



AWARD-WINNING



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2003

# PINTS WEST

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

## So long, and thanks for all the beer



We witness a landmark in local brewing as Simon Whitmore, founder of the highly successful Butcombe Brewery, bows out after 25 years, leaving the company in the trusted hands of friend Guy Newell. We wish Simon all the best in his well-earned retirement and look forward to 'more of the same' with Guy.

And it's smiles all round for local brewery Smiles as they celebrate 25 years of brewing at their Colston Yard site, while other local brewers Abbey Ales and Wickwar gather up awards, RCH creates a new range of beers to add to their excellent portfolio, and Bath Ales goes from strength to strength.

*All this and more inside your award-winning Pints West.*



There are about 180 branches of CAMRA nationwide, and about half of those produce a newsletter. The above award recognises the efforts of all who contribute to Pints West.

## NEWSLETTER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

**Overall Winner:  
Pints West,  
Bristol & District**

Pints West has just been declared overall winner in the national CAMRA Newsletter of the Year Awards. Below is what the judges had to say about Pints West.

“Over the years of arranging the judging of CAMRA local newsletters, many have come and gone, some have disappeared only to be resurrected later and a number are now only electronically published. There are however a number that have been consistently published and gradually improving as technology and above all the experience of the editor increases.

“Consistency is one of the main strengths of a publication; it encourages a loyal readership who feel that they are important to the publisher. One newsletter that has always been bubbling under in these awards has been selected this year as the winner. Its improvement has already been recognised, and under an enthusiastic editor it now has a very committed team of contributors, the envy of many others.

“Any publication fails if it is not attractive to the reader. Today’s winner scores with its wide variety of articles, good campaigning, easily read layout, good photographs and above all a feeling that beer is for all people, not just real ale enthusiasts and supporters.

“Today, the newsletter award recognises the hard work put in by branches over the last year and today it goes to a long-standing newsletter of which the Branch and CAMRA nationally should be proud: Pints West from Bristol & District, edited by Steve Plumridge.”

South Cotswold Beer Festival advert

# Butcombe Brewery changes hands

**Butcombe Brewery**, one of the most successful small breweries in the South West, has new owners, following the retirement of its managing director, Simon Whitmore, and his wife, Maureen.

The business, founded 25 years ago by Simon and Maureen, has been bought by Guy Newell, Paul Horsley and family friends.

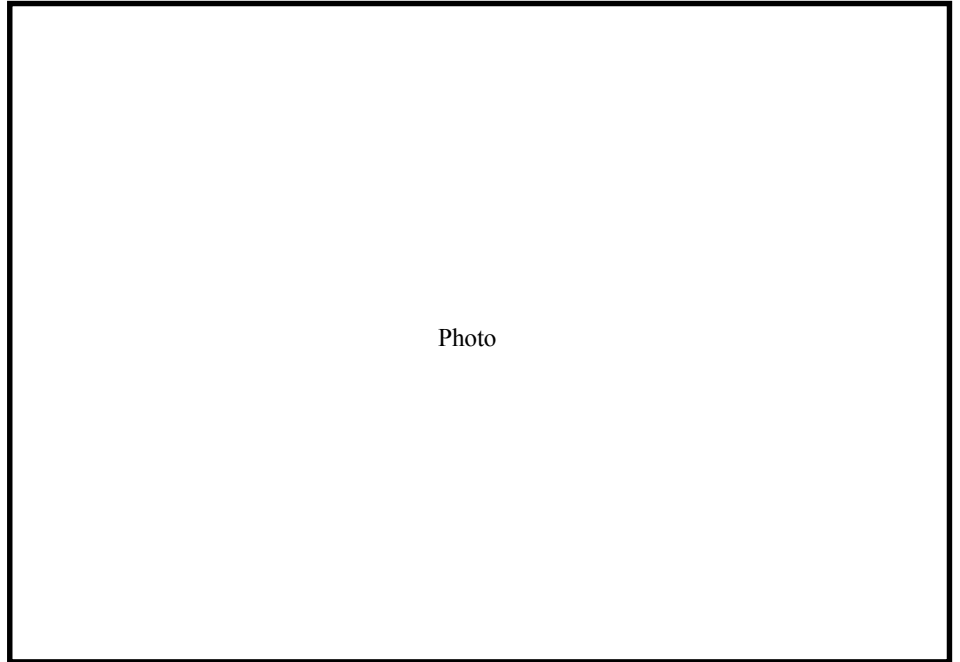
Guy and Paul built up wholesale distributors, The Beer Seller, over a period of 16 years before selling the company to Bulmer's. Guy becomes managing director of Butcombe and Paul non-executive chairman.

The deal with Guy Newell and Paul Horsley also includes the Butcombe estate of six pubs – one in Bristol, The Bell, Stokes Croft, and five in Somerset: The Ring O'Bells, Compton Martin; Swan Inn, Rowberrow; Old Crown, Kelston, near Bath; The Lamb, Axbridge; and the leased Red Tile, Cossington, near Bridgwater.

"There was a lot of interest in buying Butcombe from individuals and both regional and national brewers," said 70-year-old Simon. "But Guy and Paul were the obvious choice because they have tremendous experience of the brewing industry and we were convinced that they would run the brewery not only efficiently but in the same manner as we have done. We have also known them for nearly 20 years."

Simon and Maureen Whitmore are significant shareholders in the new company and are working full-time with Guy and Paul for a month to ensure a smooth transition. Simon will then work one day a week for a year with a particular brief to ensure that the quality of its two brands, Butcombe Bitter and Butcombe Gold, is maintained.

"It is with immense sadness that we are waving the brewery goodbye," said Simon.



Photo

**Simon Whitmore (right) and Guy Newell drink to the future success of Butcombe Brewery.**

*(Photo by Bob Bowen)*

"It is a wrench to leave something you have put your heart and soul into for 25 years. But this is tempered by the fact that we know it is in good hands and we will continue to be associated with it as shareholders."

The brewery's 15 employees, whose loyalty has twice been rewarded with trips to the Munich Beer Festival, are staying on, as are all the staff at the pubs.

Simon Whitmore, formerly managing director of Courage Western and, before that, with Guinness worldwide for many years, set up Butcombe Brewery in old farm buildings at the family home at Butcombe,

near Bristol, in September 1978, using his £24,000 redundancy payment from Courage to convert the buildings.

The company had just 30 accounts, one lorry and one employee at the start. Today, it produces more than 15,000 barrels, or nearly five million pints, of real ale a year, using a small fleet of lorries to deliver direct to 350 outlets within a 50-mile radius of the brewery, beyond which its beer is distributed by recognised whole-salers and pub companies.

For most of its life, Butcombe only produced one beer, the award-winning Butcombe Bitter, which has a dedicated following, particularly in the South West. Butcombe Gold became instantly popular when it was launched four years ago and a lorry load is delivered to the J. D. Wether- spoon pub chain every week.

What has been the secret of Butcombe Brewery's success?

"We have always maintained the quality of the beer and provided excellent service," said Simon. "Also, concentrating on one brand, Butcombe Bitter, for the first 18 years, followed by just one other beer, Butcombe Gold, has enabled us to build up brand loyalty. That is something I learned from Guinness.

"We are so grateful for all the hard work of the staff. We have kept a close relationship with them and we are very proud of the fact that only one brewery employee has ever resigned and that was over 20 years ago. We have thought of our employees as friends and I know Guy and Paul will carry on this tradition.

"In many ways, it's much harder running a small brewery now than when we started. There were fewer than 20 small breweries in those days. Now there are more than 400 and there is so much more competition."

Simon always planned to retire at 70. In addition, he is not seeking re-election to Butcombe Parish Council on 1<sup>st</sup> May. He has served on the council for 20 years and has been chairman for the past 16 years. However, he hopes to continue as South West chairman of the anti-euro pressure group, Business For Sterling.



Bag O'Nails advert

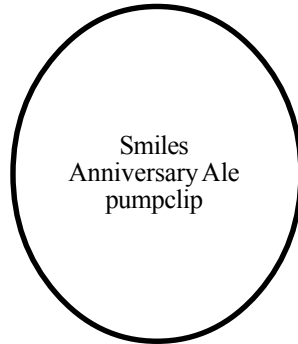
# News from Smiles

On 2nd April Smiles celebrated its 25th birthday with the official launch of Anniversary Ale at a party at the Brewery Tap. Guests included staff past and present, customers, suppliers and other micro-brewers. However, the main guest of the day was John Payne, original owner and founder of Smiles who set up at Colston Yard in April, 1978. John pulled the first pint of Anniversary Ale and launched the celebrations.

Anniversary Ale has been available at the Brewery Tap for 75p a pint for a limited period of time (don't blame us if it's all gone when you read this!).

The current seasonal ale is April Fuel (4.8% ABV). This has the lightness of pale ale and wheat malts and is complimented by the richness of Crystal malt, further supplemented by a lingering bitterness and aroma from a blend of Challenger and Fuggles hops. Other forthcoming favourites will include Mayfly (4.5%) and Zummer Vat (4.0%) in May and June respectively. During the summer, Smiles will be brewing Maiden Leg Over (3.5%) and re-introducing Smiles Golden Brew (3.8%).

During May, June and July, Weatherspoons are also having a series of ale festivals which will include Smiles products amongst other micro-brewers' brands.



Brewery tours continue to start from the Tap almost every night of the week, led by Tony Haynes. Tourists are reaching the highest levels since records were kept.

During March, Tony led a tour from a college at Bristol University. A band of hearty fellows were enjoying their crafted ales in the brewery cellars as usual, when Tony was stopped in his tracks while sampling at the brewery stillage when one gentleman enquired if it would be possible to say some prayers and bless the Smiles Brewery, its staff and indeed its ales. Prayers were duly offered. It was discovered later that these gentlemen were all clerics taking the cloth. The evening finished in fine flourish and the brewery was blessed in its 25th year.

Smiles sees one or two face changes.

Laurie Aldridge, salesman in Gloucestershire, retires at the end of April. The company and customers alike wish him a long and happy retirement. Two new sales executives joined the team in March, being Kevin Derrick and Paul Garrard. Kevin will look after Somerset and Paul takes over from Laurie in Gloucestershire. Andy Higgins moves in as "Mr. Smiles" in central Bristol.

The highly successful 2003 Bristol Beer Festival included a handful of Smiles ales: March Hare, Heritage, Bristol IPA and Old Tosser, as well as a special, pre-launch appearance from the Anniversary Ale.

*Richard Brooks*

Smiles advert

## Top consumer organisation has a woman at the top

PAULA WATERS has just become the first ever female Chairman of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, which has been hailed the most successful consumer organisation in Europe.

Paula, aged 44, has been active in CAMRA since the early 1980s when she first developed a taste for beer.

"When I reached pub-going age in the late seventies my Pomaine and Martini-drinking friends were amused by my preference for Vaux Double Maxim. My taste for decent beers has grown over the years and most of my female friends also drink it now!", said Paula.

"CAMRA's recent research shows that most women don't drink beer. One of my biggest ambitions as Chairman will be to convince them to try it and realise that the diversity of tastes available leaves wine in the shadows."

Paula was born in Seaham, County Durham and is married to Tony, with one child, James, aged five. Paula is a graduate in Textile Science & Technology from the University of Bradford and recently attained a Law Diploma from the University of Wolverhampton. She is currently enjoying her professional career as a Teacher of Design & Technology in Shropshire, where she moved in 1991.

Paula has played many roles in CAMRA since the early 1980s including Chairman of CAMRA Books, Organiser of the Great British Beer Festival, Regional Director for the North West and Vice Chairman of the Campaign since 2000.

Paula said, "I'm very much looking forward to taking the helm at CAMRA. I would like to thank the previous Chairman, Dave Goodwin, for his support and for leaving the Campaign in such great shape. CAMRA is facing many challenges over the coming years including establishing real ale as Britain's favourite pub drink and convincing the Government to act to improve competition and consumer choice in beer and pubs. CAMRA's army of 67,000 members is the voice for British beer drinkers and I am honoured to be their Chairman."

# Cider Sisters

## “Where’s the cider to?”

You could only be in Bristol, and you’d be a fool to be anywhere else and miss the Bristol Beer Festival (as we’ve done the past three years running). But we made up for it this year, and how, with a sneaky Friday lunchtime visit.

Beer festival it may be, but when we heard the words “Where’s the cider to?” from a passer-by, we knew we weren’t alone – in the minority perhaps, but the camaraderie around the cider bar more than made up for our comparatively small numbers.

So, tokens at the ready, we decided to make up for the lost years and work our way through as many ciders and perries as we possibly could in the sadly (or mercifully) limited time allowed. It was great to see a wide selection of previously untried ciders alongside some old favourites, and Richard and Lesly behind the bar were informed and enthusiastic hosts.

We each tried a different half with every token, starting on ciders and moving on to perries, with plenty of debate as to the merits of each with our fellow cider-drinkers (including some friendly and cider-devoted ex-railwaymen, who offered some useful suggestions of cider pubs suitable for ladies, obviously having confused us with someone else).

There’s not enough space to list everything we tried (and as usual our notes appear to have been written in a mysterious code which, several weeks on, we’re unable to crack), so we’ll give you the edited highlights.

To show we’re not completely non-discerning, we’ll start with what we didn’t like. Somewhere out there there’s a very dodgy perry, but it’ll be spared naming and shaming only because we’ve got no idea

now what it was called. No such luck for Oh Sir!, which we thought was a very dry cider and basically not very nice. We also weren’t particularly keen on the Stonehead Strummer, which was a hefty 8% but sadly lacking a certain something.

That certain something turned up later in the shape of Wilkins Medium, which was noted as a surprise and a sensation, very easy to drink with an edge of orangeade, more than making up in excess flavour what we thought was missing in the Strummer.

Early contenders for favourite cider were Heck’s Port Wine of Glastonbury (6.5%), one of the fruitiest we tried, and Naish Early Release, which was slightly sweet and syrupy, almost ice-creamy. Both great ciders, but couldn’t compete with our final choices: Edgar Harding Dry (Erica) and Janet’s Jungle Juice (Freya). The only bad thing about the Edgar Harding is its unavailability (we understand it’s generally brewed for private consumption only), while the Janet’s Jungle Juice deserves its popularity and award-winning status.

