch member visited on Friday 4 July. It may be undergoing internal refurbishment.

#### **White Hart Hotel, The Island, Midsomer Norton**

This National Inventory pub is under new management.

#### **George, Nunney, near Frome**

Fraser and Wayne, the former landlord and chef of the Cross Keys in Corsley are to take over at this historic village inn.

#### **Oakhill Inn, Fosse Road, Oakhill**

Recently visited by a branch member. The Usual, the new regular beer by Milk Street, was available. Pub thought to be very smart and comfortable. No further news on the plans by the new owners to open a new brewery in the village.



## Ship Inn, Oldford, near Frome

We are concerned that this pub, not far from the above mentioned Farmers Arms, may also have closed or is on the brink of closure. Again, given the state of the current pub tenancy market, its future is uncertain.

## Ring o'Bells, Priston, near Bath

This pub had closed temporarily but has now re-opened under a new landlord.

## Woolpack, High Street, Sutton Veny, near Warminster

This village local is to undergo a major refurbishment in the near future.

## King's Arms, 79 Wyke Road, Hilperton Marsh, Trowbridge

Planning permission is being sought for a major refurbishment of this large roadside pub.

## Stallards, 15-16 Stallard Street, Trowbridge

This pub closed recently and is currently boarded up. Its future is uncertain.

## Matthew's Brewery, Timsbury

Severn Stars Inn, North Road, Timsbury

It is believed that this pub, which has been closed for the last several weeks, will re-open soon under a new landlord.

## Fox & Hounds, 6 Deverill Road, Warminster

A new skittle alley, with three flats above, is currently mid way through construction. The alley should be completed early next year. The pub, which already has four darts teams, hopes to have eight skittles teams by the time the new alley is open.

## Organ Inn, 49 High Street, Warminster

Landlords Daniel and Carly are planning a first Organ Inn beer festival, to be held over the weekend of Friday 12 September, with around ten beers and four ciders. During a branch visit on Thursday 17 July the Organ had Stonehenge Brewery's new beer Eye Opener on as one of its guests.

## Sun Inn, Whatley, near Frome

This cosy attractive village pub has recently closed. Its future is uncertain.

## Seven Stars, Winsley, near Bradford-on-Avon

A change of landlord took place at this pub around late May. The pub

closed for around six weeks for a major refurbishment and has since re-opened. The walls have been painted olive green and a stone floor has been laid. The beer range comprises Bath Ales Gem, Butcombe Bitter and Wadworth's 6X and is considered by a local member to be of a reasonably good quality considering the new landlords are new to the trade. Please note that the pub closes at 10:30pm each evening (except on Fridays and Saturdays).

## Red Lion, Woolverton, near Rode

This Wadworth's owned roadside tavern on the A36 was closed for several weeks for a major refurbishment. It has now re-opened with a new extension and smoking shelter and an enlarged car parking area.



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£1 discount is available to card-carrying CAMRA members at each session but please note that this discount is claimed *at the event itself*. The full price must be paid when ordering tickets in advance.



## Forthcoming events

### Bath and Borders Socials and Meetings Diary

- **Thurs 4th Sept**, 8:30 pm. A social at Tucker Grave, Faulkland, Somerset. An old favourite and a previous Pub of the Year.
- **Tues 9th Sept**, 8:30 pm. A social at the Packhorse Inn, Southstoke, near Bath. An excellent pub not visited by us for a long time.
- **Fri 12th to Sun 14th Sept**. A beer festival at the Organ Inn in Warminster. The first of many, we hope, for this fine pub.
- **Tues 16th Sept**, 8:30 pm. A social at the Dog and Fox on the Ashley Road in Bradford on Avon. A renowned cider house and the beer's good too!
- **Thurs 25th Sept**, 8:30 pm. A social at the Raven in Queens Street, Bath. One of Bath's best pubs.
- **Tues 30th Sept**, 8:30 pm. The branch meeting at the Prince of Wales, Dilton Marsh, near Westbury, Wiltshire.

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

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

James Honey - 01373 822794

**Branch socials contact:**

Denis Rahilly - 01225 791399 or 07711 004501

Email: [denis.rahilly@virgin.net](mailto:denis.rahilly@virgin.net)

# Dawkins Taverns

GLEN Dawkins has just added to his small Dawkins Taverns estate with the acquisition of the **Bell** in Kingsdown. The pub has been closed for a while, and should be reopening – following some redecorating work – with a beer festival shared with the Hillgrove on 11th September.

The pub will no longer be known as the Bell though. Glen explains: "I'm not usually into this, but I'm going to rename the pub '**The Green Man**'. This will avoid the incessant confusion with Butcombe's Bell down the road and also fits with the aim of it being the only 'organic' pub in Bristol. I got the idea from my close friend and neighbour, Jane, who has really got me into organic food over the years and has always been keen on the Bell. I have been to an organic pub in London, the Duke of Cambridge in Islington, several times and been impressed, so I knew it could be done."

Glen claims to have found around eighty organically-brewed real ales up to now, and plans to have six handpumps dispensing three permanent ales, two rotating guests and a cider. Stuart Matthews (of Matthews Brewery) is designing an organic best bitter that should be on stream around the end of September and exclusive to Dawkins Taverns. Glen says, "We'll be getting it officially certified organic and it will be a permanent fixture at the Green Man and some of our other pubs."

There should also be one or two organic draught lagers and Glen has been told that a brewer from his Yorkshire home is to do an organic wheat beer soon. There are plenty of good organic wines around and the pub should have 20 to 30 on offer. In fact, about the only impossibility is tonic water!

Glen will be running the pub himself for a short while until the new landlords are recruited, when the kitchen will be up and running. However, Glen stresses that, like the Portcullis, this will always be a real ale pub first and foremost!

Down at the **Hillgrove** in the lower part of Kingsdown, the refurbishment of the beer garden is nearly complete, and they're largely just

waiting for the roof for the pergola to arrive. New landlords Doreen and Stewart have hit the ground running with the garden and soon the kitchen will be ready for use. Westons real cider and perry have been added to the handpumps and another two pumps will be fitted to increase the ale range to ten as more space is being made in the cellar thanks to new racking.

The Hillgrove's Organic Beer Festival planned for 11th to 15th September is now going to be a joint affair with the new Green Man, with 40 organic ales across both pubs. There will be organic promotions in all the pubs in September to coincide with Bristol's Soil Association Organic Fortnight.

Up at the **Portcullis** in Clifton Village, just down from the Suspension Bridge, Ned and Natalie are planning on featuring all 24 medal-winning beers from the recent Champion Beer of Britain awards in a five-day festival from 25th to 29th September. Ned had the idea last year when he was at the Hillgrove, but this is the first opportunity to do it. Glen says, "Most of the beers have proved okay to track down, but there will be a cask of Beckstones Mild from Cumbria coming down in the back of a friend's Mini and Surrey Hills Ranmore Ale by rail in a minipin squeezed into my rucksack!"

SP

## Meeting the brewers

NED and Natalie, the enthusiastic licensees of the splendid Portcullis in Clifton, arranged the third Dawkins Taverns' "Meet the Brewers" evening on what turned out to be a balmy June evening. So feeling that, apart from anything else, Wellington Terrace was a good place to be on June 18<sup>th</sup> (the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo!), I took a bus up to Clifton Village. For those not familiar with it, the Portcullis is a tidy, cosy, two-room, split-level boozer a few minutes' walk from the Suspension Bridge. On this occasion, the top room was packed with an enthusiastic throng keen to hear from the four featured local independent breweries, Cotleigh, Wye Valley, Cheddar and Matthews.

First up were Stephen Heptinstall and Jeff Curd of Cotleigh brewery. I've always had a soft spot for Cotleigh. They brew the first independent beer I can remember tasting, Tawny, one of my favourite best bitters, and many other fine brews such as Old Buzzard and 25. We had an interesting talk on the brewery's development, and then a film Jeff made, "A day in the life of a brewer" which showed the making of the new Honey Buzzard beer, a 4.5% brew using honey as part of the brewing process, much more subtle than just adding honey to give a sweet flavour as is often the case. The part of the film with the bee keeper extracting the honey I found scary – you're a braver man than me, Jeff, disturbing all those bees!

Vernon Amor of Wye Valley was up next. A proud family man, Vernon gave us a personal history, including his brewery training at the sadly now closed Young's brewery at Wandsworth, and his rise up the ladder at Wye Valley. It was interesting to hear of the growth and expansion of the brewery. Wye Valley Best Bitter was available on the night, one of many fine dry, hoppy beers from the brewery. Hereford Pale Ale and Butty Bach are good examples of their craft, and of course they also brew the fantastic Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout.

Cheddar brewery's Potholer can often be found on the bar at the Portcullis, and it was good to hear from John Magill, talking about the re-imaging of the Cheddar beer brands, with Best being renamed Gorge Best, and the great success of the lovely Totty Pot porter. There was talk of producing an IPA style beer in the autumn – should be great!

Closing the event was Stuart Matthews, brewer of the lovely Brassknocker which often features in Dawkins pubs, the Portcullis being no exception. Stuart gave us more pictures and video of the brewing process, and talked about his expanding range of beers, with monthly specials now complementing his regular brews.

All this, plus a pint and a crack at an excellent cheese heavy buffet for £4 – a bargain! I'm already looking forward to the next Meet the Brewers evening next year!

Phil Cummings

**the hillgrove**  
Pub of the Year 2007 CAMRA Bristol  
Dove St, Kingsdown, Bristol BS2 8LT  
9444780 hillgrove@dawkins-taverns.co.uk  
Festival Open Thu 4-12; Fri 4-1am; Sat 12-1am;  
Sun 12-12; Mon 4-12

**the green man**  
NEW Organic Pub! official launch  
(formerly The Bell) Alfred Place,  
Kingsdown, BS2 8HD Tel 9077563  
greenm@clawson-taverns.co.uk  
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# Who's to blame for the bingers?

A RECENT report commissioned by the government from management consultants KPMG has found 'a disturbing level of irresponsible and harmful practice in significant sections' of the licensed trade. The report was based on evidence collected by teams of researchers who visited pubs, clubs and off-licences across the country.

According to their website, KPMG works 'with a number of leading food and drink businesses to help manage business and technology risks and increase competitiveness by creating, releasing and protecting value.' This isn't the first report the government has commissioned from them on the drinks industry. In 2004 they were asked to assess the impact a smoking ban would have. They concluded it would boost trade, with the number of people visiting pubs more often outweighing those who would be put off by a ban.

David Matthews, Head of Drinks at KPMG said that 'The net increase in profits may not be a huge amount but it will come as an unexpected bonus for those involved in the pub trade who may have thought that a smoking ban could only have a detrimental effect on their business.'

It just goes to show how wrong you can be. In the twelve months since the ban was introduced, the numbers of pints drunk in Britain's pubs and bars fell by almost 9%. That's according to the marketing company, AC Nielsen, who've surveyed around 33,000

premises. CAMRA members can take a crumb of comfort from the fact that the most dramatic decline has been in sales of premium-strength – down by 14% – while cask ale sales only fell by 4%.

But, even though KPMG got it so spectacularly wrong last time, the government seems set to use their new report as a pretext for draconian action. Dawn Primarolo, the public health minister, says that the report shows that 'this is the right to consult on a far tougher approach to the alcohol industry.' Anyone in the licensed trade could have told them, back in 2004, the effect a smoking ban would have, just as anyone in the licensed trade today could tell them that the real harm's being done by supermarkets selling cut-price booze.

People haven't stopped buying premium-strength lager. They're buying it in supermarkets instead. It's easy to see why. In July, for example, Sainsburys in Bath was selling 30 x 44cl cans of Stella Artois (5.2% ABV) for £18 – equivalent to £1.36 a litre or, by my reckoning, 77p a pint. A two-litre bottle of Diamond White cider (7.5% ABV) cost £3.05 – that's three and half pints of seriously strong cider for £3.05. Figures from the British Beer & Pub Association show that, while beer sales in pubs, bars and restaurants between April and June 2008 were 10.6% down on the same period last year, beer sales in supermarkets, shops and off-licences were 3.8% up.

