Hereford Hopvine

The Magazine of the Herefordshire Branch of CAMRA

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BULLS HEAD RETURNS IN STYLE

AUTUMN PUB OF THE SEASON

ROSS BREWING RENAISSANCE

FESTIVALS RETURN

16th - 18th February

CAMRA
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE


MORE THAN
JUST A CIDER
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PRESS
WESTONS CIDER EST. 1880
100% LOCAL APPLES
FROM THE WESTONS FAMILY
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LOCAL HOME-PRESSED APPLES
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ENGLISH CIDER
STOWFORD
PRESS

Welcome to the revived Hopvine. We've been away for quite a while. Much has changed in the almost two years since the last edition appeared, not least involving the Hopvine itself.

It seemed, back in the end of 2019, that things might be settling down in the industry after years of despair and pub closures. Then came COVID, impacting people's lives like nothing else since the second world war, or the pandemic that followed the first.

I like to believe that the response of the county's hard-working publicans during the pandemic was driven by more than just business survival, especially where many pubs took an active role in assisting local communities with supply of groceries and essentials. As the one responsible for keeping local information on CAMRA's *WhatPub* website up to date, it appeared to me that Herefordshire pubs outperformed neighbouring counties both in providing takeaway meals, and later in their speed of reopening as the rules relaxed.

So, perhaps, there are some good outcomes from the dreadful two years that we all suffered. Many pubs, not just the rural ones, have invested in their outdoor facilities, thus widening their appeal to customers. And more people may have come to realise the importance of pubs in their lives, and not to take them for granted.

Before the pandemic there were signs that the market for pubs was very buoyant. Although a few pubs have yet to resume operations, others previously closed returned to business, including, remarkably, four that had been closed for many years. Two of these - the Kings Head at Docklow and Bulls Head at Craswall - feature in an article on page 20, plus those at St Owens Cross and Letton in pub news on page 22. Sadly, the last-mentioned has faltered, and has closed again.

There have been casualties as well amongst the brewers. The long-standing Wood's, on the road to Shrewsbury, has ceased trading, as has Swan Brewery in Leominster. The latter is particularly sad. We had high hopes when the highly experienced brewer, Jimmy Swan, launched his own business in 2016, but some thought that the early beers were slightly underwhelming. However - not for long - and those who attended the bittersweet farewell event on 13th May had eight most excellent beers to choose from.

Nationally, there was good news on taxation in 2021, but with a sting in the tail. The lower strength threshold for beer and cider was raised from 2.8% to 3.4%, but frustratingly, only for that sold in containers of up to 40 litres capacity. Equating to 8.8 gallons, this meant that the change did not apply to the vast majority of ale, sold in 9-gallon casks. Clearly, more lobbying was needed from CAMRA!

But now, with the industry facing massive concerns about costs and staff shortages, and with the Government in meltdown, even that tiny bit of good news may not happen. Now is not the time to be guessing where it will all end.

Meanwhile, what can you do to help? If you can afford it, I urge you to go out there now and support our pubs by giving them your custom. And why not lobby you MP ahead of the Autumn Budget Statement on 17th November? CAMRA members can use the online form accessed from the email from the national chairman on 29th October.

A successful staging of Beer on the Wye supported brewers and cidermakers, and the latter benefitted also from Hereford Applefest held in High Town (*page 15*).

So, what about the *Hopvine*? I have been the 'editor' for many years, a job which involved producing the whole thing, adverts and all, with the help of one (often elusive) main writer and assorted contributors from amongst the branch members. The enforced break during Covid has prompted a realisation that I can no longer manage that level of activity as well as my role as treasurer.

It's good that five other members have stepped up to make a team contribution, so a greater variety of literary styles are likely to be seen - starting with this issue. But, don't expect any dramatic change of appearance as I am still the compiler!

Paul Grenfell

LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

ARROW

The Wine Vaults in Kington has a new tenant who is not taking beer from the brewery - which was operated independently and so it has ceased brewing.

BULLEN

This micro brewery situated just outside Ledbury closed at the end of 2018, just before Covid, and the story was reported in the online-only Spring 2020 edition of the *Hopvine*, which can be found at http://herefordcamra.org.uk/Spring2020online.pdf

CORN ALES

Set up in a new venue, the Corn Exchange - in the yard of the King's Head Hotel in Ross-on-Wye. Some beers were originally brewed at Ledbury Real Ales, but now head brewer, Rob Vidler, presides over kit that is visible in a cordoned-off section one of the bar-rooms. At present, beers are served from three handpumps on the bar, including a hoppy pale ale and a porter. In time a house beer may be brewed for the hotel bar.

LEDBURY REAL ALES

An additional fermentation tank - increasing capacity by 25% is new the brewery. They have also purchased all of the casks from Swan Brewery. With other casks purchased earlier this year, they now enough casks to cope with the growth in sales they anticipate. Summer seasonal beers, Cardinal Blanc, de Belfort Blonde and Willamette Pale Ale sold out faster than expected.

A new electricity contract is going to be painful, with electricity used per cask brewed rising from £3.00 to £7.50. Along with all other costs going up, a price increase is on the cards. Three green hop brews feature in the autumn 2022 production schedule (using Goldings, Fuggles and Pioneer hops), with six or seven more green hops brews to come. Pre-sales have been strong.

LITTLE DEWCHURCH

Brewing has ceased and the kit has been relocated to the new Motley Hog Brewery premises at Brampton Abbotts near Ross (see page 16).

LUDLOW

The brewery must have foreseen the energy crisis as it has recently installed 35kW-output solar panels, which now augments the current 4kw system. According to head brewer, Gary Walters, the aim is for the brewery to eventually brew all their beer using sustainable energy.

On the beer front, the brewing team have been using a special yeast culture that unlocks the aroma intensity of the hops, Citra, Cascade, Chinook and Rakau, used for brewing Ludlow Blonde. Rakau is a New Zealand hop which has an aroma of passion fruit and apricot and, at 4.5%, this hazy, vegan-friendly brew - badged as 'Blonde Unlocked' - will be a welcome addition to the current range.

Ludlow is also brewing an exclusive beer for the Jam Factory in Hereford, (*see page 7).* Jam Dunk is a zippy IPA, packed with Idaho 7 hops infused with mango, which should be just right to complement the Mexican-style street food on offer at the new Widemarsh Street venue.

MALVERN HILLS

Having been granted, back in 2019, against some local opposition, a licence to operate a tap room at the brewery, Malvern Hills Brewery's dream has finally come to fruition. See Advertisement *(right).*

MOTLEY HOG

The brewery has been re-located from the Taphouse in Ross to a new site at Brampton Abbots. Brewing started in June, in time for beers to be served at Beer on the Wye. An official opening of the new brewery premises was held in September. (*Article on page 16*).

SWAN

The brewery closed in May. Owner and brewer, Jimmy Swan, has since joined Hobsons as Brewing Manager, and his partner Gill Bullock has moved to Newton Court Cider. (*Article page 16*).

ODYSSEY

Ordinarily their beer is only sold in kegs. However, it was recently reported that one of their beers was on sale in a London pub as a cask ale, followed shortly after with an appearance in Hereford's Beer in Hand.

OVERBITE

A new nano-brewery, initially located in Sweetmans Yard, off Plough Lane in Hereford started brewing in 2021. Cask ales appeared in a few local outlets plus at this summer's *Beer on the Wye* - the latter seeing the debut of a 4.2% ABV pale ale brewed with Herefordshire hops.

Subsequently efforts have concentrated on moving the kit to new premises in Bastion Mews in the city - a site that is currently being regenerated.

WEOBLEY

Weobley Brewery sponsored the opening event of the *Kington Walking Festival* in September.

WOBBLY

Brewing capacity has been expanded with new vessels installed in an adjoining unit. The tap house area of the brewery has been refurbished with new toilets, disabled access and changing facilities and is now functioning more like a local pub, with up to six of the company's real ales on tap. Opening times are Mon-Fri 4-11; Sat 12-11; Sun; 2-8.

WOODS

The Wood Brewery at Wistanstow in Shropshire closed rather suddenly this year after 42 years of operation, citing difficult trading conditions following the pandemic. Over 80% of its output had been draught beer sales into pubs.

WOOFY'S

A new brewery has opened at a re-purposed dairy at Strangford Farm, near Sellack. Brewing since early 2022, their output is bottle-conditioned and available in various outlets in the region. *(Visit report on page 17).*

WYE VALLEY

The Pelican in Gloucester - one of the pubs in Wye Valley's estate - has been voted CAMRA South West Region Pub of the Year 2022. The award was presented by CAMRA Regional Director, Pete Bridle, to landlord, Mike Hall. Mike is a long-standing friend of Herefordshire CAMRA from his days at the Crown & Sceptre in Ross; the Barrels in Hereford, and as landlord of the Bell at Leominster. He was also beer bar manager several times in the formative years of Beer on the Wye.

Wholesome Stout in keg form has been rebranded Nightjar, to distinguish it from the cask version.

The latest energy saving idea at the brewery has enabled the very energy-intensive cooling system on the fermentation vessels to switch automatically to air-cooling on chilly days and nights.

The monthly cask special for November is Game Changer a 4.0% amber ale with a biscuit malt base a citrus hoppiness.

OTHER NEW BREWERIES

Activity has been reported from Little Tarrington, where **Monkey Shed** has been brewing for a few years, mainly for keg. However a 4.1% ABV cask pale ale called Bine Loader was supplied to *Beer on the Wye*. No further information is available.

An application has been made to Herefordshire Council for the long-closed **Stoke Edith Station** to become a licensed café. It plans to sell beers brewed in a nano-brewery based at the owner's home in Bristol. Ultimately, the brewing kit may be moved to the station site.

MALVERN HILLS MHB BREWERY

Malvern Hills Brewery has opened their Tap Room at 15 West Malvern Road WR14 4ND, our opening hours are from Thursday to Saturday 6 pm – 10 pm

We cannot wait to welcome you all, we will have our famous Black Pear on the bar alongside Olicana, Feelgood, and Malvern Pale Ale.

We started this journey back in 2019 when Covid hit however we persevered and continued with our dream to provide an informal meeting place for the local community. Opening the Tap Room will allow the locals and visitors to the area, a designated point of interest, where we will be able to showcase our beers many of which are called after local Luminaries.

We have two requests from our visitors one please leave the premises quietly and respect our neighbours the other is to have a very enjoyable time.

LOCAL PUB NEWS

Reports back in May 2022 suggested that the owners of the **Cattleshed Cafe** at Penrhos Court in Kington were planning to open a bar, to be called the **Python Arms**, but as at the end of October 2022, nothing appears to be happening.