Of the perries, our favourites were Oliver’s (Erica) and Rat’s Tail (Freya). The Oliver’s is a true perry, pale and delicious, while the Rat’s Tail was strong and sharp and tasty enough to appeal to a non-perry drinker.

All in all, we had a ball (and we haven’t even mentioned winning an antiquated beer guide in the tombola or finally getting to meet our Ed.) and there’ll be no way we’ll be missing it next year. So if the Council House falls through as a venue, you’ll all be welcome back at ours – with priority to cider drinkers, of course.

**Freya and Erica McLuckie**  
(*Stonehead Strummer was voted by festival-goers as Cider of the Festival. Read more about the festival on page 8. Ed.*)

# Double the pleasure

There’s double the choice for Bass lovers at the Windmill in Portishead.

From a single cask in the cellar, the pipe splits in two to deliver the Bass to both a traditional handpump and a “mirror box” dispense which seems to be unique to our part of the country.

The mirror box can be easily recognised on the bar – it’s a box with a mirror. People unfamiliar with it could be forgiven for thinking it was a device for dispensing some form of fizzy keg beer. On the contrary, its purpose is to deliver the really flat Bass favoured by many drinkers, a genuine real ale presented with no head whatsoever.

The handpump, on the other hand, dispenses the Bass with a reasonable head as with the other real ales.

So there you are – a choice of two from just one cask. This is just one example of the commitment to his customers’ pleasures shown by the manager of the Windmill, John Dempsey.

SP

Hope & Anchor advert

The Bear Inn, Wiveliscombe  
advert

The Dorothy Inn, Weymouth  
advert

# Beer tax rise will hit consumers . . . but do nothing to increase Treasury revenues

BEER Consumer Group, the Campaign for Real Ale, has hit out at the penny increase in excise duty on a pint of beer announced in the recent budget.

Mike Benner, Head of Campaigns and Communications said, "We understand that the Government needed to raise extra cash in this budget, but increasing beer duty is a flawed strategy. As people only have so much cash to spend in pubs and bars, increasing duty reduces average consumption which in turn reduces revenues from beer duty. This increase is a blow for consumers after freezes in the last two budgets indicated a more sensible approach from the Government."

CAMRA has also claimed that increasingly organised gangs of beer smugglers will be overjoyed with the increase.

Mr. Benner said, "High beer duty is the cause of smuggling and the social problems which result from the unregulated and illegal sale of alcohol to children. It also affects pubs and local jobs. Someone with a garage full of cheap low-tax French fizz is unlikely to use their local. The only long-term

solution is to reduce beer duty to a level which knocks the profit out of smuggling. This increase is a slap in the face for Britain's 15 million beer drinkers."

CAMRA claims that a freeze or a small reduction in beer duty would have a positive effect on Government revenues through multiplier effects.

A penny tax increase is likely to add at least two or three pence onto a pint over the bar because of the way pubs set prices. CAMRA is calling on pub owners not to increase bar price by more than the nominal duty increase.

Mike Benner added, "The Government isn't the only one at fault. Recent price rises by brewers have put an inflation-busting five pence extra on many pints. This is sending the wrong message to the Treasury and it is essential that brewers do their best to keep prices down if they want to convince Gordon Brown to reduce beer duty."

CAMRA welcomed the freeze on cider duty which follows a small reduction in last year's budget.

For people who like their facts and figures, the average price of a pint of real ale across the country in July 2002 was £1.92 (taken from CAMRA Pubs Prices survey 2002). The average price of a pint of lager was 19 pence more at £2.11.

Excise duty, in pence per pint of 5 per cent ABV beer, in European countries is show below.

Finland	50.1
Ireland	34.8
UK	33.8
Sweden	28.4
Denmark	16.3
Austria	8.8
Netherlands	7.5
Belgium	7.2
Italy	5.9
Portugal	5.1
Greece	4.9
France	4.5
Germany	3.3
Luxembourg	3.3
Spain	2.9

Star Inn, Bath advert

Abbey Ales Bellringer advert

# If this is bad news...

They're Star brewers, and their ales are a Paragon of virtue.

Jeff Evans meets the man behind Abbey Ales.

His nickname is Bad News, and by his own admission he's been lucky. I'm chatting with Alan Morgan in the Star pub in Bath and we're drinking Bellringer. It's a pale, fruity, hoppy bitter of 4.2 per cent ABV that you could sup all night. The flavours are not so powerful that they shrivel the palate, but neither is it bland. That fifty pubs in a fifteen-mile radius take it regularly supports my first impressions.

Alan's been brewing Bellringer for five years. Well, not Alan personally, he just owns most of the company and, until bringing son Simon into the fold, did most of the selling. No: credit for the beer he gives to his brewer.

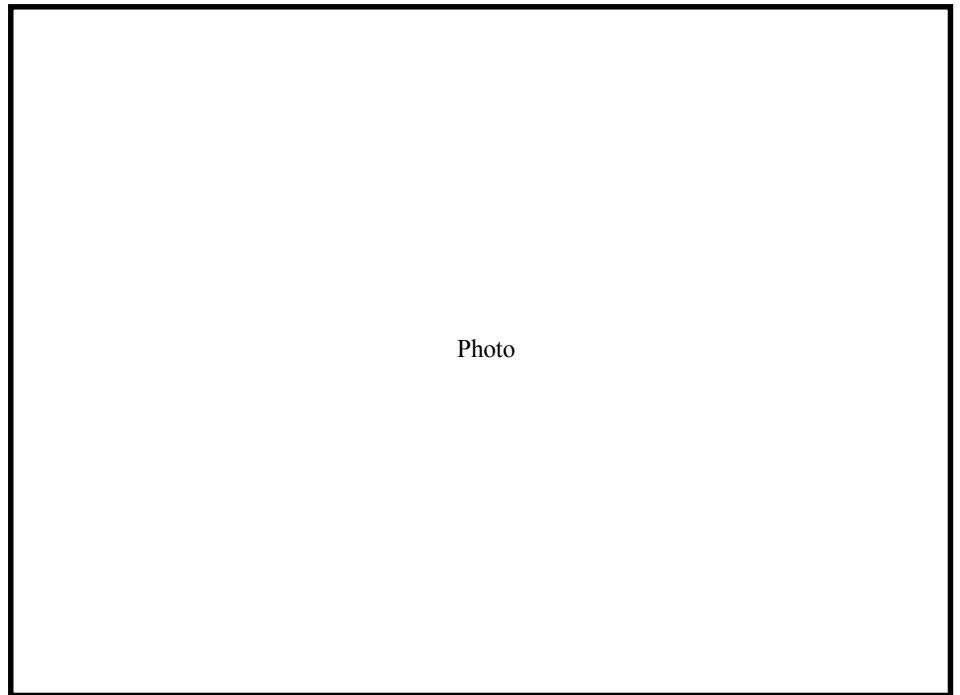
Martin Langham used to brew with Hardington. Alan discovered him by luck, he says, just by asking around a few friends in the industry. This was 1997 and Alan was about to start his own brewery, something he was reluctant to do, even though there was a building available at the back of the Old Farmhouse pub in Bath's Lansdown district.

Some years before, Alan had helped the pub's landlord, John Bradshaw to buy the building and now, seeing Alan out of work, John encouraged him to set up a brewery there. It seemed bad news to Bad News, but, in the absence of other offers, he made the first moves, thinking that getting everything together would take so much time something better would turn up. But, again, he got lucky. Things went more smoothly than planned, equipment was offered by Moles in Melksham and Alan quickly needed a brewer.

"Martin's a perfectionist," says Alan. "As the salesman, I can get the beer into pubs in the first place, but it's because of what Martin does that it stays there."

Bellringer has regularly picked up awards, too, which has underlined Alan's commitment to high standards. "We've deliberately set out to create a quality

Town and Country Harriers advert



Photo

image," he confirms. "We don't give our beer away cheap."

Alan plays on a close affinity with the city of Bath. Abbey Ales is the only brewery in town and, at a risk of collapsing into League of Gentlemen-speak, Morgan declares they do indeed brew local beer for local people. The "wine of Bath", he calls it. The brewery is brewing as near as damn to capacity, which means Bad News has had to break some bad news to drinkers elsewhere in the country.

"Why do we need to go out of Bath?" he says. "We're selling as much as we can produce anyway." Any slack in the system is absorbed by "occasional beers" – a term deliberately chosen to avoid seasonality, as they only pop up when there's room at the brewery. This said, at least one of the occasionals does have a seasonal slant: its not easy to sell the 5 per cent Twelfth Night in summer, even if Chorister, Bath Star (both 4.5 per cent) and Black Friar (5.3 per cent) are more flexible.

One of the regular outlets is the Old Farmhouse at the front of the brewery, albeit a Wadworth pub. The Devizes brewer wisely recognises the value of the brewery connection. The Star, Abbey's only pub of its own, is just down the hill. Here, as we sit in the corner, there's more bad news.

"Bloody marvellous Bass in this pub," the regulars keep chipping in, to wind Alan up. And it is, too. The Star has a tradition of serving the Burton classic out of jugs filled from casks. It's just one of the attractions of this magnificent boozier, which fell into Alan's hands – he declares again – by luck.

Punch Taverns owns the building, but had struggled to run it properly and a succession of managers had passed through

the doors. It offered Alan a 30-year lease. He accepted, on the basis that he wasn't going to pay silly rents and that he could sell Abbey Ales there, too. The deal was done two years ago.

The Star is a CAMRA National Inventory house with lots of rooms, and bare floors. Conversation is easy: while we chat there's no need to battle with a jukebox, even when we wander on to tales about the music business.

Alan tells me that in the '60s he played bass guitar in a number of bands. If you look at the psychedelia collections in your record shop, you may just unearth a track called *Meditations* by one such group, called *Felius Andromeda*. Alan's chart breakthrough never happened, but he did play with some useful musicians, like the late Steve Marriott of the Small Faces, and Pete Banks, an early member of Yes.

Alan moved instead into songwriting, but when big royalty cheques failed to arrive he quit the business, trading his bass for Bass and a sales rep's position. Over 30 years, and he's done his time on the brewery circuit, working also for Sam Smith's, Eldridge Pope, Hall & Woodhouse, Marston's, the Beer Seller, Bunces, Smiles and Moles before being head-hunted by a fruit machine company that doubled his salary but drained him of all enthusiasm to get out of bed.

"The figures were good but the business wasn't the same as brewing, which is very social," he says. In the end he quit, and the invitation to start a brewery proved impossible to decline, as luck would have it. For an industry that wallows in doom and gloom, Bad News was, for once, very welcome.

Jeff Evans

# Beer festival round-up

Throughout the year you can find **CAMRA beer festivals happening all across the country. Rarely does a month go by without a handful of such festivals somewhere or other.**

**In and around the south west region we have a few coming up soon, each offering a large selection of real ales, ciders and often perries.**

At the end of May we have the **St. Ives Beer Festival** down in Cornwall. This event takes place between Friday, 30th May and Sunday, 1st June, opening from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and noon to 3 p.m. on the Sunday (if there is any beer left!). The venue is the Guildhall, Street-an-Pol. On offer alongside the beers and ciders will be hot and cold food, games and live entertainment.

Admission is £2 for CAMRA members, £3 non-members, and the price includes a souvenir festival glass and programme. There will be free re-entry with your festival glass, so if you don't care to stay in the hall all day but wish to stretch your legs for a while around St. Ives there's no problem.

Further information can be had from Brian Gooch on 01566 775773, or by email to [briangooch@btconnect.com](mailto:briangooch@btconnect.com), or from the web site at [www.cornwallcamra.org.uk](http://www.cornwallcamra.org.uk).

July sees the return of the **Devizes Beer Festival**. This is the fifth staging of this popular festival, to be held at the Wharf on Saturday, 5th July between 11:30 a.m. and 11 p.m. The festival will be mainly an out-of-doors, family-orientated event with various entertainments all day, including live music and children's entertainment.

Admission is £5, to include a souvenir glass and programme, and free £1 tokens for CAMRA members. A saving can be made if you buy in advance, with tickets available at £4 each from David Rapley at 9 Walden Lodge Close, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 5BU. Please make cheques payable to "Devizes CAMRA" and enclose a stamped, addressed envelope.

CAMRA members who would like to volunteer to help staff the event would be most welcome – please contact Nicole Powell on 01380 725706 (evenings) or email [celtal@lineone.net.uk](mailto:celtal@lineone.net.uk).

Later in July we have the **27th Cotswold Beer Festival** at Postlip Hall, near Winchcombe, Gloucestershire. This runs from Friday, 25th to Sunday, 27th July. Here you'll be able to enjoy the extensive range of beers and ciders in a beautiful setting. The entrance fee (£5 Friday 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., £4 Saturday noon to 3 p.m., £5 Saturday 6:30 p.m. to 11 p.m.) includes a souvenir pint glass, entertainment, car parking, etc. Admission on the Sunday

(noon to 3 p.m.) will be free. Card-carrying CAMRA members receive complimentary beer/cider/food tokens at each session except Sunday.

This festival is always hugely popular, and tickets are only available in advance by post from Cotswold Beer Festival, PO Box 174, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 2HZ. Cheques should be made payable to "Cotswold Beer Festival", not "CAMRA", and a stamped, addressed envelope is essential. Applications must arrive by Friday, 20th June. Please note that there will be no tickets available on the door.

Of course, it's not just CAMRA that hosts beer festivals. A number of pubs and charitable organisations do too. Some examples of pubs that put on mini-beer festivals, greatly extending their range of beers for one or a few days, are the Lamplighters in Shirehampton, the Bag O'Nails in Hotwells, the Shakespeare in Totterdown, and recently the Windmill in Portishead. Pubs in the Wetherspoon chain also have a number of such events. (Apologies to those pubs I've missed, of which there are probably plenty – keep us informed.)

On Friday 4th (evening) and Saturday 5th July (all day from noon) the Yate and District Rotary Club are holding their eighth beer festival at the Chipping Sodbury Rugby Club, with plenty of beer and entertainment to enjoy. Details of this can be found in their advert at the bottom of page 2, with lots more information available from their web site at [www.bs37.com/beer](http://www.bs37.com/beer).

Another charity event is being organised by the Yeo Valley Lions at Claverham Village Hall, in aid of Children's Hospice South West which is being built near Weston-super-Mare. There should be a wide range of mainly local beers and musical entertainment at each of the five sessions. The festival will run from 11th to 13th July, but I have no further details I can give at the moment, so watch the local press, or you can email Nigel Carson at [n.carson@virgin.net](mailto:n.carson@virgin.net).