It may seem odd that the KPMG report doesn't highlight the contribution of supermar-

kets to the binge-drinking problem. One possible reason was suggested by Hugh Muir, writing in the *Guardian* on 22 July. He pointed out that, 'strangely, the supermarkets get a pat on the back for exemplary behaviour, despite price-led promotions such as the Morrison's TV campaign last Christmas which saw Lulu and other celebrity tipplers endorsing great deals such as £10 for a litre bottle of Smirnoff, Gordon's or Bell's. Now interestingly, Smirnoff, Gordon's and Bell's are all made by Diageo, the world's largest drinks company and one of Britain's biggest exporters. And it does seem quite interesting that KPMG is auditor to both Morrisons and Diageo, and has been hired by Diageo to lead the group's fight against whisky import tariffs in India.'

The government also seems keen to stay on good terms with the supermarkets. Last year, the 182 guests entertained by Gordon Brown at Chequers included three of the big supermarket bosses, one of them being Terry Leahy of Tesco. Leahy also sits on the (unelected) Business Council for Britain which meets two or three times a year to advise the government on 'issues that affect enterprise, business and the long term productivity and competitiveness of the economy.' The chairman of the council is Mervyn Davies, who also sits on the board of Tesco.

It may seem extraordinary that, with the proportion of alcohol sold in supermarkets higher than ever before, the government should ignore the question of how much they contribute to irresponsible and harmful drinking. I wonder if it's because their friends are telling them there isn't a problem.


Andrew Swift

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# Pubcos in Peril?

AMONG the pubs visited by Paul Kingsnorth in *Real England* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) is the Rose & Crown in Oxford. Its landlord, Andrew Hall, who's been there for over 20 years, explains how his livelihood is being ruined:

*Since Punch took over his pub, he says, he is in financial trouble. 'I'm not singling out Punch,' he says, quickly. 'My criticism is of PubCos in general. The basic problem is simple. When the pubs were run by brewers they charged us very low rents and we had to buy all our beer from them. Now they're run by PubCos who are charging high rents, and we still have to buy all our beer from them. As a result, this is now a business where you can't make money ... In simple terms my income has been cut by a third since the 1980s. I was paying £12,000 rent in 1987. Now I'm paying £26,000 but I'm paying the same sort of prices for my beer. If I buy a case of Becks from Punch it costs me £28. I could get the same case from Oddbins for £16, but I'm not allowed to. When my wife and I started as tenants here we were doing very well. Trade hasn't gone down since then – if anything it's increased – but we're heading towards bankruptcy.'*

Someone who is managing to make money – rather a lot of it, in fact – is Punch's chief executive, Giles Thorley. Aged 40, he qualified as a barrister but chose not to practice, taking a job with Nomura International instead. He was headhunted to become chief executive of the Unique Pub Company, and later moved to Punch Taverns. Under his leadership, Punch became the second-largest pubco in the UK after Enterprise, before overtaking Enterprise when it acquired the Spirit Group for £2.7 billion in 2006. Part of the Spirit Group has since been sold off. Punch is now left with an estate of about 8,500 pubs, of which Spirit accounts for about 870.

In 2006, Giles Thorley found himself under pressure to sell Punch's 1,400 managed

pubs to Mitchell & Butlers. He fought off the bid, and now the tables are turned, with Enterprise considering a bid for Mitchells & Butlers. Last year, it was revealed that his salary was a staggering £11.3 million. One commentator pointed out that the gap between his pay and that of his employees was the widest in the FTSE 100.

## Pub Closures

Meanwhile, the number of reposessions, bankruptcies and pub closures continues to rise. Some publicans – even apparently very successful ones – claim that it's not really worth carrying on – 'I'm running as fast as I can just to stand still,' as one of them put it to me recently. An increasing number are falling by the wayside.

One ex-publican I spoke to recently only managed to keep going as long as he did by doing what Andrew Hall won't do – buying booze on the open market at lower prices than those charged by the pubco. He kept getting caught, kept getting penalised, racked up debts – until eventually he handed in the keys and walked away. The shutters went up and now what was a community pub for the best part of 200 years is up for sale as a house. It's a story that can be repeated in cities, towns and villages all over the country.

Andrew Hall's comment on Giles Thorley sums up the matter: 'The man's a great entrepreneur. I don't want to discourage great entrepreneurs in our society. But he's made his money by taking my living away from me. And that I find hard.'

I'm sure Mr Thorley is a nice man. In a recent interview, he said that his goal for 2008 was to spend more time with his family. But I, along with many others, believe that he, and others like him, have brought a unique British institution, vital to the continued viability of communities across the land, to the edge of extinction.

There is no reason why a decent, well-run pub cannot provide a handsome return not only for the company that owns it but also for the landlord or tenant who runs it. Take the case of Donnington Brewery in Gloucestershire. When the owner, Claude Arkell, died last year he left an estate of over £14M, despite owning only 15 pubs – and that wasn't achieved by bleeding the publicans dry.

When the company that owns a pub views it not as a long-term investment but as a short-term asset, that's when the trouble starts.

One of the people Paul Kingsnorth interviewed while researching the pub trade was Brian Jacobs, an accountant and expert on pubcos, who has given evidence to government select committees. He described how, in his opinion, pubcos were heading for a fall:

*The pubco model is based on the promise of guaranteed income and guaranteed profit. They're also in the happy position of being able to drop a lot of the operating costs onto the tenant ... I actually think the writing is on the wall for the pubcos. They have overvalued their portfolio. They've got tranches of pubs worth about £60,000 which they've valued at £500,000, based on the inflated amounts they're bringing in from the beer tie. Inflating value inflates their ability to borrow, you see. But that's not the true value of their assets. They're artificially inflating the value of their property year on year, but profits are actually falling year on year. They're storing up trouble for the future.*

That was written in January 2005, when the credit crunch wasn't even a cloud on the horizon, and supposedly intelligent commentators were still saying that, under Gordon Brown's stewardship, the economic roller-coaster of boom and bust was a thing of the past.

## Credit Crunch

Things aren't quite so rosy for the pubcos today. Take the case of Punch Taverns. When the company was floated on the stock market in 2002, its shares were worth £2.30 each. In 2007 they rose to a high of £13.23 before falling to £2 in July 2008, since when they've rallied slightly. On 7th August, they were worth just over £3.30.

Paul Charity, writing in the *Morning Advertiser*, pointed out that 'Anyone thinking of buying a Punch pub-lease assignment in 2002 for, say, £60,000, would have been much better advised buying Punch shares instead and doing nothing. To do so would have seen the £60,000 grow 5.75 times to £345,000 at the high point – an averaged-out gain of around £57,500 per annum plus dividends for each of the five years from 2002 up to a fortuitous sale at the high water mark.'

It's hard, looking at the sorry state the pub trade is in, to resist thinking of pyramid selling. Vast sums were made as shares and estates changed hands, until, as in a manic game of musical chairs, the music stopped. The difference is that, when a pyramid scam collapses, those who get caught are those foolish enough to have believed they would make a killing from something inherently unworkable; in the case of pubs the real losers have been the publicans who have tried to make an honest living in the face of overwhelming odds.

It's not just Punch who've felt the pinch in the last 12 months. During the last year, shares in Enterprise Inns have fallen from £6.49 (11th October 2007) to £3 (27th July 2008). Shares in JD Wetherspoon have fallen from £6.07 (4th September 2007) to £1.75 (15th July 2008); shares in Greene King have fallen from £10.15 (4th September 2007) to £4 (2nd July 2008). All have since rallied, but none are

## The Victoria

### REAL ALE, REAL FOOD, REAL PUB

Five beautifully kept real ales, including Wadworth 6X, Butcombe and rotating seasonal guests.  
*Awarded 100% with Cask Marque for the past six years running!*

**10% discount on all real ales with a valid CAMRA membership card – making IPA only £1.94 a pint.**

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worth anything like what they were last year.

What the future holds is anybody's guess. One thing the credit crunch has done, apart from forcing down the value of pubco shares, is devastated the housing market. Until recently, pubs in town and country were under relentless pressure from property developers eager to convert them to residential or business use. Now that's no longer the case, but it doesn't mean we can breathe any easier.

### Restrictive Covenants

One of the more insidious recent developments is the policy of putting pubs up for sale with restrictive covenants. Judging by what's happening locally, Enterprise seem to have made something of a speciality of this. In Bristol, the freeholds of the the Bell in Redcliffe, dating from the 1750s, and the Ship & Castle in Ashton Vale are both up for sale with James A Baker. In both cases, the sale details state that 'the property will be sold with a restrictive covenant prohibiting its use as a pub.' Over in Melksham, it's the same story with the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Red Lion in the Market Place. Gordon King, of Box Steam Brewery, and Ken Roberts, from the Cross Guns in Avoncliff, approached the agents, Kavanaghs, with an offer which was turned down because they wanted to run it as a pub. It was the same with the Golden Fleece on Pulteney Road in Bath, which a local brewer was interested in taking on. He wasn't allowed to, and, in January this year, Bath & North East Somerset Council approved a change-of-use application for it to be converted to flats.

Giving up a pub because you can't or don't want to make a go of it is one thing. To

deny someone else the opportunity is quite another. As there may be children reading, I will leave it to you to come up with a suitable adjective to describe such practices.

### Parliamentary Enquiry

Later this year, the pubcos face a parliamentary enquiry into their operations. Tim Farron, MP, who tabled the parliamentary motion calling for the enquiry, believes that pubcos 'are abusing their power and this must end ... What we are asking for is not unreasonable: merely a fair rent and an investigation into the supply tie.'

The pubcos, not surprisingly, don't seem too impressed. Already Punch and Enterprise have refused to meet with Tim Farron's Fair Pint Campaign group, accusing him of making 'irresponsible, prejudiced and ill informed ... pronouncements about pub companies, some of his comments verging on the defamatory.'

Right now, with pubs dropping like flies and supermarkets deep discounting like there's no tomorrow, it's tempting to lay much of the blame for the decimation of our drinking culture at the door of the supermarkets – but ponder, if you will, an alternative point of view from the prolific Tandleman (whose beer blog can be found at [www.tandlemanbeerblog.blogspot.com](http://www.tandlemanbeerblog.blogspot.com)):

*It is fair to say that I think the creation of large pub companies with their accompanying mountains of debt and avaricious habits has done far more to damage the UK pub industry than Tesco et al ... They are the true enemy of the pub lover, squeezing the assets until the pips squeak.*

Andrew Swift

## Oasis in a Swedish Desert

JUNE saw me on a work-related trip to Sweden and Denmark. I wasn't expecting much, beer wise, and three days in Malmö and Copenhagen confirmed my suspicions (the closest I got to beer was a bottle of Carlsberg Special).

After work was over I ventured north to Gothenburg to visit a friend for the weekend. We met whilst studying in Cardiff at the turn of the millennium. After many an interesting night chatting over ales in Cardiff and Bristol Kristina's enthusiasm for real ale was fixed. This enthusiasm has resulted in her being part way through writing a book on, amongst other things, real ale for Swedes.

After four hours on a bus I was ready for a pint and Kristina didn't let me down. From Gothenburg Central, a short tram ride took us to Jämtorget Square. A stroll down Andra Långgatan and we arrived at **The Rover**. There were handpumps offering Bishop's Finger and Spitfire, but this wasn't why we were. Also on offer were 11 beers from Swedish micro-breweries. It was Friday evening and we found The Rover packed with end of week revellers. We managed to find a seat and enjoyed Oppsigård's Early Summer Ale; Nynåshamn Agryggeri's Brännskår Brown Ale and Ocean's Porter whilst sharing a plate of nachos.

After a busy weekend sightseeing in the

countryside and climbing all over Hällo island we felt that we deserved another trip to The Rover. This time we tried Nils Oscar's India Ale, Dugges, Averiyn and another one from Nynåshamn Agryggeri, Bedaro Bitter. The beers on both Friday evening and Sunday afternoon were all in top condition, tasty and varied. I tried a traditional Swedish dish of potato pancakes (raggmunk) and fried bacon served with lingonberries (I am reliably informed that some people go only to eat this dish as it is such a good example). Kristina had salmon which was cooked to perfection and served with dill and potato salad.

The Rover is a small cosy pub offering a wide range of beers from Swedish micro-breweries and whiskies from all over the world. Its friendly staff (cheers to Niklas, Pelle and Gary) and tasty beers make it an essential stop-off for any beer enthusiast taking a trip to Gothenburg.