Refurbished and reopened after a lengthy closure, the **Swan Inn** at Letton, then closed again, but has now been sold. There are no immediate signs of reopening, and local reports suggest that the new owners may be focusing only on the B&B side of the business.

The **Bateman Arms,** Shobdon has been sold. The new owner is on record as intending to live at the pub and to reopen it early in 2023.

The previously troubled community-owned **Bell Inn** at Yarpole reopened in July with new tenants, the third team since its transition from pub-co ownership back in 2018. Wye Valley HPA and Butty Bach are the regular beers, and a guest beer has been trialled. Bar and restaurant menus are available, of which early impressions are encouraging.

In contrast, the similarly community-owned **Boot Inn** at Orleton has successfully raised capital with a new share issue enabling a programme of improvements to proceed. This includes better access to (and improved seating in) the pub's garden; kitchen layout improvements, and development of the Grade II-listed barn at the rear of the pub as a community space.

The third of a trio of community-owned pubs in the north of the county, the **Crown Inn** at Dilwyn, hosted a highly successful music and mini-beer festival back on the 23rd July. Organised by the *Friends of the Crown*, funds raised will go to finance improvements at the popular village pub. There are already plans afoot to repeat the event in July 2023.

Following a period when it was known as the **Bakers Arms**, the roadside inn in Orleton has reverted to its historic title as the **Maidenhead.** Now under new ownership, we can happily report that it's trading well selling food and beers from Wye Valley (Butty Bach and HPA), plus Hobsons Best and a guest from usually Ludlow, Three Tuns and Wobbly Breweries.

Back in the summer of 2020 CAMRA (along with a number of locals) objected to a planning application by the previous owner that would have not only seen the once-thriving roadside inn converted into a house, but a further construction of houses on the pub's car park and garden. Thankfully, Herefordshire Council planners saw through what was considered to be a flawed scheme, after which the application was withdrawn by the applicant in October 2020.

Leintwardine's iconic **Sun Inn** - a rare example of a surviving 'parlour pub' - took on a new lease of life over the summer of 2022, after new licensee John Hilton took control of the Grade II-listed village pub. Plans are already well in hand to sensitively tidy up the two front rooms that were once so famous as the domain of longstanding licensee Flossie Lane; plans which include an exciting return to dispensing cask beer in the parlour bar itself. Moreover, John has also taken on the Sun Inn in Clun - another fine traditional pub.

The most northerly pub in the county, Leintwardine's **Jolly Frog**, had a second planning application in two years (for conversion into a house) rejected by Herefordshire planners back in August 2022. Located on the A4113 Leintwardine to Bromfield road, it had latterly operated as a pub-restaurant focusing on fish dishes prior to its closure in 2014. The planners cited inadequate marketing of the business as a pub as a key reason for refusal.

The **Baron's Cross Inn**, Leominster is reported to be open again.

A special offer for CAMRA members is being introduced at the **Dukes Head,** Leominster to promote real ales. The offer is 20% off a meal when purchased with an ale on Wednesdays, on presentation of a membership card.

Noted in October 2022 was that work appears to be taking place at the **Temeside Inn** in Little Hereford, closed since its licensees moved to the Maidenhead at Orleton. Hopefully, we will soon see the pub re-open.

Barking up the right tree: Poppy the dog stands guard over works at Colwall's Yew Tree Inn

Good news for Colwall is that after its successful sale at auction back in August 2022, the **Yew Tree Inn** is to re-open, with work already well in hand. The pub was stripped virtually bare by the previous owners, but (as the picture above shows) the original 1950s bar-counter has been salvaged and will be a key feature in the future. It is hoped the pub will be open offering (at least) two real ales and meals before Christmas.

The **Horseshoe Inn**, Ledbury is under new ownership, but had problems back in January with flooding in the cellar, which closed the pub for over a week. Now re-opened, drinkers who are not dining are now welcomed once more. Two Wye Valley beers still offered, in good condition on two recent visits. The food offer is little changed - pizzas from the wood-fired oven and tapas and meze plates.

The *Hopvine* is sad to report that Andy Ward, the long-standing previous licensee of the **Talbot Hotel** in Ledbury, has died. Very soon after his retirement he had moved to Douglas on the Isle of Man.

New owners at the **Royal Oak,** Much Marcle, have updated the patio and seating area outside, Recently beers from Three Tuns and Malvern Hills Breweries have been noted.

The former garage at the **King's Head Hotel** in Ross-on-Wye has been tastefully restored and repurposed as a brewery tap and bar with a food offer, plus space for live music, comedy and events. Called the **Corn Exchange,** it is currently opening weekends only. Three handpumps are serving beers brewed in-house by Corn Ales.

It's all change at The **Exchange** on Hereford's Widemarsh Street, now under new ownership, it is being refurbished and will re-open as the **Jam Factory -** a bar with music, food and events. It's licence application is due to be determined in November. It is expected to sell an exclusive Jam Factory Tropical IPA from Ludlow Brewery.

One unusual 'beer' that featured at this year's *Beer on the Wye* came from Hereford's new **Goldenwake Distillery**, which has taken on premises (that include a bar) that were once a public toilet block in the car park adjacent Hereford Swimming Baths. Subject to Herefordshire Council's Licensing Committee granting a licence at a hearing on the 3rd November, it is hoped that the bar will open on Friday 11th November. It plans to sell their specialised brews in bottle-conditioned form, plus draught beers from Wye Valley Brewery.

The outdoor area at the Kings Fee in Hereford has been significantly extended. This pub is also introducing the CAMRA members' meal deal as at the Dukes Head *(see above)*

The **Orange Tree** in Hereford has been purchased by Dudley-based *Black Country Traditional Inns*, and becomes the latest recruit to their 45-strong pub estate. Slightly extended by incorporating part of the back yard, and tastefully refurbished inside and out, it re-opened in September.

This regional pub company was born out of Black Country ales at the Bull's Head, Lower Gornal and several of

continued on page 19 ►

WHAT HAVE THE ROMANS EVER DONE FOR US?

Well, they did give us the name for a pub in Hereford!

The *Pub of the Season Autumn 2022* this year goes to Hereford's Vaga Tavern. Vaga is the Roman word for the Wye river, which I didn't know before writing this. Every day is a school day!

The Vaga Tavern is situated in Hunderton close to the river (and a foot & cycle path) and run by Landlady, Becky Clyde. Becky is a Mum of three and a Herefordian, born and bred. The pub was still owned by Marstons when she first held the licence in 2012 but within a few weeks Wye Valley Brewery purchased it. Becky is due to celebrate her first 10 years as landlady on 5th November.

The Vaga is large - on first visiting I was struck by how big it is. It is a detached building standing proudly at the end of Vaga Street. It has two bars, a skittle alley, a pool table, large garden at the rear and quite a generous car park (which has escaped the eye of potential developers.) The bar, to the left as you enter, has a cosy woodburning stove and the other bar and skittle alley both have TVs for football. The garden has extensive seating, some of it covered, and a children's play area. The pub stages live music once a month in addition to regular bingo. The Vaga has darts, skittles and pool teams.

CAMRA's Malcolm Rochefort presents the award certificate to licensee, Becky Clyde.

The pub has stood here since around 1870 and when it first opened there was a ferry operating from the river bank behind another close-by pub, Hunderton Villa on Villa Street. The ferry continued operating until 1960. The Vaga Tavern luckily has not met the same fate as Hunderton Villa which closed in the early 1960's and another nearby pub, the Belmont Inn, demolished in 1999 to make way for McDonalds.

The Vaga has a charity fundraising vein running through it. Recently Becky and a pub regular cycled 103 miles to raise money for a young local girl who has been diagnosed with a brain tumour. They amassed an impressive £2,307! Over the last 10 years with Becky at the helm the Vaga has raised over £10,000 for the Special Care Baby Unit at Hereford County Hospital.

CAMRA member and branch contact for Herefordshire, Mike Jefferis has known the Vaga Tavern since the late 1960's when he met his future wife, Sally who lived in the Hunderton area. Mike's father-in-law-to-be used the Vaga Tavern as his local and would meet his naval pals there, the landlord at the time was called Mac. Mike recalls that there "was one occasion when there was talk of Banks brewery taking over the pub and the locals were up in arms about it and threatening to boycott the place. Well, the day arrived and the Banks beer was cheaper and quite quaffable, so the resistance failed and everyone carried on as if nothing had happened. I think it was one of the M&B pubs before."

The Vaga Tavern truly deserves its Pub of the Season award for all it does for the local community. Like a lot of things associated with Roman occupation of Britain, the word Vaga remains in public consciousness, thanks to this Wye Valley pub. It's only a short walk along the river from Greyfriars bridge, so pop along to raise a pint to this friendly pub and its hardworking landlady, Becky.

Jon Powell

Vaga Tavern, Vaga Street, Hereford, HR2 7AT, Telephone (01432) 509927, Open: Mon 3-10.30; (Tue Closed); Wed 3.30-10.30 pm; Thu 3-10.30; Fri 2-midnight; Sat noon–midnight; Sun noon-10

PUB OF THE YEAR AWARD – HOW IS IT DECIDED?

Every year, Herefordshire CAMRA elects a "Pub of the Year". This is not just about the beer but about the whole pub package which includes such values as decor, service and community focus. Pub of the Year (PotY) doesn't have to be a picture postcard, unspoilt gem. It could be located on a housing estate, be a modern bar or a back street local and still be an exceptional pub.

So how do we choose it? Contrary to popular belief, it is not decided by a group of pot-bellied, bearded, grizzled old men, clustered round a table in a smoke-filled bar (yes I know we can't smoke in pubs now, but you get the idea). Nor is it determined by which pub will provide the biggest back-hander. Instead it is all down to a democratic process that all members of Herefordshire CAMRA can be involved in. Herefordshire is one of only two CAMRA branches in the UK to occupy the whole county, due to it's low population density (the other is Cornwall). All other branches are part of a county. This makes Herefordshire one of the largest CAMRA branches in the UK, in terms of area, which can result in significant distances to travel to meetings.

To solve this problem, and to allow people to travel to a local hostelry, the County is split into five regions. Imagine travelling down the A49 from Woofferton in the North to Ross, and then taking the A40 down to Monmouth. This line marks the West/East divide. Now imagine driving along the A438 from Hay in the West to Eastnor in the East. This line marks the North/South divide. This gives us four quadrants, NW, NE, SW and SE. The fifth region is Hereford City.

The first round of voting takes place between March and July each year, where a monthly Branch Meeting is held in each of the five quadrants. At each meeting members vote for five pubs within that area which they have attended in the past year and this results in the top three going forward to the second round, which happens at the August meeting. At this event members elect five finalists from the previously chosen shortlist of fifteen.

