Hereford HOPVINE

The Newsletter of the Herefordshire Branch of CAMRA

Issue No 61 | Spring 2016 | Free

RHYDSPENCE RENAISSANCE

ON YER BIKE TO LUDLOW

NEW BREWERY DRIVES INTO TOWN

PUB OF THE SEASON: OAK WIGMORE

CAMRA
CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

120+ CASK BEERS

110+ CIDERS & PERRIES

BEER ON THE WYE XII

July 8th, 9th & 10th 2016

HEREFORD ROWING CLUB

GREYFRIARS AVENUE HEREFORD HR4 0BE

HOT FOOD

WORLD BEERS BAR

FAMILY FUN DAY ON SUNDAY

CAMPING AVAILABLE
(facilities on site)

LIVE BANDS

The Skimmity Hitchers
The Luke Doherty Band
The Hayriders
The Rooters
The World of Subduction
Mike Parker
Plus 2 more TBC

ADMISSION

FRIDAY: 2 - 11pm £4
SATURDAY: 12 - 11pm £6
SUNDAY: 12 - 5pm £1

QUICK ENTRY PACKAGES

FRI £10 / Sat £15

Including Admission, Glass, Programme and Drink Tokens

(Glass and unused tokens refundable)

www.herefordcamra.org.uk/festival

@beeronthewye facebook.com/BeerOnTheWye www.pinterest.com/Beeronthewye

Accompanied children admitted until 6pm. No children allowed on site after 9pm.
The organisers reserve the right to refuse admission. (Challenge 21 and Hereford H.A.N.D. ban in operation)

RHYDSPENCE REVIVAL AS HISTORIC BORDER INN IS SOLD

New ownership brings welcome new life to an old friend

The Rhydspence Inn enjoys a prominent position in countryside just off the main A438 Hereford-Brecon road - a little way beyond Whitney-on-Wye as you head for the Welsh border. In fact, the actual border follows the brook that trickles along the edge of the garden. A particularly fine Grade II-listed timber-framed building, it is considered by many to be one the oldest (if not the oldest) hostelries in Herefordshire - dating back to the 1500s, and (it is alleged) some parts are even older. Historians inform us that in the past it was a drovers' inn. It even warrants an entry in the definitive works of the late and great architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner – rare praise indeed. There is no doubt the Rhydspence Inn is a place of great distinction.

After years of uncertainty as to its future, good news can now finally be reported. It is now under new ownership, and at the helm is local boy, Mark Price, who is realising a lifetime's dream by taking on the historic old inn. Reassuring is the fact Mark comes with a good pedigree: he has extensive experience in the licensed trade - including spells at the Salutation at Weobley; the Crown Inn at Woolhope, and (just a short hop up the road from the Rhyspence Inn) he enjoyed a lengthy and successful tenure at the Baskerville Arms at Clyro.

New owner, Mark Price, manning the pumps

History on its own will never guarantee success for a business. In recent years the Rhydspence Inn had sadly been very much in the doldrums, especially after 2011, when the previous owner sought unsuccessfully to get planning permission to convert it into a private house - something that would have been an absolute tragedy. Periods of prolonged closure since then were interspersed with false dawns when attempts to lease the business were ultimately unsuccessful. (*see the box on page 4 for the full story*)

However, that's all in the past now. It's now time to celebrate a brighter future. On the 12th February the Rhydspence Inn quietly opened its doors once more. There was no singing and dancing; no fanfare; no press launch or VIP party – just steady as she goes in the pub, hotel and restaurants from the outset.

Whilst Mark's plans don't envisage any major changes, he is keen to welcome more drinkers back

to the Rhydspence Inn. With this in mind, he has already installed two beers (Doombar and Wye Valley Butty Bach) onto the bar, with a third beer from a local brewery coming soon. Moreover, he also sees the restaurant and pub food focusing firmly on good quality British staples. It all seems to be moving the right way.

Even in these very early days, a good strong start can be reported. Drinkers and diners appear to already be returning in their droves, and amongst a frisson of genteel excitement could be detected remarks saying how good it is to see the old place back again. Even the comments left on *Trip Advisor* have been 100% five stars. Even more rare praise!