*If you read Swedish you can visit the Rover's website [www.therover.se](http://www.therover.se).*

*If you want to visit, here is the address: Andra Långgatan 12, Gothenburg, Sweden, 413 28. Trams to get to Jämtorget are 1, 3, 6, 9, 11 Don't forget, alcohol is expensive in Sweden; we paid between £5 and £6 for a pint.*

Helen Featherstone

## British Beer and Barminess

by Jamie Caddick

**Life's so chaotic and  
Work's so intense  
The desire and craving  
For an ale is immense**

**That heavenly refreshment  
Liquid gold in a stein  
I want it, I need it  
That beer must be mine!**

**With hospitals crowded  
And buses so late  
Plus councillor's blundering  
And schools' unclear fates**

**A shortage in fuel  
And taxed to the hilt  
My energy's draining  
I'm starting to wilt**

**Like a flower –  
I need watering  
Just a mouthful I seek  
Unlike wheelie bin collections  
I can't abstain for two weeks**

**I'm quickly placated  
And easily pleased  
I don't melt polar ice caps  
Or fell ancient trees**

**My want is quite ethical  
My need so organic  
I'm environmentally sound  
And no threat to the planet**

**A simple fulfilment  
Thirst-quenching and pure  
No government sleaze  
Or green-lighting new wars**

**No gravy train riding  
No terrorists to fear  
Just a fine ale establishment  
And a pint of cool beer**

**In this 21st century  
Of suspicion and doubt  
The one single constant  
Worth shouting about**

**Is the tried, true and tested  
British beverage du jour  
Be unencumbered and free  
Hold the glass and just pour...**

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

# BADRAG

BADRAG is the CAMRA Bristol & District Rare Ales Group whose aim is to promote the rarer styles of ale such as stouts, porters, old ales, barley wines, milds and low-alcohol bitters. In this capacity the group would like to ask readers to **MAKE AUTUMN TIME TO BREW, SELL, TASTE AND ENJOY RARE ALES** and will be organising a number of events during the autumn, particularly in November, to support rare ale styles.

The group ran successful Mild Month promotions in May this year and last year, as well as a limited Old Ales campaign last November. One of the criticisms of the "May is Mild Month" campaign is that it is too short a period, and actually limits the sale of mild to one month a year. But campaigning resources are limited, and so for the moment BADRAG has decided to support the national Mild campaign in May and to promote autumn as a time to enjoy all rare ales, most of which are available at that time, mild included.

BADRAG will have some posters available – like the one depicted here – and would like to hear from anyone who would get them displayed. It would also like to be advised of any brewers making such ale styles for sale during the autumn, any pubs that plan to sell rare ales at that time, and from anyone who would like to help promote rare ales in any way – we would love to find a small team of volunteers to run a passport scheme, where lovers of rare ales collect stamps on a passport from participating bars to win sponsored prizes. All the details of Rare Ales this autumn will be available on the branch web site at [www.camrabristol.org.uk](http://www.camrabristol.org.uk). Please email information to [BADRAG@camrabristol.org.uk](mailto:BADRAG@camrabristol.org.uk) or bring it along to a branch event and ask for it to be passed to a BADRAG member.

I am pleased that the feedback from the trade following our Mild Month promotion, some of which is reproduced below, was generally favourable, although there are some sceptics who think we are all bonkers and are wasting our time trying to promote rare ales! I suppose we are still suffering the effect of the Big Six breweries, whose domineering marketing strategy

was to ram bitter and lager down our throats and deny us any alternatives. I was one of those who campaigned for and worked to restore the Kennet and Avon Canal – many thought we were bonkers then, but you can go and see it now in all its restored glory...

Glen Dawkins of Bristol pub chain Dawkins Taverns, which ran its own Mild Trail passport scheme and stocked 30 milds over the month, said, "Overall, Mild Month went better than I'd expected, helped by our own Mild Trail. The Hillgrove & Victoria sold through the brands fastest; they already have dark beer established anyway. The Miners Arms has always struggled with darks, but this time all sold through without wastage (having a couple of light milds helped). The Portcullis only just opened at the start of the month, but again all sold through by the first week of June without any being thrown away. For next year, I'll increase the rate of sale by getting each pub to increase the number of pumps devoted to mild that month, try to source more light milds and run another Mild Trail offer with 50 or 60 beers in total (gulp!)." Glen continued, "CAMRA support was great, but one point expressed by many customers was that a sunny May will not help dark beer sales; surely March would be a better month? Something for CAMRA to think about nationally? The Rare Ales month sounds excellent; I'll certainly support that with either another trail idea or a dedicated beer festival at one of the pubs."

Steve Binns, General Manager of the Commercial Rooms, commented that milds sold well through the month. "Dark ales, including milds, are often available on our bar throughout the year. The six mild ales featured in the photo in the last Pints West were put on half the handpumps on the bar for Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, that being National Mild Day and the day of a local BADRAG trail, and were all sold out on the Sunday!"

The Head Brewer at Cotswold Spring Brewery, Nik Milo, said, "Our customers enjoyed the mild on offer; we have not thrown away mild this year because we had no problem selling it. I think CAMRA and BADRAG's mild month promotion did help encourage extra sales. We would be interested in brewing and old ale for the autumn."

John Magill of Cheddar Ales observed that their Mild Cheddar went fairly well, feedback from customers being generally positive. "It was our first time brewing Mild – the beer wasn't ready until the first day of the month and we had no chance to promote it in advance. So we could certainly improve things from our end in terms of being better prepared for next year, when we are likely to give it another shot."

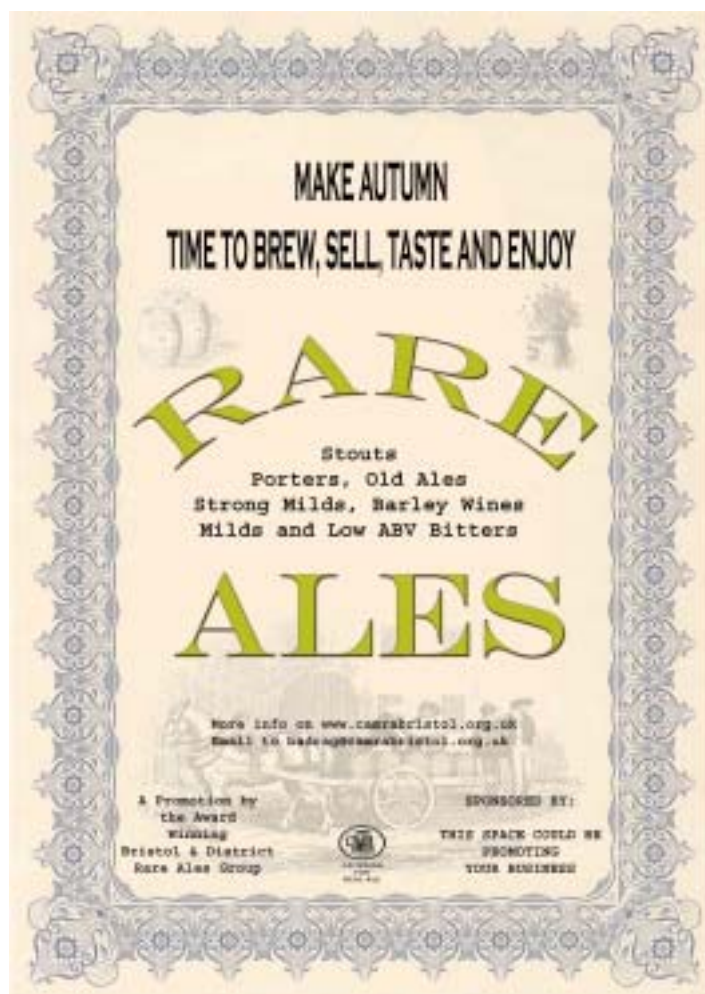
John continued, "Generally, we feel that mild isn't particularly popular in the South West though and that as a style of beer it is difficult to build any kind of customer following because there is little scope to make the beer stand out from the crowd, being such a narrowly defined style. Also promotion of May as Mild Month helps sell the beer for that month, but it is a short window, and one that closes fairly firmly on the first day of June. As such, overall we feel it is going to be difficult to have a mild as a key beer in our product portfolio because we could be making a spring special that is relevant for three or four months and can essentially be a more exciting and distinctive product. Like I said, though, we didn't quite give it a fair run this year, so we'll try again next year and see how it goes before deciding whether it's a suitable product for the long term."

Jon Comer of Arbor Ales reported, "I got some great feedback on our Mild West, and will certainly be brewing it again. The Mild Month promotion helped to increase overall sales and Arbor Ales got a few new customers too! To improve next year, a few publicans did question whether May was a good time to run a campaign for mild ale. They felt that earlier in the year (February or March) would be better. They thought a campaign for light ales in June would be a winner though, so maybe we could alternate each year between milds and light ales? With regard to the November campaign, Arbor Ales will certainly have at least two or three of the rare ale styles on offer, particularly the Oyster Stout!"

While some of us in the Bristol and District Branch of CAMRA might agree with some of this feedback, Mild Month is a national campaign and moving the dates is not a decision we can take on our own. Locally, making Mild Month earlier in the year would not be easy because so much of our resources in February and March are committed to other campaigning activities such as running the Bristol Beer Festival.

And finally, if dark ales are so difficult to sell, why is it that they always seem to run out first at beer festivals, at any time of the year! At CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival in Earls Court during August (summertime!), from 450 real ales, dark beers came out very well again. Last year Hobson's Mild was declared Champion Beer of Britain. This year congratulations go to Beckstones Brewery of Cumbria for taking second place with their mild Black Dog Freddy, and to our local brewery Wickwar for gaining Bronze for their Station Porter, which is also Champion Winter Beer of Britain.

Laurie Gibney





# Island in the sea

by your Nailsea correspondent Laurie Gibney

Ron Peters, licensee of the Sawyers Arms, was flabbergasted when he phoned to place his weekly order with his pub company, Enterprise Inns, to be told that he could no longer order local ales through the Society of Independent Brewers scheme.



The Sawyers Arms

Ron wanted to order one of the excellent real ales from the local Cotswold Spring Brewery at Dodington Ash, Chipping Sodbury. The SIBA scheme allows local breweries to supply direct to local pubs with the ordering and paperwork being done through the pub company. It would appear, Ron says, that too many Enterprise Inns pubs are ordering local ales through the SIBA scheme and reducing gallonage contracted to be supplied through bigger breweries, so Enterprise Inns has decided to redress the balance by stopping licensees of their smaller pubs from buying locally. Ron is far from impressed!

Louise Thomas, ably assisted by her mum Joan at another Enterprise Inn, the White Lion, is



The White Lion

soldiering on through these difficult times in the licensed trade. This is a true community pub with a faithful following of locals. It has no chance of making a living from food business, but offers cheese and onion baps at £1.50 mainly at lunchtimes with hearty Sunday lunches at £5.75 – best to book a table by phoning 01275 852776. Butcombe Bitter is the best-selling beer with more than six hundred pints sold each week, followed closely by Courage Best and Butcombe's Ashton Press keg cider. Thatcher's Cheddar Valley Dry real cider at £2.60 per pint is also on sale.

## Away from Nailsea ...

Chris and Maureen Grimmer of Nailsea recommended that I visit the Rose & Crown at East Lambrook, so we went for a family Sunday evening meal and were very impressed by the meal, the 17th-century ham stone pub and the real ales. The Rose & Crown is owned by Palmers Brewery of Bridport, and it is well worth

taking their brewery tour and visiting their excellent shop.

Graham and Alison Titcombe lease the pub from the brewery and have their own web site [www.roseandcrownlambrook.co.uk](http://www.roseandcrownlambrook.co.uk) (or phone 01460 240433). If you visit, don't be surprised if you see familiar faces from Nailsea – one regular party of Nailseaites visit once every month!

We travelled the one and a half hour drive across country to get the feel of the countryside that put us in the mood for a country village inn meal, rather than arriving as "townies" down the M5 and A303, although we returned that way! Our route from Nailsea took us through Congresbury, Shipham, Cheddar, Wedmore, Street, Somerton and the northern fringe of Martock. The pub is to the West of Martock, north of South Petherton which is on the A303, and the nearest large town to the south-east is Yeovil. Opposite are the award-winning East Lambrook Manor Gardens.

We arrived at the Sunday opening time of seven on a summery evening and, entering by the original front door, were greeted by five hand pumps of Palmer's real ales: Copper Ale, Traditional Best Bitter, Dorset Gold, 200 Premium Ale and Tally Ho!, their strong dark ale. All four of us plumped for Tally Ho!, and delicious it was too. Licensee Graham Titcombe is the original author of the "Real Ale Guide" series, has won many industry awards, and is passionate about the quality of his real ale. We had pre-booked a table, which is essential at busy times and if you are travelling from some distance; there were however only about ten tables occupied while we were there. The menu is extensive and varied, and we had a fantastic meal for about £25 a head, including three drinks.

