

HEREFORD HOPVINE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE BRANCH OF CAMRA

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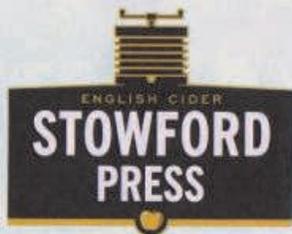
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CIDER PUBS OF THE YEAR
SHACK ATTACK IN ROSS
STOPTOBER: IS IT TIME FOR A NEW TARGET?
BROMYARD FOLK FESTIVAL
PUB CAMPAIGN UPDATES
COLWALL PUB WALK
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WELCOME BACK, OLD FRIEND

The impending return of the iconic Bull's Head at Craswall is testament to the efforts of locals, who by campaigning refused to let it die

The Bull's Head is one of Herefordshire's most precious secrets. The small and unspoiled ex-drovers' inn lies isolated on a back lane high above Hay-on-Wye and at the top of the Golden Valley. Prior to its purchase at auction by Paul Chicken and Denise Langford in 1998, it had been in the Lewis farming family uninterrupted and unchanged for over 125 years. Under their new ownership it was named *Herefordshire Pub of the Year* within twelve months.

Famed for its cobbled-stone floors, original range, grand settle and a simple serving hatch (from where beers and cider were dispensed from the barrel) it soon became a sensation amongst those who knew of its basic charms and pleasures. It was a real living piece of history there to be savoured. The beer and food were pretty good too!

It was only after Paul and Denise left it in rude good health did things start to go downhill. A number of less successful operators just didn't seem to 'get it.' The pub's bread and butter trade of walkers and horse-riders felt increasingly marginalised in favour of weekend 'destination' diners. This marginalisation transformed into open hostility with the arrival of the most recent owners, who landed there fresh from permanently closing down the Ancient Camp Inn at Ruckhall (a wonderful riverside pub). After running a disastrously unsuccessful and elitist food operation there, they shut up shop and happily converted it into a house - no doubt pocketing a substantial sum in the process.

They then promptly set about repeating their mistakes at the Bull's Head. The posh nosh may well have won plaudits from the *Daily Telegraph* and British Airways *High Life* magazine, but the Home Counties are a long way from Craswall for an evening out. Meanwhile, the walkers, horse-riders and visitors looking for a drink and a snack were forced to go without. The Bull's Head lost its brio... and then its custom too: the number of days and hours it opened were reduced, with it eventually closing "temporarily" in 2015. Like many temporary things [income tax comes to mind. Ed] it never opened again. Unable to find out what their intentions were (numerous 'phone calls and e-mails went unanswered) the growing concern became that the Bull's Head might be-



come another conversion victim. Were the licensed Grim Reapers from the Ancient Camp about to strike again?

However, the owners weren't counting on the tenacity and resilience of the locals who live in this beautiful and wild part of the world. They were simply not prepared to sit back and let the Bull's Head be forgotten. With no idea as to what was happening and no planning application available to object to, they set about raising the profile of the pub's circumstances. At the same time, they collected intelligence from individuals who they knew had made genuine offers to buy the premises with the intention of running it as a pub. The fact that all of these offers had been rebuffed or ignored by the owners only further invigorated their cause. The objective was to let the press and media know of the pub's plight. Of course, the same message would also get back to the owners: that message being that the locals weren't going to simply fade away. The highlight of the campaign was a demonstration held at the pub on a wonderfully sunny summer's day in 2018, when a natty new pub sign was hung nearby (*see photo on front cover*). Over 100 people attended that event.

Today, this all feels like a distant nightmare, with the Bull's Head now set to re-open its rickety wooden door to customers next summer. More re-assuring still is the new owner is local and understands the value and importance of the Bull's Head. The *Hopvine* has been reassured there is no intention of knocking the place about. The new owner is a chef, but whilst understanding the importance of food in making the business work, it's also acknowledged that casual pub-goers need to be catered for too. Against all the odds the good times are set to return to one of Herefordshire's most remarkable pubs.

LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

AFTER THE HARVEST

Jonny Bright brews once a month at Ledbury Brewery exclusively for Hereford Beer House, to be served via one of the pub's six keg lines. The December offering was a French Pale Ale at 5.5% ABV.

LEDBURY

During the Autumn, Ledbury Real Ales developed a range of green-hopped beers using locally-grown hops of both established and experimental varieties. These were very well received in a tap takeover at the Wyche Inn, Malvern; at a celebration event at the brewery, and in all the pubs where they went on sale.

At the brewery-based event, all the participating hop farmers were presented with certificates recognising their work. Herefordshire CAMRA took the opportunity of this large audience to present the award for the *Herefordshire Beer of the Festival* at July's Beer on the Wye. The beer concerned was a collaboration with Jonny Bright of Hereford Beer House called Wai-iti and Citra, a 5.0% IPA.



Ant Stevens (l) and Jonny Bright (r) receiving the certificate for *Herefordshire Beer of the Festival* from Mark Haslam

SIMPSONS

Simpsons Fine Ales have again produced a seasonal beer to celebrate the festive season. A blend of roast and chocolate malts have been added to create a full-flavoured, deep ruby ale, which, although still fermenting as the *Hopvine* went to press, has a predicted ABV of 4.6%. A combination of Fuggles, Pheonix and Admiral hops are expected to bring flavours of citrus, spice and berries and a moderately bitter finish. The limited run will be available in the White

Swan, Eardisland, from mid-December through to early January.

SWAN

Swan Brewery are rounding off 2019 with a couple of seasonal specials: Winter Swanderland 4.8% is warming ale and Seven Swans 4.2% is a crisp, blonde ale.

There are five new ales scheduled in 2020 with the first - Bewick Best, a 4.5% full-bodied copper ale - to be launched at the first Tasting Day at the brewery on 7th February. It's confirmed that all 2020 Tasting Days will be the first Friday of each month, with new beers showcased; an ale on the house for all visitors, and food on offer. At the time of going to press, a poll was live to decide on the name of the fundraising beer that coincides with brewery-owners Gill and Jimmy shaving their head and beard hair to raise funds for *Another MS Warrior*. Launching on the 3rd April, you could be drinking either Ugly Duckling or Bald Eagle to support this cause.

WEOBLEY

It was with great elation that Weobley Brewing Company received the award as winner of *Best Brewer at The HT Food and Drink Awards 2019*. Head brewer Tom Evans, and Juliet Whitmarsh from Jules Restaurant, were presented the award during a high profile gala dinner at Hereford Racecourse in November. After all the investment and hard work over the last couple of years to get the brewery established, it was good to see some recognition for their efforts. Tom said "We're pretty chuffed! We just want to show our appreciation to everyone who has helped us over the last two years to get this far, and also to all of our customers for their support, enthusiasm and feedback."

Through the autumn, Weobley Brewery have completed their expansion with the new extension finished and new fermentation vessels and equipment now in regular use. This has had the effect of trebling their output and has enabled them to have the complete range of beers available permanently in bottle-conditioned form, as well as being able to produce more in cask-conditioned form. Indeed, they have recently taken delivery of another 14 casks to help them achieve this goal.

Currently, either Mr Magpie's Bitter or Goldfinger Golden Ale is supplied occasionally to the Bells Inn (Almeley); can be frequently found at the Olde Salutation Inn (Weobley), and regularly at the near-

by Unicorn - the first real ale to be served at there for many years. Jules Restaurant occasionally has the beer on draught hand pull (with the intention of it becoming permanent). Further outlets are being sought - contact Tom Evans at the brewery.

Their 500ml bottle-conditioned beers can now be found at the Old School Shop in Weobley; the Market & Deli at the Bells Inn, Almeley; the Orgasmic Cider Shop at Great Parton, and the Miller & James Farmshop at Whitney-on-Wye.

They have also started development of a new beer to their range, a Session IPA, predicted to be around 3.8%, instigated as a result of demand from customers. Long-term, there is the possibility of Summer Special in the style of a Milkshake IPA.

WOBBLY

Wobbly have recently had several changes in personnel: Andy Hughes is now MD; Joanie Roberts is Sales & Marketing Manager; Paul McCauley is Production Manager, zlong with a production team of eight people. Contract brewing; canning of custom craft beers, and brewing Wobbly's core cask beers remain the main business. They have expanded the canning side to include wines, ciders and health drinks. Several innovative features of the canning process are being developed, including aluminium bottles for beer. Two new cask beers - a 4.8% Pilsner and a 4.8% Ruby Ale - have been developed recently.

Their Tap House, serving the core cask beers, is now open Thursday to Saturday evenings 5 -11 pm and is used for music/sports events and to stimulate interest in the brewing process and real ale among the general public. They are offering a 20% discount to CAMRA members at the bar. The on-site shop is open 9-5 pm every weekday ,as well as when the Tap House is open.

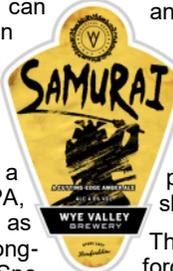
WYE VALLEY

Upcoming seasonal beers are:

January: Dreamcatcher – a pale ale brewed with experimental hops giving, a tropical aroma and blackcurrant, and citrus flavours. (3.7% ABV)

February: Blinder - a balanced British beer brewed with carefully-selected hops and boasting a strong malty character. (4.2%)

March: Samurai - a cutting-edge beer with a sharp lemon character delivered by Celeia and Japanese Sorachi Ace hops. (4.5%)



WOOD'S

Wood's, have been busy brewing two seasonal ales that are perfect for drinking by a warm fire on a cold winter's night.

Ebony, an oatmeal stout with deep hop aromas and roast coffee and dark chocolate notes is back in cask form this season.

Also launched for the winter months is Shiver. The launch follows a competition by a local magazine to name a new winter ale. It is a single-hopped, dark session ale, packed full of barley, hops and oats to give a slightly sweet, malty finish.

The Saracen's Head and Black Lion in Hereford both now stock Wood's beers.

NEW BREWERIES

Of the four new breweries first reported in the Spring *Hopvine*, Weobley (see opposite) and Little Dewchurch are in production, but Motley Hog is still bogged down by bureaucracy (see page 10). At the Green Dragon at Bishops Frome, at least one brew was produced and went on sale, but the kit has since been removed following a change of licensee (page 8).

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LOOKING TO TAP INTO MALVERN'S BEER SCENE

A proposal to open a Taproom by Malvern Hills Brewery has created quite a stir - including from some unexpected quarters

Not much more than a mile across the Worcestershire border in Malvern is Malvern Hills Brewery. Recognised for their award-winning Black Pear Bitter and imaginative green-hopped beers, the brewery now has plans to open a taproom immediately next door to their West Malvern Road brewery premises. Just like with our own Swan and Wobbly Breweries, the idea is to provide a small bar for people to buy the brewery's beers - one that would only open for limited hours and days of the week. But one key difference here is that the taproom requires the conversion of the ground-floor of a terraced house to achieve that aim.

Having spent six years looking to acquire a pub, or alternatively a property in the town that would lend itself for conversion to a micro-pub, the brewery had to admit defeat - their efforts frustrated by a lack of suitable or affordable premises. Therefore, the idea of a Taproom on-site was seen as the answer. A planning application put forward in July attracted a lot of support from in and around the town, but there was a more mixed reaction from local residents. Some support it or haven't stated a view, whilst others have (quite reasonably) expressed concerns over the potential for noise, car parking problems and nuisance behaviour. Finally, another small group appear to be ideologically set against the scheme come what may.