Another for the diary is the fifth Ashcott Beer Festival which is held at the home of Moor Brewery at Whitley Farm between 3rd and 6th July. This event is in aid of Ashcott School, Cheeky Chimps Playgroup and Ashcott Playing Fields. There will be a range of micro-brewers' beers, real ciders and live entertainment, with card-carrying CAMRA members receiving £1 off admission. The Weston CAMRA group are arranging a visit on the Friday – check out the Weston diary on page 13 for details.



THE Sixth Bristol Beer Festival took place at the Council House, College Green, between 27th February and 1st March.

It proved to be more popular than ever with Friday evening selling out a month in advance and the other four sessions selling out at least a week before the festival.

Knowing that we had sold out allowed us to offer a wider range of real ales, ciders and perries than in previous years. There was a choice of 92 real ales, 18 ciders and three perries for the visitors to enjoy, and enjoy they did with 10,500 pints being drunk!

The traditional games of shuffleboard and "devil amongst the tailors" were again well supported and so was the tombola which was forced to close early on Saturday evening as few prizes were left.

The votes for the beer and cider of the festival were totalled – this year's Beer of the Festival is Moondance from Triple FFF brewery, and the Cider of the Festival is Stoneheads Strummer.

The contents of the charity box were also counted, and thanks to everyone's generosity £835.40 had been raised to be split equally between the Anthony Clifford Trust and the Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Even though the festival closes on Saturday evening, Sunday is a busy day for the CAMRA volunteers as the hall has to be cleared, the stillage dismantled, and the casks returned. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers involved in all aspects of the festival, from planning and set-up, through working during the festival, to final take-down, all who gave their time freely.

*Phil Brooks*

Having mentioned Guide Dogs for the Blind, people might be interested to know that the charity has joined forces with Warwick-based Cubbington Brewery to launch a beer called Old Warwick. I don't know whether this is available in cask, but it is in bottles. The label features a picture of Warwick, a retired guide dog, and every bottle sold raises 20p for Guide Dogs. It's available from certain supermarkets or by mail order from [warwick@gdba.org.uk](mailto:warwick@gdba.org.uk).



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# Thrills and Spills at the Great British Beer Festival

Great British Beer Festival  
London Olympia  
5th-9th August 2003

**Don't miss out on the best beer festival in the world – make sure you put this year's festival in your diary.**

As well as a huge range of British and international cask and bottled beer, plus real cider and perry, you will find a wide selection of food available throughout the festival. It promises a great festival atmosphere, with plenty to entertain you including pub quizzes, traditional pub games such as skittles, roving entertainers, live music, tombolas and auctions.

There is also a Family Room, though please bear in mind that youngsters under 18 must be supervised by a family member. If you want to find out more about beer you could attend one of our tutored tastings hosted by beer experts which run throughout the festival and cover a number of different beer styles.

## So Much Beer

Where else could you find such a great choice? The Great British Beer Festival has the largest variety of draught beers under one roof in the world. Real ales from some of the smallest microbrewers to some of the most well-known brands in the UK are all on sale throughout the festival. The festival is the place to be if you love beer!

You will be able to sample a huge range of different beer styles. So what could we tempt you with? Do you fancy something dry and refreshing or full and malty? Smooth and chocolaty or fruity and hoppy? Whatever you prefer, you are sure to find the flavour you enjoy, as well as the opportunity to try something different.

There will be around 450 different ales, which are divided into the national and regional bars. Why not go on a tour of Great Britain, all under one roof!

## Delicious Cider and Perry

Lovers of traditional cider and perry – or the curious with little experience of the real thing – will find the Cider & Perry Bar providing a wide selection of drinks that were being quaffed in Britain before hops hopped across from the Low Countries to give us beer as we now know it.

Cider and perry is in danger of being replaced by characterless fizz but don't despair – the real thing is still out there. The delicious produce at the festival Cider &

GBBF poster

Perry Bar is proof that the small producers are right to stick to their belief that quality is most important.

Some of the best traditional cider and perries can be bought at the farm gate – if you can find the farm. With its Cider & Perry Bar, the Great British Beer Festival is the biggest farm gate around!

If you'd like to find out more about cider and perry, talk to the bar staff who care about what they drink and will be happy to help you find something to suit your taste.

## International Beer

So what, you may ask, is CAMRA doing selling foreign beer at the Great British Beer Festival? Well, there are many reasons why it is important to showcase beers from around the world at the Great British Beer Festival and you will find most of them at this year's Bières Sans Frontières bar.

The quality and range of beers from Germany, Belgium, Italy, USA, Czech Republic, Russia, The Netherlands and more will be enough to convince anyone that there's a lot of good beer out there. The growth of beer tourism has meant that an increasing number of the drinking public has been able to extend their drinking experience and at the same time support the indigenous brewing industries.

Bières Sans Frontières has grown in size over the years and has been able to introduce

many new beers to the British market. We were the first to sell cask-conditioned beer from America and Italy. Many of the 'New World' brewers approach brewing with a desire to show innovation and experimentation in brewing. For example you will find the delicate use of unusual herbs and spices, the unusual combinations of flavours, the unfamiliar hops.

## Champion Beer of Britain

Each year the Champion Beer of Britain is judged at the Great British Beer Festival and represents the consumers' choice.

Beers are judged within the following categories: Milds, Bitters, Best Bitters, Strong Bitters, Speciality Beers and Real Ale in a Bottle. The 2002 Champion was Caledonian Deuchars IPA (the first ever Scottish winner).

The 2003 Champion Beer of Britain will be announced on Tuesday, 5th August and should be available throughout the festival.

## Get Tutored

Tutored beer tastings are run throughout the festival. They provide you with the opportunity to taste beer like experts and really appreciate the different tastes and aromas. All tickets are £9 for CAMRA members and £10 for non-members.

This year we are running more tutored beer tastings than ever before, so if you want to improve your beer appreciation skills then you've come to the right place! Tastings this year run from 5th to 8th August and are led by an array of beer experts:

- Tuesday 6.30pm: Czech Beer tasting with Roger Protz hosted by Budweiser Budvar.
- Wednesday 12.30pm: 2003 Champion Beer of Britain tasting with Roger Protz.
- Wednesday 6.30pm: 2003 Champion Beer of Britain tasting with Roger Protz.
- Thursday 12.30pm: Belgian Saison Beer tasting with Tim Webb.
- Thursday 6.30pm: US Craft Beer tasting with Michael Jackson.
- Friday 12.30pm: German Pils tasting with Tom Perera.
- Friday 6.30pm: Kriek tasting with Lorenzo Dabove.

Bookings are now being taken so please contact CAMRA to reserve a ticket for any of the tastings on 01727 867201. Please book early to avoid disappointment as some of these tasting sessions will sell out very quickly.

<b>Tue 5 Aug</b>	<b>5pm-10.30pm</b>	<b>£6 (CAMRA members £5)</b>
<b>Wed 6 Aug</b>	<b>12 noon-10.30pm</b>	<b>£6 (CAMRA members £5)</b>
<b>Thu 7 Aug</b>	<b>12 noon-10.30pm</b>	<b>£6 (CAMRA members £5)</b>
<b>Fri 8 Aug</b>	<b>12 noon-10.30pm</b>	<b>£6 (CAMRA members £5)</b>
<b>Sat 9 Aug</b>	<b>11am-7pm</b>	<b>£5 (CAMRA members £4)</b>

**Season tickets also available for all sessions for £17.50 (CAMRA members £15)**

Tickets available on the door, or book on-line at [www.gbbf.org](http://www.gbbf.org)  
You can also telephone CAMRA during office hours to buy your ticket – 01727 867201

# Nothing hare brained about this little gem

DESPITE its name, Bath Ales is not based in Bath.

The company is run by two former Smiles brewers, Richard Dempster and Roger Spickett-Jones, and it was their original intention to set up a brewpub in Bath. They had a building lined up and registered the company name, but then discovered that the place needed too much refurbishment and were forced to think again.

To get the enterprise off the ground, they decided to share brewing equipment at Henstridge, on the Somerset-Dorset border. This was back in 1995. Henstridge Brewery wasn't using it all the time and it offered an economical way of getting the business off the ground. Although it was always the plan to move back to Bath as soon as suitable premises presented themselves, it never happened and Bath Ales was forced to relocate to a smallholding on the fringes of Bristol in 1999.

As with most micros, the brewery itself is not much to write home about. The vessels are squeezed into a tiny barn and if there was a brewery cat there'd be no room to swing it. At least the countryside around it is majestic.

More impressive is the small chain of pubs. It all started in Kingsdown, Bristol, with the Hare On The Hill, a pub so well refurbished and run that it's already been

local CAMRA Pub Of The Year. Likewise the Hop Pole, the brewery's first pub in Bath. It has since added four more, the latest being the Wellington, a former George's hotel in the Horfield district of Bristol.

The change Bath Ales has brought about here is remarkable. The multi-room concept has been preserved by the clever use of archways to link different areas, which include a no-smoking area once home to a pool table and its groupies. Stripped wood and high ceilings add a down-to-earth but airy atmosphere, with cleanliness and friendliness paramount to attract all sectors of the community.

New etched glass displays the Bath Ales logo of a running hare, which will be instantly recognisable to anyone who has seen *Watership Down* but which was actually based on the style of traditional hill carvings seen here in the West Country.

A year ago, the only real beer on sale at the Wellington was Courage Best, barely ticking over at one cask a week. Now there are three beers from Bath Ales, guests from other small breweries, interesting continental draughts like Budvar and Affligen, and bottled Chimay, Duvel and Erdinger.

Gem is the main Bath Ales brew, a 4.1 per cent ABV beer modelled originally on London Pride but now quite different, if just as drinkable. Challenger hops add fruit and

spice to a sweet malt base. The session beer is Spa, very pale and highly quaffable at 3.7 per cent, with a slightly piney hoppiness (echoes of American pale ales) from First Gold. Stronger and darker is Barnstormer, a 4.5 per cent brew named after Richard and Roger's mate Stuart Barnes, who used to play rugby for England and is now a Sky rugby commentator. Like Barnes himself, it has plenty of body and character but also a dry, blackcurrant finish thanks to the use of Bramling Cross hops. Allied to these regular brews are seasonal treats like Festivity, runner-up in CAMRA's Champion Winter Beer of Britain last year; Rare Hare, a stronger version of Gem with First Gold replacing Challenger; and Spa Extra, which, as its name suggests, is Spa with a lot more kick.

These beers are top notch, just like the pubs Bath owns. When you see one of their smart blue vans darting along the M4 corridor, you can't help thinking the lads have got the professional approach just right. "There's no point in doing this half-heartedly," Richard says. "We knew that if we offered simple quality marketed well we'd have something."

If they keep it up, the hare will run and run.

*Jeff Evans  
Taken from What's Brewing,  
CAMRA's national newspaper*

The Annexe Inn, Bishopston  
advert

The Bell, Kingsdown  
advert

# Latest news from Bath Ales

FOLLOWING a hectic year of expansion the brewery is going through a short period of consolidation.

The brewing team are still working six days a week to keep up with demand, particularly for Gem. The three standard beers are in such demand that its been difficult to fit in brewing runs for the seasonals. However Rare Hare, an out-standing 5.2 per cent strong premium ale, is appearing at a few select locations and the SPA Extra, a 5 per cent version of the session bitter SPA, will be available from the end of May.

It's been alleged that some landlords have squirrelled away a few barrels of the award-winning Festivity in their cellars. As a strong old style rum porter it will get even better over the months so it will be worth keeping a look out for any special occasions at the Wellington Hotel in Horfield.

Hare on the Hill landlord and beer guru, "Genial" John Lansdall, is taking on a wide ranging role to ensure that beer quality stays at its currently high level in the growing number of Bath Ales pubs.

The brewery is once again sponsoring events at this year's Bath Festival which runs from 16<sup>th</sup> May to 1<sup>st</sup> June. Main involvement is with events in Royal Victoria



Park, just over the main road from the Hop Pole. Bath Ales' Richard Dempster recommends looking out for Sierra Maestro, a big Cuban Band as their Latin rhythms will get you dancing to build up a thirst. Further details are available on their website at [www.bathmusicfest.org.uk](http://www.bathmusicfest.org.uk).

Bath Ales has long standing links with the sport of rugby union with tales of the premium dark beer, Barnstormer being named after Bath and England star, Stuart Barnes. Brewery Director, Roger Jones, has set up the Welly Club at the Wellington Hotel to support efforts to keep Bristol Rugby Club at the Memorial Stadium. Whilst this might have something to do with the prodigious quantity of beer drunk by supporters on match days it also reflects the brewery's active support of community issues. There are plans for various events which will be publicised in the Bath Ales pubs.

## Prove that you can organise a p\*\*\* up in a brewery...

The Brewery is located at Webbs Heath, about half way between Bristol and Bath. They run pre-booked guided tours which are a fun way of seeing how top quality real ale is produced with ample opportunity to sample the finished product. Your evening (or afternoon) concludes with a trip back to one of the award winning Bath Ales pubs for more beer and food.

It's a great way for a group of people to socialize and they won't let on that all you did was make one phone call to the brewery, 0117 9527580.

Further information about tours and what's going on at Bath Ales can be obtained from their website, [www.bathales.com](http://www.bathales.com).

*Steve O'Shea*



## A trip to the Barn

IN January we took a bus over the bridge to Glamorgan in an effort to shake off those post Christmas blues. Last summer we had joined up with fellow CAMRA members in mid-Glamorgan for a pub crawl of their "patch", so when we were alerted of a beer festival at the Barn at Mwyndy we jumped at the chance to join with them again.

As its name suggests, the Barn is a pub recently converted from a barn. It is a free house offering good food and a very good range of beer, usually featuring Welsh breweries such as Tomos Watkins.

For the festival, as well as the usual handpumps, a number of beers were served straight from the barrel on an improvised stillage, meaning around ten of the thirty or so beers at the festival could be on at any one time. Although Welsh beers were dominant, there was a good range of beer styles and flavours on offer, including a 10 per cent monster from Bullmastiff Brewery.

The pub is very comfortable, and has numerous nooks and crannies as drinking areas. Being January, the garden was pretty much out of bounds! A feature of Friday evening was a performance of the Llantrisant Welsh male voice choir, which finished the evening off perfectly.