## "He was the man who had everything, except *Theakstons* OLD PECULIER"

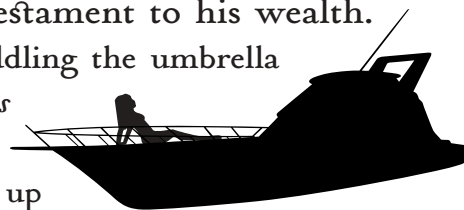
We'd been muçkers at school. Then he went into property and made so many millions they ran out of multi's to describe them. Some years later and here I was in the Med, a guest aboard this floating testament to his wealth.

"Aye, I've got plenty of ACKERS," grumbled my friend, twiddling the umbrella in his coçktail, "but no bloomin' pub and no bloomin' *Theakstons*

*Old Peculier*, that's for sure." "Why don't you just go home and get some?" I asked. He snorted, glancing at his trophy wife soaking up

the rays beside him, "It's the missus, won't go anywhere it rains." "Ah, I see." I replied, wondering how the leggy Latino lovely liked being referred to as the MISSUS. Then, wistfully, I thought of my very own şpecial rain-şpattered corner of Yorkshire. The lady I loved would be there now, behind her bar serving pint after pint of *Theakstons* Old Peculier, dark, rich, and deliciously strong. With my return tiçket burning a hole in my poçket, I turned to my mate in exile.

"Fancy another *Pina Colada*?" I enquired, smugly.



# Fog on the Tyne this time – and on the Wear too!

IN the last edition I recounted details of a beery trip to Newcastle to celebrate a mate's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. My wife had to miss that trip which gave me an excuse to go back in July.

This was to be a three-night trip from Saturday to Tuesday, with lots of retail therapy for Marilyn and a bit of liquid therapy for me. An internet trawl about six weeks before secured very reasonable return train tickets at around £30 each and the incredible price of £19 per double room per night at the Travelodge on Quayside in the centre for the Sunday and Monday nights. I was unable to get any deals for the Saturday so looked a bit further out, eventually settling for the Windsor Hotel in Whitley Bay at £60 bed and breakfast for two. My thinking was to avoid the usual city centre melee on a Saturday night – that was to backfire somewhat though!

We arrived in Newcastle at 2pm and headed straight into the superb **Centurion Bar** on the station for a quick one before heading out to Whitley Bay on the metro. Our hotel in South Parade was a short walk away, but it was immediately obvious that this was to be no peaceful haven from the madding crowd.

The hotel was surrounded by nightclubs and tacky bars already overflowing with half-cut revellers at 3.30pm! The hotel itself was very nice, with excellent service and just about the best breakfast I have had in a hotel.

We headed out to take a walk around the town, which didn't take long as it seemed to consist of a handful of low-key shops and a lot of bars. Next we tried the seafront but a very heavy mist or fog totally obscured the sea and beach. So it had to be off to the pub!

There are two pubs in the 2008 Good Beer Guide and one of them, the **Briar Dene** in The Links, is a 10-minute walk along the sea front. Now this was a real haven from the madness. A large, airy, open-plan pub, it had on seven beers, all-changing guests and four of them new to me. It was, however, odd to see Matthews Bob Wall (from Timsbury near Bath) served though a tight Northern style sparkler! We dined here on very pleasant food and enjoyed a few rounds. In common with about 75 per cent of the best pubs in the North East it is owned by Fitzgeralds – a very enterprising local chain that seems to allow landlords a free choice of real ales.

The other Good Beer Guide-listed pub is the **Rockliffe Arms** in Algernon Place, a side street near the metro station. A cracking local boozier, with four constantly changing guest pumps and a real buzz about it. We got the distinct impression that this is where the locals come to shelter from the lunacy of South Parade! Prices were noticeably low – indeed

one of the beers was a 9% offering from Boggart Hole Clough brewery at £2.60 per pint! I particularly enjoyed the landlady giving a local drinker a good telling off for choosing a keg beer when he normally drank the real stuff. It is of course another Fitzgeralds pub.

We ventured back towards the hotel at about 9.45 planning to pop into **Fitzgeralds** (a 2007 Good Beer Guide entry) but it was packed with the clubbing crowd. We then had to literally run the gauntlet of the lunatics to get back to the hotel – no exaggeration this was far wilder than central Bristol on weekend nights. For some reason the image of a swarthy muscular bloke in fishnet stockings and a red and black Ladybird puff ball skirt has stuck with me! I would recommend staying at the Windsor but not at weekends, especially as many of the party crowd were roaming the corridors in the early hours.



Inside Fitzgeralds

Sunday morning was brighter (and quieter!) – the beach and sea now clearly visible, but it was off to Newcastle for us. Once checked into the hotel, the weather was perfect for a walk along the Quayside, and the Sunday market there.

Then off to the shops, and a few beers – sadly many of the central Good Beer Guide pubs don't open until evening on Sundays. We did get a beer in the **Duke of Wellington** in High Bridge though. Then it was off to Byker to revisit the **Cumberland Arms** and **Cluny** (see the last edition for descriptions of all three).

I had never been to Sunderland, and a favourite on-line shop of Marilyn's is also there, so that became Monday's destination – incredibly it is also served by the metro and the £3.70 all-day ticket (£2.20 after 6pm) covers you. Our first pub of the day was the hugely impressive **Fitzgeralds** (yes them again) in Green Terrace. What can I say? Seven or eight changing beers from all over, lovely food, a friendly landlord and one of the most ornate interiors anywhere (see picture). A truly excellent pub.

We set off to walk what we thought would be the short distance to the **Clarendon** on High Street – it turned out to be 15 minutes and well out of town in High Street East. This is a rough and ready free house in need of some renovation, but is the home of the small Bull Lane Brewery opened in 2005. Two of their

beers were on and were tried and found to be pleasant – especially at under two quid a pint. The friendly barman arranged a taxi to take us on to the **Kings Arms** in Beech Street (it is possible to follow the river path all the way there in 20 minutes but it was starting to rain). This excellent pub, in an industrial area that used to be a haunt of dockers in days gone by, has won the local pub of the year award for the last few years – much to the chagrin of the landlord at Fitzgeralds I must say though! It is not hard to see why though. The beer policy is simple – Taylor's Landlord and seven guests from anywhere. We tried a few and they were all in great nick – impressive at 4pm on a Monday.

It was time to eat again so we headed to **Saltgrass** in Hanover Place about 200 yards away. Sadly the GBG was inaccurate in stating that "Monday night is curry night" – when we asked for food we were gruffly told, "No food until Wednesday". The beer range was made up of well known beers from much further south and my Everards Tiger was disappointing on this occasion. We swiftly decided to return to Fitzgeralds as the GBG said it did evening food (well it didn't that day anyway!). So it was back to Newcastle for something to eat.

After polishing off a pizza there was time for two pubs: repeat visits to **Bacchus** in High Bridge and the famous **Crown Posada** in Side, both impressive in contrasting ways and both owned by Fitzgeralds of course! Bacchus has a modern and roomy feel to it with about six changing beers, and the Crown Posada is a complete time warp with five beers on. We were amused to bump into the same crowd of drinkers in both. The old-time atmosphere in the Crown Posada was completed by them playing real "78" records such as Glen Miller on a genuine antique gramophone!



The author inside Fitzgeralds

Our final day was spent shopping until two and then an excellent lunch and a few splendid pints in the **Bodega** in Westgate Street – another very ornate pub with a great selection of beers. (Guess who owns it.) We were entertained by two splendid elderly gents, John and Tom, who took it in turns to regale us with tales of

their 40-odd years drinking in the pub. We were amazed when we offered them copies of Pints West to be told that they already had some, as "some bloke from Weston-super-Mare dropped them in last week."

A disappointing beer and indifferent service was had in **Tilleys** a few doors down before going full circle by finishing our trip back at the Centurion Bar whilst awaiting the late train home.

Vince Murray (photos Marilyn Murray)



# The other Royal Oak

MUCH has been written in these pages about the Royal Oak at Twerton since Becky and John Whinnerah, previously at the Hobgoblin, took over, but, to the confusion of taxi-drivers, there is another Royal Oak in Bath, just a mile up the road, at Widcombe. Although it had not closed, it too had had mixed fortunes over



recent years, and was beginning to look ominously like a pub with no future. But then Simon Wynne, who had run the Ram at Widcombe for years, taking it into the Good Beer Guide on a number of occasions, returned from a year's travelling in 2007, and decided to take on the Royal Oak.



After a thorough redecoration, and the installation of completely new bar equipment, the pub reopened. The last time I had seen it, it was dark, with spurious timberwork here and there. Simon has stripped the pub back to the original walls and panelling, as well as stripping the floorboards back to the wood in the main bar. Now painted in a warm cream, the bar achieves an uncluttered look while keeping the character of the building. The garden has been refurbished, too, with a covered smoking area, and a boules piste, while the skittle alley doubles as a function room.

But what of the beers? In addition to the usual range of keg drinks, Simon was keen to serve good real ale. This he is doing – but not the range he would like to see there. With so many real ale pubs in Bath offering some interesting and unusual beers, Simon is keen to get back in on the act. You would think that the pubco would recognise the experience of a landlord like Simon, and allow him to make a choice of at least one guest beer. Unfortunately, Enterprise does not live up to its name. He is restricted to Courage Best, Bath Ales Gem, Otter Ale and Butcombe Gold – all perfectly good beers and very well kept, but hardly the most exciting range. He also has Addlestone's cider on one handpump. On top of all that, he has to buy the beer through the pubco. It would be cheaper to go down to the local cash and carry to get beer – but he's not allowed to do that.

So Simon and his team at the Royal Oak are working hard to bring in the customers by making this a pub which has plenty to offer the patron. Open every day from 12, except Mondays when it opens at 5 p.m., there is a menu which offers bar snacks at lunchtime, as well as more sustaining fare, which is also served in the evening. One of the specialities is their homemade hamburger. I had this the other day, and it was delicious, with proper chips – my only complaint was that I could not finish it, so generous was the portion. There is



a special menu for Sunday lunch. There's newspapers lying around, and even wi-fi if you really feel you must keep working at your laptop.

If you're looking for somewhere to have a party, Simon can offer you a range of options. We went to a birthday party there, and Simon had laid on the full works, including a hog roast – but you need at least 70 people in your group to make that worth while. We filled the whole garden, and later the inimitable Bill Smarme played in the function room. For a smaller group, the room at a level slightly higher than the bar is convenient. There are quiz nights, and occasional music nights, as well as a screen to allow TV for special sporting events.

If you want to know more about what's happening at the Royal Oak at Widcombe, why not visit the website at <http://home.btconnect.com/theroyaloakbath/index.html> or ring 01225 335220. You will be assured of a warm Widcombe welcome.

*Kirsten Elliott*



## The Whinnerahs break new ground

John and Becky Whinnerah, who have taken the Royal Oak at Twerton to ever greater heights, have decided to branch out into brewing. Although they remain as landlords, and will be at the pub fairly frequently, Chris Powell is now installed as manager with Dave Selby – known to one and all as Hip-hop Dave – as assistant manager. Becky and John will be living at Axminster, since the brewery is at North Chideock, in Dorset, on a farm with its own spring. This will supply the water needed for brewing.

The brewery, when I spoke to the Whinnerahs, was still under construction, but by the time this goes into print, John plans to be experimenting with brews. He has been learning the art of brewing at Stuart Matthews' brewery at Timsbury while the work continues on completing the brewery down in Dorset.

The title Becky and John have chosen for their venture is **Art Brew**. The Royal Oak is well known for its ever-changing art work on the walls, but not everyone appreciates that Becky is herself an artist. Hence the name. If all goes to plan, the next edition of Pints West should carry news of the first real ales from Art Brew.

*Kirsten Elliott*

## Englishcombe Inn

The Englishcombe Inn in Bath is up for sale for £1M plus VAT with James A Baker. The blurb states that it "offers an exciting opportunity for redevelopment to an alternative commercial or residential use, subject to the necessary permissions being granted." The Englishcombe, one of the biggest pubs in the city, opened in 1934 to serve new housing developments south of the city. Its most famous landlord was Graham Moffat, who, before entering the pub trade, appeared alongside Will Hay in the film *Oh Mr Porter* as Albert, the Fat Boy.