Now for the best bit – you can travel to each of the five pubs, at your leisure, and mark it on six different categories. The form, which CAMRA members can obtain by e-mail from the Branch Secretary, needs to be completed and submitted by November's Branch Meeting. You must also complete all five pubs to be included. Remember that these are the best pubs in the county, probably. It's a tough job, but someone's got to do it! Everybody's marks are then totted up to get PotY. And that's not the end of the competition; our PotY then goes forward into the West Midlands regional final, and the winner of that joins CAMRA's National PotY shortlist. There's very strong competition, but it is quite possible for a Herefordshire pub to be crowned National Pub of the Year.

So why not get involved? The final shortlist has already been decided and the five pubs are:

Alma Inn, Linton
Barrels, Hereford
Beer in Hand, Hereford
Farmers Arms, Wellington Heath
Tap House, Ross-on-Wye

Any Herefordshire CAMRA member can request a form, visit the pubs and submit the results. PotY 2022 will be announced at the AGM on Wednesday 30th November in the Brewery Bar in the Barrels, Hereford. See you there!

▲ The 2019 *Pub of the Year* winner was the Taphouse, Ross-on-Wye. Malcolm Rochefort presents to Nigel & Chris Ree

▲ The 2019 *Pub of the Year* winner was the Alma Inn, Linton. Mark Haslam presents to Dan and Gemma Evans

◄ The 2021 *Pub of the Year* winner was the Black Swan, Much Dewchurch. Malcolm Rochefort presents to Gill Constance and Howard Smith

▲ The 2022 Spring *Pub of the Season* winner was the Taphouse, Ross-on-Wye, run by Nigel & Chris Ree

◄ The Spring 2020 *Pub of the Season* winner was the Bells, Almeley. Paul Grenfell presenting to Jason Hudson

PANDEMIC AWARD-WINNERS

As Covid began to spread, the Bells at Almeley was awarded PotS Spring 2020 and was reported in the online-only Spring 2020 *Hopvine*. See https://herefordcamra.org.uk/archive.htm

A *Pub of the Season* award was also made *al fresco*, between the first and second waves of Covid, to the Nags Head at Peterchurch. See page 22.

POMONA AWARD RETURNS TO HEREFORDSHIRE

CAMRA's Pomona award, which is named after the Roman Goddess of apples, honours a person, group, organisation, idea or concept that has made an outstanding achievement, commitment, or contribution to the promotion of real cider or perry.

Another in a long line of CAMRA awards coming to Herefordshire, the Pomona Award for 2021 was presented at an open day at, appropriately, Little Pomona Cidery in Avenbury in October of that year. The recipient was cider expert, author and co-founder of Little Pomona, Susanna Forbes.

Susanna has a multitude of cider achievements under her belt: in 2018 she published the book *Cider Insider*, and she has also served as drinks editor of *Imbibe* magazine and as a member of the *Guild of British Beer Writers*. She and her husband, James Forbes, established Little Pomona in 2015, crafting a variety of cider and perries from their orchard near Bromyard and partner orchardists around the region. They moved to their current site in 2019 and opened a tasting room and cider garden in 2020.

She also co-led on the formation of the group *Cider Women* in 2019, helping to promote the profile and involvement of women within the cider industry and hospitality, and beyond.

Previous Herefordshire Pomona Winners

2005	Ivor & Susie Dunkerton (Dunkerton's Cider & Perry)
2007	The Big Apple Organising Committee
2009	Mike Johnson (Ross-on-Wye Cider & Perry)
2013	Tom Oliver (Oliver's Cider & Perry)

Perry Pear Rescued

Another event planned as part of the open day was a tree planting by the Mayor of Hereford Coun Paul Stevens. Having learned during a visit to the Museum of Cider that the Holmer Perry Pear was at risk of extinction he made it his task as Mayor to revive it.

A two-year process of sourcing scion wood from the National Perry Pear collection in Hartpury, near Gloucester, then turning to Frank P Matthews Ltd, near Tenbury Wells, to do the necessary grafting, resulting in 14 new Holmer perry pear trees.

Two each have gone to Little Pomona, and Ross Cider, one each to Tom Oliver and Paul Stephens at Newton Court along with various other sites across the County.

Says Paul Stevens "As they say *Pears for Heirs* - it will be a while before I can taste the fruits of my labour of love. The reason Holmer? It's where I live of course. Wassail"

CAMRA's Andrea Briers presents Susanna Forbes (on her right) with the 2021 Pomona Award watched by Mayor Paul Stevens and the assembled gathering

Paul Stevens did the honours with the spade, with Bromyard's Town Crier, Peder Nielsen looking on

CAMRA CELEBRATES HALF CENTURY

CAMRA was formed in March 1971, so celebrations due on 17th March 2021, when the country was just recovering from the first winter of Covid, were inevitably delayed and somewhat muted.

Announced on that day were the Golden Awards which would aim to recognise 50 people, groups of people or businesses that have made a significant contribution to CAMRA's aims - Pubs, Pints, and People.

Herefordshire did not have a winner in the pubs category, but two each in pints and people:

Pints

"A brewery or cider/perry producer that has gone above and beyond in delivering excellence or innovation over the years."

CAMRA West Midlands Regional Director, Cy Day with three generations of the Amor family, Peter (founder); Vernon (Chief Executive) and Max, who had recently joined the brewing team.

Real ale enthusiast, **Peter Amor**, took over the Abbey Brewery near Retford in Nottinghamshire, in 1983, moving it to Herefordshire two years later. It finally landed at the Lamb Inn in Hereford, via Nags Head at Canon Pyon. The pub was renamed the Barrels, and **Wye Valley Brewery** was established. The business had outgrown its Hereford site by the turn of the century prompting another move in 2001, to the redundant premises of Symonds Cider of Stoke Lacy, between Hereford and Bromyard.

A virtually all-new brewery came on stream in Spring 2002 and has continued to grow with latest technology and environmentally-sensitive practices. The company has also built up a seven-strong pub estate in Herefordshire and Gloucester.

Cy Day, presenting the award certificate to Tom Oliver at the Crown Inn, Woolhope.

Tom Oliver came to making cider fairly late in life. As one who, with a group of friends, enjoyed harvesting apples and pressing them on someone else's press, he became aware of the lack of choice in what was available to the public, and the opportunities for more variety.

A downturn in the fortunes of the family farm led him to take cider more seriously and start making his own. Initially just for personal and family consumption it quickly gained momentum - and **Olivers Cider & Perry** was born.

Tom is now an internationally-renowned cidermaker, and particularly perrymaker, and is described by one well-known commentator as "simply the greatest cider maker in the world, a real artist".

People

"*Individuals – who have made a significant contribution to the achievement of our campaigning aims in the 50 years since CAMRA was founded.*"

Elizabeth Pimblett came to Hereford Cider Museum primarily as an administrator, rather than a cider enthusiast. It was a natural move back to her home town to take on the directorship after running a museum in Worcester.

The Hereford museum was the brainchild of Bertram Bulmer. He, with the help of Norman Weston of Weston's and Professor Hudson of Long Ashton Research Station, set about saving the records of the fast-changing cider industry, and were offered a building made redundant by Bulmers' expansion to a new factory across the road.

Recognising that the museum was of much wider importance than just a Bulmer or Hereford institution, Elizabeth has renamed it the Museum of Cider and given it national status and

Elizabeth and Paul at Hereford AppleFest

recognition.

Paul Grenfell joined CAMRA at the Barrels Beer Festival in 1993, and has subsequently taken on almost every role in the branch from Chairman to, unofficially, minibus driver. He has had the pleasure of bringing home from CAMRA's annual Members' Weekend five awards, covering local pub guides, the branch magazine and the branch website - all of which he was instrumental in producing. He is currently treasurer of Herefordshire Branch, a role that has become very much more onerous now that "making tax digital" means that purpose designed spreadsheets are no longer acceptable.

FIRST DOUBLE WINNER

CAMRA's annual Campaigner of the Year accolade continued to be awarded throughout the pandemic, although the actual presentations for 2020, 2021 and 2022 were all made at the 2022 Members' Weekend, held at Eastbourne in April.

In 2020 the first repeat winner emerged… and it was our own **Mark Haslam**, reprising his 2010 win. Once again the citation highlighted his expertise on the planning system and saving pubs threatened with change of use, which he makes available to branches all over England and Wales.

The 2021 winner, Barnsley-based Paul Ainsworth brings a similar set of pub-campaigning skills to CAMRA.

The 2022 winner is **Gabe Cook**, known as The Ciderologist who teaches pommelier courses through The Beer and Cider Academy. He worked very closely with CAMRA's Campaigns Team on our alcohol duty submission regarding cider and perry and supported our calls for cider duty to be reformed and led on the 50% minimum juice campaign that CAMRA launched – widely welcomed by cider and perry makers.

His book "Modern British Cider" included 101 cider and perry makers. A copy was sent to each MP who had one of the featured makers in their constituency. This ensured the message about CAMRA's campaigning for cider and perry was heard and understood at the highest levels. This was CAMRA's first Kickstarter funded book and through Gabe's presence on social media and appeals for support, the application met its target in just 48 hours.

FESTIVAL MAGIC RETURNS TO HEREFORD

And it wasn't just Beer on the Wye

It goes without saying that the lockdowns that came with the Covid emergency proved to be catastrophic for our pubs, brewers and cider-makers. With pubs unable to open (and latterly then only outside or via table service) it's a miracle (or maybe a testament to the resilience of those who run them) that we haven't seen more of them close for good.

However, another area that struggled were our festivals. And for beer, cider and perry-lovers there was widespread disappointment when Herefordshire CAMRA's showpiece Beer on the Wye festival was cancelled - not just for 2020, but then again in 2021. To help soften the blow, and with generous support from Hereford City Council, we put on a city pub trail in July 2021. It was felt important that we had to do something constructive. Called *Not Quite Beer on the Wye*, it was an opportunity for a dozen pubs across Hereford to put on a show through selling unusual and different guest beers and ciders over a long weekend. But, whilst it was great to be able to give our pubs a leg-up at a time they were just coming out of the worst ravages of an extended lockdown, it was never going to be the same as *Beer on the Wye*.

It's still early on: mid-afternoon at Beer on the Wye's Cider & Perry Bar was already going crazy!

Champion Beer of the Festival

1	Wye Valley (Stoke Lacy, Herefordshire) Wholesome Stout	4.7%
2	Ashover (Ashover, Derbyshire) Zoo	5.5%
3	Anarchy (Newcastle-upon-Tyne) Citra Star	4.1%

Fast forward July 2022, and wasn't it good to see Beer on the Wye back at its traditional riverside home? And after three long, thirsty and

Great Swan brought down!