The Barn is easy to find – leave the M4 at Junction 34, take the A4119 and turn left down a lane opposite the Corner Park garage.

*Phil Cummings*

Bath Ales pubs  
advert

## Pub Profile: The Red Lion

*This house will go down as the "home from home". It is almost impossible to ascertain how long the house has been a licensed inn but it is quite clear that ever since the house existed in Caroline Row (the original name for that part of Worrall Road at the Blackboy Hill end) it has been a licensed house.*

*There are no great architectural features about its outside elevation but it is a comfortable house whose customers meet night after night in friendly intercourse and in which there exists that spirit of friendship and good feeling which does so much to add to the sum of human happiness. The food and the beer are always good. The latter, under the expert control of the Licensee, is always in good condition, and it is a house of which everyone connected with it, Landlords, Licensee and Customers, may well feel proud.*

The above is an extract from an article written in 1937 about the Red Lion in Worrall Road, Clifton, close to the Downs. Since 1937 I am sure that, like most public houses, there have been many changes. I remember the Red Lion being a predominately cider house in the recent past. That all changed a few years ago, and, for a relatively short period, the pub came under the control of local pub chain, House of Bellingham.

Since 2001, the pub has been run by Nick Russell. Nick has been in the trade for several years. Before taking over the Lion nearly two years ago, he was the general manager at the Prince of Wales in Westbury-on-Trym and the Cambridge in Redland. Nick was also the joint licensee of the Cambridge.

When the Cambridge was sold to Fuller's Brewery, Nick went back to the Prince of Wales for a while before taking on the Red Lion, his first pub. The pub is owned by Punch Taverns and Nick has a "Vanguard" lease with 17 years to run. Nick had little experience of dealing with real ales in the trade initially and admits that he owes

a lot to Rod Duckett who was with him at the Cambridge.

When Nick took over the Red Lion, the pub only sold one real ale. Although he does not have exact figures, back then it is likely the pub only sold about two to three firkins (a firkin is a nine-gallon container by the way) per week.

The Red Lion now stocks three real ales on a permanent basis – Courage Best, Bass and the locally brewed Bath Spa.

In the two years at the Lion, Nick has developed a loyal following. He is a big personality with a great sense of humour – he must have, as like me, he is a "Gas Head". He is also a huge fan of Rugby Union.

So what about the pub? One of its greatest features is that it is one of those very rare pubs nowadays that has a separate bar and lounge. Yes, in sort of soccer parlance, it is a pub of two halves. The bigger of the two rooms is the bar, a flagstone-floor room that is very popular with the regulars. There is a good ambience here, conversation dominating in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere, and service is always swift. For those big sporting events, a couple of TV screens will feature rugby and soccer matches in the hop-adorned bar.

If you want to get away from the buzz of the bar, pop next door to the wood-panelled and carpeted lounge. This is a room to relax in and have a quiet chat with no TV or music to distract.

This pub has come on so much under the stewardship of Nick. For a pub that was selling a small amount of real ale just two or three years ago, Nick is now selling substantial amounts. Yet another example of how looking after your ales will benefit not only the customer, but the pub business as well (why don't more pubs realise this!?).

This is a drinking pub. The beers are good, you have a choice of rooms, and customers continue to meet night after night in friendly intercourse – not unlike 1937 really!

*Pete Bridle*

## Abbey Ales celebrates another award

ABBEY ALES has been praised at a regional beer festival. Black Friar won a runner-up prize at the Society of Independent Brewers' South West Maltings Beer Festival at Newton Abbot in Devon.

The 5.3 per cent stout brewed to celebrate the brewery's fifth birthday came second in the stouts, porters and old ales category.

This event in Newton Abbot's Tuckers Maltings is one of the few beer festivals that is actually set in an authentic Victorian malthouse. More than 180 beers were on display from the region's 45 or so independent brewers.

Managing director Alan Morgan accepted the award on behalf of brewer Martin Langham and said: "This is a very prestigious award as it is judged by experts from the whole spectrum of the licensed trade. We must be the only brewery to win awards for our beer every year since we started, although up till now it has always been for our 4.2 per cent abv Bellringer."

This is a festival that is now in its eleventh year and it attracts in excess of 3,500 ale lovers, who come from far and wide to satisfy their tastebuds on brews from Guernsey, Helston, Bristol, Swindon and all of the West Country.

Tuckers Maltings is one of only six traditional malthouses remaining in the country where malt is still produced from locally-grown barley.



## Beer, the Blues and Bristol

ANYONE over the age of 50 may just remember the blues boom of the late 1960s to mid-1970s, when Bristol was very much on the blues circuit.

The Dugout on Park Row, the Three Tuns at Hotwells, the Full Moon at Stokes Croft and Bristol's premier blues venue, the Bristol Chinese R'n'B Club every Tuesday at the Corn Exchange – all played home to a "who's who" of British and American blues.

John Mayall, Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac, the Yardbirds, Alex Korner, Graham Bond, and Savoy Brown from Britain, Bo Diddley, Buddy Guy, Howlin' Wolf and

John Lee Hooker from the USA, and many others graced the city.

Great music, pity about the beer! Those were the days of Watney's Red Barrel, Double Diamond and Courage Tavern and plenty of other gassy, tasteless keg beers.

At the present time yet another revival of blues in Britain and Bristol is under way. But this time not only are the artists first rate, but the venues are too, with many selling real ale in excellent condition and with an interesting and varied range of beers.

Many stock local ales from the likes of Smiles, Bath Ales, Wickwar, plus a wide

range of ales from other micro-breweries.

Regular blues venues like the Fleece, Fiddlers, the Prom, Kingsdown Vaults and the Bunch of Grapes (home of the Bristol Blues Club on Tuesday and Thursday) all serve real ale.

Please support these live music venues, after all when "you wake up in the morning, your woman done gone and left you", a drink to drown your sorrows is essential. Make sure it's real ale in one of Bristol's blues pubs.

*Ray Holmes*

# WATERING HOLES IN THE DESERT

## News from Weston-super-Mare

### Weston Whispers (pub/beer news)

THE local RCH brewery is producing a new beer every month this year with a “steam” theme. The up-coming line-up is:

April – Steam Showers,  
May – Steam Pole,  
June – Steam Flames,  
July – Steam Special  
August – Steam Festival.

So far, each of the monthly specials has appeared in **Off The Rails**.

Members of our valiant Pints West distribution team have had a few pleasant experiences whilst doing their rounds. **The Cabot Bar** continues to get good reviews. It recently had Charles Wells Banana Bread Beer. This one has been commented on in previous Pints Wests and not everyone is keen on having a banana aftertaste. However, others like it a lot and it won “Beer of the Festival” at last year’s London Drinker Beer Festival. Also mentioned in dispatches was the high quality of the Bass at the **Claremont Vaults**, the Wadworth Henry’s IPA at **The Major From Glengarry** (at a very reasonable £1.70) and the Badger Sussex Bitter at **The Nightjar**.

Fans of the excellent Nethergate brewery in Suffolk were delighted to see a new beer from the brewery – Dr. John’s Panacea – at the **Queen’s Arms**, Bleadon.

The Worthington 1744, produced by the Coors conglomerate, has received very mixed reviews from local drinkers. Com-

ments have ranged from “excellent” to “awful rubbish” and all points in between. So far it seems to mainly be making inroads on the club circuit, with appearances at the **49 Club** and **Century Club** in Worle and no doubt others.

**Weston-super-Mare Cricket Club** in Devonshire Road has confirmed that it is happy to allow CAMRA members admittance to the club. You may be asked to show your membership card. Beers available are Butcombe Bitter, Fuller’s London Pride and an occasional guest beer. Well worth a visit.

**The Woolpack** in Shepherds Way, St. Georges (left turn about quarter of a mile before the motorway if heading out of Weston) has been getting lots of positive reviews of late. On occasion there has been a fantastic line-up of beers. One such occasion saw the excellent PG Steam from our local RCH brewery in Hewish joined by two Champion Beers of Britain – the current Champion, Caledonian Deuchars IPA, and Taylor’s Landlord. On another occasion, the wonderful Pitchfork and the rarely seen but sublime Firebox, both from RCH, were featured along with Butty Bach from the Wye Valley Brewery of Herefordshire. The pub’s strategy of supporting local breweries, whilst slipping in the odd classic from far-flung parts of the UK, provides a heady mix for even the most discerning ale drinker. Most important of all, all of the beers

sampled on recent visits have been in excellent condition. **The branch will be having a social at The Woolpack on 16 July.** The pub is easily reached from Weston town centre, as bus route X1 stops about 100 meters away. If you haven’t been before, come and try it!

*Tim Nickolls*

## WsM Diary

**Non-members welcome at all events**

**Wednesday 7 May** – Minibus outing, visiting 4 or 5 rural pubs. Tickets £6. Minibus leaves Off The Rails at 7.45.

**Wednesday 21 May** – Two-pub town social. 8.30 The Bristol Hotel (for short meeting). 9.45 Off The Rails.

**Wednesday 18 June** – Bristol City Centre crawl. Itinerary to be confirmed. See local press or contact Tim Nickolls on 01934 628996 nearer the time.

**Friday 4 July** – Ashcott Beer Festival. This event is held at Whitley Farm, Ashcott, home of the Moor Beer Company. An excellent range of beers in wonderful surroundings. Minibus leaves Off The Rails at 7.15, cost £6. Advance booking necessary.

**Wednesday 16 July** – The Woolpack, St. Georges, 8.30 onwards. Bus X1 from town stops within 100 meters of the pub.

**Wed 20 August** – Winscombe. Visiting Winscombe Cricket Club and The Winscombe Club. Service bus from town at 7.35. Bus back leaves Winscombe at 10.45.

## Contacts

Tim Nickolls - 01934 628996 (eves)  
Rich Neale - 01934 429808 (eves)

Perhaps if we volunteer ourselves  
for the Pints West distribution team  
we’ll have better luck tracking down  
that beer



## A Round with Robin continued ... part 5

I NOTE that the last issue of Pints West had me writing about the Monmouth rebellion and the conception of RCH Pitchfork. This reminds me that in the period leading up to the turn of this century, the Chalice Morris Men danced at three Sealed Knot battles. They were “the Battle of Uphill”, “the Battle of Weston Moor”, and “the Battle of Langport”. It has to be said that the Sealed Knot have a good eye for real ale, and at the beer tent in every case the ale was of the finest quality. At the Weston Moor battle, suitably held on the old airfield, the beer was from the Marlow Rebellion brewery, whilst at the Langport Battle, the beer came from the now defunct Bridgewater Brewing Company (BBC).

Sometime in the 1980s both the Royal Clarence Hotel at Burnham on Sea and the George Inn at Middlezoy were having regular beer festivals. The former had theirs in the ballroom of the hotel, usually twice a year, and about 30 ales to choose from, with the usual five or six in the bar as well. They were very well run and all praise to Paul Davey and Graham Dunbaven and their staff for them. The George Inn’s festival appeared to run under the auspices of Cotleigh Brewery, and although the beers were excellent (as the beer always is at the George), with the cramped conditions it often meant that the beers were served from three different places in the pub. Other good

small beer festivals I went to were at Horfield and Easton in Bristol, and recently Weston had a beer and music festival on the beach lawns that promised much but regrettably only had 14 real ales.

I really cannot remember when Wetherspoons started, but I do remember a trip to London and finding a super Hogshead pub at the bottom of Ludwell Hill, The King Lud. Not only did it have a selection of real ales on the handpumps, but also had six ales on gravity dispense, and all were at reasonable prices (for London). Also in London the first Firkin pub started at Borough Market, and it wasn’t long before Bristol had one too, the Fleece & Firkin in St. Thomas Street. As most of you probably know, the Firkin pubs all had their own microbrewery on the premises.

This leads me to mention another pub that has its own brewery. Sadly there were none in Weston, but further afield was (and still is) the superb Beer Engine at Newton St. Cyres, just west of Exeter. Piston Bitter and other railway titles for beer, as well as good food and a beer garden, and occasional live music, make this a pub to be visited. Try a detour there on your way to the next Maltings Festival at Newton Abbot.

I have to say at the conclusion of this article that I think the state of ale in the UK

is probably better now than it’s ever been, but we mustn’t become complacent about it. We should encourage our local pub landlords, and managers and Wetherspoons, etc., and not be over critical of service as long as the beer is of good quality. There have been so many times in the past when I’ve been to a pub and been given beer of doubtful quality by staff who do not care, or by landlords with long faces who give short measures to increase their profit, that any improvement on that has to be applauded. We can sometimes make too much, I think, of inclusion in the Good Beer Guide. It is only a means to an end, and I have to admit that I use my GBG only after I’ve been to a pub.

In the last issue I noted many good pubs in the area, and to finish this article I’d like to name some of my favourite beers. Everybody’s taste is different, thank God, or else we’d all be drinking Fosters! It’s easy to say what my top ten beers are: **Hopback Summer Lightning, Bath Ales Gem, RCH Pitchfork, Bass** (especially on gravity like you get at the Swan With Two Necks in Bristol), **Adnam’s Regatta, Oakhill Yeoman Ale, Fuller’s London Pride, Kimberley Classic, Hook Norton Old Hooky,** and **Timothy Taylor Landlord.**

The rest is not, as they say, history, but lies in the future. Cheers!

*Robin E Wild*

Hop Back Brewery and  
Coronation, Southville advert

Moles advert

# Eating (and drinking) in Weston . . .

## 1: The Britannia

THIS is the first of a new regular column in which I will be seeking to offer people a steer on finding that rarity these days – a pub where you can get a good quality meal at an attractive price, accompanied by a decent pint of ale. Before you ask, all visits have been anonymous – there have been no “free lunches” or extra helpings.

The first pub to be featured is The Britannia. The Britannia is tucked away down an alleyway between The London Inn and The Playhouse on the High Street. It is a one-room pub, with a drinking area and an area set aside for people eating. There is a patio outside which is very pleasant on a nice, sunny day away from the bustle of the nearby shops. It is a basic, unpretentious pub attracting a wide variety of customers. Landlord Mark Scotford is also Head of Kitchen.