*Andrew Swift*

# Wir Wollen Stammtisch Bekommen!

IN Bavaria, beer (or *bier* as it is called there) is officially regarded as a food, and the average Bavarian's calorie intake is expected to include two beers each day. A beer lover's sort of place! So it was that the day before the early May bank holiday, Vince Murray, Richard Walters and I (Phil Cummings) found ourselves speeding towards Stanstead airport, and a flight on the Monday to Bavaria's capital, and arguably the world's beer capital, Munich.

The single most important piece of our luggage was the superb **Good Beer Guide Germany**, by Steve Thomas, truly indispensable for the beer traveller (and now on offer at a giveaway £5.99 from CAMRA HQ for members and £6.50 for others).

Our itinerary was Bamberg, Nuremberg, and Munich. Naturally, we stopped to quench our thirst at several Good Beer Guide-listed pubs – the bizarrely named *Land of Liberty, Peace and Plenty*, which is handily situated just off the M25, and, making a small detour, the *Swan* at Little Totham, twice a former CAMRA National Pub of the Year. Both impressed. We were staying at a Travelodge in Great Dunmow, near Bishops Stortford. Although we had the pleasure of meeting Ian, one of Vince's old college buddies, and his wife Sue, we had a less than satisfactory evening beer wise, the GBG-listed *Saracens Head* seemed our best hope of a good pint, but we were less than impressed to see the promised four beers turn out to be one, then none as we were about to order! It turns out the pub changed owners that very weekend!

A word here about flights. When we planned our trip, the only destination in Germany from Bristol was Berlin. If we were to repeat our journey we would fly from Bristol to Frankfurt using the new Lufthansa service and then use Germany's superb train service to get about.

However, flying to Munich does have one major advantage – surely the best airport bar there is? In fact, *Airbrau* brews on the premises at the airport terminal, and is remarkably good value too. We enjoyed the seasonal bier, a reddish unfiltered wheat bier, and a good value lunch, before taking a train to Munich, then on to Bamberg.

The best way of getting about in Germany is the excellent train service:

tickets can be purchased in advance on the astonishingly good national rail website [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de). For 69 euros each, we got tickets from Munich airport to Bamberg and from Nuremberg to Munich airport. The walk-on cost would have been 170 euros, and the tickets had been delivered by post promptly to "Herr Murray" within a few days of being ordered.

Bamberg is a lovely town, a UNESCO world heritage site with many beautiful ancient buildings crowding picturesquely around the river Regnitz. But we were here for the beer, as Bamberg possesses eleven breweries, an impressive figure for a town of only 70,000 inhabitants!

We were staying in the stubbornly traditional brewpub *Fassla*, a short walk from the station. Single en-suite rooms are great value at 40 euros. However, booking them was not easy. Vince had tried eiling (no reply), writing (no reply) and eventually resorted to phoning, not easy with broken German. Of course, Rich and I may have not helped with our hysterical laughter in the background, especially when Vince was asked to spell his surname and when it came to "R" could only think of "R for Reichstag"! Eventually our booking was confirmed by my brother, who visited Fassla a month before our visit, inspected the books and sent the welcome message, "ACHTUNG! Vince's booking confirmed, ein Engländer drei Zimmer!"

After sampling the tasty Pils we crossed the road to *Spezial*, another traditional brewpub and the world's oldest producer of a local speciality, Rauchbier (smoked beer). The smoking of the malt brings in some unique flavours, and the aroma of smoked ham! Rauchbier divides drinkers into lovers and haters, in the same way as Belgian gueuze, or perhaps Marmite! Sitting at the typical long, scrubbed pine tables, we enjoyed a good value meal, two courses each cost the three of us 42 euros, with Rich, a noted carnivore, enjoying his venison.

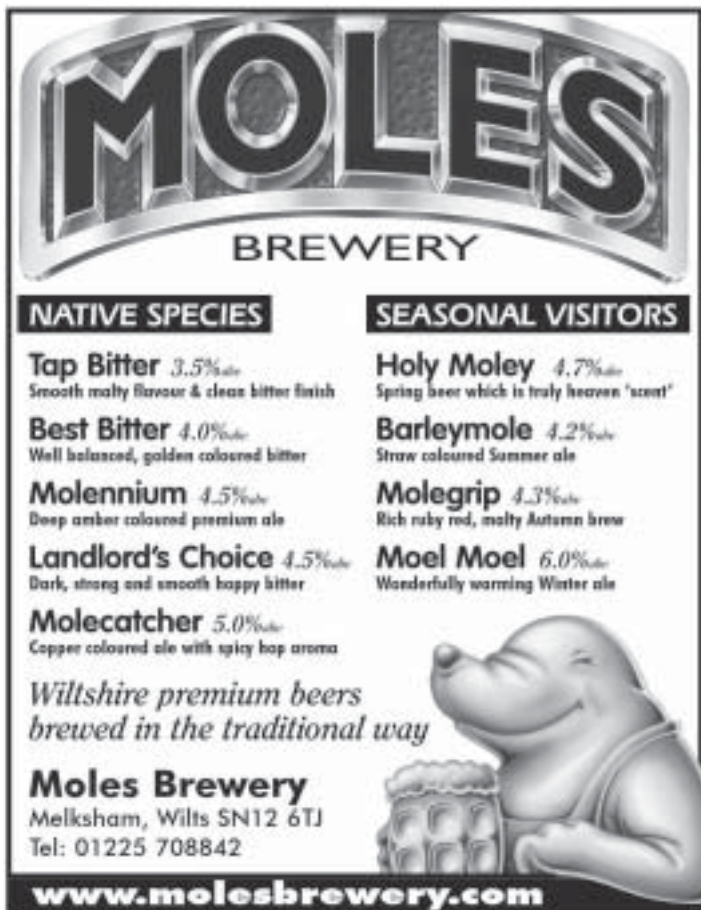
We found Bamberg the best value of our three destinations, a beer costing generally 2.50 euros. We sampled the Rauchbier of course, and the rarely seen Ungespundet, which has less carbonation than most German beer and is probably as close as you get in style to our real ale. A similar style to look out for is Kellerbier, which was featured in a recent JD Wetherspoon's festival.

Heading down to the river and town centre, where many of the bars are concentrated, we found *Ambrausianum* closed for its Ruhetag (day off) so went around the corner to *Schlenkerla*, the most famous producer of Rauchbier and another must-visit brewpub in the traditional German fashion. Expect plenty of exposed beams and decorations in the hunting lodge fashion in these traditional bars. Schlenkerla's bottled Rauchbier is the one you may find in some of our more enlightened Bristol pubs – the *Colston Yard* and the *Cornubia* spring to mind as stockists. *Stillbruch* was our next port of call, followed by *Pizzini*, and then finally we returned to Stillbruch, which is more in the nature of a *kei* (bar) than the other pubs we visited, livelier and less touristy. We enjoyed the Klosterbrau Schwarz bier and Keesman Pils here, a taste of the day to follow...

With the traditional cheery Bavarian greeting of "Gruss got" ringing in our ears, we attacked a typically hearty breakfast spread of meats and cheese, bread and strong coffee, and wondered at the locals, supping on their first bier of the day at 9am! By this time I was aware that I was not well, but decided to press on regardless as our first bar of the day was another lovely traditional brewpub, *Klosterbrau*. Schwarzla (black beer) was on draught and the seasonal brew was a particularly pleasant Maibock, a powerful pale 7% beer. Leaving with some reluctance we threaded our way around the delightful river and headed uphill and west to *Greifenklau*. Their beer garden proved a pleasant place to be and we drank their home-brewed Lagerbier. It was here that we learned the trick to attract the waitress when your stone beer mug was empty was to lay it on its side!

Going east and back into town (I took the opportunity to purchase a small bottle of Gavuscon which cost nearly £9 and did nothing to ease my discomfort), and dodging the showers we headed for *Keesman*. Another fine traditional brewpub, we enjoyed the bitter Sternla in particular and then headed across the road to one of the highlights of our trip, *Mahr's-Brau*.

It's easy to see why Mahr's-Brau is rated as one of the world's top breweries by many aficionados. Set in a classic, authentic bar with tiled stove and low beams, we sampled the Leight, astonishingly tasty at 2.8%,



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

the Festival Wheat bier, the standard Wheat bier (which was amazingly full of clumps of matter, enough to make most beer drinkers throw up their hands in horror!), the Helles, and the whole range really!

When the showers lifted we took the opportunity to sit outside & chose a prominent round table, until, we realised it had a notice saying *Stammtisch* on it. This fine old German tradition means that the table is reserved for regular customers. We went to move but to our surprise the landlord gestured for us to remain seated, a very generous gesture we thought – and the moment that gave rise to the odd title of this article!

Heading north now took us to *Maisel-Keller*, another brewery tap. We decanted ourselves into a modern, light and airy room, with much pinewood in evidence, and studied the menu. We had heard that a local delicacy, the rare white asparagus known as Spargel, was in season for our visit. Mine was served in a lush Hollandaise sauce with salad and went down a treat. Sadly for me the rich food and the several swiftly downed glasses of wheat beer I had consumed took a heavy toll, and so I staggered back to Fassla, missing the evening's festivities. My only consolation was to have the surreal experience of watching a favourite film dubbed in German on TV.

Over to Vince for a description of the evening...

After watching Phil (whose whole idea the trip was in the first place) trudge sadly off into the sunset we made our way to a bar/restaurant that we had spotted earlier, but was not in the Guide. We had wanted to try the *Kaiserdom* brewery tap but it was just too far out to walk to, but stumbled across what seemed to be a sister outlet in Wilhelmsplatz. This seemed very food-orientated, but had a couple of tables outside which we took advantage of. The brewery's own Pilsner and Schwarzbier went down well. On we went to *Ambrasianium* (open this time) and sampled their own Hell and Dunkel beers in a long corridor with various rooms set off of it. From there we headed a few hundred yards out of town to *Pelikan*, not a brewery but a *kneipe* that sells a good range of draught and bottled beers from a variety of small brewers. This place was absolutely thriving and was full of local people and we were lucky to get the only free table. Most of the lighting comes from candles and conversation was king. We had not planned to eat here but everybody else was so we decided to join them – the house chilli turned out to be high on both quality and value. We enjoyed a couple of hours here before heading back to the Fassla for one last bevy and a sound night's sleep.

Back to Phil...

The next morning found me feeling no better after a very poor night's sleep, but looking ahead to a visit to Nuremberg. After taking our leave of Fassla we boarded an ICE train for the Franconian capital Nurnberg (Nuremberg to us Brits). Cost was about £8 each. Our train was an inter-city train and was not only extremely quiet but, according to the digital display over the carriage entrance, achieved a maximum speed of 299 kilometers per hour! A large city, it is nevertheless very easy to do a circuit of Nuremberg's central pubs, most of which are handily located within the old city walls. The old town is quite picturesque and easy to walk around.

Leaving Nuremberg hauptbahnhof it was a simple matter to head into the



Klosterbrau, Bamberg

adjacent old town and make a first stop of the day at *Barfusser*, a cavernous underground brewpub, with a ceiling decorated with old British pub signs. I had vowed this day to take it easy and drink "halves" only and sipped a Schwarz beer as we examined our maps and made our plans.

Our hotel, the Lorenz Hotel Central, was two minutes walk away on the main shopping drag. We had secured single rooms and breakfast for 55 euros each. We hesitated at first as the entrance and lobby were unpromising, but once inside all was good. So dumping our bags we headed back the way we came and went straight to *Andescher im Deutschen Kaiser*, which we had spied earlier as it is directly opposite Barfusser. Sitting outside I sipped Pils while Vince dived into the powerful Doppelbock Dunkel – as he said, he was on holiday, as if an excuse was needed!