Bizarrely, it was one of those in the latter category that was not only a long-standing and active member of Worcester CAMRA, but had been appointed by CAMRA as a liaison officer for the brewery. Following his submission of a thirteen-page dissertation to Malvern Hills Council, where he not only objected to the planning application for the taproom, but tends to question the very existence of the brewery, he was subsequently dismissed from his CAMRA volunteer role after he declined to resign. This made for some interesting reading in the *Malvern Gazette*.

It's fair to say the brewery have jumped through more hoops than you'd find in a family-sized packet of *Hula Hoops* to put in place measures that will mitigate any risk of potential nuisance to local residents. Bearing in mind, it needs to be remembered this will be a small, niche operation and not a conventional pub. This fact appeared to have not escaped the members of Malvern Hills Council *Southern Area Planning Committee* who, on the 20th November, voted by a majority of 12 to 1 to pass the proposal. With planning permission now in the bag, it remains for the brewery to get a licence and then push-on to create the taproom.

The expectation is that it will sell MHB beers; local ciders, as well as some wine and soft drinks, but not food, with the proposed opening hours likely to be 6pm to 10pm Thursdays and Fridays and 12noon to 10pm at weekends. If all goes to plan, it is expected to be trading by the summer.

Gloucester CAMRA City Pub of the Year 2014 2015 2016 2017 and 2018

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LOCAL PUB NEWS

The **Castle Inn, Wigmore** reopened on the 1st November in the care of new owners and licensees, Stephen & Karen Johnson, who hail from Wigan. It is open all day serving local ales. The kitchen and four letting rooms are being readied for use.

Operation of **The Bateman Arms** in Shobdon has been taken over by the owners of the nearby Riverside Inn at Aymestry. The new manager is Abbi Court.

A community-owned pub that is still finding its feet is the **Bell Inn** at Yarpole. Despite still having no sitting publican(s) as this *Hopvine* went to press, it is still managing to open for special occasions, including for separate Christmas (on the 20th) and New Year's Eve parties, and an event to celebrate the tenth anniversary of creating a community hub within the local church on Sunday 19th January. The committee overseeing the pub are actively looking for new publicans, with 22 expressions of interest in the vacancy having been made by the deadline day.



The new sign at the Crown, Dilwyn

Another community-owned pub that suffered a few early mis-fires with tenants, but is now absolutely flying, is the **Crown Inn** at Dilwyn. In August was held a successful inaugural beer festival, and the food has developed a reputation, such that on a cold Sunday in early December it had over 60 bookings for its excellent Sunday Roasts. And now it has a splendid new pub sign above the entrance, that proudly celebrates its community pedigree with the tag-line: "Owned by Dilwyn Parish Council and run for the benefit of the local community." Four beers are on the bar, being

Wye Valley HPA and Butty Bach; a changing brew from Hobsons, and normally another locally-sourced guest including from Swan, Three Tuns or Woods.

Apart from the occasional trial cask, the **Unicorn Inn** in Weobley has not offered real ale for over thirty years. With the launch of Weobley Brewing Company, that has now changed, and either Mr Magpie's Bitter or Goldfinger Golden Ale can be found on the bar. Once called the Unicorn Hotel, this Grade II-listed building is very much a drinkers' establishment, as it no longer offers accommodation or food, and just uses a single bar (to the right on entry).

Refurbishment work is ongoing at the **Boughton Arms**, Peterchurch following its sale. The new owner, originally from Italy, is planning an Italian restaurant in part of the building, whilst also maintaining the atmosphere of a pub. It is planned to reopen during 2020.

The **Bridge Inn** at Michaelchurch Escley has reopened after a kitchen fire in early September closed it for over a month. Owner Glyn Buffon was slightly injured. By November the pub was fully operational, apart from being briefly inaccessible at the height of the floods.

Work on refurbishment of the **New Inn** at St Owen's Cross, first reported back in the Spring *Hopvine*, subsequently appeared to be making extremely slow progress. Now, a planning application has emerged for five dwellings on adjacent land. In representations to the planners, Herefordshire CAMRA welcomed the owners' commitment to the refurbishment and associated increase in the size of the pub's car park. It has been requested that safeguards linking the development to the funding of the works should be put in place.

The **Fountain Inn** at Orcop recently satisfied one of their regular drinkers' ambitions by taking an unusual guest ale. John Farr, who has been a customer there for over 50 years, is the father of Nick Farr, the founder of Farrbrew, a brewery based in Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire. It had long been John's ambition to drink a few pints of his son's beer in his favourite pub. So, with his son's help, a cask of Farrbrew Bitter was recently delivered, to feature alongside the pub's other favourites from Otter brewery.

Said John: "Debbie and Scott Jagger have done wonders over the last three years to turn this closed pub into a true community meeting point.

They serve great beer and cider, superb food, and also have a micro-shop of essentials within the pub."



Debbie Jagger with John and Nick at the bar at Orcop

Retirement of the kitchen team at **The Yew Tree** at Peterstow has resulted in the pub's food offer to be curtailed. Soups are still available, together with home-cooked ham and cheese rolls. Pre-arranged events may also be catered for. Options for restoring a full service are being explored.

The **Castle Inn** at Little Birch closed during the Autumn. It is not clear whether early reopening is likely.

The **Slip Tavern** in Much Marcle re-opened on 1st December, remarkably launching with a Sunday Roast! Described as a 'soft opening' this was followed by a formal opening on 5th December. The new leaseholder is Tracey Thompson, who intends to supply high quality pub food that complements what's available at the two nearby pubs. Initially Wye Valley Butty Bach was on offer with a guest beer expected shortly. Opening times are Tuesday to Thursday lunch and evening; Friday and Saturday all day and Sunday until late afternoon.

Andy Ward, long-standing landlord of the **Talbot Hotel** in Ledbury is planning to retire in the New Year. A full account of Andy and Maria's considerably legacy will appear in the Spring *Hopvine*.

It's all change again at the **Green Dragon Inn** at Bishop's Frome. Sole licensee, George Bedford who only replaced the longstanding and popular partnership of Adam and Zoe Durrant in April, quit the Grade II-listed, award-winning pub on the 1st December, removing the microbrewery that he had installed at the pub. He was replaced the next day by John Oliver and his family.

John originally hails from near Tenbury Wells

and has plenty of experience running pubs. He last ran the Baiting House at Upper Sapey between 2004 and 2005, before scooting off to South Africa. Having now returned to the UK, he's looking to review the beer and cider offer at the Green Dragon. He tells the *Hopvine* that he's passionate about real beer and likes dark and stronger brews, so expect those to appear at some point. He is definitely keeping the Purple Moose Snowdonia Ale and Timothy Taylor Golden Best. Oliver's Cider can be expected to appear, as John believes he is a distant relation of Tom Oliver of Oliver's Cider.

Another item on the agenda is to recruit a chef, and it is hoped that food will return sometime in early January.

It was always a little confusing for visitors that the only two pubs in Herefordshire called the **Live & Let Live** were less than three miles apart. With one being high on the fringe of Bringstly Common and the other in the heart of the neighbouring village of Whitbourne, there are endless anecdotes to be told of customers confusing the two. But not any more, after the latter Live & Let Live in Whitbourne changed its name to the **Live Inn at Whitbourne** when it was re-opened by new owner Nick Western-Kaye in August. Beers are Wye Valley Butty Bach, HPA and St.Austell HSD. Food is served every day and includes a number of Malaysian special dishes.

Artisan Ales on Old Street in Ludlow, closed suddenly a few months back when popular landlord, Gary Jones, decided it was time to take a rest. The owner of the adjacent café - the Olive Branch - who happens to be the leaseholder for the entire property decided it was time to step-in. The building was originally the Prince Rupert Inn, and later named the Bear & White Lion and latterly the Imperial Vaults. The small bar, which is now downstairs is now called the **Micro Bar** or just **The Bar**. It serves two beers, usually from Three Tuns and Swan breweries, but may offer a wider range in future. The bar has been redecorated and opens 2pm until 8pm Wednesdays to Saturdays.

Good news from Worcestershire is that the charming **Brewers Arms** at West Malvern has re-opened after a period of closure. Run by experienced licensees Simon Toop and John Dobbins, it's already selling a number of beers from Malvern Hills Brewery, with a food operation (including various budget theme-nights) likely to start before Christmas.

MONKLAND'S REVITALISATION NOW COMPLETE

The Monkland Arms is named Pub of the Season and Runner-up Herefordshire Cider Pub of the Year

Some fifteen or so years ago the Monkland Arms - a roadside pub at Monkland - was acquired by a small Pubco who, like all good PubCos, had a very simple business model: if the tenant shows the slightest sign of making a profit, crank the rent up. And so the inevitable happened - a succession of tenants came and went and gradual decline was followed by the pub's inevitable closure. It then stood empty and unloved, with a sign outside offering a "Former Public House and Restaurant", which conveniently overlooked the fact that - in planning terms at least - it was still a pub.

Rescue came in 2015, in the shape of new owners who undertook a major restoration and reopened the pub - now called the Monk. The layout was rearranged: created were a single bar-cum-drinking area with dining areas to one side and rear, plus a pleasant garden. It then unexpectedly came back onto the market in 2017 due to the owners' personal circumstances.

Enter Jed and Allie Dunn, experienced publicans who moved up from Ilminster in Somerset to take over the Monk. After a quick tidy-up of the pub, and some more substantial work in the kitchen, they reopened in February 2018 under its original name - the Monkland Arms.

The *Pub of the Season* award came into being when it was realised the major *Pub of the Year* awards tended to stay within a more limited group of standout pubs, while other excellent pubs could go largely un-recognised for their efforts. This year's Winter winner was selected before the short-list for *Herefordshire Cider Pub of the Year* was drawn up. In the event the Monkland Arms came out a very creditable Runner-Up in the cider competition. The cider award recognises that the pub stocks up to seven local draught ciders from producers like Newton Court and Gwatkins.



The Monkland Arms, Monkland, Herefordshire, HR6 9DE Telephone: (01568) 720510. Winter opening times 12-2, 6-11 Wed-Fri; 6-11 Sat; 12-3, 7-10.30 Sun. Meal Times: 12-2, 6-9 Wed-Fri; 6-9 Sat; 12-2.30, 7-9 Sun Website www.themonklandarms.co.uk



Jed Dunn receives the Pub of the Season certificate from Herefordshire CAMRA Chair, Paul Grenfell

For the most part, the Monkland Arms is a place to go for drinks and meals in smart but relaxing surroundings. The menu embraces a wide range of dishes, made - as far as possible - from very local ingredients sourced from the likes of *Howard Moseley* (Family Butcher) and *Parry's Fruit & Veg*, both of Leominster. Meals can be washed down with the aforementioned cider, or beers from Hobsons, Ludlow, Wye Valley, plus guests.

But the place really comes alive when there's music - Allie & Jed welcome you to a village pub with folk at its heart. There are regular sessions on the first Friday and third Thursday of the month which are proving quite a draw. A live band performs on the second and fourth (occasionally fifth) Saturdays.

There are also occasional quiz nights, typically on a Thursday. All the events are very clearly set out on the pub's website.

Great British Beer Festival Winter 4th - 8th February 2020
Bingley Hall, Birmingham www.winter.gbbf.org.uk

TOP OF THE TAPS

Ross-on-Wye's Tap House is crowned Herefordshire Pub of the Year for 2019

It's a very long time since a pub in Ross-on-Wye was recognised in Herefordshire CAMRA's *Pub of the Year* competition. In fact, it was way back in 1994 when the Crown & Sceptre on the town's Market Square took the title. It's been pretty lean times for the town's pubs since then.