The main attraction at The Britannia for me is the food. There is a wide range of snacks and meals available and the prices are very reasonable. Obviously price is not everything (no-one wants rubbish, however cheap it is) and the strength of The Britannia

is that you always feel you have had good value for your money. Sandwiches run from £1.65 to £2.05, jacket potatoes from £1.95 to £3.45 and ploughmans start at £3.05. All these compare very favourably with what you would find in many rural pubs, where you could stick an extra £2 on the prices of the above – the aim in many of these places is seemingly to attract a few, very wealthy customers. No wonder so many are empty.

In terms of hot meals, there is a wide choice to suit all tastes – pies, curry, chilli, etc. Highlights include roast lunches at £3.50, half a chicken at £3.25 and an 8 ounce gammon steak at £4.25. My personal favourite is their three lamb chops plus four veg, accompanied by an excellent drop of gravy for £3.95. There are also four vegetarian options at £4.25 and three different children’s meals at £1.75.

The beers that are usually available are either Smiles Best (if you are lucky) or Courage Best.

Food is available from 12 to 3 and 6 to 9 Mondays to Saturdays and 12 to 3 on Sundays.

*Tim Nickolls*

## Poetry Corner

Arriving by train in Weston-super-Mare  
The Off The Rails beer is beyond  
compare  
And The Dragon right by the High Street  
Is a JD Wetherspoon’s hard to beat

The White Hart may be tucked away  
But there at skittles you can play  
If more studious, theatrical or arty  
The Regency may better suit your party

In other parts of town, The Waverley  
And Ancaster your local taste may be  
Even the Balmoral if loud music you like  
Though some singers should go on strike

The Nut Tree of all in Worle is the best  
With food that will pass your sternest test  
The Lamb Inn right on Worle High Street  
Being for those who prefer the Irish to  
meet

Also out of town is the St. Georges  
Woolpack Inn  
In fair Uphill you have The Ship and  
Dolphin  
And Bleadon’s Queens Arms you will  
remember  
If of a Morris Dancing side you are a  
member

*Dr. John (aged 47 and 3/4)*

Wadworth JCB advert

The Windmill Inn, Portishead  
advert

## Weston in Winter – a socials review

A COUPLE of days after the Solstice, a good time was had by all at the Branch Christmas Social at **Off The Rails**. Thus, it seemed the ideal place to start the New Year.

With a warming, dark Smiles Holly Hops at 5 per cent ABV and an equally fine Moles Best (4.5 per cent) inside us, we piled into a lightly snow-dusted minibus *en route* to northern climes in the guise of the **Windmill Inn** in Portishead. There, the snow deepened, crisped and evened as we slid into what used to be the 19<sup>th</sup> at a par-77 (I need a lot more than that) golf course, after being, briefly, partly a real windmill and later the Hole in One. Inside were memories of Smiles what was, and a book collection including Oscar Wilde and Jeffrey Archer, which could prove useful if you had to lag the pipes. Equally useful in such a case would have been the creamy and well-kept guest Molegrip (4.3 per cent), less so the RCH Pitchfork (4.3 per cent) but this was also a really good drink, as was the beautifully light Butcombe Gold (4.7 per cent). The Bass (4.4 per cent) and Courage Best (4 per cent) completed the excellent selection in a most hospitable hostelry charging £1.90 or £2.20.

Having already braved the coastal hills with their 30 m.p.h. uphill speed limits, we next crawled over to the **Blue Flame Inn** on

the outskirts of Nailsea. There were only two cars in the car park and one cyclist fitting his skis but this is one worth seeking out – especially on the Thursday lunchtime pie day. We were equally content with more Smiles memorabilia, the open fires and the RCH East Street Cream, the best all night and well worth the £2.25. The Bass was served as above at 20p less, the same price as the Fuller's London Pride. A really atmospheric pub with an outside ladies' loo that is well worth the visit in snow or shine.

The nearby **Ring O'Bells'** ancient ambience was somewhat marred on this occasion by an apparently diminished range of ales. To an oldie, it was like the fairer sex, the guest ales board offering Marston's Pedigree (4.5 per cent), Young's Special (4.6 per cent), Wickwar Brand Oak Bitter (4.0 per cent), Woodforde Wherry Bitter (3.8 per cent), Burton Bridge Festival Ale (5.5 per cent) and Hampshire Good King Censlas (5.0 per cent), but delivering only Courage Best, Spitfire and a good Bass straight from the barrel. I have yet to go back "soon" for the promised O'Hanlon's Red Ale (4.5 per cent), Black Dog Rhatas (4.6 per cent), Nethergate Umbel Ale (3.8 per cent) or Goose Eye Pommies Revenge (5.2 per cent).

As time was getting on, we sped over to

**The Full Quart** at Hewish, where the huge train spotters' car park was packed with four cars. This is a grand family roadhouse with open fires, a fine selection of bottles old and new, N.E. railway clock no. 138 and other interesting things such as Butcombe Bitter, Otter Ale and Bass. It has a Share Certificate for the Associated Gold Mines of British Colombia and Guiria Ltd., which seem a bit far apart if they are the ones I know.

Our final port of call, the **Woolpack Inn** at St. Georges, was a 17<sup>th</sup> century coaching house on the old Bristol to West Country road. My interest in similarly named hostelries is concerned with turning

to the wall as the gentlemen go by but this one claims only to have been a wool packing station baling local wool for t'mills in t'North. It is now a very well run and accommodating house with equal appeal for those who use Weston as a dormitory, those who visit less than once a day and those who actually live here. But not for those with muddy boots. On offer were a very good Palmer's Traditional Best Bitter (4.2 per cent), an equally well-kept Old Speckled Hen (5.2 per cent), Oakhill Best Bitter (4.0 per cent) and Courage Best. An inn well worth visiting but stopping on the way into Weston will probably mean the tide has gone out by the time you finally reach the seafront, not that that in itself is unusual. On a later visit, it had four other excellent ales, including Deuchars IPA (3.8 per cent) and Timothy Taylor Landlord (4.3 per cent).

The next venture by the local branch was by big green bus to the **Nut Tree** in Worle where a kindly mine host admits us on Saturdays to write purple prose such as the present and eat some of the best food around for lunch. This time it was for two special guests – a fruity Cairngorm Tomintoul Wildcat Scottish Ale (5.9 per cent) with a good finish at £2.20 and the Palmer's Traditional Best through-and-through bitter IPA (4.2 per cent) at £2.10. The future promised St. Austell Tribute (4.2 per cent) to keep the Courage Best Bitter company. The past was more tragic in Ebdon Road in the early hours of June 28 1942 when a German bomb fell and the bombers machine-gunned the residents, leaving a bullet hole in the Somerset C.C. signpost that still stands opposite the Nut Tree, 18 miles from Bristol.

The **Lamb Inn** on Worle High Street was next, to sample a rather thin Butcombe Bitter (4.0 per cent) at £1.85. The house specialities are of stouter stuff such as a Guinness that, with the extensive themed wall displays, could easily be mistaken for the real thing, a Mackeson, Thatchers at £1.50 and free snuff. Not to be further tempted from the straight and narrow, it was on to the **Century Club** for Coors Worthington 1744 (4.4 per cent), which at £1.50 in the Century Club can replace Draught Bass any time for my money. It was in brilliant condition, smooth on the way down and with a beautiful bite at the end. The Butcombe Bitter was a bit better than elsewhere at £1.50.

A large crowd gathered another winter's evening at the **White Hart**, Palmer Row in Weston to witness the televised embarrassment of skill-less souls such as myself showing their ability to steer a ball through serried ranks of skittles without harming ne'er one. It is most unfair that there is no award for repeating this difficult feat on

Adnams advert



## A tour of Exeter's historic streets and inns

numerous occasions, the prize going to one who achieves no more than the much easier knocking down of a single skittle on a number of occasions. Life is so unfair. We were treated to Hopback Crop Circle (4.2 per cent) and Archers Special Bitter (4.3 per cent).

As the Equinox hove into view, it was big green bus time again for another fine visit to Banwell. The bus subsidised by Weston taxpayers that had not turned up for the Wrington Vale Rotary Club Beer Festival held in Winscombe arrived empty this time and dropped us conveniently outside the **Whistling Duck**, a good place to stop on Carnival Saturday if you are in a car. The Greene King Abbot Ale (5 per cent) was a clear, nutty bitter with a sweet aftertaste. The Adnam's Broadside (4.7 per cent) was a fruity bitter with a full finish but it seemed their session Bitter (3.7 per cent) had blotted its copybook. The Bass was nice and tasty. As well as crib and table skittles league teams and a somewhat different public bar, there is a fine selection of empties, including a French Fischer swingtop and a German Vamp 5 per cent screwtop can.

At a pub down by the riverside the beers did little to inspire, and so it was on to the **Bell Inn** in The Square, which offers "A Warm Welcome" but which was pleasantly cool. Here, the aim is to most attentively please and the clean, clear Flowers Original session Bitter that had just finished as we arrived was changed quicker than a set of F1 tyres, although copious quantities were discarded to ensure that the first pint got off the grid without a hitch and had a fabulous finish. The Greene King Old Speckled Hen (5.2 per cent) was smooth as silk with a gently fruity finish. There were also Bass and Spitfire and Otter Bitter (3.7 per cent) had just swum out on the last tide. The best table skittles pub of the night, its refurbishment is putting this one well on the road to recovery and it is a good one to visit if you get stuck in a Banwell traffic jam. Only beer lorries, CAMRA members' cars and local residents should be allowed in our villages.

It was no surprise when, at the end of the evening, we went back to the Whistling Duck before catching the big green bus home.

Altogether, a Weston Winter that was well worthwhile.

*Dr. John*



ON a late autumnal afternoon, I left St. David's Station heading for the nearby **Great Western Hotel**. Passing through the lobby into the main bar, I was warmly greeted by the sight of eight handpumps, displaying beers from all over the West Country and one or two from further afield.

I chose my first ale, which was Headstrong from Blackawton, a Cornish brewery. This was rich, dark and superb. It was followed by halves of Scatter Rock's Valley Stone, a Dartmoor beer and O'Hanlon's Goodwill, another Devonian beer.

The Loco Bar, which is down some steps, is aptly named as the walls are covered with great pictures of steam locomotives. This is a wonderful place to relax with a salad and a few ales selected from the bar. Children are welcome in the main bar.

Just across the road from the Great Western stands **The Jolly Porter**, a multi-roomed pub. This establishment offers less ales (four on the day I visited), but what it lost in quantity, it gained in quality. I tried Sharps Resolve, a golden brown Cornish beer and the old faithful PG Steam from RCH brewery. There is also a superb games room on the premises, as well as a dining room/family room.

To reach my third pub, **The Well House**, you can either catch the train to Exeter Central or, more interestingly, stroll (or rather climb) St. David's Hill. Upon crossing the Iron Bridge, constructed in 1834, look right down towards the Exe. The City Wall can be glimpsed and directly below this Roman Wall are the Catacombs (19th century burial vaults). When the weather turns misty it reminds me of a Hammer horror movie.

Continuing up North Street, passing the more modern Guildhall Shopping Centre, you finally reach the top of the stoop, when the twin towers of the cathedral appear. Turn left into the High Street – the 13th century Guildhall building and several Tudor-style shops are great to browse upon.

Reaching St. Martins Lane, turn left down this narrow alleyway, passing the famous Ship Inn. A noble, wooden-beamed building but a range of ales offering no surprises. Turn right into the Cathedral Yard and shortly the Well House is reached. This is a real ale oasis in the city centre which is sadly full of tacky "theme

pubs" and "alcopop" bars (reminds me of Bristol city centre!).

I needed refreshment, fast, after that long walk so I ordered a Branscombe Vale Hells Belles, another dark beer from Devonshire. I sat by the window, which overlooked the cathedral. The front of the building was beautifully lit up by floodlights in the early dusk of the evening. Palmer's 2000 was also a fine caramel flavour beer, from Dorset, as was the Figgy's Brew, a Skinner's beer from Cornwall.

Reluctantly, I left my chair and made my way down Fore Street, passing the charming medieval Tucker's Hall. Continue until Tudor Street is reached, down a flight of steps. A beautifully restored building appears, appropriately named Tudor House. Upon reaching Bonhay Road, turn right through the historic district of Exe Island. After a few minutes a former paper mill comes into view. It is now a tastefully converted St. Austell Brewery pub called **The Mill On The Exe**. As the bar area and restaurant were rather busy, I took my half of Cockle Rooster, a mild of distinction, to the garden by the weir. Also on tap were the fruity IPA and the HSD, a hoppy bitter.

Crossing the weir, via the Millennium Footbridge, I made my way down to my last port of call – **The Welcome Inn** at Haven Banks. This inn is reached by following the river down to the lovely quayside, passing the formidable Custom House (circa late 17th century), with its cannons as guards. Cross over the lock-gates and shortly the quaint two-hundred-year-old inn is reached. Passing through the door is like going back in time, with the dimmed gaslights, the flagstones and the walls and ceiling liberally covered with river/canal artefacts such as oars, rudders, nets and wheels. I was greeted by a truly lovely white-haired lady, who proceeded to serve me a wonderful glass of Stonehenge's Pigswill (a Hampshire beer). I sat by the roaring fireside – a great way to finish my Exeter tour.

*Stuart F Jennings*

Take Stock  
advert

# Island in the sea

By your Nailsea correspondent  
Laurie Gibney

## REAL ALE is alive and kicking in Nailsea and District.

Bernadette O'Reilly, the landlady of the **Moorend Spout**, tells me that they are now dispensing more real ale than keg beers including lager. Their line up includes Bass, Butcombe Bitter, Courage Best and a guest. Also, that Innspired regional managers are working hard to get Smiles Best re-listed. At the time of a recent visit the guest was Bishop's Tipple at 5.2 per cent ABV. Worthington Cask had recently sold out in three days and Butcombe Gold is a regular guest.

Just up the road at the **White Lion**, Richard Kefford dispenses Butcombe Bitter and Courage Best and now also dispenses CAMRA membership literature and Pints West magazines.

The **Ring O'Bells** recently had Bass served straight from the barrel in the cellar adjacent to the bar, also Courage Best, Ringwood Best Bitter and Smiles Best. In the cellar awaiting their turn on the two guest pumps were Caledonian Deuchars IPA, Barnsley Blackheart, Marston's Pedigree, and Shepherd Neame Spitfire.

The members-only **Mizzymead Club** has Butcombe Bitter, Courage Best and a guest. At the time of writing it was Smiles

March Hare, but the guest changes twice a week.