Crossing the river Pegnitz we proceeded in a leisurely fashion towards the 12<sup>th</sup> century castle, within whose shadows lies *Hausbrauerei Altstadt*, also rather confusingly known as *Schwarzer Bauer*. This compact brewpub produces a set of lovely beers, which we sampled in a tasting tray which comprised Red, Helles, Wheat, and Schwarz beers and a Bock spirit! I thought the Schwarz beer here was the best I tried on the trip, and the Red, the only beer of its kind we found, was excellent. At this point in mid-afternoon I felt it wise to return to the hotel and rest. On reflection a bizarre fishy garlic sandwich I had consumed at one of the interesting market stalls in the Hauptmarkt may have been an error! (*Mine was nice though! - Vince.*) I spent the afternoon feeling increasingly poor, and whilst Vince and Rich sampled the delights of the city during the evening I had the rather less pleasant task of finding an English-speaking doctor working an evening shift. At this point I was diagnosed with viral gastroenteritis and my drinking (and eating) was over for the trip. The doctor smiled ruefully at me, "Nein, Herr Cummings, kein bier." So following a visit to the emergency chemist I consoled myself with watching the highlights on TV of the German Bundesliga, and reflected that almost every city I have visited in Germany have had their football team relegated from the Bundesliga shortly after my visit – Duisberg, Rostock, and now Nuremberg! Only Hertha Berlin is still flourishing.

Vince takes up the narrative again...

And then there were two! We were enjoying some astonishingly good May weather and after waving Phil off, took a slow walk around the impressive castle and city walls for a while. This city is rarely mentioned as a tourist destination but really should be – it is very impressive and easy to see in a day. Once we had seen enough we headed on to a lovely small bar called *Hutt'n* just a couple of streets away from the Schwarzer Bauer. This pub has a changing list of draught and bottled beers, and the food looked good too. The friendly barman recommended that I try Neder Schwarza Anna which was lovely, whilst Rich went for Pyraser Landbier. It was time to eat again, and the Guide had eulogised about the Nurnberger Rostbratwurst at the nearby *Schlenkerla Schranke* restaurant/bar which is almost directly under the castle in the most touristy bit of town. The Bratwurst were indeed excellent and well washed down by the variety of local beers on offer.

(continued on next page...)

(...continued from previous page)

We were now into early evening and headed back to the station area. Just inside the city walls lies **Tucher-Brau am Opernhaus**, a sprawling place that acts as the brewery tap. On this occasion we were the only people in the huge room except a noisy party of local pensioners enjoying a celebration meal of some sort. We were amused as one old gent kept holding an old-fashioned transistor radio to his ear and became excited when Nurnberg football club scored a goal! We were served efficiently and politely but otherwise ignored, so maybe caught the place at the wrong time.

We headed outside the city walls, and therefore out of the range of our city map, and set off in search of **Café Express** – this took about 20 minutes longer due to some half-cut navigation on my part! This is a small side-street bar with a decent range of draught and bottled beers. Up to now all the bars on the trip had been smoke-free, so we assumed that the same law as in the UK applied – obviously not quite true as this non-food-serving place seemed to be a grand meeting place for every local chain smoker! It was without doubt the smokiest bar I have ever sat in and in my view totally horrendous for it. We decided to finish our beers and move swiftly on.

Next stop was **Steichele**, a ten-minute walk back towards town within the city walls. This place specialises in wine and food but also offers a decent selection of beers in very civilised surroundings. We both fancied a change so I asked Rich (something of a wine buff on the quiet) to select one of the many white wines sold by the glass – it was excellent as was the one he chose for himself. A final beer back at Barfusser, which was now amazingly busy at after midnight on a Wednesday, concluded the evening. Over to Phil...

Munich is rightly regarded as one of the most expensive cities in Europe in which to stay. Vince had done well to secure us a three-berth room at the airport hotel Theresienhof at Halbergmoos, a few miles from the airport. This turned out to be not the concrete monstrosity you sometimes get with airport hotels but a very pleasant family hotel complete with a friendly bar. So with me being out of action and only seeing the inside of a hotel room in Munich, over to Vince again...

then proceeded to waste a futile hour trying to work out the local buses to the station and missing three in the process! It was gone 3pm when we finally got back to the city centre. It was a glorious day so we headed out to Liem station a few miles out and walked to **Hirschgarten** (deer garden), the world's biggest beer garden with an astonishing 8,000 seats! We sunned ourselves whilst sipping a couple of Pils style beers from Augustiner and Kaltenberg. The idea here is that you select and wash your own glass then choose a beer and wash your glass again before leaving. Sadly only a few of us seemed to be complying. The pub is part of an enormous park, with the added attraction of an enclosure with quite a few deer and the odd goat. These can be fed through the fence whilst supping or taking a meal from one of the food shacks. An amazing place!

We headed back to town and on to the awesome **Augustiner Grossgastätte** – the showcase for band former home of the mighty brewery, in Neuhauserstrasse. It has an impressive interior by any standards, with the central restaurant room being the most ornate. Great beer and good old-fashioned service too. Next stop was the nearby **Hofbrauhaus** in Am Platzl. This huge beer hall has often been described as the world's most famous pub and is unashamedly and successfully targeted at the tourist trade. Try not to look surprised when your request for a beer results in the arrival of a one-litre stein (more or less two pints) of your chosen house brew – it's the only size they do! Not one for driving to either! An amusing oompah band was in full flow when we were there and there was much "toasting" going on. If you hear the words "Ein Prosit" then raise your glass and knock some back. An absolute must-do place on your first visit to Munich.

After all that excitement, it was time for a quieter beer just opposite at **Ayingers am Platzl** – a much more formal and sophisticated place selling the Ayinger range of brews. This was the beer formerly sold at **Humpers** off-licence in Staple Hill as "Loopy Juice" and was well named. Just a couple of streets away in Altstadt-Lehel we found the **Weisses Brauhaus** – the former location of the famous Schneider Brewery and still its brewery tap. This turned out to be a real highlight as it sold an amazing range of wheat beers from Schneider. Feeling reckless and without consulting Rich, I used my pigeon slurred German to order Rich a half litre of an 8% brew, plus a bottle of the mighty **Aventius Eis Bock** at 12% ABV for us to share, whilst ensuring I had a glass of the more sensible 5% beer! The Eis Bock, which is as rare as rocking horse poo, was astonishingly good and extremely alcoholic – Rich is still raving about it months later! We both felt compelled to buy one of its special glasses, even at 8 euros each. Amazingly, both glasses made it home intact too!

By now my body was letting me know in no uncertain terms that I had overdone things all week and that I was "Kaputt", so we settled for one last stop, via the underground train for a couple of stops to Goetheplatz station – this is close to the famous **Paulaner Brauhaus** in Kapuzinerplatz, where we had our final beer of the trip. I would like to tell you how it tasted but the Eis Bock seems to have erased my memory! There are at least another ten great sounding places in Munich that we had neither the time nor stamina to get to (*sounds like an excuse to go back - Phil*). So it was back out to the hotel to tell Phil in minute detail what he had missed – if he had had the strength I am sure he would have found something heavy to throw at us.

Altogether we would say that these parts of Bavaria are often overlooked when planning foreign trips, but anyone with even a passing interest in beer and beer styles should make an effort to get there – you will be rewarded by the quality and rich diversity available and the fact that all three cities have much else to offer too.

*Phil Cummings and Vince Murray*

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## North Cotswold Festival

THE first North Cotswold CAMRA Beer Festival takes place from Friday 26th to Sunday 28th September 2008 at the Moreton-in-Marsh Cricket Club in Batsford Road, Moreton-in-Marsh (five minutes from the railway station, London to Hereford line).

The will be 40 real ales plus ciders, food, soft drinks, entertainment, and a souvenir glass. The festival is open from 6pm to 11pm on the Friday and noon to 11pm on the Saturday, with entrance costing £2 or £3, but free to card-carrying CAMRA members. Sunday opening is noon to 3pm and free to all. Car parking and camping are available.

For more information, please contact Martyn Herbert on 07760 134866 or email [gloscamra\\_media@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gloscamra_media@yahoo.co.uk).



# Gone for a Burton

AS the Brewing Museum at Burton on Trent was due to shut at the end of June we set out for a day trip – by train – a few weeks before the fateful day.

The museum, opened by Bass in 1977, was taken over by Coors in 2003. Our initial impression was that Coors hadn't been interested in the museum from day one. The exhibits, if not exactly dusty, had definitely seen better days. What passed for state-of-the-art displays in 1977 look decidedly past their sell-by date today. Nevertheless, there's lots of fascinating stuff to see. Our greatest surprise was to come across a painting of the Star Inn in Bath, painted by Ian Cryer a few years ago. It didn't have a label and there's a fair chance that nobody at the museum knew where it was. I wonder what will happen to it now the museum's shut?

The saddest part was the shire-horse stables. Once the pride of Burton, winning prizes at shows all over the country, only one horse was left, the others having literally been put out to grass. The head horseman, who's been with them for years, was about to start another job up north.

The weirdest part was the brewery tap,

refurbished by Coors last summer at a cost of half a million pounds, with handpumps cunningly disguised to look like keg dispensers – a dystopia in chrome and frosted glass, looking more like a cocktail bar in an airport hotel than a shrine in the temple of brewing. Apparently, Coors hadn't wanted to sell real ale in the revamped bar at all, and were only persuaded to do so after staff and regular customers pointed out there wasn't much point calling it a brewery tap if they didn't.

Coors claim that they lost a million pounds a year on the museum. I've spoken to several



One of the more curious bits of brewery memorabilia on display in the museum

people in the museum industry since, all of whom say it's impossible to lose that sort of money running a museum that size – although if you factor in spending half a million on an unnecessary bar refurbishment and add what you're losing by not realising the assets tied up in the real estate, such a figure becomes more plausible.

Faced with the outcry that the closure of the museum has provoked, Coors has said it's willing to work with, and help out, anyone who wants to take it on as a going concern. A national brewing museum, which could display items from breweries apart from Bass, run by a body committed to celebrating Britain's brewery heritage, is certainly an enticing prospect, but it won't be achieved overnight. The alternative scenario, of the collection being broken up and sold off, and the site redeveloped, would be a tragedy, not just for Burton but for anyone interested in the history of one of the country's most important industries.

Our visit to Burton ended on a somewhat



Ian Cryer's painting of the Star in Bath dates from the days when Bass was dispensed by handpump

happier note, with visits to two cracking pubs – the Burton Bridge Inn, flagship of the Burton Bridge Brewery, and the Coopers Tavern, a classic 19<sup>th</sup>-century alehouse, with a handsome array of beers served straight from the barrel. On the day we visited, the local evening paper announced it had been voted Pub of the Year by the local branch of CAMRA. It's also the 2008 West Midlands Cider & Perry Pub of the Year. It's well worth visiting Burton for these two pubs alone – it's just a pity that, for the time being at least, you can't call into the Brewery Museum while you're there.

*Andrew Swift*



An enamel sign from the museum's collection

## Somerset Beer Festival

THE ninth Somerset Beer Festival will take place on Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th September, on the platform of Minehead station (step off the train straight into the festival!). It will feature around 100 beers and ciders, including festival specials. Food will be available all sessions, with musical entertainment Saturday evening and Sunday lunchtime.

Opening times are 11-11 Saturday and 12-4 Sunday. Admission is free, though you'll need to purchase a commemorative glass.

Travel by scenic West Somerset Railway (reduced fare for card-carrying CAMRA members) or by bus from Taunton. Plenty of local B&B accommodation should be available (contact Minehead Tourist Board for details). Further details from Colin Heapey on 01823 444020.



Inside the Coopers Tavern, a gloriously unspoilt and welcoming pub with beer served straight from the barrel. The landlady's choice of reading matter – Pints West!

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YOU can now wear Pints West. T-shirts, polo shirts, sweat shirts and fleeces are now available to order with an embroidered Pints West logo on the left breast. All are available in navy, black, bottle green, grey, red, dark royal, purple or burgundy, and in sizes S, M, L, XL and XXL. All except the fleeces are also available in jade, sky blue, gold and white.

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# Yate's secret pub

IF you're looking for a proper traditional country pub, without travelling scores of miles into the unknown, then try the Cross Keys at Yate. A few hundred yards from the Fox on the north side of Yate, along North Road is the Cross Keys, a warm-looking, ivy-clad building that nestles in the heart of the old part of Yate amongst houses, a school and a post office. A good-size car park welcomes the driver and inside a good range of ales welcomes the real ale drinker! There are no gimmicks here, just plain old values such as smart furnishings, conversation and good banter.

The pub has two rooms laid out around a horseshoe bar. The usual keg fonts dispense lagers and ciders, but it is the real ale that is being pushed to the fore in this pub. There are five ales: Courage Best sells an eighteen in two days, Bass and London Pride aren't far behind, and then there are two guests. At the time of my visit Bristol Beer Factory No. 7 was overstaying its allotted time on the bar due to demand, and Hancock's HB was offered at a very attractive 'promotional price'.