Ross has been a perennial underperformer on the pub front for decades. Other towns in the county such as Ledbury, Leominster and even wee Kington have all had *Pubs of the Year* and multiple *Good Beer Guide* entries ever since, but Ross has just languished stubbornly in the pub relegation zone for year after year. Things did pick-up a bit, when in 2001 the arrival of J D Wetherspoon brought some much-welcome beer variety to the town, but it has taken the arrival of the Tap House to deliver a long overdue transformation. And transformation is by no means too strong a word.

Located directly opposite *Morrisons* supermarket on a corner of the town's Millpond Street, the diminutive ex-TV shop had a problematic birth. First there were objections to the planning application from a handful of local residents (something Herefordshire CAMRA was able to assist with), then on the day before licensees Nigel and Christine Ree were due to open the show in September 2018, a deluge brought down the ceiling above the bar. It didn't look at all promising. However, Nigel and Chris are not quitters by any measure, and a lot of hard work and good humour meant the Mayor of Ross was still able to open the micro-pub to a thirsty gathering on time the very next afternoon.

Today an array of eight handpumps dispenses six cask ales and two real ciders or perries. Brews originate from some of the UK's most exciting small brewers, such as Fyne Ales and Siren Craft. Those drinkers who have a preference for porters and stouts will find they are always catered for too, with Titanic Plum Porter and Oyster Stout from Gadds of Margate being just two dark-coloured recent visitors worthy of mention. In the fourteen months since opening, beers have featured on the bar from 177 different breweries, and in September this year things ramped up another gear when the pub hosted a successful first beer festival in a side room, which has since been pushed into service to accommodate all the customers who just keep coming back time after time.

What is so noticeable about the place is that it doesn't just appeal to discerning real beer and cider



drinkers. It has clearly caught the imagination of a lot of the town's pub-goers, irrespective of what their favourite tittle might be. Alongside the beer, cider and perry (it's a member of CAMRA's Press2Pub scheme); it offers three craft keg taps, and features its own mini-gin bar. However, there is still more excitement in the pipeline with fiendish plans afoot for a micro-brewery on-site



next year. This seems most appropriate as the Tap House occupies what was once part of the site of Alton Court Brewery, which ceased brewing in 1961.

Like most of the micro-pub genre, the Tap House doesn't pretend to be anything fancy. There is no food (other than filled rolls at weekends), no muzak, gadgets or gimmicks. But what you do get is a good old-fashioned atmosphere, plenty of conversation and a genuinely warm welcome.

Nigel Ree said to the *Hopvine* about winning the award: "We're quite overawed with the result. It's been a hell of a journey, but it's definitely been worthwhile. It's great to have such a band of loyal locals supporting us too."

Mark Haslam from Herefordshire CAMRA added: "It is nothing short of astonishing what has been achieved at the Tap House in such a very short time. It's a wonderful addition to the Ross pub scene. The town can now say it has a resident beer festival every day of the year! What's not to like?"

The Tap House, 1 Millpond Street, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 7BZ. Bus number 33 from Hereford.

Opening Times: 12-2.30, 4.30-10.30 Mon-Wed; 12-2.30, 4.30-11 Thu; 12-11 Fri & Sat; 12-10 Sun

...AND THE BARRELS ROLLS ON

Named Runner-up for the second consecutive year is the Barrels in Hereford

Wye Valley's flagship pub, the Barrels on the city's St Owen Street, has been named Runner-up or Winner in the *Herefordshire Pub of the Year* competition more times than any other pub in the county. It's getting to the point where we struggle to find a new photo of the place to put with the next winning write-up. A few less-informed detractors might scoff that it gets a CAMRA award every year. Obviously, this isn't the case, as the rules of the competition debar a winning pub from being considered the following year. It's probably just a case of what some psychologists might describe as penis envy. It wins because it's consistently good - full stop.



The Barrels enjoys a cult following in Hereford. And don't take our word for it, as the very same word 'cult' once featured in the hallowed pages of the *Lonely Planet* Guide to Britain to describe it. The Barrels is an established part of the fabric of the city's social scene, without it Hereford wouldn't feel quite the same.

Being one of the last remaining multi-room traditional pubs in the city, it oozes down-to-earth character, which attracts a varied and eclectic clientele. Like the Tap House in Ross, it eschews gimmicks and just gets the basics right – every time. Its USP is that it sells good beer at very affordable prices in a welcoming and safe environment. It gets famously busy at weekends, but never intimidates or threatens. You can take your partner there as much as to meet up with friends after work. Moreover, witnessing one of the pub's quiz evenings should be on everyone's 'bucket list'. It is the quintessential city pub at its very best - and it comes complete with a heart of gold.

As a 100% committed community pub, the highlight of the Barrels' busy events calendar is its annual beer, cider and music festival. Held each August bank holiday weekend it's basically a big party, but it's also about giving something back. Since it started in 1988, it has raised an amazing total, in excess of £500,000, for charities. There can't be many pubs in the UK - let alone Herefordshire - that can boast such a fund-raising record. We should raise a glass to a friend to all...the Barrels.

*The Barrels, 69 St Owen Street, Hereford, HR1 2JQ www.wyevalleybrewery.co.uk/the-barrels
Telephone: (01432) 274968 Open 11-11.30 Mon-Thu; 11-Midnight Fri & Sat; 12-11.30 Sun*

GILL'S TRIPLE CELEBRATION

The Black Swan at Much Dewchurch being named Herefordshire Cider Pub of the Year was one of a trio of reasons to celebrate

2019 was a very special year for licensee, Gill Constance, as she celebrated with her customers twenty-five years behind the bar. And over all that time she has stayed resolute to her traditional principles, as the Black Swan remains steadfastly an old-fashioned pub in the very best sort of way. It's precisely the type of village pub many of us would dream to have plonked on our doorsteps.

What has been thrown away in a headlong rush to chic modernity in too many other pubs, still stands proud at the Black Swan. It has four separate bars. In the middle section of the pub is the main bar area replete with a roaring fire and inviting window alcoves. At one end is a more basic bar with pool table and TV, whilst at the opposite end is a small lounge featuring two comfy 1980s-style sofas and a piano, beyond which is a restaurant boasting a grand fireplace, numerous curios, lithographs and a wonderful old sideboard. Finally, upstairs is a room for private functions and meetings – how many pubs still have one of those? The pub does reveal a few frayed edges in places, but this is easily forgiven considering there isn't a single piece of IKEA-inspired furniture to be seen; it's decor recalls to one how so many village pubs used to be. What is more, this one sits right at the beating heart of a vibrant village community.

On a visit to the pub on a Saturday lunchtime in October those community credentials were on full parade. In one bar an informal darts match was underway, while elsewhere talk gently swirled around regarding one of the villagers who had recently had all his work tools stolen. As a tree surgeon, he relied on them for his living. Only that same night was to be a function at the pub to raise funds to help replace them: this is a pub where the regulars choose to care rather than stare.

These credentials were also apparent when the cider judging team arrived - on a November Monday evening. They were in the process of judging a short-list of six pubs, which didn't include any previous winners. They observed that more establishments are finding customers that



CAMRA members with Gill Constance (centre, in red) celebrate her 25-years as landlady

now better appreciate real cider and perry. The six pubs all served and promoted a range of local ciders, and there was an impressive variation across the county.

The Black Swan is a worthy winner of *Herefordshire Cider Pub of the Year*. It serves draught Westons perry; a selection from Colcombe House, plus the (very) local Cockyard Cider. It was the quality of the Cockyard Foxwhelp Cider which particularly impressed the judges, unsurprising, as it was later learned it had benefitted from three-to-four years of maturation.

Therefore, it's congratulations three-fold to Gill: for winning *Cider Pub of the Year*; for being adjudged a close third in the overall *Herefordshire Pub of the Year* competition, and for completing a great first 25 years. The locals won't be alone in hoping she'll yet do another 25!

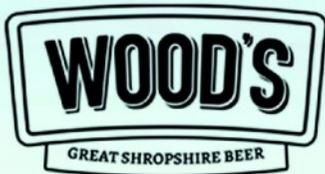
Runner-up in this year's cider pub competition is the Monkland Arms at Monkland, where up to seven local draught ciders from producers like Newton Court and Gwatkins are available. Even before the Cider Pub of the Year short-list was known, the Monkland Arms had been designated *Winter Pub of the Season*. See page 9.

Black Swan, Much Dewchurch, Hereford, HR2 8DJ Telephone: (01981) 540295.

Open: 12-3, 5.30-11 Mon-Fri; 11.30-3, 5.30-11 Sat; 12-4, 6-11 Sun. Meal Times: 12-2, 7-9 daily.

Email: gillconstance-blackswan@outlook.com

GREAT SHROPSHIRE BEERS



A VIEW FROM THE ORCHARD



CIDERLANDS
MAKERS &
LOVERS

At this time of year, I encourage everyone to go to at least one Wassail. All the events are

different. The bigger wassails are usually led by a Morris side, but the smaller community ones have their own character. Even if they sound strange, everything gets explained in one form or another and the sense of camaraderie is wonderful. The list below and opposite covers those we know about today...

However, over the last few months celebrating cider has added an international taste. The Cider Club at the Yew Tree has had guests from America and Spain showcasing their ciders. The focus from America was the variation in their Kingston Black ciders which were markedly different from those we enjoy in England. The presentation from Spain's Ciderzale introduced us to an appreciation of Basque cider – again styles and tastes which are different from the traditional cider of Hereford. As well as enjoying plenty of cider to drink, the club has demonstrated the range of high-quality ciders and perries which the different producers create, along with the stories behind them.

Then over the Big Apple's Harvestime weekend we had the Ciderlands conference of the International Network of Cider Culture and Tourism Destinations. Whilst the two were not linked, the delegates were able to participate in the 30th Harvestime and there was a packed programme! Find out more about the countries involved at www.ciderlands.org.



Herefordshire CAMRA's Paul Grenfell and Kerry Gibson-Yates explain the P2P initiative to (left) Tom Oliver of Olivers Cider & Perry and (right) Aggers Szostak of Hereford Beer House

Ciderlands started on the Friday evening at The Cider Museum with a carnival event. The international cidemakers were promoting the wide culture of cidemaking from other parts of the world, whilst Hereford cidemakers had stocked a bar with 40 varieties of local ciders and perry. CAMRA were on hand to explain their P2P initiative to encourage locally-produced cider in the county's pubs. The museum offered tours and the band *Whose Hands Are These* provided the soundtrack for the night. Lots of reports and feedback can be found on the Ciderlands2019 Facebook page.

The centre-piece of the weekend was the Cider Banquet which was held at the recently refurbished Green Dragon Hotel – another symbol of the heritage of Herefordshire. The evening was breathtaking and reflected the thought and passion that went into its creation. It was a gastronomic work of art, but it was everyone savouring the various combinations of food and drink that brought it to life. Clearly the ciders were excellent, but they were not those you would normally choose. However, paired with the food, the flavours of the cider harmonised on the palate. Something you can try at home.

The new year will introduce the season of wassails, but the momentum of Ciderlands is encouraging further activities in the Cider world during the year. Clearly the Cider Club at the Yew Tree is thriving, but others may take up the approach since it is a good way of supporting your local pub and local producers and your own enjoyment of cider. Details will be circulated when available – in the *Hopvine*, in *Full Juice* and across social media.