Across town, the **Sawyers Arms** dispenses Courage Best, Smiles Best and on a recent visit Adnam's Broadside was also on handpump.

The **Old Barn** at Wraxall is still awaiting the first pints from the planned **Tickenham Brewery** and offers gravity-fed Bass, Bath Ales Barnstormer, Moles Bitter, Moles Molenium, and a mystery bitter "Landlord's / Landlady's Choice".

The **Old Farmhouse** is a Hall & Woodhouse pub with food and on handpump Badger Best and Tanglefoot, and King & Barnes Sussex Ale – the same line up as the **Regent** in Hill Road, Clevedon.

While in Clevedon, the **Campbells Landing** has discontinued having a guest beer and supports Courage Best, Fuller's London Pride and Greene King Old Speckled Hen. Greene King beers are on sale at their two restaurant pubs, the **Moon & Sixpence** and the **Little Harp**, both on the sea front. The **Royal Oak**, a traditional local in Copse Road, dispenses Butcombe Bitter and Bass by handpump as well as Thatcher's Traditional Cider.

Returning toward Nailsea, a call was made at the **Star** at Tickenham – a 'must

visit' for discerning diners as well as drinkers. Beside an extensive food menu making it primarily a food pub, it supports five real ales which comprise about 50 per cent of all their beer sales. They are Bass, Courage Best, Greene King Old Speckled Hen, Marston's Pedigree and Smiles Best.

And finally the **Courtyard** in the centre of Nailsea quenches the thirst with an excellent Marston's Pedigree and a smooth "VAT 69" whisky while stocks last.

A Pints West distribution trip took the Nailsea team to the **Blue Flame** with its gravity-fed Bass and Fuller's London Pride on the evening visited. **Claverham Village Hall** has a bar open to the public serving Butcombe Bitter and a guest ale. The **Prince of Orange** in Yatton High Street dispenses Bass, Courage Best, Greene King Old Speckled Hen and a guest. Again in Yatton, the **Market** near the railway station boasts Ansell's Mild (a favourite of mine), Bass, Butcombe Bitter, Butcombe Gold and Usher's Best.

The **Black Horse** at Clapton in Gordano has gravity-fed Courage Best, Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Smiles Best, and on handpump Bass, Webster's Bitter and Thatcher's Traditional Cider.

Bunch of Grapes, Bristol  
advert

# Visiting the Old Market area again ...

**Two groups of people took a stroll around some of the pubs of the Old Market area of Bristol recently – and liked what they found...**

IT'S always good to have several pubs you can form into a pub crawl, and therefore it's pleasing to report that Old Market, which in times past has been *the* area for real ale in Bristol, seems to be on the way up again after a rough patch during which some of its pubs have been closed.

A good place to start a crawl of the Old Market area from the centre is the **Printers Devil**, which lies in the shadow of the Evening Post building. A small, friendly place, serving a good pint of Butcombe and Bass, with the omnipresent Courage Best lurking in the background.

Walking up to Old Market Street you have a choice of the **Stag & Hounds** on the south side of the road, and the **Punchbowl** directly opposite on the north side. The Punchbowl caters very much for the lunchtime crowd, and serves a good pint of Marston's Pedigree and Butcombe amongst others. Don't get caught out (as some of our group was!) by the 8 p.m. closing time. At the Stag & Hounds you may find beers from regional breweries such as Greene King and Wadworth, or more locally Wickwar. Both pubs fall into the category of solid, traditional style pubs. It's worth checking the opening hours of these pubs if you're planning on a weekend visit, as most of their business is generated in the week due to their closeness to the city location.

A short way up the road from the Stag & Hounds is the aptly named **Long Bar**,

much discussed in these pages in recent editions. Although Courage Best is the only real ale, the excellent Thatcher's and Cheddar Valley traditional ciders are served at the splendid price of just £1.20 per pint. We found the Long Bar to be relaxed, friendly, comfortable, full of character (and characters) and well worth a visit.

On the corner of West Street the **Palace Hotel**, aka the **Gin Palace**, has been a feature of Old Market for a long time. It's been suggested that it was built as the station buffet for the Great Western railway terminus, but Brunel had a different idea where to finish his railway! This may explain the steeply sloping floor in the bar! (Ask the bar staff to explain.) The pub had a sympathetic refurbishment several years ago, but has been re-invigorated by a change of ownership. Now in the hands of the same team who run the excellent Bridge Inn in Passage Street, there are usually two or more real ales available, often but not exclusively from Bath Ales. Look out for the popular music quizzes here.

Moving into West Street you will find, set back from the road on the left, the **Old Castle Green**, which may find itself returning to its original name of the **Plume of Feathers** in the future. This pub used to have a reputation as being great for food (particularly its curries) as well as beer but fell on hard times. Happily, it has recently become the third pub of Wickwar Brewery's burgeoning pub estate. Typically, as well as three Wickwar beers, there will be a guest beer available too.

Our last stop was the **Swan With Two Necks** in Little Ann Street. Far more comfortably furnished than in the past, Bass straight from the barrel is a feature here, together with Thatcher's cider. The pub was closed for some while recently, so it's good to see it open once more and we wish them success.

Altogether, an interesting ranges of pubs and beers, and well worth a visit. There are good bus links back to the Centre or to Lawrence Hill.

*Phil Cummings*

## ... and again

ENCOURAGED by recent news that three much loved pubs in the Old Market area had been reopened, a group of real ale fans checked out all three one Friday evening in March.

First port of call was the **Old Castle Green** in Gloucester Lane, now owned by Wickwar Brewery. Tastefully refurbished and looking warm and welcoming, the Wickwar range was available along with a guest beer, Brewer's Gold from Crouch Vale. Our chosen beers were found to be in excellent condition.

Sadly, our arrival doubled the number of customers. This pub needs and warrants your support given its sensible prices (BOB £1.20 per pint) and excellent range of beers.

Next stop was the **Swan With Two Necks**, recently reopened after more than a year closed. It looked much bigger than before, but is still intimate and cosy. Again we doubled the customer base and tried Pulling Power, a beer we think may be a house beer from the Elite Pub Group (any information on this beer would be useful). Also available was Bass on gravity and Worthington 1744. Pulling Power is an acquired taste being very bitter with a strong citrus aftertaste.

Our final stop was the **Palace Hotel**, better known as the **Gin Palace**, and now stocking a range of beers from Bath Ales. Our arrival on the night coincided with the leaving of a stag party. Retreating to the snug/lounge bar we sampled Barnstormer and Gem. Both were in excellent condition and we spent the rest of the evening sampling more of Bath Ales' range.

The Gin Palace is worth a visit if just to 'walk up' its steeply sloping bar floor and admire its architecture.

The reopening of these three pubs in the Old Market area is much welcomed, giving lovers of real ale added reason to visit the area.

*Ray Holmes*

Swan With Two Necks,  
St. Judes advert

## Wickwar gathers awards

Wickwar Brewery's Station Porter (6.1 per cent abv) has received a gold award at the recent Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) beer festival competition held at the Dragon Inn, Worcestershire. Mr. Perrett's Traditional Stout (5.9 per cent abv) was awarded runner-up in its class, and in another class Station Porter collected runner-up as well. So it turned out to be a pretty good award-winning day for Wickwar.

Station Porter is a dark, powerful, warming porter, reminiscent of an old English ale. Introduced into Wickwar's

portfolio in the early nineties, Station Porter was the result of months of research into old English porters, stouts and ales. It was originally produced for drinking in the winter months and could only be found in cask form. Due to its popularity, Station Porter is now produced all year round, both in casks and in bottles. The bottled version now has a collection of no less than six awards to its name.

Bottles are available direct from the brewery, or orders can be made from their on-line shop at [www.wickwar.com](http://www.wickwar.com).

# Old Inns of Bristol

A COLLEAGUE has lent me a fascinating book published in 1943 entitled *Old Inns of Bristol*, written by C.F.W. Denning. Denning was the architect of several notable Bristol buildings in the inter-war years including the elephant house at the Zoo.

Many of the old pubs he mentions are still with us today, albeit in some cases much altered. There are numerous drawings of exteriors and of interior details by the author and it is in my opinion, a book well worth searching out, though long out of print.

The book concentrates on the best of Bristol's pubs left standing after the 1940 blitz and there are old favourites which are still recognisable including the Cornubia, Hatchet, Nova Scotia, Ostrich and the Stag and Hounds.

Sadly there are some pubs he mentions that are now in much distressed conditions such as the Rummer or much changed such as the Greyhound in Broadmead.

Spurred on by Denning's book and also by another, *Bristol Inns and Ale Houses in the Mid-Eighteenth Century* published by the City of Bristol in 1979, I have enjoyed visiting some of the old pubs and have taken photos to compare with the 1943 drawings.

The names of some modern pubs seem quite fanciful, but among the many Crowns, Ships, Roses and Red Lions the 1979 book lists former pubs with such gems as: The Three Hour Delivery, The Tippling Philosopher, The Double Headed Cat and The Leg of Mutton and Cauliflower. All these are from the central area in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The relatively small area of the inner city and docks must have catered for a very large and thriving drinking community. Appar-

ently there were 37 pubs in Marsh Street alone, mostly catering for the "Irish Trade".

Many pubs in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century are listed as being the location for impromptu

inquests, several on unfortunate people who had drowned in the docks, perhaps I wonder, having been ejected from said pub just before.

## Who remembers the Old Arm Chair?

A few older residents of Redcliffe certainly will. It is still standing as a private residence on the corner of Albert Place and Guinea Street, almost opposite the Golden Guinea pub. As shown in the drawing, the tavern sign was a wooden armchair at the first floor level of the curved frontage.

The sign and the front door are now gone but in the 1940s the pub was thriving with this most unusual, perhaps unique name and with an adjacent off-licence and general store.



## A smart hostel

There is an interesting and prominent white building on the Clifton side of Hotwells Road, just to the left of the ramp which takes the Brunel Way over the Cumberland Basin flyover. The Stork Hotel, which is now Stork House, is now being used as a hostel.

The building was erected in 1718, perhaps as a private house as the Hotwells did not reach their heyday until the 1760s. During 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the last century the Stork was a well-known landmark for dock workers, passengers who were to embark on ships from the landing stage nearby and for visitors to the Hotwells Spa.





*The Coach and Horses*

## Still trading and long gone

The Seven Stars off St. Thomas Street has little changed on the outside apart from the addition of graffiti and a plaque describing the pub's slave trade connections, but around the corner at the Victoria Street end the building that was the Coach and Horses is still one of

the finest 17<sup>th</sup> century survivals in the area.

Originally a row of private dwellings, the Coach was trading from some time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century until after the Second World War. It is now offices with shops to the left.



*The Seven Stars*



## Bristol's Lost Pubs

My quest for information has also found me the excellent web site at [www.bristolslostpubs.co.uk](http://www.bristolslostpubs.co.uk) which has a gallery of photographs as well as comprehensive lists.

The web site author, Kevin Brice, is anxious to hear from people who may have further information that he can use to update the information.

There is a useful message board where several people have asked for and received further information.

*John Phillips*



## READERS' LETTERS

## FROTH OFF!



Your chance to let off steam.

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))

Steve,

Picked up a copy of Pints West, during an enjoyable week in Bath. Sorry, but my memory fails me as to exactly where I obtained it. Enjoyed the read and it certainly helped me to plan my drinking excursions.

Particularly enjoyed the wonderful Star Inn and Old Green Tree in Bath as well as a number of Bristol pubs including the Bridge Inn and Kings Head.

Could I, through your newsletter, say a big thank you to Martin at Abbey Ales and Craig at Bath Ales for their time and hospitality during prearranged trips to the respective breweries.

I also had a very pleasant lunchtime with Alan Morgan of Abbey Ales, in the Star Inn. What a wonderful way to spend a couple of hours, drinking Bellringer in a superb old pub and discussing beer. Marvellous.

Best wishes,  
John Bell,  
Secretary, Bradford CAMRA.

Steve,

Further to your request for pubs in the Blagdon area, may I humbly put forward my pub, the New Inn in Church Street.

We serve Butcombe Bitter, 6X and Henry's I.P.A. all year round with two other guest ales in the summer. In the winter we have Old Timer from November to January.

In the summer you can sit in our garden overlooking Blagdon Lake and raise a glass or two to the Butcombe Brewery which can be seen on a clear day.

Regards,  
Pat McCann,  
New Inn,  
Church Street, Blagdon BS40 7SB.  
(Indeed a great pub. Ed.)

Dear Steve,

I am prompted to write this letter after reading the article 'Gloucester Road Crawl Part 2' by Pete Bridle. I have in fact been

# Enterprising listings

REGULAR readers will remember that in Pints West 56 we published excerpts from an open letter written by the former licensee of The Bell at Banwell.

The letter was highly critical of Enterprise Inns, the company which owns the pub.

Subsequently, we received a letter from a Mr. Guy Arnold, of Enterprise Inns. Mr. Arnold said, amongst other things, that:

○ "The pub market has been transformed over recent years, and companies like Enterprise have invested time and considerable sums of money to maintain and develop a national estate of pubs, whereas previous owners have been actively selling off their pub estates."

○ "Enterprise (and presumably any Pub Company or Brewer) is only as good as the quality of the people running its pubs, so it's patent rubbish to suggest we purposely try to get rid of good people!"

○ "Enterprise is driven by a philosophy called 'Retailers in Partnership', which means that everything we do needs to be aligned to the needs and benefit of the good licensee, whilst appreciating we also need to make a return on our asset."

○ "We have always had a policy of trying to make as wide a portfolio of cask beers as possible available to our pubs. This includes regional and local brands – certainly a lot more than most brewers! Last year, over 300 different cask ales were sold in Enterprise pubs, and sales are growing rapidly in our estate – in complete contrast to the rest of the cask ale market."

○ "We don't charge listing fees to small brewers."

Following further correspondence with Mr. Arnold, he sent us a number of lists. The first showed 286 different "specialist ales" (i.e. real ales) featured by his company between April 2001 and January 2003 – and a very impressive list it was too. Many favourite microbrewers' products were there, including dark beers, strong beers and weird and wonderful ones.