The Cross Keys has been doing lunch-time food for some time Monday to Saturdays, but since the smoking ban food is now offered from 5pm to 8pm Wednesdays to Saturdays. This benefits by filling a potential gap in trade and does not interfere with the drinkers that dominate from mid evening.

On Wednesday evenings from October a quiz night gives a chance to win a bottle of wine and engage in a bit of fun at the same time!

The Cross Keys is in good company. Yate's own Codrington Arms is across the same road, and a little further out is the Rose and Crown at Rangeworthy, so if you're looking for an alternative destination then North Road is well worth heading for.

*Mike Jackson*

# Bag O'Nails

THE Bag O'Nails in Hotwells will be having one of their twice-yearly beer festivals from Thursday 20th to Sunday 23rd November. This time there should be more beers on than ever (not all at the same time though), with around 50 promised over the four-day period. The pub will be open all day each day of the festival.

The Bag remains one of the best pubs in Bristol for an ever-changing range of beers, and at competitive prices too with the real ales generally between £2.50 and £2.70 a pint. And for those that don't want something new every visit, two handpumps are given over to semi-permanent beers, which at the time of writing are from Hop Back and Otter breweries.

*SP*

# The Bag O'Nails

141 St. George's Road, Hotwells,  
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# A Real Ale Pub

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# A Taste of Bath

THE second annual Bath Taste Festival, held in Royal Victoria Park from 3rd to 6th July, was the usual melange of local and specialty food producers, wine sellers, celebrity chefs, and some rather fine bands on the bandstand. The place was packed – surprising, when you consider that it cost £12 to get in – less so when you realise that most people either seemed to have won tickets (as I did) or received complimentary ones.

There was some beer on offer as well – from Wells & Young's, from Cotleigh, and from an outfit called Direct Beers Ltd from Belper in Derbyshire, who were selling bottles of Cat Piss, Dog Piss, Old Fart and – I kid you not – Big Cock. I can't help feeling that, as far as getting the real ale message across to non-real ale drinkers goes, this leaves rather a lot to be desired. This real-ale drinker wasn't too impressed either.

However, someone who was flying the flag for real ale in a much more responsible way – and for local real ale at that – was Alan Morgan of Abbey Ales. Given that many of the people who went to the Taste Festival were there for the celebrity chef side of things, and probably hadn't come across much in the way of real ale, this was an ideal place to get the



Alan & Simon Morgan manning the Abbey Ales stand at the Taste of Bath Festival

message across that it's worth taking seriously. It was a brave decision on Alan Morgan's part to stand at the festival, given the cost of the stalls, but one that should pay off in raising the profile not only of Abbey Ales but of real ale in general – hats off to him for going for it.

Staying with Abbey Ales for a minute, Alan's two pubs in Bath – the **Star** and the **Coeur de Lion** – were among nine local businesses to win prizes at the Bath in Bloom awards on 11th August.

Andrew Swift

# Next stop Ulan Bator

MOST pub landlords agree that it pays to advertise. Few, though, have gone to such lengths as Tim Bethune of the **Old Green Tree** in Bath. By the time you read this, the enticing prospect of downing a pint of RCH Pitchfork in one of Bath's top pubs will have been dangled in front of puzzled locals in places as far-flung as Turkey, Iran, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and – yes – Ulan Bator, capital of Mongolia.

Nicholas Ward, son of Green-Tree regular Malcolm Ward, is taking part in the 2008 Mongol Rally, which started in London on 19th July. Unlike other rallies, there are no back-up crews and no specified route. The website blurb sums up its appeal succinctly:

*Travel a third of the way around the earth, from London to Mongolia via a plethora of countries most people haven't heard of in any crap car that has an engine with no more than 1 litre of power ... The Mongol Rally isn't just about adventure. It's also about raising huge sacks of cash for some great charities. Last year we topped £200,000 and we hope to smash that this year.*

Nicholas and his co-driver, who are undertaking the journey in an N-reg Nissan Micra, have been sponsored by the Green Tree and RCH brewery and the sponsors' details are proudly emblazoned on the side of the car. By 12th August they'd reached Kazakhstan, where they had to fix their first puncture and

were given beef and onion soup for breakfast. Their journey can be followed on [lowbeam.blogspot.com](http://lowbeam.blogspot.com) – and if, next time you're in the Green Tree, you're stuck behind someone trying to order a pint of Pitchfork in Mongolian, you'll know why.

Andrew Swift



Nicholas Ward and his co-driver line up alongside their Nissan Micra



The sign on the side of the car – guaranteed to cause a few scratched heads in the steppes of Central Asia

# Bath festival time

TALK about being spoilt for choice – two beer festivals in one weekend! And not just any old beer festivals. The Cornish Beer Festival at the **Star** and the Folk Music & Beer Festival at the **Royal Oak** – two of the top events in Bath's beer calendar – both kicked off on 17th July. Any worries that numbers would be down as drinkers were forced to choose between the two venues were quickly dispelled.

The **Star** had one of its best nights ever on the Thursday ("just like New Year's Eve" according to one regular), the **Royal Oak** was packed to the rafters, and trade was buoyant all weekend in both pubs. At the **Star**, the Spingo Special from Blue Anchor ran out on the first night – slaking throats dry from bawling out Cornish ditties – but the pasties, supplemented by home-made stargazey pie, lasted all weekend.

At the **Royal Oak**, a terrific line-up of performers was complemented by a terrific line-up of around 40 beers, including two specially brewed by Blindman's and Downton. It really was a weekend to remember, with over £1,100 raised for this year's charity, Mentoring Plus ([www.mentoringplus.net](http://www.mentoringplus.net)), a remarkable result and one that couldn't have been achieved without a great deal of effort and dedication from everyone involved.

Another Cornish Beer Festival kicks off in Bath on 22nd September – not at the **Star** this time, but on the other side of town, at the **White Horse** in Twerton. It runs until 28th September and details can be found at [www.thewhitehorsebath.com](http://www.thewhitehorsebath.com). It's the first in a series of mini-beer festivals which will cover other counties – Devon and Yorkshire are already being planned.

The **White Horse** now has a guest ale served straight from the barrel. The **Golden Fleece**, at the bottom of the hill (midway between the **White Horse** and the **Royal Oak**) also serves guest beers straight from the barrel, making Twerton something of a mecca for gravity-dispense fans.

Charlie and Amanda Digney are planning a double beer festival for the weekend of 3rd to 5th October at the **Garrick's Head** on the Sawclose in Bath and the **Oakhill Inn**, a few miles north of Shepton Mallet, which they took over earlier this year. As well as 20 real ales and five local ciders, live music, a hog roast and morris dancers are promised. ([www.garrickshheadpub.com](http://www.garrickshheadpub.com))

An Oktoberfest beer festival will be held at the **Raven** in Queen Street in Bath, starting 3rd October. It will feature 30 British beers – ten at any one time – and several ciders. The festival will see the official launch of the **Raven's** new range of bottled beers from around the world. The aim is to feature as many guest bottled beers as possible, and see how many different ones they can get through in a year.

The **Inn at Freshford** is holdomg a beer festival from 29th to 31st August, with 20 real ales and 10 ciders. Entry is £4 to include a souvenir glass and half a pint of beer or cider. ([www.theinnatfreshford.co.uk](http://www.theinnatfreshford.co.uk))

Andrew Swift

# Bath's music pubs

PERHAPS the most welcome bit of news for Bath's drinkers in the past few months – the **Old Farmhouse** on Lansdown Road has reopened. Chris Wetton and her 22-year-old daughter Clare are now firmly at the helm, having taken over in mid-June, and already they've built up a strong local following. As before, music will play an important role, with some of Bath's best bands being signed up to play at what has quickly re-established itself as one of Bath's top music venues. It was John Bradshaw who established it as a music pub – he still lives next door and pops in for the occasional drink and to chat with friends – but, whereas he concentrated on jazz, Chris and Clare are going for a more eclectic mix – jazz, certainly, but with blues, swing, rock and acoustic acts as well.

Anyone who remembers the pub during Brad's day will be relieved to learn that it's still a traditional community pub with a fine array of handpumps – the sort of place where you can choose to listen to the band, stand at the bar, or take yourself off to a quiet corner for a chat. There is food – the chicken wings I saw on a recent visit looked particularly enticing – but it's very much a supporting act. This isn't a gastropub, with tables laid up for prospective diners – the emphasis is on finger

food, with platters to share – the sort of thing to keep hunger at bay while listening to the band or downing a couple of pints. And, on the basis of half a dozen visits, the Wadworth's is in tip-top condition as well.

Before going to the Farmhouse, John Bradshaw ran the **Bell** in Walcot Street. He established that as a music pub as well, a tradition that has since been carried on by Ian Wood. To say it's the top music pub in Bath doesn't really give a fair idea of its reputation; for many people, it's the top music pub in the world! Beer-wise it doesn't often feature in *Pints West* because it doesn't run beer festivals or hold special events – which seems a bit unfair. It has seven regular real ales – Butcombe Blond, Danish Dynamite, Gem, Pitchfork, Otter, Bellringer and Summer Lightning – a pretty impressive list by any standard. Add a couple of guest beers – almost always from within a 100-mile radius of Bath and including some wondrous rarities – a range of ciders and Belgian beers, an astonishing top shelf, probably the best pub garden in the city (with a pizza oven that gets fired up at weekends), and free live music on Monday and Wednesday evenings and Sunday lunchtimes, and you'll see why it's so popular. You can check it out on the web at



The splendid beer garden at the back of the Bell – with one of the last surviving illuminated Courage signs in the city

[www.walcotstreet.com](http://www.walcotstreet.com).

Finally, a relatively new music pub on the scene is the **Curfew**, down by Cleveland Bridge. Since Heidi and Anna took over just over 18 months ago, this Wadworth pub has been more popular than ever. As well as an Irish session on Sundays, there are live bands on Fridays and sometimes on other nights as well. The wood-panelled bar downstairs, with a short flight of steps leading down to a superb snug, is one of the most atmospheric drinking areas in the city, while the newly-refurbished upstairs, with a stunning view eastward down London Road, has a more minimalist feel, and, with its large screen TV, is popular with sports fans. ([www.thecurfew.co.uk](http://www.thecurfew.co.uk))

Andrew Swift

## The Queen's Head at Willsbridge

IN the last *Pints West* I wrote of the then forthcoming re-opening of the Queen's Head at Willsbridge. This was an event that I had very much looked forward to since its closure six months earlier.

But days before the opening (and while *Pints West* was at the printers) the Bristol & District CAMRA Pubs Campaigning Group received reports from angry former pub regulars and local people indicating that the pub had suffered some unauthorized alterations to its interior fixtures and layout. The building carries Grade II listing and as such requires planning consent for works of repair or alteration which would affect the architectural or historic interest of the building. Failure to obtain consent for such works would be a criminal offence.

As well as being a listed building, the pub is listed on CAMRA's National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors – Part One. The criteria for inclusion is as follows:

Part One (189 entries) *includes pubs whose interiors have remained wholly or largely intact since World War Two or, in some exceptional cases, up to 30 years ago.*

Part Two (65 entries) *covers interiors which, though altered to an extent, retain exceptional rooms or features which are of national historic importance. It also includes outstanding pub-type rooms in other kinds of establishment like hotels or station buffets.*

The description for the Queen's Head is as follows:

"17th- to 18th-century building with a stone

porch and three rooms. A tongue and grooved panelled passage runs from the front door to the rear with a hatch on the right with, unusually, two half doors in the lower section. The small public bar on the right has bar back some 100 years old, bar counter possibly 40 years old, old half panelling, fixed seating looks 40 years and an old cast fireplace. On the left behind a part glazed partition wall is a pool room with an ancient stone fireplace and old window seating. The rear room was probably brought into public use in recent years and has another old stone fireplace but the tiled floor, fixed seating and half panelling are difficult to age."

Further information can be found on [www.heritagepubs.org.uk](http://www.heritagepubs.org.uk).

The Conservation Officer at South Gloucestershire Council visited the site and advised the licensee of the procedure that should be followed in the event of alteration to a listed building. By this time alterations had been made and the basic action required was to re-instate the alterations. This had not been done at the time of writing.

I visited the pub in early June and noted a number of changes to the interior had taken place including that of a partition that had been removed in order to position a pool table. Other observers have noted further alterations.