It is well worth attending and even participating in these various events during the coming months. Each has its own character!

Russell Sutcliffe

Morris and Wassails at a Glance

- Dec 26 Leominster Morris: Barrels, Hereford, Noon
- Dec 26 Silurian Morris: Market Hall, Ledbury; then local tour tbc
- Jan 4 Silurian Morris Wassail: Westons Cider
- Jan 6 Leominster Morris Wassail: Bell Inn Tillington
- Jan 8 Leominster Morris: Breinton Manor
- Jan 11 Foxwhelp Morris Wassail: Crown, Longtown
- Jan 11 Leominster Morris: Oldfields Cider, Frith Common
- Jan 11 Wassail: Crown, Woolhope
- Jan 18 Colwall Community Orchard Wassail

WASSAIL!

A roundup of seasonal events

Leominster Morris will be performing on Boxing Day at the Barrels in Hereford at mid-day.

Also that day, at 11am, as the Ledbury Hunt leaves the market square, the Silurian Morris Men will appear from beneath the Ledbury's Market Hall. This is normally followed by dance spots at nearby places, but details were not available as the *Hopvine* went to press.

Silurian will be performing at Westons Cider Was-sail on January 4th, starting at 5.30pm for refreshments.

The traditional "Leominster Morris Wassail" moves around North Herefordshire and is always held on twelfth night (January 6th). This season's venue is the Bell Inn, Tillington, starting at 7pm. Note that this is a Monday.

The third of the county's regular wassailing sides, Foxwhelp Morris will be performing on January 11th starting at the village Hall, Longtown.

Leominster Wassail takes place on Saturday 11th January, meeting from 11am in Corn Square Leominster, with a procession to the Millennium Orchard with Jenny Pipes Morris. In the Orchard

there's a toast to the apple trees and a dramatic song about life in the orchard followed by celebration with cider and apple cake. Finally, to Grange Court, where hot soup and mulled cider will be served. Watch www.grangecourt.org

Also on January 11th, award-winning cider pub, the Crown at Woolhope holds a Wassail; meet 5pm for 6pm torch parade.

Colwall Wassail organised by Colwall Orchard Group, is also due to take place on Saturday, January 18th, meeting for 6pm at Colwall Stone. The procession will lead to the orchard at Colwall Village Garden. The evening will also include Morris dancing with the locally-based Old Meg Morris, singing, food... and cider.

Chepstow's Wassail and Mari Lwyd is a victim of its own popularity and, having outgrown the town's facilities, is not taking place in 2020 - but is promised to return in 2021.

The popularity of these events has grown tremendously over the past few years and attendance can sometimes be restricted for safety reasons and remember, events may be cancelled or rearranged due to adverse weather - please check before travelling.

See summary opposite.



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GO SOBER FOR STOPTOBER - IS IT TIME FOR A NEW TARGET?

A very laudable national campaign is having some serious unintended consequences – some licensees are now asking: isn't it someone else's turn to take a hit?

Most people have heard of *Stoptober*, the successful NHS-supported campaign to encourage people to quit smoking. Doubtless it's a good cause that improves medical outcomes and has the further benefit of saving money for those who participate. It's a no-brainer really, considering the irrefutable medical evidence of how damaging smoking is to the nation's collective health.

However, there is now a spin-off called *Go Sober for Stoptober*. It's a parallel annual campaign which encourages people to pledge to go booze-free for the whole of October in order to raise money for *Macmillan Cancer Support*. On the surface of it, it sounds like a fantastic idea: raise money for a very worthy charity that does such sterling work, and chances are it helps the wallet and waistline too. It's absolutely right to promote moderate and responsible drinking, but by setting a target of complete abstinence there are also some unintended consequences.

It was back at the start of October when Herefordshire CAMRA were approached by *BBC Radio Wales* to contribute to a discussion programme, the topic of which was the *Go Sober for Stoptober* campaign. The Beeb were interested in getting CAMRA's take on the campaign, but the views they received weren't quite what they were expecting. It gave them genuine food for thought.

Boycott your Post Office

It's fine if people just skip buying alcohol at their local supermarket for drinking at home, but this campaign is about so much more than that. It was explained to the BBC that those who consequently give their local pub a miss for October needed to be careful - very careful indeed - if they then want it to still be there for them in the future. This well-meaning campaign, by hitting pub visits, is in real danger of helping to tip already-struggling rural and community pubs over a financial precipice; the result of which will inevitably see more villages and other local communities lose their pub. What applies here is the hackneyed phrase - *use it or lose it*. We wouldn't ask people to boycott their village shop

or post office for a month as it would put their future in peril, so why promote a campaign that discourages them from visiting their village pub? For that is exactly what is being promoted here - albeit inadvertently.

One Herefordshire publican - who understandably wishes to remain anonymous - told the *Hopvine* that the *Stoptober* campaign costs his rural pub alone £1,000 in revenue. And alongside *Stoptober* comes the already well-established *Dryanuary* - another month now synonymous with abstinence. There only needs to be a *Don't Drink in December Campaign* (or similar for another month) and that would see the pub trade take a hit for a whole quarter of the year. That's a lot of custom for any pub to lose.

Invisible Pubs

Can there really be people out there who still don't realise that our pubs are having a torrid time? Maybe this initiative was dreamed up in a metropolitan bubble, where the plight of our village and community pubs is all but invisible? It would be worthwhile the campaign organisers reading some of the independent research that tells us that local pubs play a vital role in promoting social and mental well-being, by them helping to address the root causes of social isolation and loneliness in many communities. There is a real danger here of the pub baby going out with the alcohol-free bathwater.

The same publican suggests that it's now time that some-one else took the hit instead of our pubs next October. Why not encourage people to give up fast food for a month? There is little dispute that burgers contribute significantly to an ongoing national epidemic of obesity (including amongst our children), and that's before one takes into account the latest findings of the possible detrimental effects of eating too much red meat. Or perhaps give up driving your car to work for a month would be better - it would give the nation a fitness boost; reduce road deaths and help save the planet into the bargain? Both of these surely have more merit than piling more financial pain onto our valued village and community pubs.



HT

HEREFORD TIMES NAMES ITS COUNTY WINNERS

The winners of the second *Hereford Times Food & Drink Awards* were announced at the end of November at a gala evening held at Hereford Racecourse. Overall champion was **Pensons Restaurant** at Netherwood near Tenbury Wells which, having topped the *Best Restaurant/Dining Pub* category, went on to receive the accolade of *Food & Drink Business of the Year*. Photos courtesy Hereford Times



The **Best Brewer** category, celebrating ale, lager and stout brewed in Herefordshire, was won by newcomer, **Weobley Brewing Company**, which is based at Joules Restaurant in Weobley (see *Brewery News* on page 3). The other finalist was last year's winner, Swan Brewery of Leominster.

Pictured (opposite left to right) are Juliet Whitmarsh, owner of Joules Restaurant; Mike Trulove of sponsor Hereford Business Improvement, and Weobley Brewery Head Brewer Tom Evans.

The title of **Best Cider Producer** (restricted to products made from apples grown in Herefordshire orchards and bottled in Herefordshire or a neighbouring county) went to **Little Pomona Orchard & Cidery**. The other finalists were last year's winner, Celtic Marches Beverages of Bishops Frome; Wilces of Ledbury, and Fair Oak of Bacton.

Pictured (opposite, left to right) are Susanna Forbes, Little Pomona's owner; Julian Vaughan, MD of sponsor, The Green Dragon Hotel, James Forbes and Blair Coté



The **Sun Inn** at Leintwardine, was judged to be the **Community Pub of the Year**, having to beat-off strong competition from the Bridge Inn, Michaelchurch Escley and the Yew Tree, Peterstow.

Pictured (opposite, left to right) are Chris Cook, Abbie Gadd, Sales & Marketing Manager of sponsors, Wye Valley Brewery, Sally Cook, Sun manager and Sarah and Nathan of the Sun team.

This award recognises pubs that attract customers due to their excellent drinks offer and all-round atmosphere, with particular emphasis placed on beer quality and local-sourcing of products.

ROSS SHACK ATTACK

A rather interesting 'construction' has appeared in the garden of the town's Riverside Inn.

Those of you familiar with Ross-on-Wye may also know the plight of the town's long term closed and semi-derelict Riverside Inn. Adjacent to Ross's star piece of riverside public amenity space (complete with bandstand and picnic area), its current owner bought the pub in 2014, and later failed to get planning permission to convert the premises into flats. Having appeared to have thrown his toys out of the pram, rather than offer it for sale to another potential pub operator, it has since been allowed to rot to the point where it is now considered by many to be the No.1 eyesore in Ross.

However, it may soon have some seriously stiff competition in the eyesore stakes, if Herefordshire Council planners approve a part-retrospective planning application made by the pub's owner for what is rather euphemistically described as a "single-storey building" within the grounds of the closed pub. The idea is to serve drinks and ice creams from it (as once happened from a kiosk there before), but the implementation of this project looks to be seriously off-beam.

It is the building's construction that has raised some eyebrows: with it being hastily nailed together re-using the same planks that until recently constituted the pub's decked terrace; it certainly makes for shanty-town chic. As to the quality of workmanship? The reclaimed timber hasn't even been cleaned, with daylight visible between the algae-stained planks. One might be forgiven for suggesting it comes from the *Huddersfield & District Allotment Association School of Architecture*. Certainly, it would struggle to pass muster as a pigeon loft. There have even been cruel rumours circulating around Ross that it might have been the town's entry for this year's *Turner Prize*.



Pigeon Loft or Turner Prize entry? Decking planks stand to attention to create a shack at the Riverside Inn.



Eyesore-on-Wye: Ross's Riverside Inn in 2019

Ross Town Council don't appear to be very enthusiastic either. In their response to the planning application they have helpfully pointed out that there is a condition in an earlier planning approval that requires the kiosk to only open when the pub does. That isn't likely to happen, but if you do come across a pigeon eating an ice cream then let the *Hopvine* know.

Short Measure?
No price list on display?
Contact Trading Standards

08454 040506

consumeradvice@herefordshire.gov.uk

IT'S GROUNDHOG DAY AT THE NEWTOWN INN

Another Hopvine prediction was proved right, as owners appeal their latest planning refusal

With the same pre-ordained regularity that Christmas arrives with us, so too does another planning application for the closed **Newtown Inn** at Lower Eggleton. To be more accurate, it's actually another appeal this time, following the pub-owners' latest planning setback on their desperate mission to get permission for their illegal conversion of the closed roadside pub into a private dwelling.

The appeal is due to be heard by a Government Planning Inspector at a public hearing at Hereford Town Hall on the 14th January. Herefordshire CAMRA expects to be joining the local parish council to lend support to the council's defence of their latest refusal decision.

It's going to be an interesting session. A rather bizarre suggestion by the pub-owners' agent, that the village hall could adequately replace the facilities of the pub won't take too long to debunk. But the undoubted climax of the day will be to witness how the pub's owners are going to justify their £295,000 asking price for the premises.

Notwithstanding they bought the inn for £135,000 (less than half of what they were asking), they are going to need to explain the massive price discrepancy when compared to the sale price figures of a basket of other far superior pubs that have recently changed hands across Herefordshire. CAMRA will present evidence from five other recent pub sales, including the Stockton Cross Inn which changed hands for £222,000 (that's 24% less than what is being asked for the Newtown). And don't forget the Newtown has been completely stripped of all its interior fittings, toilets, bar and a fully-equipped catering kitchen. The whole lot has gone – even the main entrance has been bricked-up and rendered over! There will be a full report on proceedings in the next *Hopvine*.