Russell Sutcliffe, Swan fan and local member of the Campaign for Real Ale, pens a eulogy which makes clever use of the names of the Swan beers. Which was your favourite?

The decline started in *2020* when everyone started *Spitting Feathers* because of the lock down. Swan's *Small Step* began in 2015 when *Lily Little Legs* wobbled out of the brewery. This was a *Giant Leap* and was rated *Gold* by the drinkers in the Marches.

Swan's *Love* for beer showed in everything. They were *Heros* with their ales keeping a sense of *Balance* and making drinking a *Barrel of Laughs*. They were inclusive – brewing for *Blondes* and *Baldies*. Another highlight was seeing Gill in exotic *Plumage* at their *Cygneture* tasting days. *Swanderlust* took them to darkest Peru and the home of *Coscoroba*.

The real *Armbreaker* was the arrival of the new *Mutation*, so the G*reen* went to *Amber* and then stopped on a *Black Swan* day.

The announcement of the closure of Swan Brewery and that there would be no more *Ore* in *Lemner* certainly *Ruffled Feathers*.

Mortimer's Cross that his ale has entered history.

The *Priory Porter* will no longer *Neck Swan Oil* or *Swan Along the Wye*.

Despite *Bewick's Best* efforts, the industrial park will return to an arid *Tundra* and we can only dream of a *Winter Swanderland*.

Their *Swansong* could be the best April Fool ever!

Cider and Perry Winners

Cider:

1	Gwatkins (Abbeydore)	Yarlington Mill Med	6.0%
2	Fair Oak (Bacton)	Medium Still	6.0%
3=	Barkers (Hallow, Worcs.)	21 Sweet	6.6%
3=	May Fayre (Dormington)	Wasp Whisperer	4.1%

Perry:

1	Chiblers (Kempley)	Turners Barn/Red Longdon/Oldfield	5.5%
2	Newton Court (Newton)	Panting Partridge	5.3%
3	Gwatkins (Ocle Pychard)	Farmhouse	6.0%

fun-free years away, what a show it was! No doubt a combination of fine weather; it's prolonged absence, and people simply looking to have a good time, turned it into a record breaker (no, that should be a record-smasher). The photo shows the Cider Bar mid-afternoon on the Saturday, when queues for admission already extended half the length of Greyfriars Avenue. Unless you were there to witness it for yourself, you'd struggle to imagine what it was like later that evening. Even the normally calm Sunday session had a higher attendance than we had on a Saturday in the early years. How crazy is that?! What a way it was to come out of our enforced hibernation; it was fantastic to be back.

However, not content with the runaway success of this summer's *Beer on the Wye*, we were at it again in October - this time in the city's High Town when a re-invented *Beer on the Wye* Cider & Perry Bar found itself relocated into a marquee pitched no more than eight feet in front of WH Smith's. Who'd have thought it?

The Fruity Dozen: CAMRA volunteers pose ready to open the cider and perry bar for the city's inaugural AppleFest.

It was all a part of the kick-off event for the city's inaugural two week-long Hereford Applefest. Organised by Hereford City Council, CAMRA were only too pleased to be one of a number of active partners signed up to participate in the event. So it was, on Saturday 1st October, we found ourselves setting up a bar that offered no less than 53 different ciders and perries.

Unfortunately, there was a rail strike that day, therefore the thirsty hordes that would normally migrate for the day from Birmingham and South Wales to attack the ciders and perries at *Beer on the Wye* wouldn't be joining us. Was it going to work? Would local people be up for it? We need never have worried - you were REALLY up for an autumnal cider and perry fix. Our hard-working team of twelve fruity CAMRA volunteers were kept busy on the bar all day. And the overall event was a success too (that was the REAL Doctor & The Medics who headlined on the festival stage!). We're already looking forward to playing our fruity part in a bigger and better Hereford Applefest next year. But before then we have next July's Beer on the Wye to organise and run!

Doing plenty of apple business on CAMRA's bar

A TALE OF TWO BREWERS

There's both bad and good news to report from two Herefordshire breweries.

A perfect day for enjoying Swan beers for the last time

Leominster's Swansong

Back at the beginning of 2022 we were not alone when we were shocked and saddened to learn the news that Leominster's Swan Brewery was to close. Located in an industrial unit on the Leominster Enterprise Park, it had been brewing its various Swan-themed beers since 2016.

Owner and brewer, Jimmy Swan, is a longstanding friend and member of Herefordshire CAMRA and he and his beers were sadly missed on the *Herefordshire Brewers' Bar* at this year's *Beer on the Wye*. Prior to this, in May, there was a wonderful sending-off, when they put-on a well-organised and well-attended 'Swansong' event at the brewery before it finally closed its doors.

However, we can happily report that both Jimmy Swan and his partner Gill have both got new positions in the industry: Jimmy is now brewing with Shropshire-based Hobsons Brewery, whilst Gill is redeploying her keen marketing skills with Newton Court Cider (it was great to see her – complete with smile on face – when she delivered their cider and perry to *Beer on the Wye*). We wish them both well for the future, and thank them for their support and good beer over all those years.

Gill and Jimmy with half of the draught beers on offer

Ross Revival

Ross-on-Wye used to have the largest brewery in Herefordshire when the town's Alton Court Brewery was in its heyday. Those times are long gone – it closed for good way back in 1956 – in the process removing Ross from the nation's beer map for more than five decades. This was until Nigel Ree set up Motley Hog Brewery in his Taphouse micro-pub on the town's Millpond Street. How ironic it seems that the Taphouse (and brewery) were established in an old TV rental business premises that was itself once a part of the Alton Court Brewery estate.

Since then, and despite the worst ravages of the Covid lockdowns, both the Taphouse and Motley Hog Brewery have gone from strength to strength. The Taphouse was named Hereford-

Nigel Ree on the brewery launch day

shire *Pub of the Year* in 2019, and has been a joint runner-up again since. Moreover, the micro-brewery's beers were soon proving so popular that an early decision was made to relocate it to larger, more shiny, professionally-equipped premises on a farm a few miles out of Ross at Brampton Abbotts. In fact, some of the very first beers brewed there found their way onto the bar at *Beer on the Wye*. And didn't they sell well!

Hence it was, on Friday 23rd September, that the bunting was out and barrels lined-up for an official launch party for the new brewery. Held in a barn on the farm, it was a great opportunity for visitors to enjoy some of the six beers on their new home turf. It was also planned to show those interested around the new brewery plant, but the event proved so popular that it never quite happened, with Nigel and his team pinned down on the bar serving the many eager customers. Therefore, there'll be a full write-up on the new brewery in a future edition of the *Hopvine* when we can get inside!

NEW TO BREW - WOOFY'S BREWERY

One of the Herefordshire's newest breweries is located in a former dairy building at Strangford, near Sellack, north of Ross-on-Wye.

Owner & Brewer, Stewart Allan

Run by Stewart Allan and Imogen Gurney, the brewery name is a tribute to their boxer dog, Sir Woofy Woofington, to give him his full name and title. Woofy features prominently in graphic form on their bottle labels and marketing.

Always a keen beer enthusiast, during the recent lockdowns Stewart's ideas solidified into a project to install a microbrewery in an old dairy building situated on a farm near the house they had moved into. In the dairy, two shiny 240 litre temperature-controlled cylindro-conical fermenters stand near a smaller development kit. Considering that they have only been brewing in 2022, the results are impressive. The core range comprises a session IPA, a pale ale, a Czech-style pilsner, and a wheat beer (using wheat grown on the farm). Darker beers include a ginger infused porter, and a vanilla, coffee and cacao porter. Inspired by Stewart's Scottish background there is a velvety smooth 'Wee Heavy'. At present all output is bottled without filtration or pasteurisation, with secondary conditioning in the bottle. In time, cask packaging for draught service in pubs is planned.

His heritage drives Stewart to source the majority of his malts from Simpsons. He is also an enthusiast for UK hops, committed to using locally sourced hops when the recipe allows, although some recipes may use modern US grown varieties. In addition to the core range, the smaller kit allows experimentation – when the *Hopvine* visited a fruit lambic was fermenting away. There are plans for kit to allow spontaneous fermentation in Belgian style. Stewart clearly has a broad taste in beer and is developing the skills to brew styles originating from outside the UK.

Sir Woofy

At the moment, Woofy's bottled beers are available at Verzons Restaurant and The Nest, both outside Ledbury, and Truffles Deli in Ross-on-Wye and further afield at Off the Square beer cafe and bottle shop in Stow-on-the-Wold. On the morning of our visit, Imogen and her mother were at a stall at the Artisan Market at The Nest, explaining their beer styles and offering tasting samples. They are building their stock of the established core recipes and actively looking to expand their outlets. Keep an eye out for their distinctive canine branding!

Website: https://www.woofysbrewery.com

Martyn Evans

BREWERS IN THE COMMUNITY

Malvern community buys their local pub, and there's now an urgent hunt on to find the right people to run it!

Community action: the first of many working parties armed with mops and buckets at the ready

Hardly a pint-glass's throw across the Herefordshire-Worcestershire border is the Brewers Arms in West Malvern. On the 27th September this year the 200-year-old village pub, that boasts great views, joined that elite club of community-owned pubs when Herefordshire CAMRA's own Mark Haslam was on hand to accept the keys from former owners *Admiral Taverns*. It's his local… that is when it's not closed (which it has been on and off a fair bit in recent years).

As one of six members of the steering group who run the Community Company that now owns the pub on behalf of 437 shareholders, Mark had this to say about the project: "It's taken a lot of time and effort to get this over the line, since *Admiral Taverns* first expressed their intention to sell the pub back in November 2021. It helped a lot that it was listed as an ACV (*Asset of Community Value*), therefore giving us a clear run to bid for it… and our bid was ultimately successful."

It was bought freehold for £295,000 after a community share offer successfully raised over £407,000. Mark added: "There's still a lot of work to be done before we will be in a position to get it open, but before a week had passed, we'd hit the ground running with remedial electrical work well in hand. Then, on the first Sunday of ownership, over 40 locals, pub-supporters, and shareholders turned out (mop buckets in hand) to clear-out and give it a much overdue heavy clean. It was in desperate need of some TLC. Throughout October there have been regular working parties cleaning, painting and decorating, as well as attacking the pub's overgrown garden.

The community company plans to appoint tenants to run the pub business, the aim being for it to be a genuine free house selling local beers and providing simple, but wholesome pub meals and snacks. The search for the 'right people' to run it has already started in earnest. Do you think you might be that person, or do you know others who might fit the bill? If the answer is 'yes' to either of those questions, then Mark Haslam wants to hear from you (his contact details are on page 34).