There are very good reasons the Rhydspence Inn has survived over the centuries, and these are also strong indicators for an exciting future. It's an outstanding historic inn, set in a nice location with a bar, three restaurants and seven letting rooms. It has an array of charming original features, including a grand fireplace; old settles; wonky beams, and discreet nooks and crannies. It is in the middle of good walking country and is no more than a ten minute drive from painfully trendy Hay-on-Wye – with its internationally-renowned literary festival. That's plenty for Mark and his team to get going at.

This is an old inn we very nearly lost, but now it looks like the good times have definitely returned. Herefordshire CAMRA wishes Mark and his team well in their future endeavours. The Rhydspence Inn is still with us as a real living and breathing part of our nation's history - isn't it time you went and had a look?

Rhydspence Inn, HEREFORD, HR3 6EU. Telephone (01497) 831262 Website: www.rhydspence-inn.co.uk
Opening Times: 11-11 Meal times: 12-3, 6-9.30; 12-9.30 Sat; 12-3, 6-9.30 Sun

SUSPENCE AT THE RHYDSPENCE: THE STORY OF HOW A GREAT INN WAS SAVED

In January 2011 Herefordshire CAMRA was stunned when a planning application was submitted to convert the old inn into a private dwelling. In support of the application, claims were made by the then owner that it had been on the market for around twelve years (on and off) and had been offered for sale on one occasion for a price as low as £350,000 - which didn't really help to explain why it was then on offer for a whopping £750,000.

With more holes than a Swiss cheese in the marketing evidence supplied to the planners, that application soon came a cropper. However, come September of the same year, an identical planning application appeared - this following a brief period of marketing of the inn at a still highly ambitious £550,000. The planners ultimately shared CAMRA's view that the premises had been priced for sale as a private house, as opposed to a licensed business and hotel, and consequently the second application was refused that November.

After a couple of false dawns, where the Rhydspence Inn was leased out for short periods, the bar closed and it was run only as a B & B over the intervening years. It was then finally sold as 2016 arrived. The campaign to ensure its future was finally at an end. The Rhydspence Inn was saved!

Today we have what is hopefully now a 'win-win-win' situation. The previous owner has got a fair price and can now enjoy his retirement; the local community has a great pub and hotel back in its midst, and a new rural business enterprise has been born.

Looking back, it was both surprising and disappointing that CAMRA was the only organisation interested in fighting to save this historic inn. No-one else seemed the least concerned about its plight. One can perhaps forgive antipathy to our cause from one or two local pub and hotel owners (after all it's good for their business to see the competition closing-up shop), and the ex-locals too - who had probably long since jumped ship and gone elsewhere. However, the attitude of the local parish council left a sour taste in the mouth. When CAMRA attended a meeting of Brilley Parish Council, they seemed set to support the conversion, even before they bothered to properly read the supporting information provided by the planners. In the final analysis they only supported conversion for half of the Rhydspence Inn! However, quite how you are supposed to save half a pub was never quite explained to us.

LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

AFTER THE HARVEST

Arrangements for Jonny Bright, of the Hereford Brew House, to brew at Saxon City have run into technical difficulties, so this brewery is currently inactive.

KELPAUL

Kelpaul are working on a session IPA which will be available in early March and they have also bottled some of their Amber Ale for the Beefy Boys under the name of Tarby's Barbie Brew. New outlets are the Monk at Monkland, Saracens Head and Dog Hangs Well at Ludlow.

ODYSSEY

A new bottling cycle is now running at Odyssey where they will be bottling Cookie Monster (with cinnamon levels raised); Little India Pale Ale; Crowd Control; Nirvana and Devil May Care. The latter is an unfined 7.2% IPA. - Lighter bodied than Merciless but more heavily hopped - this is going to be an unbalanced West Coast hop monster with very high bitterness.

All of the above will also be available in cask other than Devil May Care which is keg only (save for a pin or two exclusively for the Beer in Hand).

Odyssey have joined *EeBria,* a small brewers' marketing organisation, meaning Odyssey bottles and kegs will be available online and nationwide. All Odyssey kegs will be keg-conditioned .