CLIFFE PLAN THROWN OUT

But will the Mathon pub now be offered for sale?

Just as was predicted in the last edition of the *Hopvine*, a planning application for conversion of the **Cliffe Arms** at Mathon into a dwelling (plus a new build of two more houses in the pub's garden) ended in a car crash, when on the 10th October Herefordshire Council planners threw out the application on no less than nine separate grounds.

This scheme was never going to get approved. Alongside written objections from more than 90 local residents and former pub-users, there were also objections from seven other bodies and organisations – including the *Malvern Hills AONB*, the Council's own Ecology Officer and, of course, CAMRA.

However, most damning of all was that the pub's owners had made no effort at all to sell the premises as a going concern before considering an alternative use. In fact, an offer to buy the pub - which was initially accepted - was then later declined by them. Thus, their *loadsamoney* property development now looks stillborn. Moreover, more bad news for them is that the potential owner is still there waiting in the wings to purchase the Grade II-listed property, with their aim being to re-open it as a village pub. It will be interesting to see if the pub's owners waste more of their time and money by appealing the decision.

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A TOWN FILLED WITH MUSIC

September is the month that Bromyard's pubs take on a folk rhythm all of their own

Each September since 1968 a Folk Festival takes place in Bromyard, held just beyond the site of the old railway station, a short walk from the town centre. For the duration of a weekend Broad/High Street fills with rucksack wearing, instrument case toting, colourfully clad people of all ages. The folkies are in town.

Not so well known is that a Fringe Festival has sprung up in the last ten years occupying all five pubs and Market Square in front of the former Hop Pole Hotel. This serves a dual purpose. It caters to those of the general public who wish to dip their toe into this music without committing themselves to attending the official festival, but also provides a break for festival-goers, many of which have brought their own instruments with them and feel the need to let off steam playing with a host of like-minded people. The field of folk music is probably one that, more than any other, encourages listeners to buy an instrument, master it and join in.



Strings in the garden at the Falcon Hotel

This is the most popular venue for musicians, who pack the front room. What distinguishes this from the typical acoustic session, is the general low guitar count. Instead, fiddles, whistles, flutes, recorders and 'free-reed' instruments – melodeons, concertinas, button accordions and piano accordions dominate. I counted at least a dozen fiddles, and probably even more reed instruments. There were between twenty-five and thirty players, but there can be forty. The music is predominantly instrumental, and what is amazing is that one musician will call out a title and everyone will join in, in tune and in time, with no sheet music in front of them.



Grandfather's clock at the Kings Arms

Walking towards the centre of Bromyard from the official site via one of its most intriguing streets, Church Street, a regency house on the right hand side of the road, has a notice in its window stating that it was the Adam and Eve pub in the 18th century and listing four other pubs that once lined the street. These are examples from the distant past, but more disturbingly, nearby are the Crown and Sceptre and Hop Pole both empty and up for sale.

On a more cheerful note, the first essential port of call was the **Falcon Hotel**, on the corner of Broad Street. The Falcon already hosts a weekly folk/acoustic session every Tuesday (well worth a look) and its capacious front room is well shaped to allow performers breathing space with cosy seating areas for the audience at the bar end.

A short backtrack was then necessary to see what was happening in the Market Square. Teams of Morris Dancers gathered, each with its own cadre of musicians. These had come from Evesham, Kenilworth, Barnsley, the Cotswolds and Coventry. The Earlsdon Morris organised an elimination contest of dancers, reminiscent of a television show - was this really traditional? Nevertheless, it was in good humour and thoroughly engaged the attention of the audience. Morris Dancing has



The Shropshire Bedlam outside the Hop Pole

come into the 21st century and there are now women's dance groups. The 'Shropshire Bedlam', a male ensemble, tour in tandem with 'The Martha Rhodens' a female troupe, and both have their own musicians. It was gratifying to see so many people gathering outside the frontage of The Hop Pole on a sunny day, and gives an inkling of what the Market Square could be like if the venue was regenerated. I should also mention that the Square has that rarity in small towns, a reasonably-priced cafe that was open on a Sunday.

Returning to the pubs, **The Inn** (formerly the Bay Horse), on the left of the High Street, had Morris Dancing in the pub garden, but the music in the pub itself had wound down, so the next stop was across the road to the **Queen's Arms**.

This had Morris Dancing in the yard at the side, with an outdoor bar open, selling Timothy Taylor's Landlord and Wye Valley Stout. A labyrinthine wander through various rooms led to the



The Martha Rodens on Market Square

front bar where six or seven musicians were in session. Crossing the High Street and into New Road showed that the **Rose & Lion** was now the centre of the folk universe.

A succession of dancers with accompanists kept the sun-lovers entertained, while in the pub, if you could struggle through the jolly crowd, both the left and right front rooms had different groups of singers/musicians, both excellent.

A penultimate port of call was the **King's Arms** at the end of the High Street. It was impossible not to be charmed by a delightful family band of five who sang to an appreciative, if select, audience with a charming rendition of 'Grandfather's Clock' and other gems. It was now late afternoon, and things were quietening down.

However, as a postscript, a return visit to the Falcon Hotel was made which found it now com-



Jam at the Rose & Lion

pletely emptied inside, but revealed three young musicians in the garden playing fiddles in three-part harmony, a piece of Shetland/Scandinavian origin called 'Mountain Bird'. Exquisite.

All the pubs served Wye Valley and/or Hobson's beers in addition to ones mentioned earlier. My thanks to the helpful volunteers at Bromyard's Local History Centre for background information, and essential reading - *The Pubs of Bromyard, Ledbury and East Herefordshire* (Eisel & Shoemsmith: Logaston Press)

Paul Knott

THE BARRELS

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BATH TIME

A trip to the exquisite (but expensive) city of Bath was an opportunity to visit a few pubs, besides presenting a certificate to the brewery whose beer took the champion's rosette at last summer's Beer on the Wye.

Written by Jules Verne in 1873, and later made into a 1956 Hollywood film starring David Niven, *Around the World in Eighty Days* relates the fictional tale of how Phileas Fogg and his entourage fight the elements, multiple mishaps, tribal conflicts and railway catering to get to their destination...all just in time.

Thus it was, back on a bright and sunny Saturday in November, that sixteen CAMRA daytrippers took inspiration from Fogg's determination in an effort to get to the city of Bath by train - despite floods, tempest and rail strikes. An ambitious itinerary required travel to Bath via two different rail routes, dependent on which of the county's four rail stations was the starting point. If this wasn't enough complication on its own, then in between - trying to thwart the epic and valiant endeavour - was a rail strike by *West Midlands Trains* (who elected to run their lightly-used Leamington Spa-Nuneaton shuttle instead of running anything at all between Birmingham and Hereford); floods at Evesham that stopped *Great Western* services getting anywhere close to Hereford, and most disconcerting of all, was *Transport for Wales* threatening to run their "normal service". This brought harrowing flashbacks of abandonment in Llanwrytd Wells (and a £100 taxi fare home) from a trip there with them (but not back) in November 2018.

Centre of the Earth via Bristol Temple Meads

The travel element of the itinerary was certainly going to need a Plan B and, for that matter probably Plans C,D,E and F too, as well as possible intervention from the Holy Trinity to make it all work. On paper, at least, it might have been easier to have instead journeyed to another of Jules Vernes' famous daytrip destinations - to the Centre of the Earth. In fact, the Holy Trinity may well have intervened, such was our collective good fortune as timely progress was made towards Bath. A foot in a train door, after a spirited run over the footbridge at Newport station, meant a critical connection was still made, and choosing an alternative station to change trains instead of at Bristol Temple Meads meant none of the party were amongst the 30 or so unfortunate souls left behind on the platform there (with our final train being loaded to the gunwales). The upshot of all this rail-borne excitement was



What is in those oak casks? Its all beers and smiles at Electric Bear Brewery

an arrival at our destination, Oldfield Park (a western district of Bath), with the party 100% intact and no more than ten minutes late. Phew!

With all in fine spirits, it was time to route march to the unusually-named **Electric Bear Brewery**. The brewery occupies a typical modern industrial unit in an otherwise forgettable area in the west end of the city. However, all isn't quite as it seems, as a bit of interesting history comes into play which helps to explain the brewery's strange name. One needs to go back to April 1942 at the height of World War Two. Earlier that same year, RAF Bomber Command had paid a night-time visit to the historic German port city of Lübeck and made a number of significant structural and architectural adjustments to the cityscape. This enraged Mein Führer, who set in plan a revenge attack on Britain's historic cities. These were to be called the *Baedeker Raids*, taking their name from a pre-war German tourist guide that featured the target British cities (if it helps, imagine *Lonely Planet*, but with swastikas and Jewish-owned businesses omitted). Five

cities were targeted and Bath's turn came over the nights of the 26th and 27th April. Ultimately it wasn't to be the success that the Luftwaffe had hoped for, which was partly down to the guide book itself. Or so the story goes...

Dodgy map-reading and Teutonic efficiency

The *Baedeker* guide entry for Bath included a detailed fold-out streetmap, onto which the city's many architectural and historic riches were highlighted – including the world-famous Roman Baths. In fact, these riches are so many in such a relatively small area, that there was only room enough left on the map to annotate the city's name offset to the west of the city centre. Therefore, it was there - with typical Teutonic efficiency – that most of the bombs fell, helping to save Nash's wonderful Georgian architecture in the process. However, there was to be a sting in the tail. For in the west of the city was located the Bear Brewery, which took a direct hit and was destroyed. All was considered to have been lost forever, and the story of the original Bear Brewery might well have ended there, but, for that on the brewery's same site were built the industrial units that Electric Bear occupies today. So, it all comes full circle with the word "Electric" being added to "Bear" to represent the source of energy used to brew their beers. Thinking about it, Diesel Bear doesn't quite have the same ring to it.

After a wait of not three minutes at the door to the brewery, almost like a vision from a Mr Benn cartoon, brewery employee and host for our visit, Conor Prior, suddenly materialised on his bike as if almost by magic. Letting the party into what is a substantial and very well-equipped brewery, the one thing that hits on entering is the absolutely over-powering aroma of hops. It's quite evident there's no skimping on the ingredients here. From the outset, it is obvious to even the casual observer that this is a properly-funded and professionally-run operation. Taking a craft-beer steer very much from the other side of the Atlantic, this is no run-of-the-grist mill micro-brewery. The equipment is state-of-art stainless steel, and the outfit seems to have all the kit needed to trade in what is today a very crowded and competitive market place. And with it all comes some pretty cool marketing. It is difficult not to be impressed.

Fortunately for the group, like so many other craft beer-orientated breweries, it has its own tap room for visitors to sit and enjoy the various beers in amongst the brewing apparatus. So, seats were taken and beers poured. First up to try was the reason we were there – Electric Bear's Whirly Bird. This 5.2% strength brew won *Champion Beer of the Festival* at this summer's *Beer on the Wye*. It's a cloudy Pale Ale with a zingy-ness delivered by generous additions of Chinook and Vic Secret hop varieties. They had moved Heaven and Earth to make sure the brew was on for our visit, albeit it was only available in keg form on the day. It was explained the brewery only brews cask versions of their beer portfolio for special events – which are thankfully quite regular, and often involve food operators coming into the brewery. It would prove interesting to see how people judged the qualities of this version of Whirly Bird, as opposed to its cask twin that had previously joined us in a marquee in Hereford. The general view expressed was that it is still an outstanding beer, but it's better still when it's served from a cask.