If things go to plan, it is anticipated the pub will re-open in early December. To learn more about plans for the Brewers Arms under community ownership go to: www.brewerscommunitypub.co.uk

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from page 7 ► that company's beers are always on sale. The impressive row of twelve handpumps, ten for beer and two for cider, enables up to six guest beers to be stocked. As is the practice in all of the company's pubs, details of beers including gravities and styles and ciders are displayed on large screens. A welcome addition to the range of beers available in the city, but just snack food is served.

Beyond the county boundary, the **Blood Bay** in Ludlow has recently been sold, and now opens daily from 5pm (from noon at weekends). There have been few alterations and it now stocks beer from Uley Brewery and a changing guest, two traditional ciders (normally from Gwatkins or Olivers).

In Malvern, a pandemic debutante was **Weavers Real Ale House** on the town's Church Street. With nine hand pumps, plus cider, snacks and ten keg taps - this modern and well-appointed new venue brings a step change in choice for the town. Located in a converted shop, it also boasts a fine garden/patio area. Some of you may be familiar with the Weavers concept - their long-established sister branch in Kidderminster won West Midlands Region *Pub of the Year* a few years back.

Short Measure?
No price list on display?
Contact Citizens Advice
03454 04 05 06
Textphone: 18001 03454 04 05 06

NEW RADNOR, NEW LIFE

Villagers buy their local pub at auction for £115,000

In the opposite direction to Malvern's Brewers Arms, and just over the Herefordshire-Powys border, is the Radnor Arms at New Radnor. The first step to it becoming a community-owned pub was its successful sale at auction on the 20th October to a local consortium who are in the throes of setting up a community-ownership company.

For a pub that boasts six letting rooms; two bars and a restaurant, plus a car park and large garden (all set in more than a quarter of an acre), it might be considered a very shrewd buy for the winning bid of only £115,000. However, it does need a LOT of work undertaking, it having been completely neglected since closing over six years ago. That project now falls to the dedicated group of local residents and previous pub-goers who set up the *Radnor Arms Action Group* (RAAG) and have now taken on the exciting task of bringing it back to life.

Sky-high excitement: locals gather at the Radnor after its purchase.

To finance their ambitious scheme they plan to launch a community share offer, where they will invite investors to buy shares in the pub. Local resident and Radnorshire Brewery-owner, Ben Asson, is the chair of RAAG and had this to say: "We're really chuffed for the village. It's been a long journey, which we started back in 2016. By getting it back up and running we will fill the black hole that its closure has created in the village. We need to get it back to being the bright light it once was. Already we have over £113,000 in pledges, but we need more. Further, we anticipate issuing a share prospectus and business plan immediately after Christmas."

Therefore, if you've ever fancied owning a pub (or part of one, to be more accurate) then you'll soon have your chance! It helps that New Radnor is a thriving village, and the Radnor Arms is its only pub. And a surprising fact is that, prior to local Government reorganisation in 1974, the village (population 400) was the county town of Radnorshire - complete with its own county hall!

To learn more about their plans and to pledge to buy shares go on-line at: www.radnor-arms.org

WELLINGTON ON HOLD?

Buy-out scheme deferred after potential community purchase is outbid by a private buyer.

There are three community-owned pubs in Herefordshire as at October 2022: the Boot Inn at Orleton; the Bell Inn at Yarpole, and the Crown Inn at Dilwyn. And earlier this year there was (very nearly) a fourth - the Wellington in the village of Wellington. However, after a local group successfully raised a sum approaching £300,000 via a community share scheme (with their aim being to buy the currently closed village inn) they were pipped at the post by a private buyer.

However, with there being no sign that the pub is likely to re-open anytime soon, the locals are not giving up. They've made it clear to the new owner, that should he have no wish to operate it as a pub business, then they are still very much in a position to purchase the village pub from him. It might be that all this set-back represents is a delay to their ambition to see the Wellington re-invented as a community-owned pub. We shall await developments.

HEADS WE WIN

A tale of two Herefordshire pubs that re-opened and were refurbished in 2021 (at the height of the Covid pandemic) proved to be unexpectedly good news. Dared we hope that things weren't going to be quite so bad after all for our pubs post-Covid? However, they now have the energy bills crisis to contend with too...

The Kings Head at Docklow and the Bulls Head at Craswall are two very different rural pubs, that by the end of 2019 had one thing in common – they were both long-term closed and in very real danger of being lost forever, that was until they were both bought by new owner-operators, refurbished and are now thriving businesses serving their rural communities once more.

Paul & Debra English

The Kings Head at Docklow is an otherwise unremarkable roadside pub on an unpopulous stretch of the main A44 road between Leominster and Bromyard. Sitting alone with no obvious village nearby; blink when driving past and you'd be in real danger of missing it. Too many pubs like the Kings Head – having lost their historic passing trade - have had their day and have been closed and converted into alternative uses (more often than not into houses). On first inspection, when it closed in 2014 it didn't look to be a very promising proposition. Therefore, when in 2018 Herefordshire CAMRA became aware of a planning application that would see it close permanently, the expectation was that there wouldn't be too much of a fuss. It's loss would be little-mourned; how wrong we were!

Planning and TLC at the Kings Head

It would not be an exaggeration to say that what followed a lively village hall meeting soon developed into one of the more vociferous and active community campaigns Herefordshire CAMRA have ever been involved with – and we've been associated with a few over the years. It soon became quite evident that this rural and dispersed community didn't want to lose their only pub; they were going to fight this all the way. It was the failure of the then owners to make a genuine effort to sell the premises as a pub business first, before they submitted their rather ambitious and money-spinning plans to convert the pub into two houses (and build further houses in the garden), that ultimately did for their planning application. Refusal of the plans by Herefordshire Council planners eventually paved the way for a new broom (in the shape of new owners Paul & Debra English) to apply the TLC and enterprise the place was crying out for.

So it was back in April 2021 – almost a year and a month to the day that the first lockdown got underway – that Paul and Debra collected the keys and set about renovating and upgrading the pub, and what a fine job they've made of it. Inside is completely revitalised; the garden with its fine vistas now has timber-framed seating pods, and even today – twelve months in - they've put a fabulous and tastefully sympathetic new extension onto the pub. After more than five years of closure and neglect the locals returned along with an increasing number of destination diners and drinkers. On the occasion we visited the pub for a CAMRA branch meeting, it was absolutely chocker – and that was on a Tuesday night! Paul and Debra have haven't had the time to look back, which is so deserved simply because they had the guts and vision to put their money where their mouths were at the very height of the Covid emergency. On the surface of it, the Kings Head looked a distinctly unpromising proposition, but undeterred from day one, they have transformed it into a profitable business. Such an outcome can only give heart to others who might be looking to revitalise other underperforming and neglected pubs.

Drovers return at the Bulls Head

The Bulls Head at Craswall is so remote it makes the Kings Head look almost metropolitan in its aspect. As one of the last intact ex-drovers' inns in England, it is seriously off the beaten track; it's a world away from any serious habita-

tion (let alone an 'A' road). Pitched delightfully on the corner of an impossibly narrow and twisting mountain road at the foot of the Black Hill on the Herefordshire-Powys border high above Hay-on-Wye, this is a truly remarkable survivor. The Bull's Head had been in the same farming family for over 125 years when it changed hands at an auction back in 1999 following the death of longstanding landlady, Mrs Lewis.

View of the bar, a few minutes before the grand opening.

Its cobbled floors, peeling wallpaper, open fires, settle, Belfast sink, serving hatch and outside loos, allied with its bucolic and weather-beaten disposition make it a sight to behold. For those who didn't have the patience or wherewithal to grapple with the arcane intricacies of Ordnance Survey Map OL14, it was destined to remain a secret, but for those 'in the know' it soon took on almost iconic status. Subsequently, like a summer no.1 record, it became an unlikely hit in the 2000s catering for diners and hill walkers alike with a food offering ranging from quality full meals down to wholesome snacks. And the beer was pretty good too. However, around 2010 it was all-change when new owners took over and set about creating a high-end dining experience. Having previously made the same disastrous mistake at the Ancient Camp Inn at Ruckall (they closed and converted that into a house before selling-up at a profit), it came as little surprise when their latest elitist dining delusion also crashed and burned at the Bulls Head. Come 2014 and the pub was closed, with its future looking very uncertain.

Locals' stink

Again, it was the locals who kicked up a stink, believing that it was in danger of going precisely the same way as the Ancient Camp. However, unlike with the Kings Head locals, they didn't wait until a planning application was submitted before they acted: fed-up with no sign of the pub either re-opening or any efforts being made to sell it and their enquiries ignored by the owners, on a sunny day in the summer of 2018 they went on a war footing and held a demonstration at the pub. Attended by over 100 people, they even created their own pub sign for the occasion (that today takes pride of place inside the pub). Allied with all the press publicity that this generated they also gathered 1100 names on a petition. They weren't taking this lying down! Whether or not these actions unblocked the impasse is a matter of speculation, but one thing it did do was alert the Townley family to the sad plight of the Bulls Head and its locked-out locals. They run Wild by Nature, a successful artisan farming, butchery and catering business and could see the opportunities the Bulls Head offered. Ultimately, they bought the cherished old inn lock, stock and outside loos and set about a quite remarkable (and not inexpensive) renovation. What they have achieved is to successfully preserve the pub's unique character and charm, but, just as importantly, they've also put the Bulls Head back on a financially sustainable footing (and back on Ordnance Survey Map OL14 too!). It finally opened to great fanfare (and a sigh of relief from the locals) back on the 18th November 2021.

To visit the Bulls Head today, one can still enjoy its character as a living relic of a by-gone rural lifestyle: the cobbles, serving hatch, settle – and even the peeling wallpaper and outside loos - are all still there intact, but it is no understatement to state the Bulls Head is now a true masterpiece; it's everything a remote rural inn could and should be. True to its long and interesting history, but respectfully updated to include a magnificent Dutch Barn in the garden that has recently been joined by some rather snazzy outdoor seating. And it's all set in the most spectacular countryside. Good times lie ahead for this true survivor.

The Kings Head and the Bulls Head between them were closed for over twelve years, but still – when they were forced to sale by either a planning refusal or by a passionate display of community people power – there were new op-

erators waiting in the wings ready not only to buy them, but to heavily invest money into their fabric and facilities. This is not only great news for those who enjoy and rely on these two old inns, but we should all take solace that however bad things have been over the past two years there is still hope for our pubs. It's just that we need to remember to fight for them!