Once alterations have taken place it is difficult to accurately recall what exactly has changed, but fortunately CAMRA's Pub Heritage Group have photographs of the National Inventory pubs' interiors which were used to support the claims of alterations.

The pub owners are entitled to apply

retrospectively for consent to the alterations, and depending upon the decision they will have the right to appeal, so the full process could take some time to conclude. If the decision is that the fixtures and fittings have to be re-instated then problems could result from availability of authentic pieces. This could result in CAMRA's Pub Heritage Group regrading the pub within the National Inventory or removing it from the listing all together – a disaster as it is the only South Gloucestershire pub on the National Inventory!

Clearly there is a requirement for vigilance in the event that it is thought that destruction is planned or is taking place; don't be afraid to inform CAMRA or your local council if you believe a pub is at risk from unauthorised alteration. This pub has suffered alterations to its fabric that have been in place for a considerable number of decades. The gain, if any, of this is likely to be very short term and after the current licensee and customers have moved on, the pub offers less than it had done before this episode of destruction took place.

However, don't be put off visiting this pub if you wish to enjoy the history that it still clearly has. Although alterations have been made, the majority of features of interest remain intact.

If you are a fan of historic pubs then visit the local National Inventory-listed King's Head in Victoria Street, Bristol; Berkeley Arms in Purton (beware of the limited opening times); Tucker's Grave at Faulkland; White Hart at Midsomer Norton; and the Bath trio, the Star, Old Green Tree and the unspoilt 1960's Long Acre Tavern. Keep your eye open – you may discover one that we don't yet know about!

Mike Jackson



# Great Western Brewing

Things at the Great Western Brewery in Hambrook are progressing nicely. Their *Classic Gold* and *Maiden Voyage* are now being brewed regularly with some customers taking it weekly. The possibility of bottling these two beers are now being discussed ready for Christmas.

Another beer was added recently for the late summer, *The Bees Knees*, a 4.2% honey beer that incorporates wild Mexican orange blossom honey, which leaves a nice after-taste but is not sweet. In October *Old Higby* will be available. This will be a stronger, dark beer at about 4.8%.

Brewery founder Kevin Stone reports: "The brewing equipment has performed well with good extracts and consistent quality. Samples of our beers have been tested at the

labs at Bath Ales (thanks Roger and Simon) and Wadworth, with excellent results. Off-sales from the brewery have been selling well and hopefully the shop floor will be finished soon so that we can have an open day (which was originally was planned for June!)."

SP

## Brewdoku winners

The winners of the 'brewdoku' competition in the last Pints West were Bob Coles of Weston-super-Mare, Geoff Cole of Kingswood and Matthew Gale of Clifton, each of whom receives a case of Young's bottle-conditioned beers kindly donated by Well & Young's.

# Bristol Beer Factory news

THE Bristol Beer Factory are currently contract brewing for the London brew pub 'Brew Wharf' whilst their kit is undergoing some modifications.

The Grain Barge held a very successful mini beer festival during the August Bristol Harbour Festival. This included beers from Matthews, Great Western Brewing Co, Wessex, Cheddar Ales, Arbor Ales, Cotswold Spring and of course the Bristol Beer Factory. As well as real ale there was also a stage with some live jazz and blues. The Grain Barge is now looking at stocking a series of guest ales from micro-breweries.

Richard Brooks

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

## Wroughton Vale Festival

Wroughton Vale Rotary Club will be holding their 8th Beer and Cider Festival at Winscombe Cricket Club, just off the A38 near Sidcot, on the evenings of Friday 24th (£2) and Saturday 25th October (£5), and lunchtime on the Sunday (free). There are regular bus services operating stopping at Winscombe the 121 between Bristol and Weston-Super-Mare and the 126 between Wells and Weston-Super-Mare.

Any beer that remains after the festival will be sold off at discounted rates in 5-litre containers.

Tickets may be purchased in advance by post from Wroughton Vale Rotary Beer Festival, Highwater, Norville Lane, Cheddar, BS27 3HJ. Send a stamped addressed envelope and cheque made payable to "Wroughton Vale Rotary Club", to arrive before Tuesday 17th Oct. Any enquiries call Mark on 07702 589617 or email [m.parnell@btconnect.com](mailto:m.parnell@btconnect.com) or directly from Thatcher's Cider Shop, Sandford or Ian Studley Cars, Winscombe.



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**LETTERS:** please email correspondence to:  
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**Published by** the Bristol & District Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale, August 2008 ©  
**Next edition:** November 2008 (probably).

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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).

**Trading Standards Officers:** contact numbers for problems such as consistent short measures, no price lists...

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## Beer festivals

- **Miners Arms, St Werburghs** - Summer Beer Festival, 21st to 25th August.
- **Ubley Parish Hall** - Chew Valley Beer Festival, 12th & 13th September ([www.chewvalleybeerfestival.co.uk](http://www.chewvalleybeerfestival.co.uk)).
- **The Hillgrove, Kingsdown, Bristol** - Organic Festival, 11th to 14th September.
- **Minehead station** - Ninth Somerset Beer Festival (CAMRA), 12th to 14th September.
- **The Organ Inn, Warminster** - Its first beer festival, 12th to 14th September.
- **Beeses Riverside Bar & Tea Rooms** - 12th to 14th September ([www.beeses.co.uk](http://www.beeses.co.uk)).
- **Moreton-in-Marsh** - First North Cotswold Beer Festival (CAMRA), 26th-28th September.
- **Royal Bath & West Showground, Shepton Mallet** - Wessex Beer Festival, 26th & 27th September ([wessexbeerfestival.co.uk](http://wessexbeerfestival.co.uk)).
- **Winscombe Cricket Club** - Wrington Vale Beer Festival, 24th to 26th October.
- **Bag O'Nails, Hotwells** - Beer Festival, 20th to 23rd November.
- **Redcliffe Bay Hall, Portishead** - Fourth Portishead Beer Festival, 28th & 29th November.

## Diary

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

- **Sat 30th August** - Severn Beach train line crawl. Take 12.03 train from Temple Meads.
- **Wed 3rd Sept** - Possible explorer/survey trip, depart Cornubia 6.45pm.
- **Tues 9th Sept** - Pubs Group meeting, Cornubia, 7pm.
- **Wed 10th Sept** - Committee meeting, Cornubia, 8pm.
- **Thurs 11th Sept** - BADRAG gathering at the Cross Hands, Fishponds, 8pm.
- **Fri 12th Sept** - GBG Launch, Seven Stars.
- **Wed 17th Sept** - Explorer/survey trip, depart Cornubia 6.45pm.
- **Thurs 18th Sept** - Pubs Group "Treasure Island pub social". Start at the Kings Head, Victoria Street, Bristol, 6.30pm.
- **Wed 24th Sept** - Branch meeting at the Famous Royal Navy Volunteer, King Street, Bristol, 8pm.
- **Tues 30th Sept** - Explorer/survey trip, depart Cornubia 6.45pm.
- **Fri 3rd & Sat 4th Oct** - LocAle festival/showcase, Commercial Rooms (see back page).
- **Wed 8th Oct** - Committee meeting, Old Fish Market, 8pm.
- **Thurs 9th Oct** - BADRAG meeting, Robert Fitzharding, Bedminster, 8pm. All welcome.
- **Tues 14th Oct** - Explorer/survey trip, depart Cornubia 6.45pm.
- **Wed 22nd Oct** - Branch meeting, Windsor Castle, Weston-super-Mare. Bus will depart Cornubia 7pm. Fare to be confirmed.
- **Thurs 30th Oct** - Explorer/survey trip, depart Cornubia 6.45pm.
- **Tues 11th Nov** - Explorer/survey trip, depart Cornubia 6.45pm.
- **Wed 12th Nov** - Committee meeting, Cornubia 8pm.
- **Thurs 13th Nov** - BADRAG meeting Knights Templar, plus rare ales tutored tasting, 8pm. All welcome.
- **Thurs Nov 20th** - Explorer/survey trip, depart Cornubia 6.45pm.
- **Wed 26th Nov** - Branch meeting, Commercial Rooms, 8pm.
- **Tues 2nd Dec** - Explorer/survey trip, depart Cornubia 6.45pm.
- **Wed 10th Dec** - Committee meeting, Old Fish Market, 8pm.
- **Thurs 11th Dec** - BADRAG meeting, Eldon House (back room), 8pm. All welcome.
- **Fri 12th Dec** - Branch Christmas Social.
- **Thurs 18th Dec** - Explorer/survey trip, depart Cornubia 6.45pm.

## Weston diary

- **Wednesday 17 September** - The Raglan, Upper Church Road. 8.30 onwards.
- **Wednesday 15 October** - Hotwells Crawl. Meet at the Merchants Arms, 7.30.
- **Wednesday 22 October** - Bristol & District Branch Meeting, the Windsor Castle, Upper Bristol Road, Weston-super-Mare. 8.00 start.
- **Wednesday 19 November** - Three-venue town social: Bristol Hotel 8.00, Red Admiral 9.00, the Dragon 10.00.
- **Wednesday 17 December** - 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Seasonal Ales Crawl.

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

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**Editor: Steve Plumridge**

○ Views expressed in Pints West are those of the individual authors and not necessarily supported by CAMRA  
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# LocAle - Local Ale for Local People!

CAMRA "LocAle" is a new initiative that promotes pubs stocking locally brewed real ale. The scheme builds on a growing consumer demand for quality local produce and an increased awareness of 'green' issues. This is your chance to support the local economy, reduce carbon footprint and try the many quality beers that are being produced locally but are too seldom seen in local pubs.

The Bristol & District branch of CAMRA are launching this campaign with a special local real ale festival/showcase at the Commercial Rooms, Corn Street, Bristol. This starts at lunchtime on Friday 3rd October and runs until closing time on Saturday 4th October.



It will feature a range of beers from the dozen breweries that are within approximately 20 miles of Bristol, including some that are being especially brewed for the event. These beers will be on sale on the Friday and Saturday at an excellent promotional price of just £1.50 per pint.

There will be the opportunity to meet local brewers on Friday afternoon and representatives from CAMRA throughout Friday and Saturday to find out more about locally brewed real ale and the LocAle campaign. Everyone is welcome to join in, particularly anyone that can order some local real ale for their pub or club. Please come along and find out more!

Promotional material will be available for venues that can stock local real ale. Remember you can still promote real ale that is brewed locally to you wherever you are located. If you are a licensee that would like to sign up to be involved in the LocAle campaign but you can't make it along for our launch, then please email [camra@camrabristol.org.uk](mailto:camra@camrabristol.org.uk).

Aside from doing your bit for the environment and reducing road congestion and pollution by drinking locally brewed real ale, this is a chance to promote a local industry, our local identity and sample some great local beer.

*Richard Brooks*



Everyone benefits from local pubs stocking locally-brewed real ale...

- Public houses as stocking local real ales can increase pub visits
- Consumers who enjoy greater beer choice and diversity
- Local brewers who gain from increased sales
- The local economy because more money is spent and retained locally
- The environment due to fewer 'beer miles' resulting in less road congestion and pollution
- Tourism due to an increased sense of local identity and pride - let's celebrate what makes our locality different.

## Bath Ales produce their one millionth bottle of beer

BATH Ales recently celebrated the millionth bottle coming off their bottling line. The installation of the state-of-the-art bottling plant, in dedicated new premises just down the road from their main brewery in Warmley, was completed just under a year ago. The equipment for the bottling line was shipped in from as far a field Shanghai and the Czech Republic.

Bath Ales are now bottling most of their beers and are delighted with the results. Craig Lewis, director and head of bottling said: "The quality of our bottled ales has improved. This is mainly due to the various checks the beer now undergoes before it is bottled, which are done in the new lab by the specially appointed Microbiologist, Stuart Tucker."

As cask conditioned ale is still Bath Ales' core business, they have made the bottling line available to other people and are happy to assist breweries nationwide in their ambition to bottle their beers. The lab and biotraceability services will also be offered to those breweries and they would encourage brewers with bottling ambitions to visit on a bottling day.

Bath Ales have produced a detailed bottling information pack, which outlines every step of the bottling process, including all the tests which will be carried out by the biochemist. The information packs have been made available free of charge by contacting the brewery direct.

Distinctive, Diverse and Delicious

Tel. 0117 9474797  
[www.bathales.com](http://www.bathales.com)

Dedicated brewers and bottlers