Zorbing with an Imperial Breakfast

Before we presented the *Beer on the Wye* Champion Beer certificate to Conor on behalf of his brewery, time was allocated to give the premises the once over, and the opportunity also taken to sample a few of the alcoholic wares on offer. There were no less than ten brews displayed on an electronic beer board behind a rather make-shift bar. These ranged in strength between a brew called Zorbing (a Pale Ale at



A rare glimpse minus traffic: the Royal Oak with just sixteen ciders

4.1%) and something called Breakfast Epiphanies, which was advertised as an 11% strength Imperial Breakfast Stout. Despite most of the group having already had breakfast earlier that morning, it was surprising (and slightly unnerving) that a number of the group actually gave it a try. Of equal surprise, was to appreciate how a drink of that outlandish strength can taste so subtle and drinkable. No doubt this was due to it defying expectations by proving to be neither cold nor gassy. Beers between these two extremes included a Vienna Pale Ale; a Belgian Quad and a Caribbean Sour. One thing is for certain, and that is the days of boring brown beer styles are long gone!

Finally, a stillage with an interesting collection of old brandy and whisky casks caught the eye. These turned out to contain a number of special beers that undergo maturation for twelve months. One was described as being a Baltic Porter. Excited by the prospect of drinking a beer dreamt-up in Lithuania (or somewhere of that chilly ilk), thoughts promptly moved on to getting one for next summer's *Beer on the Wye* festival. But, alas, the barrels were scheduled to be tapped, racked and sold by Christmas before starting the whole process all over again. So near, but so far.

All too soon it was time to thank Conor and leave the brewery behind. The starting pistol was now fired on our wonderful (but financially painful) odyssey of the great Georgian city's pubs. Our first target was just a short (but furious) paddle up the River Avon towards the city centre. So, having deftly avoided punctures to inflatables, and by carefully out-manoeuving the submerged shopping trolleys, the group presented at a fine flight of old stone steps that afford entry to the **Royal Oak** on Lower Bristol Road. It was time to dry our socks and buy a beer.

Good beer, not half!

Home to Ralph's Ruin Brewery, the Royal Oak is a solid and imposing two-bar affair on a busy crossroads, in an area that appears to have a sizeable student population. Awarded the accolade *City Pub of the Year* in 2017 by the local CAMRA Branch, this place has an impressive range of beers on offer - and an even more impressive range of sixteen different draught real ciders and perries (with Celtic Marches flying the flag for Herefordshire).

Where to start with choosing from eight very interesting beers was the first quandary? Tiny Rebel's Apricot Fool (you'd be one for not trying it) and their Stay Puft Oreo version (a very rare beast to witness in cask form anywhere), were sat keeping company with a 5.0% IPA from Morecambe's Cross Bay Brewery, plus two from the home team in the shape of Ralph's Ruin Naughty (at a gentle 7.3%) and Dark Side of the Ralph at 5.0%. We wondered if we had instead drowned in the Avon and departed to a Beer Heaven? There was just so much good beer and cider to try, and yet so little time to try it. Moreover, it didn't help that there were no half-pint glasses left in the pub to make sampling easier - these had all headed-off home with the customers from what sounded like a very lively session the night before. Still, sherry schooners or champagne flutes would equally be up to the job.

The opportunity was taken to inspect Ralph's on-site brewery, which is done via a glass vision panel in a lower bar that has some nice original stone flags. In case you were now wondering, the brewery takes its name from a dog called Ralph. However, it was the first major mistake of the day that, with Ralph nowhere to be seen mooching [shouldn't that be pooching? *Ed*] on the premises, we completely failed to ascertain his breed, age or even his whereabouts. Perhaps he was out body-boarding on the nearby River Avon... or maybe he was a victim of that *Baedeker Raid* that did for the other brewery up the road?

With its well-worn timber and stone floors; a mish-mash of rickety wooden furniture, and walls adorned top-to-bottom with posters for gigs, it's clearly a popular venue with students and music aficionados, as well as with real beer and cider-



Crossing the 'Price Frontier' to arrive at the Hop Pole

drinkers. Noticeable is that a broad spectrum of different live music genres features more nights than not - doubtless helping to drown-out the drone from the ever-passing traffic outside.

The Price isn't quite Right

It was soon time to eat, which meant crossing the River Avon again, but this time via the conveniently-positioned and royally-named Windsor Bridge. Feet dry, and with no sign of HRH Prince Andrew knocking about (reports he had been seen in the city's *Pizza Express* that morning remained uncorroborated) the party landed at the **Hop Pole** on Upper Bristol Road: a thoroughfare which is, thankfully, much quieter than its 'Lower' cousin that had just been left behind. One difference that was noted here were the prices. It felt like we had crossed an invisible price frontier: from now on we would be paying full-on Bath prices. With a single round of bread and butter (to accompany a meal) coming to £3 [It was politely declined! Ed] it isn't a pub for the terminally price-savvy to partake in budget dining and drinking. It was to be the first, but it wouldn't be the last time of needing to apply a defibrillator to our wallets.

The Hop Pole is a longstanding Bath Ales pub that occupies a substantial stone-built, three-storey building - one so archetypal of Bath. Inside has been thoroughly modernised, which included more than a slapdash of gastro sage-coloured paint. Entering through an opened-out bar area at the front, we were directed past a busy open kitchen to a dining room at the very rear of the premises to enjoy our lunchtime fayre. Bath Ales have been taken over by Cornish independent, St. Austell Brewery, and this probably explains why their three beers were keeping company with St.Austell's Proper Job on the bar. The trademark Bath Ales Gem - an amber-coloured brew at 4.1% - was there on the bar with two other Bath Ale beers, but where was their hallmark Bath SPA? It was disappointing to see it wasn't in residence. The semi-eponymous IPA has always been a favourite on any visit to a Bath Ales pub. Available instead was a 'new world' IPA called Prophecy, which just couldn't quite measure-up to fond memories of the deliciously light SPA. Even more disappointing was to learn that it is no longer brewed. Otherwise, the food and beer hit the spot, plus there were three real ciders to try too. Thus, now fed (but still pining for the deceased Bath SPA), it was time to head towards the city centre, which (unlike the Luftwaffe back in 1942) we knew precisely where to find.

En-suite Garden Shed

Entering the city centre, passing by the impressive Theatre Royal, it was a wonder to marvel at Nash's honey-hued Georgian architecture at every turn, which was now glowing resplendently in the waning late afternoon sunshine. Equally eye-catching were the various upmarket shops and businesses that occupied streets bustling with busy-busy shoppers. Many of them appeared to sell things that no ordinary person would ever dream of needing, such as a solar-powered Aga; or maybe a double-decked faux leather-clad hot tub, or even a titanium-plated digital lavatory brush (with accompanying software package)... all on sale at prices no sane person would entertain. Furthermore, an idle glance into an estate agent's window prompted a (very) sharp intake of breath, as the realisation struck home that the sale proceeds of a detached house in Herefordshire probably wouldn't quite get you an en-suite garden shed in Bath. It's another world completely.

The **Grapes** on Westgate Street is right in the middle of this shopping madness and was heaving with customers (some doubtless struggling



The recently re-opened Grapes, which occupies one of Bath's oldest buildings and is the tap for Three Dagers Brewery

with their newly-purchased Agas and hot tubs). A key outlet for the nearby Wiltshire-based Three Dagers Brewery, it had only re-opened in August 2019 after a two-year period of closure. Two of the three beers were from Three Dagers, which the consensus view that they weren't a lot better than satisfactory. Architecturally, the Grapes can claim to be one of Bath's oldest buildings and boasts a fine stone frontage. In contrast, inside it has been refurbished which has created a very modern environment with clean lines; light wood furnishings; old enamel adverts, and hipster-style lighting. Topped-off with some mildly-irritating *muzak*, it had an atmosphere more evocative of a national chain pub. In some towns the Grapes would be a good pub (in fact, a very good pub), but it lacks the prerequisite character, charm and history when compared to some of the other pubs in the city... which were next in line.

Rev Ian Paisley and a few elbows in the ribs

It was time to criss-cross through narrow cobbled streets and down alleyways to arrive at the **Old Green Tree** on Green Street. Things were about to change, for by any measure this is no ordinary pub. One can tell immediately from the pub's façade that it's something quite special. In fact, it's nothing short of a true classic. The 300-year building is on CAMRA's list of pubs with unspoiled interiors of historical importance. But there was something stopping the party from seeing this fine interior, as the shoppers' hordes had now been significantly swelled by rugby supporters following the conclusion of a game versus Ulster. We didn't spot if the Reverend Ian Paisley Jr was amongst their number, but there were enough of them to prevent our easy access through the pub's front door! However, perseverance paid off with the group adopting a diamond formation, with elbows flaying, to win admission into this wonderful little three-bar time-warp.

Replete with fine original oak-panelling in all of its bars, it boasts a delightful snug (with roaring fire) to the front, and an unusual northern-style drinking lobby down one side. Settling down in the back bar, we couldn't quite comprehend how there could be seats vacant in such a small and busy pub. Perhaps they were booby-trapped? Whilst carefully searching for whoopee cushions (or worse) under the seats, beers from Pitchfork, Butcombe and Flying Monk were enjoyed. The Old Green Tree has always championed West Country beers, plus it offers real



One of Bath's (and Britain's) finest hostelries - the Old Green Tree

ciders and a collection of Belgian bottled beers to boot. This one scored 9.5 out of 10.

Darkness was rapidly encroaching as we left the Old Green Tree. Bath takes on a whole different atmosphere at night. One is never too sure if the ghost of Guy Fawkes, Dracula or even HRH Prince Andrew (with pizza still in hand) might emerge menacingly from the shadows.

Rain had started to fall, as a long slog up a hill was called for. But it was definitely worth it to see another of Bath's historic and quirky *wün-derpubs* – the **Star Inn**. This is another establishment that is recognised in CAMRA's little black book of fabbo unspoiled pub interiors. The Star consists of four small rooms with blazing fires, with benches along and around the walls; glass screens, and more (what else?) wood-panelling. The at-times manic bar-counter is accessed from one of the rooms and a corridor. One of the benches takes the name 'Death Row', which may be linked to the fact the pub is



Wot, no snuff? The wonderful Star inn.

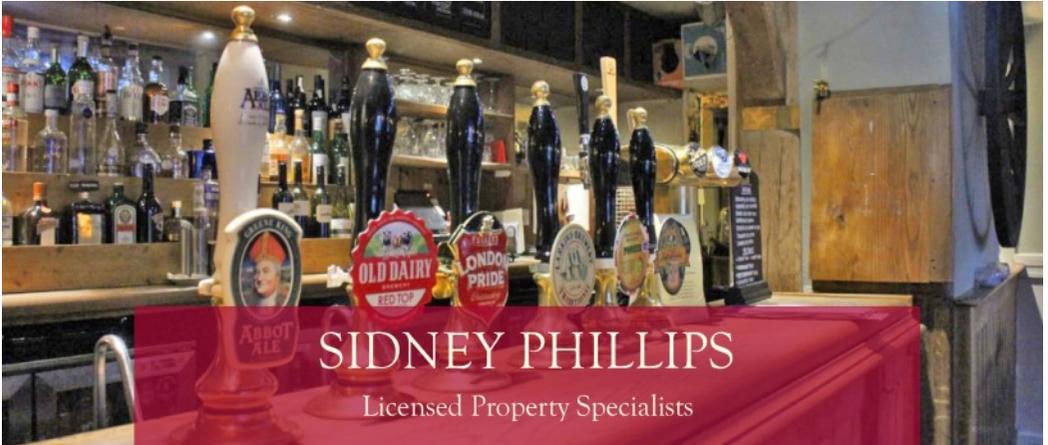
coffin-shaped [How charming. Ed]. The Star dates to the 1770's, but the interior is down to the handiwork of *Gaskell & Chambers* pub-fitters back in 1928. This place always looks splendid and is a must-see when visiting Bath (along with

the *Pizza Express* on the city's Southgate Place).