Websites

Bulls Head: https://www.wildbynaturellp.com

Kings Head: https://kingsheaddocklow.co.uk

These were in fact just two of four long-closed pubs that reopened in quick succession. In 201x, it was announced that the **New Inn** at St Owens Cross, was to benefit from a major refurbishment. After months when seemingly nothing was happening, work got underway. The result was a very thorough refurbishment, including a reimagining of the pub's layout. The New Inn has now unashamedly positioned itself in the high-end dining market, although, with two Wye Valley ales on tap, it still caters for the non-diner.

Under the management of award-winning chef Michael Fowler, the New Inn has been awarded 2 AA Rosettes for its glorious food and 5-stars for its luxury rooms!

The fourth was a particularly unexpected revival at Letton, where the **Swan** has sat forlornly alongside the Hereford to Brecon road for many years. The pub was extensively refurbished and reopened in 2021 - but sadly has subsequently ceased trading.

WORDSEARCH

T	T	I	U	Q	F	S	C	P
H	Y	T	I	R	U	P	I	U
E	W	L	M	S	L	R	N	N
A	D	N	A	M	S	A	A	I
K	A	R	B	E	I	H	T	L
S	L	F	D	P	N	S	I	B
T	F	U	O	R	E	T	T	O
O	B	L	D	S	F	F	O	G
N	A	S	E	L	U	O	J	B
S	N	O	S	B	O	H	O	O
T	L	L	A	V	Y	W	S	H

Can you find 13 breweries in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight unbroken line. *Solution P33*

PANDEMIC AWARD-WINNERS continued

The Nags Head at Peterchurch was nominated as Summer 2020 Pub of the Season. It was recommended specifically as a modest locals' pub that offers simple British cuisine, cooked to a high standard. It was also providing a takeaway service at the time. Just one cask ale is on tap - pot luck as to the style, but assured of a pint in good condition.

The presentation to the landlady, Karen Miller, was done al fresco as the relaxation of the Covid rules had only just begun.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

There are eleven Herefordshire pub names included. Solutions on page xx.

Across

9 & 21d Mixed up Flich lied, chambers in Hereford (9, 6)

10 Game 0 rescheduled, the last (5)

11 Peter lost his head. Not all lost at first. This'll go on forever (7)

12 Metal oxide put Calum in another container (7)

13 Friendship means you'll never go into the water again here (5)

14 Squash goat's head (9)

16 An entangled sign? It's in Bodenham (8, 4, 3)

19 Modern beach in Eardisley (3, 6)

21 Rival is shaken, it's gone mad on social media (5)

22 Male sheep's in metal container. Note, it's also in Eardisley (4, 3)

23 Announce "It's between Hereford and Ledbury!" (7)

24 Encountered little Alan, could be a conductor (5)

25 Rep at Ternhill contains fashion again (9)

Down

1 Ancient alien on the road right north. In Kington? (4, 6)

2 Small team in Golf turning clockwise into piece of timber, say (8)

3 I fly on, in pieces. What are the chances! (2, 4)

4 Call in Bosbury, Leominster, Tillington and Yarpole (4)

5 Profited from being in a bad van. Tag Edward (10)

6 A French one comes up in second in Whitecross (8)

7 Sounds like they've freshly arrived in several Herefordshire towns (3,3)

8 In Hunderton, initially versatile range cooker (4)

14 Mixed up brand names, that's poor etiquette (3, 7)

15 Part of satin plat in German is metal coating (10)

17 Workers homes? They're just piles of soil (8)

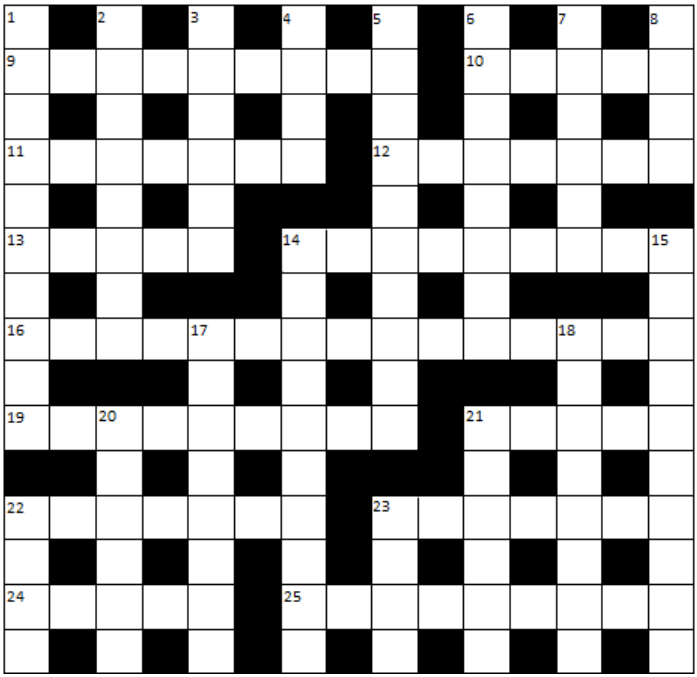
18 Burst in suddenly. "It's part of stirrup, Teddy" (8)

20 Initially we eat apples later, thanks Helen. That's rich! (6)

21 See 9

22 It's in Wormelow. No exercise for confused Muppet (4)

23 Record gaffer (4)



A DIFFERENT PINT OF VIEW

How I switched from lager to real ale

By Hayley Clarke.

When I turned 18, I was invited to go bellringing, it is known that once the practice has finished you go to the pub for a debrief and a social session. Being a typical teenager, I had tried various different alcoholic drinks, from cheap cider to alcopops. However, once I could buy my own, I found I liked mass-produced lager: I was definitely a 'Fosters girl' once I had joined the Holmer bellringers. As with most, the Holmer ringers went for a debrief - at the time - in the Britannia on Cotterell Street. This worked well because the ringers who came to the pub were either already CAMRA members or just liked real ale, while the pub also had Carling on tap. I did get a lot of comments regarding this and offers to try the beers they would drink, however, at the time they tasted 'flat' to me.

While ringing at Holmer, the launderette on Whitecross Road was bought and turned into Beer in Hand. Due to this and being outnumbered by CAMRA members, we switched our debrief sessions to there, so they could try the range of beers on offer. Luckily, hidden on the end of the cask bar, was a lager pump selling Freedom lager, so again I never needed to try beer. Although I continued to try the beers my friends were buying none were to my taste. As I got more friendly with the ringers, I was invited to Ludlow Spring Festival, although, again as I wasn't very adventurous - I stuck to Wye Valley's 1985 lager, and then when that ran out I switched to cocktails. The pubs on the route back to the train also seemed to be able to accommodate my lager drinking.

In 2017, the same CAMRA ringers invited me to my first *Beer on the Wye*. As I was working nights, the Saturday night I couldn't drink, so I didn't taste any of the beers. The following year I was talked into volunteering for the festival. Because I didn't really know what I was doing (and didn't know anything about beer) I offered to help on the beer or cider bar. When the staffing form came back, I had been put down to work on the cider bar on the Friday night; this worked well for me - I liked cider and it was, so busy I was unable to try too many. Once the festival closes, the staff have a little get together, in this time I was told to try some beers, so I would know what I would be selling on the beer bar on the Saturday night. I didn't try many because I didn't like many, however, I was introduced to Moho by Mantle Brewery. This is a Welsh pale ale, hopped with two different American hop varieties, very light and - to me - tasted a bit 'fizzy'. This beer was my turning point, I really enjoyed it. When my Saturday night shift started, I placed myself near this beer so I at least I knew what it tasted like if people asked me. However, due to the brilliant bands playing and the people near them struggling to hear the customers, I was moved closer to the bands, so it was I felt a bit out of my depth. I did sample a few of the beers behind me so I at least knew what they were like. But by the end of the festival and at the staff party, Moho was still left, so to save it being thrown away I continued drinking it.

However, back to Thursday nights and back in Beer in Hand, their changing casks didn't contain Moho. But as I liked the hoppiness of it, the bar staff would suggest which ones to try. They got my taste right almost every time - I would drink hoppy beers. Onto *Beer on the Wye* 2018, I knew a bit more about hoppy beers and which ones were good, so I volunteered for the beer bar all weekend and could help people who also liked the hoppy beers. When the pandemic hit in 2019, I wanted to help continue to support local breweries, so would order from Wye Valley, Swan, Ledbury, and Ludlow. I was also at university in Swansea, so also supported Mumbles, Mantle and Gower. I wanted to try new things so started ordering amber ales and bitters, along with the pale ales. I have found in my experimenting that I really like bitters and amber ales.

Therefore, when I go into Beer in Hand and at this year's return to Beer on the Wye, I tended to order bitter. And if, by lucky chance, an amber ale is on, I order these because I really like the taste associated with them. I have since tried a lager and I now find it tastes too much like chemicals and I am very much now a hardened CAMRA real ale drinker.

HEREFORD AMATEUR BREWERS

A small, friendly and enthusiastic group who have been meeting once a month since 2016

CAMRA exists to promote beers that are made by traditional methods, naturally conditioned, and served without additional gas pressure. A majority of members pursue that enjoyment outside of their homes, in the pub, club or bar. But CAMRA also supports people who are unable, or who wish to enjoy real beer away from the pub environment. Brewing at home is a valid alternative. In the past, brewing at home had a bit of a dubious reputation, but now the vast improvement in variety and quality of ingredients available in small quantities to home brewers now means that anyone can brew beers that are the equal of the beers you drink in your local.

Why brew you own beer?

To learn more about the ingredients and processes involved in producing our favourite drink. To expand your knowledge and enjoyment of beer styles that are not local or regional. We have a great group of breweries within Herefordshire and the adjoining regions, but it's good to expand your horizons and develop your palate in unfamiliar directions. Depending on what and how you brew, it can be a more economical way of having a ready supply of beer at home, although we all also want to get out and support local pubs and beer shops. You may also be able to brew beers that are more appropriate for your dietary needs e.g., low gluten or low alcohol. It's also fun and sociable, and if you have competitive streak, there are opportunities to pit your brews against all comers in open competitions.

Who are we?

A small, friendly and enthusiastic group who have been meeting once a month since 2016, usually, but not exclusively, at Hereford Beer House on West Street in Hereford, on the second Wednesday of the month. Members bring samples of their beers to share for everyone to taste. If they don't have anything ready to bring, it's good form to select and buy a different beer from the extensive and ever-changing HBH stock to share, which helps support our generous host Sion. We have contacts with other groups in Worcester and other parts of the Midlands.

What do we brew?

Each member has some favourite styles of beer, but also enjoy the challenge of brewing something unfamiliar, so any given meeting can involve a range from a weiss beer to an aged porter, with many styles and shades in between. We each brew on different kit: budget equipment through to top of the range gear: it's all about how you use it! Friendly judging is part of our ethos, something can always go wrong, and our number one rule is: Bring Your Mistakes – it's a learning process for all of us, and shared knowledge helps avoid problems in the future and develop better ways to brew more excellent beer.