Dank Destroyer finished in the top 10 of a Europe-wide IPA competition run by *Simply Hops*. This is excellent news as there were over a hundred entries.

The latest session IPA San Diego Session (4.2% ABV - unfined) is now available at the Beer in Hand and will join the range that is brewed on a fairly regular basis. Evil Empire also makes a welcome return - the latest batch will be ready in mid-March.

WOBBLY

New brews from Wobbly are: 4.5% ABV HopRod, a very hoppy American Pale Ale, with grapefruit aftertaste, produced in cans; and 6% IPA002, a very hoppy bottle conditioned pale ale.

The on-site shop (open 9-5 Mon-Friday) is also selling Brodie's bottled beers from London.

Wobbly beers are available at Saracens Head in Hereford, Kings Head and Crown & Sceptre in Ross-on-Wye, Harewood End, Stockton Cross, Kimbolton and Cosy Club in Hereford.

WYE VALLEY

Butty Bach, the 4.5% ABV premium ale has won gold in West Midlands CAMRA *Bottled Beer of the Year* 2015.

The Wye Valley 'lozenge' logo has given ten years service and is about to be pensioned off, to be replaced by the 'stamp' design (*left*). This will infiltrate all Wye Valley design material and even appear on the company's classic mini.

New and exciting monthly specials are promised as well as a daringly-different summer beverage.

The February special was Supreme which was one of the original portfolio in the 1980's. This was followed by The Hopfather in March. Lined up for April onwards are:

Pump It Up (4.6%) with a thirst-quenching zesty taste - something to do with cycling?

Goddess (named with Maia, the Goddess of Spring in mind) a 4.0% burnished copper ale with a distinctive hoppy taste

Tap In, a 4.2% golden ale for the 2016 Euro Championships .

LUDLOW

It's hard to believe, but Ludlow has been brewing for ten years and has been in its Railway Shed for over five years. To celebrate the brewery is putting on a family open day on Bank Holiday Monday 30th May with tours, food, and a selection of rebuilt classic *Lloyds of Ludlow* trucks. In addition there'll be fun items for the family. Comments Head Brewer Gary Walters: "Brewing is our passion and we'd like to share this with our loyal customer base. It is for the whole family to come and enjoy; that's what the day is about. Our featured charity on the day will be Macmillan cancer support."

There is a report on a recent brewery visit to Ludlow in this edition of *Hopvine*. (see page 28)

SWAN BREWERY PREPARES FOR FLIGHT

Popular ex-Wye Valley Brewer takes off on his own

After the recent closure of Mayfields, it is excellent news that brewing has returned to Leominster so soon, in the form of the Swan Brewery. By the time you read this, their first brew will have hit Herefordshire pubs.

Herefordshire's newest brewery has been set up by Jimmy Swan with partner Gill Bullock (the plan is he'll brew it and she'll sell it). Both have excellent backgrounds. After studying biochemistry at Oxford University, Jimmy obtained a postgraduate diploma in brewing science at Herriot Watt University in Edinburgh. Following stints at *Brewing Research International*, *Hall & Woodhouse Brewery* and *Munton Maltsters,* he joined Wye Valley Brewery where he was Head Brewer and most recently Operations Director.

Now the lure of the mash tun has finally persuaded him to branch out and have a go at brewing his own beers.

It is a highly competitive market. Britain has 1,300 breweries - more per head of population than anywhere else in the world, - and last year alone 170 new ones opened. "Ideally I should have done this three or four years ago", Jimmy said to the *Hopvine*, "but I'm confident that with the right beers and consistent quality we can compete in the market." Certainly he has the ambition: "I considered a five -barrel plant initially", he said, "but I was worried that this would prevent future growth so settled on a ten-barrel capacity." (A brewer's barrel is 36 gallons or 288 pints). Gill has a chemistry degree, also from Oxford, but has been lured to the 'dark side' to a different discipline and is currently the Marketing Manager for a food manufacturer in Tenbury Wells.