Snuffed-out Bass

The Star has sold Draught Bass for time immemorial, and probably a lot longer. However, as none of the party could quite recall where or by whom that once iconic beer is brewed these days, most of the party instead plumped for one of the two beers from the more local Abbey Ales. The pub is also famous for inviting punters to avail themselves of a range of free snuffs. However, our sinuses had to stay virgin and unmolested on this occasion, as a simple notice pinned to a wall explained this service was no longer available as somebody had stolen the snuff boxes. [Perhaps it was the same crowd who nicked the half-pint glasses from the Royal Oak? Ed]

Just around the corner (and a mini-roundabout away) from the Star, the **Bell Inn** on Walcot Street was our last pub of the day. This place is a real survivor. A famous pub in the city for its live music scene, by 2012 it had already been closed for some time and its future looked bleak. However, come 2013 and the pub's staff, music



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fans and customers put their money where their mouths were, as over 530 of them invested in a co-operative buy-out. The place was saved, and it was theirs!

This is like no other pub in Bath, and it certainly isn't like any other community-owned pub in the UK. Despite being an 18th Century Grade II-listed building (like most are in Bath), inside is a dark, brooding and Bohemian single long bar that has a music pedigree screaming not just from posters on the walls, but from off the ceilings and inside the toilets too. Rather bizarrely, a DJ merrily spun vinyl in a section of the bar off-set midway along the pub. Gratefully, the music was played at a level that allowed for casual conversation, not that the quality of conversation was too coherent at this point in the day's proceedings. Matching the extensive music repertoire was the Bell's beer offer of six: three of which were over 5.0% strength, with Flying Monk Brewery's Dark Lane Stout going down a treat.

With our beer and food appetites now thoroughly sated (with wallets frazzled), and having had our fill of Georgian Bath, it was time to escape from a city where the pavements were now sparkling with heavy rain. The bright sunshine of our morning visit to Electric Bear Brewery felt like a lifetime ago, and thinking back to the epic planning effort that had gone into the travel itinerary – with the multiple near-misses on the train journey down - it was in stark contrast that the trip back to Herefordshire proved to be a total anti-climax. It was home and (with apologies to Zebedee and friends) straight to bed.



The Bohemian Bell Inn on Walcot Street is now a music venue proudly in community ownership



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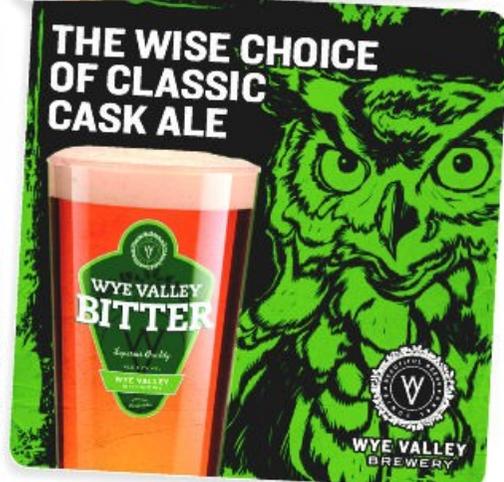
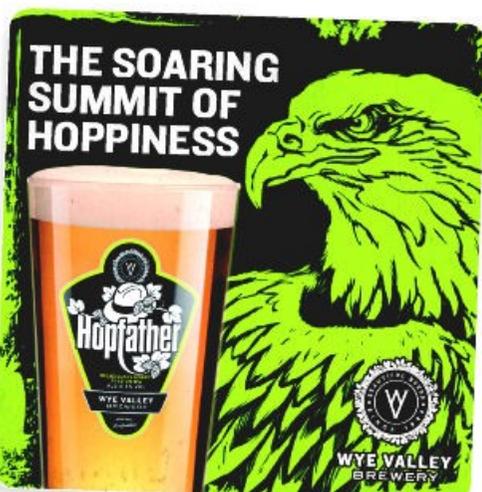
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COLWALL

By our Transport Correspondent

When the Great Western Railway arrived in 1861 it transformed the sleepy village of Colwall into a much larger settlement clustered around the station. It is hard to imagine the turmoil when they built the tunnel under the Malvern Hills, a masterpiece in engineering delivered by the principal engineer, Stephen Ballard. From then onwards his family was inextricably linked to the development of the village including a vinegar factory, bottling plant, and brick and gasworks. Needless to say, Colwall remained as a major producer of fruit and the Colwall Orchard Group maintain this heritage to this day. The walk, however, runs through pastures, climbing the wooded shoulders beneath the Malvern Hills. There are gentle climbs and a few stiles on this moderate 4-mile (7 km) walk but you will be rewarded by outstanding views throughout.

The pubs featured are the Chase Inn at Upper Colwall and the Wyche Inn at Upper Wyche. The Chase dates from the early 1850s and in recent decades has gained a reputation for serving unusual beers for Herefordshire. In the 1980s for example, it offered Best Bitter from the short-lived Bailey's brewery at Leigh Sinton as well as Mild from Donnington Brewery in the Cotswold. Now, you are more than likely to find Batham's Bitter and Courage Directors (brewed by Wells and Youngs) on tap as well as two guests, sometimes from local brewers as well as national brands. There's also usually a cider or perry from Westons on tap. The view from the garden is exceptional even at this time of year, and the bar area is equally engaging. The second pub is the Wyche Inn with stunning views across the Severn plain to the Cotswolds. The Wyche is a paradise for those seeking out ales from small brewers; the beers change regularly. When we called in there was a 'Tap Takeover' involving Ledbury Brewery, all green-hopped beers using local hops from Instone and Thinghill Courts, Hawkins Farming and the Hop Development Nursery - and excellent they were too. This fine establishment has two bars, one with pool and darts and the other a lounge cum dining area.

Evendine

Exit Colwall railway station, go immediately left over the footbridge and pass by the Charlie Ballard nature reserve on your right. Go through



a kissing gate ahead and walk up to the top left-hand corner of the pasture. Once through the next kissing gate follow the path ahead which curves right and then up steps to a junction. Keep right here beneath a woodland canopy to a gully and another kissing gate leading into a field where there are great views of the British Camp. Follow the field's edge to a small gate in a field gate and through the next gate onto a track. This leads to the hamlet of Evendine where you go left on the lane to pass the Malt-house where you can buy pressed fruit juices by the roadside.

The Kettle Sings

As the road bends right keep left along a drive which curves towards a wood. As the drive finally turns right to a bungalow continue on a narrow path between a fence and hedge into the wood. The woodland provides a timely reminder of how important tree cover is in the fight against climate change. It is fortunate the people years ago planted these woods for the future...we need to do the same and urgently.

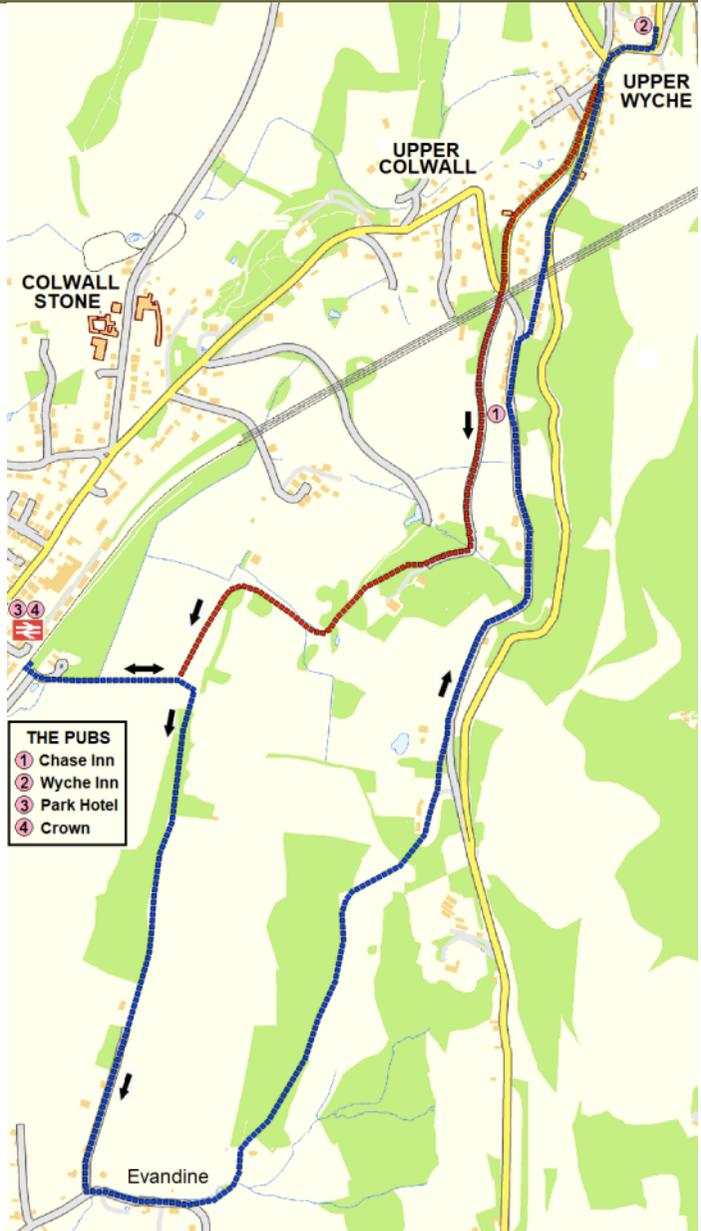
The path reaches a junction. Go right here over a stile and turn immediately left to walk through a rough pasture and through an old kissing gate. Ease away from the parkland fence to reach a stile. Once over, climb right through the woodland to reach the Kettle Sings café. Follow the drive as it bends right but cut up a grassy bank to a lane. Go left along it for about a kilometre until you reach the Chase Inn.

Wyche Cutting

On leaving the pub, go left and turn first right to climb past houses to an upper road. Cross with care and keep ahead again to Wyche Cutting, originally an old salt road where a gap was dug

out in 1837. The Wyche Inn is around the corner on the left. After your stop, retrace your steps back down the pavement of the B4218 to a hairpin bend; this will require crossing the road twice. Cross over before the hairpin bend and follow the lane directly opposite, off Chase Road, signposted as Geopark Way.

Follow this surfaced drive to the entrance gate to the late Victorian house, Linden, where you cut right on a track which becomes a green lane heading to a field gate. Once through, turn right down the field to the right of a clump of trees. On reaching a small gate, do not go through. Go left here, but keep near to the hedge on your right. This leads to a kissing gate where you retrace your steps back to Colwall station. If there's time before your train or bus there's always the Colwall Park Hotel serving Wye Valley beers and the Crown, just across the road, which had Doombar on the bar when we called in. They are no more than 2-5 minutes walks from the platform; that's handy.