Is it Real Ale?

Definitely - all of our beers are secondary fermented and matured on the yeast, either in bottles with natural carbonation, or in modern casks with natural carbonation or low additional CO_2. We don't pasteurise or filter yeast out of our beer. Check out CAMRAs excellent range of books about brewing at home if you are in any doubt, and get further inspiration.

Interested?

Drop into Hereford Beer House on the second Wednesday of the month at 18.30, and introduce yourself There's no subscription or fee. No need to bring anything, unless you happen have some beer ready for all to sample. Don't be shy – new brewers are very welcome, and we can help advise you on your first or next steps of your brewing adventure.

Martyn Evans

After the 2021 and 2022 winter Great British beer festivals were lost due to Covid , the festival stays in the West Midlands for 2023, but moves to Burton upon Trent Town Hall on 16th - 18th February.

RAISING A HAT (AND A PINT GLASS) TO STOCKPORT

A tour of the town's pubs comes highly recommended

Stockport is famous for hats (although one suspects – like everything else – they're all made in China these days). On taking a cursory glance at the pub entries in CAMRA's *Good Beer Guide*, it looked like it boasts some pretty decent pubs too. Thus it was, back on a Saturday in March 2022, that an intrepid group of Herefordshire CAMRA members broke cover from their Covid bolt holes with the intention of giving the town's hostelries the 'once over'. With Covid having ceased to be hogging the news headlines, the virus was no longer our main fear - of greater concern was the fact we were going to need to rely on a *Transport for Wales* train to get us there – and back! Sadly, that's not something that can ever be taken as a given based on past experience. However, we did make it to the town of ex-hats only a few minutes late, albeit we were crammed less than comfortably into a two-carriage train.

For our first pub we headed north away from the station (and town centre) in a mixture of bright sunshine and a cold, blustery wind. A trek up a hill along a busy main road (whilst taking in views of the impressive redbrick railway viaduct to our side) brought us to the **Magnet**. It's very much a pub for the beer connoisseur as opposed to those with an interest in pub architecture, although the place is pleasant enough. Certainly, the welcome from the other side of the bar was genuinely friendly. There were no fewer than fourteen handpumps waiting for us on the bars, plus literally oodles of craft taps and foreign bottles. With a digital screen that wouldn't have looked out of place in an airport departure lounge to navigate you through the multitude of beers on offer, it would take another article just to list the individual beers each of the party enjoyed. But it wasn't just great for choice - the quality was top drawer too. It's easy to see why this pub has won so many awards. We were impressed, such that the general consensus was to have another drink after we had slaked our initial thirst. Perhaps this would help erase from our memories that morning's train trauma?

First of many – arrival in sunshine at the town's Magnet

Brown beer

We now tacked into the wind and headed towards the town centre, where we arrived at the **Swan With Two Necks.** On the way, it was surprising to see how traditional and unspoiled parts of Stockport's Victorian town centre still are (the old market hall is a particular delight). Stockport also boasts its own long-established brewery. Robinsons Brewery is very much an old school, family-run affair that, to its great credit, remains totally committed to producing real ale. But it's probably fair to say that many of its beers sit firmly outside the realm of what is considered fashionable in the beer world today – it's brown rather than hoppy, and a pint of it is considered by many a drinker to a be a 'Marmite' beer (one that often can divide opinion), which is shame. However, it would have been indecent to have visited the town without frequenting at least one of their pubs. Thus it was we pitched up at the Swan. Whilst the beers didn't excite too much, the pub did – behind a mock Tudor façade is a multi-

Tucking in at Stockport's Arden Arms

roomed pub with various light oak wood-panelled bars, one of which boasts a fine stone-surround fireplace – this place was both traditional and comfortable.

It was soon time to move on down a steep hill to the **Arden Arms.** An imposing and traditional brick-built corner pub: it's another Robinsons establishment, but it has the bonus of also selling guest beers. Grade II-listed, and very unspoiled, one point of interest is it has a small snug bar that can only be accessed by going through the bar servery (one of only four pubs in the UK where this applies). Its comfortable and traditional rear lounge bar - a fine room with a grandfather clock in residence - was the venue for our lunch stop, which was accessed via a bustling tiled corridor.

Another old school, family-run brewery that can polarise opinion amongst discerning beer drinkers, is Yorkshire's Sam Smiths – and it was to one of their pubs we were now destined. The **Boars Head** sits on a corner of the fine market square (it's a rectangle strictly speaking, and with a large market hall at its centre). This is an impressive place by any measure. It's a large redbrick and stone-faced former hotel, that you enter via a most impressive portico doorway. It has a warren of rooms, both small and large, cosy and cavernous that exudes an uber-traditional, no-frills town boozer feel to it. Again it was friendly in spades, as we found our way to a large and impressively ornate room (that looked like it was once a ballroom) at the rear. Sadly, the choice of Sam Smiths or Sam Smiths meant we only felt able to stay for the one pint.

The **Bakers Vaults** is on the opposite-facing corner of the Market Square to the Boars Head. And it's also opposite in so many other ways too. It's an opened-out Victorian pub, replete with a striking island bar-servery at its heart. With its cool lighting set in a modern, post-industrial chic interior, it came as no surprise to learn those responsible for its high-quality refurbishment also owns pubs in nearby Manchester's fashionable 'Northern Quarter'. Of particular architectural merit (the place is Grade II-listed) are arched windows, timberwork and a superb intricate wooden bar-back. Originally built on the site of Stockport's long-gone castle in 1775, in a previous life it was a Victorian Gin Emporium. It too is a Robinsons Brewery pub, but - just like the Arden Arms previously – it offers an interesting selection of guest cask beers. It was at this point another contrast to the Boars Head was detected, when a half pint cost £2.30 - although to be fair it was Titanic Plum Porter at 6% ABV - and delicious it was too!

Aliens and soiled nappies

Project 53 is a most unusual name for a pub. Not to be confused with Area 51 in the United States (there wasn't an alien to be seen anywhere on the premises); it looks like a branch of a provincial building society, with its modern picture-window frontage. Opened in 2018 - just in time for Covid - it was previously a shop, but is now the flagship outlet for the Cheshire-based Mobber-

Pulling (and drinking) pints at the Bakers Arms

ley Brewhouse. Running back deep, at the very back is an array of wooden barrels, some arranged as tables, which (alas) are only for decorative effect. On the bar were to be found two of Mobberley Brewhouse's cask beers, that were eclipsed by an array of eleven key-keg fonts on a wall behind. Like the Bakers Vaults before, this is another modern venue with characteristic grey timber-flooring, bare brickwork and trendy light fittings. The clientele was a combination of young professionals chatting; hipsters contemplating life, and power-mums fighting to control a small army of semi-feral infants. It's genuinely good to see a pub that welcomes families with young children - although one or two of the little darlings were threatening to rebrand the place to a kindergarten. Having learned that the number 53 in the pub's moniker relates to the premises' degrees of latitude, it was soon time to carefully negotiate the discarded nappies and head next door to the Angel Inn.

After being closed for no less than 67 years, the **Angel Inn** returned to the Stockport pub scene in 2018 – also on the cusp of the pandemic. What first catches the eye is the pub's ornate white brick and tiled façade. However, inside has been totally transformed, and now incorporates what was a neighbouring (closed) shop. Despite it being opened-out and modernised, its layout is still dictated substantially by its original multi-room lay-out. With its discrete alcoves and much original wood panelling still evident - all equipped with benches and sumptuous leather sofas - it has character and atmosphere in what is otherwise a contemporary (and very popular) space. In fact, it was so busy that it was necessary to decamp outside to the patio at the rear. And this was the cue for it starting to rain! More surprising than the pub's (very) extended period of closure is that it is owned by the local community. Something you'd never guess on first sight, and surely living testament to the fact you can't always pigeon hole a pub based on its ownership model - how different the Angel Inn is to the expectation one often has of an archetypal community-owned pub, something that would be demonstrated to good effect later on at our last pub of the day.

1970s transport cafe

The **Petersgate Tap** looks like a 1970s transport café as one approaches (at least it did on the day we visited). However, what was at one time a betting shop, is now a two-storey pub that belongs very much to the micro-pub genre. We never ventured upstairs to investigate the upper bar area, but instead squeezed into a very busy downstairs bar where the most striking visual feature are some rather fine oak-topped tables set into seating bays. Amongst a selection of keg craft beers was the reassuring sight of six handpumps offering an eclectic selection of real beers from small breweries, plus it was the first place we had happened across on our pub odyssey that featured a good range of ciders and perries - all there to be enjoyed from a large display fridge. Architecturally this place scored 2 out of 10, but for beer, cider and atmosphere it scored 8 out of 10… it's definitely one for beer (and cider), as opposed to history.

Moving away from the town centre - and little more than a rail-replacement bus's length away from the rear entrance to the town's railway station - brought our party to the threshold of the **Olde Vic**. Set in a "less fashionable" residential district, even before we got inside it screamed 'community local' at us, and that's precisely what it is. Moreover, this was to be our second visit of the day to a community-owned pub. There are only 160 or so community-owned pubs in the UK, and they are nearly always village and/or country pubs, yet there we were ordering a round of drinks at a second urban example that day. This place felt absolutely right - it certainly wasn't flash or trendy, but had everything one needs in a reliable local pub: a choice of decent beers from small brewers (plus ciders); it was clean and comfortable, and a great atmosphere was stoked-up by the ruthless banter from a friendly and eccentric landlord. After a long day, and with a return leg train trauma awaiting us across the road, it was good to simply sit, relax and reflect with friends over a decent pint and a packet of real pork scratchings - all in a real pub. It don't get much better than this! If you do ever get around to visiting the pubs of Stockport – an experience that comes highly recommended – a visit to the Olde Vic should always be a 'must-do'. Alas, it was all too soon to head back to the station to play sardines on another Transport for Wales two-carriage wonder.

The light was failing (but not the beer and banter) on arrival at Ye community-owned Olde Vic

CHESTER SUMMER EXCURSION

We knew that on visiting Chester in August we'd encounter crowds of tourists, but took the risk when this was organised. We hadn't anticipated that it would be one of the hottest days of a hot Summer, and that there would also be a rail strike on that day….

Luckily, Chester wasn't quite as hot as Hereford on 13th August, and, for once, it was a bonus travelling on Transport for Wales as the unions had done a deal and their trains were not directly affected. Only one minor cancellation on the Crewe-Chester leg, which delayed our arrival by 45 minutes and was soon coped with by a minor change in our schedule.