The second list showed specialist

"Alehouse" style pubs in Enterprise Inns' South West region. There were 24 on this list, including one in Bristol – the Portwall Tavern (facing St. Mary Redcliffe), of which more below. Also listed was the Bell in Banwell (Pints Wests passim), and four pubs in Wiltshire. The remainder were spread across Dorset, Devon, Somerset and Cornwall.

A third list showed Enterprise Inns (South West region) pubs which participate in the Cask Marque scheme, a beer quality initiative supported by CAMRA. There were six pubs on this list, the nearest two to Bristol being at Burnham on Sea (the Somerset and Dorset, 1 High Street) and Chippenham (the Three Crowns at Brinksworth).

The final list showed cask ales available from the company's Shirehampton depot. These include a mild (from Cains of Liverpool); twenty-one standard bitters, of which only half come from national companies; twenty premium cask ales; and four traditional draught ciders. Again, this seems to be a creditable range of regularly available beers, although only eight come from the numerous microbreweries who provide most of the innovation in British brewing these days, and the range of strengths and styles is limited.

Pints West would like to encourage companies like Enterprise Inns to continue making the widest possible range of traditional ales and ciders available to their licensees. We would also like to see all of these drinks on sale in our area. Surely Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare between them can support more than one "Alehouse" style pub; and surely also there are pubs whose trade would support an occasional more exotic ale from a less well-known and publicised source? Please let us know of any examples of adventurous Enterprise Inns licensees, and please encourage your local one to consider trying some more of the diverse range of choice that seems to be on offer!

(If people wish to see the full lists we were given they should be able to find them on our web site [www.camrabristol.org.uk](http://www.camrabristol.org.uk).)

Norman Spalding

licensee of 'The Lamps' for twelve and a half years and I like to think that our inclusion in this year's Good Beer Guide was down to my own *and* my members of staff's hard work, not just two individual members, namely Paul and Dee Tanner. (*I'm sure mention of them wasn't meant to imply that any less credit for the success of the Lamplighters is due to your own sterling efforts.* Ed.)

That said I do think CAMRA must be congratulated in finding this 'gem' of a pub but I wonder how much longer it will take to find other 'gems' in the deep and dark

suburbs of our great city!

Furthermore, whose decision was it to include our entry in the Guide under Gloucestershire as Shirehampton is as much part of Bristol as, say, Westbury-on-Trym?

Yours faithfully,  
Leon Franklin,  
The Lamplighters,  
Shirehampton,  
Bristol.

P.S. I do think Pints West is a wonderful read – keep up the good work for the cause. *Any other 'gems' of pubs out there that we in CAMRA may have missed? Do say.* Ed.

# Prize crossword - win stuff!

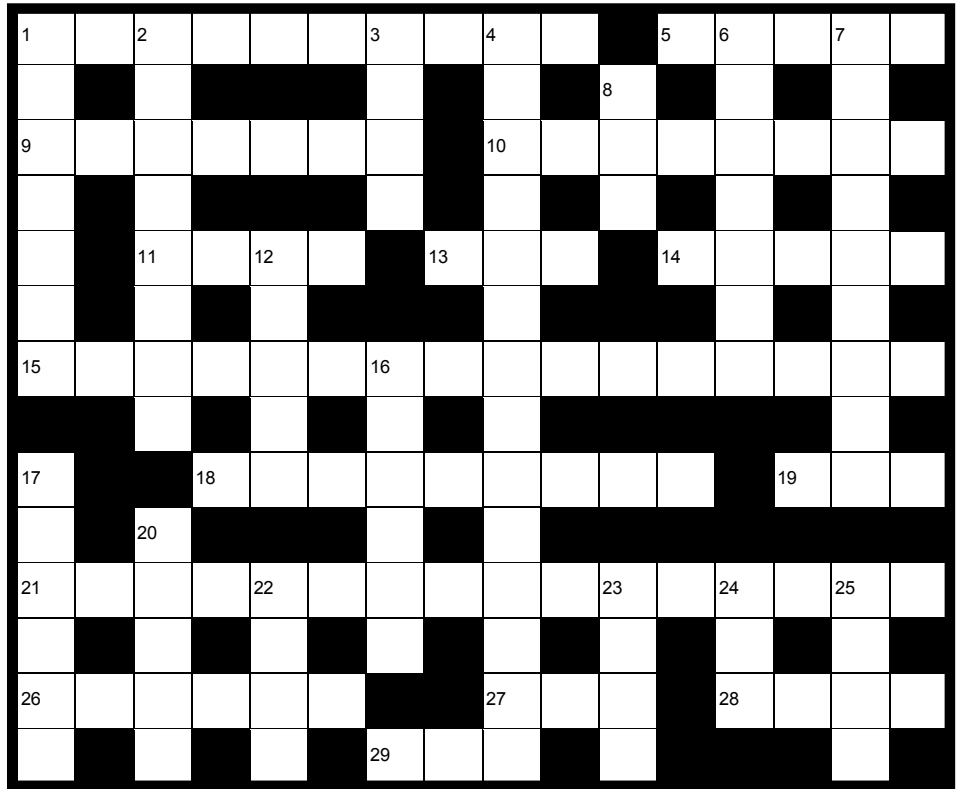
by Phil Brooks

## Across

1. A pub in Dean Lane, Southville, this is Hopback brewery's only pub in Bristol. (10)  
 5. At 4.5% ABV what is the full-bodied premium bitter from Mallard brewery? (5)  
 9. Sharing the same name as the road it is in, this Bedminster community pub can be found between St. Johns Lane and Windmill Hill. (7)  
 10. What is the 3.6% ABV wheat beer from Tigertops brewery of Wakefield? (4,4)  
 11. See 20.  
 13. Many a CAMRA member can be found propping this up. (3)  
 14. Name the 4.5% ABV beer brewed by Blewitts brewery of Kingsbridge, Devon. (5)  
 15. Pub in Little Ann Street, Bristol. (4,4,3,5)  
 18. Voted the Beer Of The Festival at this year's Bristol Beerfest was the 4.2% Moondance. Which brewery makes it? (6,1,1,1)  
 19. Another name for a pub or tavern. (3)  
 21. Filton brewery that brews Cabot at 3.6% ABV and Brunel at 4% ABV. (7,7,2)  
 26,29. Pub in Ashton, Frampton Cotterell or Windmill Hill. (6,3)  
 27. What is the warrior beer brewed at 4.5% ABV by Pitfield brewery of London? (3)  
 28,3. Popular cartoonist that writes Kegbuster for CAMRA's national newspaper, What's Brewing. (4,4)  
 29. See 26.

## Down

1. Which brewery can be found at the White Hart Inn, Caerphilly? (7)  
 2. This pub can be found in the Mall, Clifton. (5,3)  
 3. See 28.  
 4. The latest pub to be acquired by Wickwar brewery. It can be found in Gloucester Lane, Old Market. (3,6,5)  
 6. What beer is brewed by Leadmill brewery of Ripley Derbyshire at OG 1049 and 5.1% ABV? (7)  
 7. An 18 gallon cask. (9)  
 8. What is the 3.8% ABV light session beer from Warcop brewery of Wentlodge, South Wales? (3)  
 12. Which Burton on Trent brewery brews Walsitch Wobbler at 5.2% ABV? (5)  
 16. At OG 1041 and ABV 4.2% this beer is brewed by Trueman's of Burton on Trent. (6)  
 17. Halifax brewery that brews Luddite at 5% ABV and Stabbers at 5.2% ABV. (6)  
 20,11. At OG 1043 and 4.3% ABV this beer is brewed by Fyfe Brewery of Kirkcaldy. (5,4)  
 22. Three of these can be found in St. Georges Rd., Hotwells. (4)  
 23. Shropshire brewery that brews Parish bitter at 4% ABV and Wonderful at 4.8% ABV. (4)  
 24. This mild is occasionally brewed by the Bass Museum brewery from Burton on Trent at 3.9% ABV. (3)  
 25. What do Bitter End brewery of Cockermouth brew "out" at 4.2% ABV. (4)



**Send your solution to the editor (address on back page) by 1st July 2003.**

**The first correct entry drawn at random after that date wins £25 to spend on merchandise from the CAMRA Shop — make your choice on-line or have a list and order form posted to you.**

## Last issue's answers:

Across: 4 Captain Cook. 7 Skye. 8 Pub. 10 Dunn Plowman. 12 Lyte. 13 Castle. 14 Abbey. 16 Raven. 18 Stag. 19 Isle of.

Down: 1 Dark Ruby. 2 Gin Palace. 3 Bob. 5 The Annexe. 6 CHB. 9 Fail. 11 Wassail. 12 Lia. 15 Bat. 17 Eco.

The winner was **Alan Reid** from Musselburgh who received a copy of the new edition of the Good Beer Guide to Belgium & Holand by Tim Webb and a cuddly CAMRA teddy.

Wickwar's pubs advert

# Norwich – beer capital of Britain?

**Have you ever wondered which town or city in Britain has the best selection of pubs for real ale enthusiasts?**

If you asked around you would probably receive a wide variety of answers, depending on people's experiences and exactly what they looked for in a pub. Among beer drinking circles for some time many people, myself included, acknowledged Derby as being the unofficial "beer capital" of Britain. Many of us made fairly frequent "pilgrimages" to the East Midlands city to sample the huge range of ales sold in the unusually large number of freehouses in or near the city centre.

The revolution there was started by the reopening of the Brunswick Inn, quickly followed by the Alexandria Inn next door, in the late 1970s. The two pubs built up a huge range of beers, always changing constantly, and the Brunswick even opened its own in-house brewery. Other pubs quickly followed suit and it was soon possible to find well over 100 different beers on offer in town on any given night.

A recent visit confirmed that all the pubs are still going, but to me the range and overall quality seemed noticeably less than I remembered – and the pubs seemed much quieter too. Was it an off weekend or has Derby's bubble burst?

During the 1980s and 1990s (when I had the considerable benefit of free rail travel!) I visited most of the large cities in Britain and took the chance to check out

the local beer scene. I have very fond memories of some – including Liverpool (a huge number of great and very characterful pubs), York (ditto) and Edinburgh (surprisingly good for beer). Honourable mentions, too, to Sheffield, Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds – and our own beloved Bristol.

Many current beer "tickers" are often heard to sing the praises of Sheffield based apparently on the fact that several pubs have chosen to supply a constant stream of "new" beers to attract the ticking trade. Nothing wrong with that, but I look for far more than that – ideally a nice cross section of pubs, supplying classic beers, local independent brews and new, interesting guest beers.

Approaching my birthday this year, I recalled spending a very pleasant weekend 12 years ago in Norwich and thought it would be nice to go back. A quick look at the 2003 Good Beer Guide and it was settled. After persuading seven friends and my wife to join me, we set off.

The great problem with Norwich is that it is geographically out on a limb, especially if you live in Bristol. Anyway, the five-hour journey proved well worth it. There are 16 pubs currently featured in the Guide and we set out to try and visit them all.

Our hotel turned out to be almost directly opposite the **Coach and Horses**, a large pub on Thorpe Road which is the home of the Chalk Hill brewery – five of

their beers were available plus Courage Best as a guest (is there really no escape?). This was a cracking start to the trip and made a convenient meeting point for us.

Just about 100 yards away is the **Rosary Tavern** in Rosary Road, a much smaller pub with a distinct community feel, and a cracking range of about seven beers – including several changing guests. A little birdie had told us about another pub just around the corner – the **Jubilee** – which also stocked about eight beers in seemingly good condition and including guests. A pub that would be likely to walk into the Guide in most areas, but Norwich is so well off for pubs that it probably couldn't be accommodated due to lack of spare spaces from their allocated slots.

We had also heard a whisper about a beer festival being held at the **Trafford Arms** in Grove Road, about a mile away, so grabbed a couple of taxis and investigated. True enough, a marquee at the back of the pub contained about 30 casks of beer, to nicely supplement the dozen or so in the bar. It was noticeable that this pub was very busy with a genuine mix of all ages, including a lot of young people (but none of the behaviour often associated with them). It was here that I sampled my idea of the best beer of the weekend – Icen Brewery's Men Of Norfolk – a beautiful black beer of 6.2 per cent ABV (expect to see it at the next

Euro-beer advert

RCH advert



Bristol beer festival!).

A short walk took us to the **Kings Arms** on Hall Road – yet another free house with around 12 or 14 constantly changing beers, and a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. No food, but OK to bring in from nearby takeaways.

Having to drag ourselves away, we crossed the road to the **Billy Bluelight** directly opposite – a Woodforde’s brewery pub selling six or seven of their beers and the odd guest too. This one is more of an unspoilt old local with no music, machines, etc., and a very friendly welcome. I had my first (but not last) pint of Woodforde’s Wherry of the weekend – still as brilliant as when it won Champion Beer of Britain a few years ago.

We had spent late Friday afternoon and all evening in six cracking pubs selling about 60 different beers between them (plus the festival at the Trafford) and nobody had tried any beer that was in less than tip-top condition. Yet we were less than halfway round our planned pub-crawl!

Saturday morning, a cooked breakfast and loads of black coffee later, it was time to face up to what we knew would be the

highlight of the trip. A scuttle across to the other side of the centre brought us to the **Fat Cat** in West End Street – truly one of the most outstanding pubs that can ever have existed. Situated on a corner in a maze of residential streets, it looks much like any other pub, but inside is beer nirvana!

No less than 26 beers are on at a time including about half of them straight from the cask. Many local beers feature, as do all beer styles, plus real cider and draught Belgian and German beers too. The regular beers include such delights as Hopback Summer Lightning and Taylor’s Landlord. Food is restricted to very reasonably priced rolls and the world’s greatest pork pies, which is fine with me. This was CAMRA National Pub Of The Year in 1998, and it is obvious why. We felt unable to leave for about two and a half hours.

We had seen in the local equivalent of Pints West, “Norfolk Nips”, that two local CAMRA members had opened their own pub – the **Nelson**, 200 yards from the Fat Cat – so decided to check it out too. It was another nice, friendly pub selling four beers, including two guests, and they were pleased to see us.

Good luck chaps, but getting in the guide in Norwich will be a challenge for sure!

Quickly back to the Fat Cat for a sneaky one then onwards, this time to the **Alexandra** in Stafford Street in another nearby residential street, owned by Chalk Hill brewery and serving their beers and guests. Very much a friendly local, with a community feel.