Factfile

Map: Explorer 190 Malvern & Bredon Hill

Catch the train from Hereford or Ledbury

On Monday-Sundays:

There are hourly trains from Hereford to Colwall on weekdays, but on Sundays there are longer gaps between trains in the morning; journey time is approximately 30 minutes.

Catch the bus from Ledbury

First Bus 675 operates from Ledbury to Colwall every 2 hours on Mondays to Saturdays

Traveline:
www.travelinemidlands.co.uk

The Pubs

The **Chase Inn** is open 12- 3 and from 5 onwards; all day at weekends.

The **Wyche Inn** and **Park Hotel** are open all day every day.

The **Crown** is open 11-2.30 on Wednesdays to Fridays and from 5; all day at weekends.

Check with Whatpub.

PUBS & FLOODS

A Number of the county's pubs were affected by the recent floods that hit the region.

The River Wye bursts its banks somewhere or other along its length to varying degrees pretty much most years. For Beer on the Wye - held in its riverside marquee next door to Hereford Rowing Club - its waters are an ever-present threat. Like the great city of Naples, sat beneath the brooding Mount Vesuvius, one learns to respect the potential danger that lies within one's near neighbour. However, unlike in 2012, when Beer on the Wye famously became Beer *in* the Wye, this last summer everyone managed to keep their feet dry and their beer and cider undiluted. But how quickly a seemingly benign and genteel river can change its face. Come the end of October, it wasn't just the Beer on the Wye site that was fully submerged, but most of Greyfriars Avenue and beyond, - with many parts of the city taking on the resemblance of a mini-Venice. The only thing missing were the gondoliers overcharging tourists for rides.

In the city itself, the **De Koffie Pot** and the **Black Lion** on Bridge Street were hit, whereas the **Saracen's Head** in St. Martin's Street, despite being immediately next to the 14th-Century Wye Bridge, was saved thanks to new flood defences that were erected after the deluge of 2007.

One of the most astonishing stories emerged from a pub at Symonds Yat. **Ye Old Ferrie Inne** discovered its garden furniture had been ferried off down the River Wye; then into the Severn Estuary, before being found beached near Portishead in the Bristol Channel - that's a voyage of 47 miles. It's not known whether the stricken furniture will be adopted by a hostelry down there or return home to Herefordshire. At least the pub itself escaped inundation.

However, it wasn't just the usual suspects along the banks of the River Wye that copped it this time. Such was the intensity and duration of the rainfall, that local streams just couldn't cope; the upshot being places (and pubs) across the county were hit. It would appear that Climate Change had set off on its own pub crawl of Herefordshire.

It was a very close call at the **Red Lion Inn** at Stiffords Bridge, when the neighbouring Cradley Brook topped out. It's done this before in quite spectacular fashion when, during the flood of 2007, the then publicans had to escape from the pub onto the roof of an articulated lorry from a first-floor window.



Photo: Hereford Times

Proprietors William & Kasia Chambers relax after the chaos at the Bridge Inn, as the River Monnow subsides

It wasn't quite that bad this time, but things were looking serious: the pub's cellar was taking on water like a scene from the film *Das Boot*, and would soon be literally lapping at the pub's doors. Licensee Steve Moorman used his initiative and put out a desperate appeal via *Facebook* for help, and so various Good Samaritans, including Julian Hawthornthwaite from Malvern Hills Brewery, were soon hot-footing it there with the necessary hoses and pumps. A critical situation was soon brought under control and a repeat of 2007 avoided. In fact, the pub was up and running as if nothing had happened in time for a visit by Gloucester CAMRA the very next night.

In the extreme south west of the county, Ewyas Harold and Kentchurch were two other places affected. In the former, the **Temple Bar** and **Dog Inn** had a very close call, whilst the recently refurbished and reopened Bridge Inn suffered serious damage to the kitchen. For a while after the floods, the kitchen team moved outside and cooked on a barbeque to maintain a meal service.

Herefordshire has always been prone to flooding, but like in many other places, the rain is getting heavier and more persistent and we are starting to see more and bigger events. This makes things worrying for some of our pubs located at or around water. Instead of being able to attract extra custom by dint of having a babbling brook or river nearby, it's fast becoming a case of those publicans losing sleep every time heavy rains arrive. What should be a trading advantage for some pubs is now in danger of becoming a real liability. That's a shame.

The *Hopvine* team wishes all those publicans who've had a torrid time recently the very, very best with getting back on their feet.

Herefordshire CAMRA

Winter What's on

Branch Meetings:

Wednesday 29th January: 8.00pm at the Boot Inn, Orleton. See for yourself the county's latest community-owned pub. Includes a round-up of beer scores ahead of final surveying for the Good Beer Guide 2021.

Wednesday 26th February: 8.00pm at the Tap House, Ross-on-Wye. A chance to visit our Pub of the Year winner in the flesh. Final selection of pubs for Good Beer Guide 2021.

Wednesday 25th March: 8.00pm at the Three Horseshoes, Allensmore.

Beer on the Wye Festival Meeting:

Tuesday 14th January: 8.00pm at the Gordon Bennetts, St. Peter St, Hereford. Plans are in hand for Beer on the Wye XVI. Why not get involved? Volunteers and new helpers always welcome.

Social Events:

Saturday 14th December: 27th Annual Black Country Pub Tour by minibus. FULLY-BOOKED!

Sunday 22nd December: Barrels, St. Owen Street, Hereford 12noon onwards: Annual informal pre-Christmas social get together. Come along and chat with friends over a pint of beer (or cider).

Monday 6th January: WASSAIL! Blow those post-Christmas blues out of your hair by celebrating a Twelfth-Night wassail at the Bell Inn, Tillington. Torchlight procession to the orchards led by the legendary Leominster Morris. A great atmosphere, plus food, beer and cider! Arrive 6.30pm absolute latest for a 7pm start.

Saturday 8th February: Lunchtime informal 'survey' of pubs in Leominster, commencing at the White Lion at 11.15am. All welcome! Please contact 07581 692538 if you wish to join in later.

Friday 7th February: Afternoon visit to the Great British Beer Festival (Winter) at the New Bingley Hall in Birmingham. Over 400 beers, ciders and perries star alongside hot food and live entertainment. Trip by train, more info to follow.

For more details go to:

www.herefordcamra.org.uk/diary

CAMRA BEER AND CIDER FESTIVALS

Thursday 6th to Saturday 8th February. 25th Tewkesbury Winter Ale Festival, George Watson Hall, 65 Barton Street, Tewkesbury, GL20 5PX Thu 7-11pm (members only); Fri 11am-11pm; Sat 11am-8pm. 80 Winter ales + local ciders and perries. Admission £6. www.tewkesbury.camra.org.uk

Tuesday 4th to Saturday 8th February. Great British Beer Festival Winter at The New Bingley Hall, 1 Hockley Circus, Birmingham B18 5PP. British beers of all styles; World beers; cider and perry. Tuesday session trade and CAMRA members only. <https://winter.gbbf.org.uk>



Wednesday 22nd to Saturday 25th April. 25th Great Welsh Beer festival, Sofia Gardens, Cardiff. www.gwbf.org.uk Tickets available soon.

Friday 10th to Sunday 12th July. Beer on the Wye XVI. Hereford's own festival down by the river.



LOCAL BEER AND CIDER FESTIVALS

Thursday 14th to Saturday 16th February. Valentine's Beer Festival: Ludlow Brewery, Station Drive, Ludlow, SY8 2PQ.

Organisers: For local festivals planned for mid-March to mid-June we need to have details during February for listing in this column. Local beer festivals frequently come to our notice too late for inclusion in the *Hopvine*. Wherever possible we put these on our *Beer on the Wye* Facebook page

www.facebook.com/BeerOnTheWye

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goes with them by joining today
at www.camra.org.uk/joinup

Or enter your details and complete the Direct Debit form below and you will receive
15 months membership for the price of 12 and save £2 on your membership subscription

Alternatively you can send a cheque payable to CAMRA Ltd with your completed form,
visit www.camra.org.uk/joinup, or call **01727 798440**.* All forms should be addressed to
Membership Department, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW.

Your details:

Title Surname

Forename(s)

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy)

Address

..... Postcode

Email address

Daytime Tel

	Direct Debit	Non DD
Single Membership (UK)	£26.50 <input type="checkbox"/>	£28.50 <input type="checkbox"/>
Under 26 Membership	£18 <input type="checkbox"/>	£20 <input type="checkbox"/>
Joint Membership	£31.50 <input type="checkbox"/>	£33.50 <input type="checkbox"/>
(At the same address)		
Joint Under 26 Membership	£23 <input type="checkbox"/>	£25 <input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate whether you wish to receive
What's Brewing and *BEER* by email OR post:

What's Brewing *BEER*
By Email By Post By Email By Post

Concessory rates are available only for Under
26 Memberships.

I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and
agree to abide by the Memorandum and
Articles of Association which can be found on
our website.

Signed

Date

Applications will be processed within 21 days.

Partner's Details (if Joint Membership)

Title Surname

Forename(s)

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy)



Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Please fill in the whole form using a ball point pen and send to:
Campaign for Real Ale Ltd, 230 Hatfield Road St. Albans, Herts AL1 4LW



Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society	Service User Number
To the Manager Bank or Building Society	9 2 6 1 2 9
Address	FOR CAMRA OFFICIAL USE ONLY This is not part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society Membership Number Name Postcode
Postcode	
Name(s) of Account Holder	Instructions to your Bank or Building Society
Bank or Building Society Account Number	Please pay Campaign For Real Ale Limited Direct Debits from the account details on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Campaign For Real Ale Limited and, if so, will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.
Branch Sort Code	Signature(s)
Reference	Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.

 This Guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay by Direct Debits
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd will notify you to working days in advance of your account being debited or as the revise agreed. If you request The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society
- If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when The Campaign Real Ale Ltd asks you to
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

*Price of single membership when paying by Direct Debit - Calls from land lines charged at standard national rates, cost may vary from mobile phones. New Direct Debit members will receive a 12 month supply of 4 vouchers in their first 15 months of membership. The debt you provide will be processed in accordance with our privacy policy in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

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December 2019

Landlords! Talk directly to your target market. Herefordshire pub-goers and real ale drinkers.
Advertise in the *Hopvine*

The *Hopvine* is produced four times per year and, of the 3,600 copies of each issue, most are distributed to around 300 pubs in the county, where they may be read many times over by different customers. Others go to real ale pubs further afield, plus beer festivals etc.

Attractive discounts are available for entries in consecutive issues, and even bigger discounts for four issues paid in advance.

Completed ads can be accepted in .pdf .doc, .pub, and .jpg format, or just send us your information, and perhaps a logo, and we can compose the ad for you. Deadline for next issue: November 10th.

Current advertising rates (from)

Full page	£110
Half Page	£73
One third page	£49
Quarter page	£40

Rates refer to an inside reverse page, prices subject to VAT

Do you miss issues of the *Hopvine* or live away from Herefordshire? You can get copies by post from David Powell, 18 Chatsworth Road, Hereford, HR4 9HZ. Send any number of stamped, self-addressed envelopes for A5 up to 100g OR 6 x 2nd class postage stamps for 4 copies (11 for 8 copies) OR cheque payable to Herefordshire CAMRA - £3.00 for 4 copies (£5.00 for 8 copies)

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please phone: 01568 616193
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service



product



knowledge