The line-up at The Cellar

Our small party (more sensible members having been put off by the weather and strike) made a bee-line for the **Cellar**, just a stroll down the City Road from the station. Good range of Marble (of Salford) beers (Persephone, Ogden Stout, Earl Grey IPA, Late Summer Pints, and Mild) plus the now ubiquitous Taylor's Landlord in this street level bar (the cellar is underneath for functions). It's on the edge of the canal district, with a modern aspect designed to attract all ages as a city pub. Friendly, beers kept well, and the Late Summer Pints I had was in excellent condition (pleasant hoppy pale, 3.9%) – I would normally have stayed for another but we were on a mission (and had to make our pre-booked lunch in under 30 minutes). I'll be back.


The Cornerhouse

Next up was the **Cornerhouse** – the same owners, I believe, and just down the other side of City Road. This has a mock Tudor frontage and modern interior, with a lesser range of cask ales, but I just had time for an excellent half of Mobberly (Cheshire) 1924 Amber Bitter (4.0%, classic bitter) served by a knowledgeable Czech barmaid.

Others had already gone straight to our lunch stop – **Old Harkers Arms**. This is just off City Road, down alongside the canal in a lovely setting on a hot day. Large converted warehouse interior and seating outside. Our table was at the 'library' end of the bar. Beer was again good, though perhaps a shade down on the first two excellent beers at the Cellar and Cornerhouse. Here the Weetwood (Kelsall, Cheshire) Cheshire Cat (4.0%, dry, lemony gold) was almost as good, but the Mobberley Bunji (3.8%) frankly reminded me of burnt rubber – not everyone agreed! My lunch of fish, chips, mushy peas and homemade tartar was fine, if not exceptional.

We then had a lovely, leisurely, sunny, walk through Chester, and partly along the old wall, before arriving at the **Brewery Tap**, Lower Bridge street. For those who haven't been there before, definitely a must see, with the steps up from the pavement into this former Jacobean banquet hall. Very popular with tourists for

The Brewery Tap

good reasons, this is a unique venue. The usual big range of their linked brewery (at Waverton) cask ales on offer, and I tried the Spitting Feathers Session Beer (3.6%, standard bitter), which was fine, if unremarkable. Time was calling, and we had to move on up the street.

This was where I got slightly lost – having cockily led the party to the pubs so far using my smart phone, I strode off ahead confident that I would be there first. Unfortunately, the **Cavern of the Curious Gnome** (I know, how could you miss that…) refused to be where my phone said it was, and, after searching through the raised level arcade for a good few minutes, I arrived to find the others already there and supping their drinks. The smirks said everything. This is a Belgian style bistro-pub, with a wine bar below and the Cavern, curiously (!), being upstairs. The logo is a monument to bad taste (see photo), but the beer is OK. I tried the Squawk (Ardwick, Manchester) Otis Pale (3.9%) which was very good. They had an impressive range of Belgian bottled beers, including most of the true Trappistes, except Westvleteren.

The Cavern of the Curious Gnome

Telford's Warehouse was another very pleasant walk along the city walls, and down steps to a canal side location, just outside the walls (Tower Wharf). Great views along the canal from the main bar. Another good range of cask ales, so I tried the Squawk Pavo Pale (3.9%), which was again very good – very similar in taste to the Otis tried earlier.

Heading back to the station, we stopped at the **Pied Bull** (Northgate Street) to sample their very locally brewed ale (actually, on site!). I had the Pied Bull Gullabull (3.9%, standard bitter), which was good, but even better to us was the air-conditioning unit, that we managed to arrange ourselves under when some locals indicated they were leaving and we could have that table. Bliss on that day, as we were getting somewhat hot & bothered having walked round most of Chester (literally).

The view from Telford's Warehouse

Finally, we called in at the **Deva Tap**, just outside the station. A striking late Victorian edifice (1880), with a Disneyesque conical tower and long narrow rooms, it acts as a local outlet for Osset brewery, all the way from Wakefield in West Yorkshire. I tried an unlikely Ossett Banana-ratta (4.0%, pale, with a hint of banana), which was surprisingly pleasant.

And so, the train took us back into the heat of Herefordshire on a balmy August evening, with the sun sinking slowly over North Wales and even appearing as a rare triple sun dog. We got back, with surprisingly little impact from the strikes or weather, and with very pleasant memories of Chester.

WEOBLEY WANDER

Les Lumsdon

This must be a first. There are only a few stiles on this walk and no hills. This five-mile wander along field paths and a bridleway includes some lane walking on the eastern section to and from Dilwyn. Hedgerows, orchards and green pastures are topped and tailed by two characterful Black and White villages, which have attracted visitors to our county for many a decade. Weobley is without doubt one of the finest, if not the finest village, in the Marches so when you get back give the heritage trail a try if time permits.

The Sargeants 461/462 bus stops opposite the Green Bean deli and café. Step off the bus, and lo and behold, there are two pubs temptingly nearby. Across the Market Pitch is the 17th century Ye Olde Salutation Inn which serves one regular beer, Butty Bach, as well as guests such as Hobsons Town Crier or Hereford HLA. There's a choice of entry, into a small bar or a lounge cum dining area which leads to a garden so take your pick. The other hostelry, the New Unicorn (another historic pub) is around the corner in High Street, a pub which for decades did not offer real ale, but now serves a changing beer or two including Ludlow Gold which was on fine form when I called in. There are two traditional bars and space outside for drinking and you'll always get a welcome from the landlord and landlady. The Crown Inn at Dilwyn is a superb village pub and featured many a time in Hopvine. It offers a range of local beers including Wye Valley, and Hobsons. There's a marquee in the spacious back garden as well as a cosy bar.

Tall Spire

Walk down Broad Street towards the church of St Peter and St Paul, by a garage and ahead on a lane, passing by the old Red Lion. The church has the second highest spire in the county, a landmark seen throughout the walk, so it is difficult to get lost! As the lane bends left, go right through a gate and in 100 metres left through a small gate by a field gate.

Keep left alongside a hedge leading to a footbridge and a track. The next section is not entirely clear as some of the rows of apples trees have been grubbed and waymark posts lost in the process. The Throne farm has adopted an agroforestry approach which is explained on their website so take a look. Turn right on the track by a storage area and after a few metres walk slightly left between a row of apple trees. At the end, turn left on the track to reach a junction. Go through a gap here into the next orchard. The track curves slightly left and right then ahead where you continue through a row of trees again. At the end cut left and right through another gap into a third orchard. The path curves slightly left and right twice, then you continue ahead alongside a line of apple trees.

Homme Dingle

At the end, go through a kissing gate and turn right (follow white waymarks) to walk up the field's edge. This permissive path passes a lovely veteran oak tree and exits eventually at a kissing gate with an old barn to the right and Homme dingle ahead. Once through, go left and keep left to pass through a field gate at the next boundary.

The bridleway curves slightly right at first, then ahead to a stile by a gate at the wood. As the green track bends right towards a field gate, keep ahead to a small gate leading onto the road to Dilwyn. Follow this to the village edge where you go left at the junction and down to the Crown Inn on the right.

Dilwyn

Dilwyn is quieter than Weobley, a picture post-card village with many half-timbered houses nestled around a beautifully tranquil village green. Here you will find the Crown Inn, a much -loved community pub so step inside.

Retrace your steps to the bridleway by going left out the Crown and right at the junction. As the road rises to a bend, go through the small gate and up to the top field edge then alongside the wood. Proceed over a stile and directly across the pasture curving slightly left to a field gate. Keep ahead and then right to where you entered this field earlier.

However, now keep ahead to pass to the left of the barn and through a gate. The bridleway continues through several fields back towards Weobley where you come to the track used on the outward section.

Retrace your steps into the centre of the village. On a final note, thanks go to the Ware family of Throne Farm for allowing a permissive path across their land and for their progressive ap-proach to farming; please keep dogs on a lead. Check out their website www.thronefarm.co.uk

Factfile

Map: Explorer Leominster and Bromyard 202

Travel to Weobley

Bus 461/2 (Sargeants) from Hereford Railway Station and Country Bus Station Mondays-Saturdays: 0900 and hourly throughout the day

Sundays: 1100,1400 and 1700

Return buses from Weobley (stop nearDeli)

Return buses to Hereford (Mons-Sats), at 15 minutes past the hour until 1615 then 1735

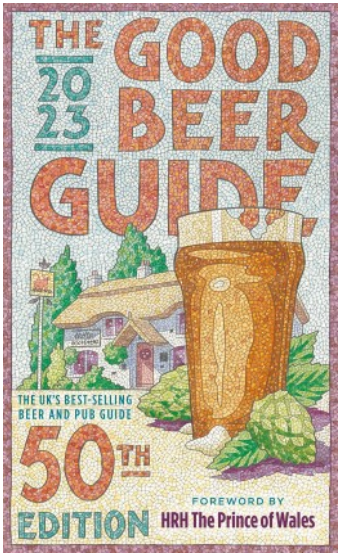
Sundays: 1015,1315,1615

It is easy to download a full timetable from the website www.sargeantsbros.com

Traveline:www.traveline.info

The Pubs

The New Unicorn is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 3pm and Friday, Saturday and Sunday from noon onwards. Closed on Weds. The Olde Salutation is open daily from 12 noon. The Crown Inn, Dilwyn is closed on Mondays, but opens all day from 12 noon on other days. Check Whatpub for details.



RRP: £16.99 from bookshops

CAMRA Member price £14.99 from

https://shop1.camra.org.uk

Crossword Solution

Across 9. Lichfield; 10. Omega; 11. Eternal; 12. Alumina; 13. Amity; 14. Butternut; 16. Englands Gate Inn; 19. New Strand; 21. Viral; 22. Tram Inn; 23. Trumpet; 25 Metal; 26 Repattern

Down 1. Old Tavern; 2. Screwing; 3. If only; 4. Bell; 5. Advan-taged; 6. Monument; 7. New Inn; 8. Vaga; 14. Bad manners; 15. Tin plating; 17. Ant hills; 18. Irrupted; 20. Wealth; 21 Vaults; 22. Tump; 23 Tape

Wordsearch Solution

Adnams, Bude, Goffs, Hobgoblin, Hobsons, Joules, Ludlow, Ot-ter, Purity, Salopian, Sharps, Theakstons, Titanic

WHAT'S ON

Wednesday 30th November at 8pm November **Annual General Meeting** (followed by a brief Branch meeting) at the Barrels, St Owen Street, Hereford.

Wednesday 16th November, 8pm in the Orange Tree, Hereford. **Beer on the Wye XVII launch meeting**

Saturday19th November **Annual Black Country Trip** by minibus. Leave Hereford around 9am.

Sunday 18th December, at noon **Christmas Social** at the Bar-rels, St Owen Street, Hereford.

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