Onwards again to the **St. Andrews Tavern**, just off the city centre, and half a dozen beers including Adnams and Fullers. We wanted to see the England v France

rugby game so made our way quickly on to the **Ribs Of Beef** in Wensum Street, by the river in the centre. An excellent pub with six regular plus six guest beers and food served all afternoon. So concluded an afternoon at least as enjoyable as the previous evening.

The evening commenced at the **Wig and Pen**, in St. Martins at Palace Plain, yet another great free house selling a quantity of regular and guest beers. A stiff ten-minute (much needed!) walk away was the **Ketts Tavern** in Ketts Hill, with another huge range of beers plus an arrangement for Indian meals to be ordered at the bar and brought in from a local takeaway. The pub then provides cutlery and crockery. What a great idea and should set a trend. We took full advantage before a walk around the ring road to the **Iron Duke** (also known as the Wellington or similar) in Waterloo Road. We were getting understandably jaded by now but remember it offering a very large selection of real ales and draught Belgian beer to boot. Two streets away in Magdalen Road came our final point of call, the **Whalebone**, selling eight more guest beers – not that I can recall what they were!

Alas, we just failed in our mission to try all the Beer Guide pubs, not getting to the **Champion**, the **Beehive** or the **Coachmakers**, but we did do two extra ones! What we did find was the biggest selection of free houses, selling the biggest range of beers that any of us have come across in one city. All of this in the nicest and friendliest pubs as well.

Apparently Norwich was totally dominated by Watneys “brewery” up until it got out of brewing and pub ownership in the late 1980s and sold all of its pubs. Most ended up in the hands of caring and enterprising individuals and evolved into today’s superb examples of what can be achieved when free to express themselves and react to customer demand.

Sadly, it will not happen elsewhere as pub companies (which didn’t exist back then) tend to snap up all available pubs in job lots from each other, and brewers too, and foist their chosen “guest” beers on you, like it or not.

We did not experience a single pint in poor condition all weekend, and if Norwich is not the beer capital of Britain, I would like to know what is! (Suggestions, with reasons, to the editor?)

Vince Murray

Wickwar BOB advert

# Real ale in Helsinki

TOURISTS are, I'm told, beginning to discover the delights of Helsinki as a new 'city break' destination, and perhaps also Finland in general.

If any Pints West readers are considering heading up to Scandinavia for their holidays and are thinking of including a visit to Finland, they might like a few details about the beer situation.

I moved from Bristol to Helsinki ten years ago and have watched the beer scene steadily improve over the years. It was pretty dire back then but has improved a lot, especially on the real ale front.

Nestling up against the Russian border so far from the UK, Finland is not perhaps the most likely export destination for cask-conditioned ale. But, thanks to a small and growing group of dedicated Finnish publicans, the real ale message has been steadily spreading since the mid-1990s. So much so that Finland now has a dozen pubs serving draught real ale, more than half of which are in the capital, Helsinki. There are also three beer festivals featuring imported cask ale.

These beer festivals are not held in summertime, unfortunately, but deserve a mention nonetheless. The biggest of them is the annual Helsinki Beer Festival, held in

March. Now in its sixth year, this has always featured a real ale stand with up to a dozen imported British ales. Many Finns are well clued up on their beers, and the real ale stand usually sells out well before the end of the second festival day.

The other two festivals are both pub real ale festivals. One of these is held in January at The Gallows, featuring around ten cask ales imported from the UK. The other is in the Pullman Bar in Helsinki's main railway station, and is held in February.

Both The Gallows and the Pullman Bar each have one regular cask ale (sometimes two) throughout the year. This is the case too for the other real ale pubs in Finland. Although one ale doesn't give you much choice, it can be a life-saver if the only alternative is a cold lager! I can assure you that it's nice to know there is a handful of places that serve even one real ale (usually in good condition too, I hasten to add) most of the year.

However, a word of warning: many of these dozen or so pubs take the decision to discontinue their cask ale for the month of July – partly because this is traditionally the month Finns have their holidays, but also because many have experienced adverse effects of warm weather on the ale as it travels to Finland or otherwise in their own cellars. For that reason, June or August are probably the best months for a visit.

For anyone travelling by car or train to Finland, it may also be useful to know that the Swedish capital, Stockholm, also has a few real ale pubs, some I think stocked by the same supply chain that the Finns use.

Besides the two Helsinki pubs mentioned, there are several others in the city that serve real ale. Most of the publicans involved are good friends and share their knowledge and expertise around, and have

been very keen to learn top cellarmanship skills, right from the start. Many of them also regularly visit the UK, especially the GBBF, but also other cities and festivals, and breweries too.

The other real ale pubs in Helsinki are Urho, Black Door, Angleterre, Pikku Lintu and one of the William K chain of pubs (in Flemarinkatu street).

Beyond the Helsinki area, the only other pubs so far to sell real ale on a regular basis are in the country's second-largest city, Tampere, a two-hour train ride north of Helsinki. It's a city worth visiting if you have the time. The real ale pubs in Tampere, all within walking distance of the railway station, are: Salhojankadun Pub, Pikilinna, O'Connells and Pub Höyry.

The addresses of all these pubs can be found at [www.posbeer.org/php/spo.php?kieli=en](http://www.posbeer.org/php/spo.php?kieli=en), if you key in the pub name and city name. The pub guide shown on the website can also be ordered by post and contains English translations, though it is a couple of years old now. The same website also has a page showing what cask ale is currently on sale in each of the pubs in question – although it's not always updated every day ([www.posbeer.org/php/ra-watch.php?kieli=en](http://www.posbeer.org/php/ra-watch.php?kieli=en)).

Fuller's ESB makes a regular appearance, and one of the pubs (Angleterre) regularly stocks a Shepherd Neame brew, but otherwise the emphasis is on unusual microbrewery beers or festival winners.

In most of these pubs, real ale is just one of a wide range of speciality bottled and draught beers from around the world, so you'll not be short of alternatives if the ale happens to be one you're not keen on or is not in tip-top condition.

You may see handpumps in many other pubs as well, but these are used to dispense keg beer. In a few cases, this may be a Finnish microbrewery draught keg beer – these are generally much improved from a few years ago, though can still be of variable quality.

If you're wondering whether any of the Finnish brewers has tried to produce its own real ales, well a couple of them have made brave efforts. However, the end result just doesn't match up, probably due to both lack of experience and the particular hop, malt and yeast combinations used.

Many Finns extol the virtues of their traditional beer 'sahti', of course, as Michael Jackson has done, too. If you try it, though, it's worth bearing in mind that the ABV is usually around 7 or 8 per cent!

Peter Ovell  
Helsinki

Butcombe advert

# Beer in the Axis of Evil

SHOULD any readers find themselves in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, it may be comforting to know that palatable beer may be found, even in this rarely publicised location. Sadly not real ale, but in the circumstances it is still a pleasurable surprise to find something eminently drinkable.

The brand new Taedonggang Brewery, supplied by Germans and opened in 2002, offers at least two bottled beers worthy of attention; a clean-tasting, bitter lager, and – amazingly – a “black beer” which tastes remarkably like an old-fashioned British sweet stout or brown ale. All the members of my party who tried this, on a recent visit to the country (March 2003), were impressed and asked whether more was available. Sadly we drank our train dry of it very soon.

The only other brand of bottled beer we

came across, Ryongsong, suffered by comparison. It had a distinct tang, and even the lager drinker in the party did not want a second one.

Perhaps the most surprising find of all was that our hotel in Pyongyang, the 47-storey Yanggakdo Hotel, opened in 1997, was selling beer on draught – brewed on the premises! It was a strange, cloudy, mid-brown coloured beverage – possibly produced without finings. Again, everyone who tasted it was willing to drink a second one; unfortunately, the promised tour of the brewery was not possible because “the man who looks after the machine” had gone home.

All in all, it was a pleasure to find that even this mysterious and little-known country can produce something to satisfy the discerning Western drinker. So next time you go there, look out for the unexpected.....  
*Kim Ale Snug*

## Blindman's promising beginnings

A NEW brewery whose beer sold well at the recent Bristol Beer festival, despite not featuring in the festival programme, is Blindmans, set up in November 2002 by David Capps-Tunwell.

Based in Leighton near Frome, their first beer is the tasty **Mine Beer** a 4.2 per cent brew, which has been available in several Bristol outlets, such as the Cornubia, the Bag O'Nails, the Bunch of Grapes and the Hope & Anchor. The beer can also be tasted closer to its home at the strangely but accurately named “Pub at Wanstrow”, in Somerset.

David took advantage of the retraining which is available when leaving the Armed Forces. Incidentally, this route has produced several new micro breweries – ex-Para Jim Kenyon at Spinning Dog also springs to mind. An ex-Navy man, David had been a home-brewer for many years before seeing an opportunity to set up in business himself.

Serving a brief apprenticeship at Cheriton, David was able to take Triple FFF Brewery's old five-gallon plant, which was no longer needed due to upgrading. With the help of Dark Star's Rob Jones, the unit was installed in an old barn and brewing commenced.

The site has the great advantage of a spring water supply, lending a greater degree of consistency to the beer. It's often forgotten that water is as important as the malt and hops in the brewing process!

Look out for Blindmans second beer, **Golden Spring**, which will soon be available. This promises to be a light and hoppy brew, featuring Challenger and First Golden hops with an ABV of 3.8 per cent.

*Phil Cummings*

## An unlikely notice found in a real ale pub!

This is a copy of an old and stained temperance notice in the public bar of the Brockweir Country Inn, up the Wye from Tintern. The pub is a 2003 Good Beer Guide entry, well worth a visit and a good base for Wye and Offa's Dyke walkers. Please note however that the beer is slightly more expensive this year than is shown below!

### Two Pints make One Quart

And one Quart of Ale costs five pence. Fivepence per day is £7 12s 1d per annum, and this in Three Years comes to £22 16s 3d. Yes! The large sum of £22 16s 3d has been spent on buying 2190 pints of Ale.

Working Men – wouldn't it have been better if the money had been spent as follows:-

A suit of Sunday Clothes	£4	4s	0d
A light suit for summer wear	£3	0s	0d
A good top coat for winter	£2	0s	0d
A good shawl for wife or sister	£1	5s	0d
Two dresses for wife or sister	£2	0s	0d
Two pairs of boots for self at 12/6	£1	5s	0d
Two pairs of boots for wife or sister at 8/-	£0	16s	0d
8 volumes of Half Crown books	£1	0s	0d
Put in Savings Bank	£7	6s	3d
	<b>£22</b>	<b>16s</b>	<b>3d</b>

Reader – don't buy any more ale but “go in” for something sensible, useful and good.

*John Phillips*

## Pub news

**The Anchor (Made for Ever)**, 307 New Cheltenham Road, Kingswood. In addition to its regular Courage Best this pub is now serving Bass on gravity.

**The Star and Garter**, 33 Brook Road, Montpelier. As well as its two regular beers, Bass and Courage Best, this pub is now stocking ever-changing guest real ales. Recently on offer have been Taylor's Landlord, Spitfire and Old Hookey. The pub may not open before 8 p.m., so it may be worth checking before paying a visit – (0117) 9405552.

*Ray Holmes*

# DIARY



Diary of the Bristol & District branch of CAMRA.  
See inside pages for the Weston-super-Mare sub-branch diary and contacts.

- Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> May.** Visit to Wickwar Brewery. Depart from the Cornubia, 7pm.
  - Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> May.** Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia, 8pm.
  - Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> May.** St. Michael's Hill crawl, starting at the Bell at Kingsdown, 7:30pm.
  - Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> May.** Pints West planning meeting and social drink, Horts City Tavern, 8pm.
  - Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> May.** Branch meeting at Horts City Tavern, 8pm.
  - Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> June.** Visit to Blindman's Brewery. Depart from the Cornubia 6:45pm.
  - Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> June.** Branch committee meeting at the Cornubia, 8pm.
  - Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> June.** Visit to Butcombe Brewery. Depart from the Cornubia 6:45pm.
  - Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> June.** Branch AGM at Horts City Tavern, 8pm. Please bring membership cards.
  - Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> June.** Visit to Triple FFF Brewery. Depart from the Cornubia 9:45am.
  - Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> July.** Visit to Enville Brewery. Depart from the Cornubia, 9:45am.
- For more information on local events either attend our branch meetings or contact Phil Cummings on 0117 9858220 (evenings).

## THANKS TO THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS:

- Norman Spalding
  - Stuart F Jennings
  - Freya McLuckie
  - Richard Brooks
  - Erica McLuckie
  - Phil Cummings
  - Laurie Gibney
  - Steve O'Shea
  - Robin E Wild
  - Vince Murray
  - John Phillips
  - Ray Holmes
  - Tim Nickolls
  - Pete Bridle
  - Phil Brooks
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  - Jeff Evans
  - Dr. John
- Editor: Steve Plumridge

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## Watch the Web


Bristol and District CAMRA would like to remind readers that we have a web site at

**www.cambristol.org.uk**

This contains information on the local branch and the Campaign for Real Ale generally, as well as details of forth-coming meetings, socials and other activities. The web site is regularly updated and so is the best place to find out about any last minute changes to arrangements as well as some of the latest real ale related stories. **Past editions of Pints West can be viewed there!**

Check out also the independent pub web site [www.britishpubguide.com](http://www.britishpubguide.com) which is now up and running. Over 400 pubs in the City and County of Bristol are featured, plus many in North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, with pictures of virtually all! Visitors to the site can dynamically search for their favourite real ales and traditional ciders. It's a 'community' web site so comments, additions and updates are welcome.

## PINTS WEST

- TO ADVERTISE IN PINTS WEST** call Steve Plumridge in the first instance, evenings or weekends, on (0117) 9743242. (Email: [steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk))
- LETTERS** can be sent to:   
**Pints West Editor,**  
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(Email: [steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:steve.plumridge@bristol.ac.uk))
- Suggestions for future entries for the CAMRA GOOD BEER GUIDE**, and any comments on existing entries, can be made to our GBG Coordinator, Richard Walters, care of the editor (above).
- FURTHER INFORMATION** on all aspects of CAMRA can be had from Ray Holmes on (0117) 9605357 (h).
- SEVEN THOUSAND COPIES** of Pints West are distributed free to pubs in and around the cities of Bristol and Bath.
- SUBSCRIPTIONS:** To be put on a mailing list send a cheque for £2 to the editor (payable to Steve Plumridge) for the next four issues. (Rate applies in the UK only.)
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Pints West 58

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Date.....

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