Gill Bullock and Jimmy Swan

The brewery is sited in an industrial unit on the *Leominster Enterprise Park*. "It's surprisingly difficult to find premises that tick all the boxes", Jimmy says. "The ideal was for a level site, single-storey building with three-phase electrics and mains sewage. We looked at a few barn conversions which looked fantastic and had a certain romance about them, but in the end a modern industrial unit is more practical."

The brewing equipment comprises the usual hot liquor tank, mash tun and a gas-heated copper. There are also two ten-barrel and a five-barrel capacity fermenters. When the *Hopvine* visited in early March, all the equipment was installed and tested and the initial brew was planned later in the week. A 200-litre pilot line has also been ordered for trials and special beers.

Kit and Cat

The kit was all purchased from a brewery in Kirkbymoorside in Yorkshire, which was set up by a retired head brewer from Joseph Holts before poor health forced him to sell up. And Jimmy didn't just buy the brewing equipment, he bought the whole brewery - lock stock and barrel - including the dartboard (well you've got to while away the hours somehow as the hops are boiling). Sadly, the brewery cat declined the offer to re-locate. The brewing operation is all computer-controlled which manages the critical temperature profiles and other processes. Wet yeast is to be used, as Jimmy reckons "dried yeast gives the beer a flavour that I'm not keen on."

Arm Breaker

Three beers are planned initially. 'Swan Gold' at 4.0% ABV will be the first brew using Admiral and Saaz hops. This will be followed by 'Swan Amber' at 4.4% ABV. A third beer, 'Arm Breaker', a 6.0% ABV IPA, will be brewed on the pilot line. (Geddit? Swans are supposed to be capable of breaking your arm with their beaks, though if you suggested this on QI it would set off the klaxons).

Meanwhile Gill has been busy marketing the beers into Herefordshire pubs. We suggested that many publicans moan about being inundated with sales enquiries from micro-breweries and that she may meet with stony indifference. "On the contrary", she replies. "It seems the bush telegraph has been working well and several landlords had already heard about us and are eager to have a cask as soon as possible." Clearly Jimmy's brewing reputation had preceded him.

So, do check-out the web site and go and find a pint of Swan. The signets are that you won't be disappointed. www.swanbrewery.co.uk

LOCAL PUB NEWS

Up in the hills above Hay, concerns persist regarding the **Bull's Head** at Craswall. In a previous *Hopvine*, it was reported that the wonderfully remote ex-drovers inn had failed to open for its usual summer season, this owing to the retirement abroad of the owners and then illness preventing the planned-for succession of son and daughter into the food-led business. However, there is nothing at all on the pub's website as to what might be happening in the future - only a contact telephone number. Some good news is that it has now been listed as an ACV, following its nomination by the Parish Council.

James & Lisa Aubrey pictured at the Barrels, Hereford with their quoits board

A sequel to the feature on quoits in the Christmas 2014 *Hopvine* is that the author of the article, Mark Shirley from Northamptonshire has donated a spare quoits board to new licensees James & Lisa Aubrey who have recently taken on the **Pandy Inn** in the Dorstone, with the intention of re-establishing the pub at the centre of village life. The dartboard has already been re-hung, but sadly the pub's old quoits board was given away by the previous licensees. Two sets of rubber quoits remained at the pub though, and the couple were keen to track down a replacement board, with enthusiastic support from regulars who presumably miss the game.

A quoits board was also observed at the **Rhydspence Inn** near Whitney-on-Wye following its re-opening after a long period of closure. (The full story is covered on pages 3 and 4).

Just across the river from the Rhydspence Inn, things are changing in Hay-on-Wye. Back in early autumn last year the **Swan Hotel** changed ownership. Wye Valley Butty Bach is now the single resident beer in the bar. As at the beginning of March, both the town's **Kilverts Hotel** and the once famously-unspoiled **Three Tuns** are up for sale.

Reports from the **Tump Inn,** Wormelow suggest that trade is picking up steadily following the arrival of new tenants John and Pat Quinnell in March 2015. The single real ale alternates between Butcombe and Otter.

New licensees Emma Vaughan and Danny McMenamin are in charge of the newly-reopened **Crown & Sceptre** in Ross-on-Wye's Market Pace. One nice surprise is that beers from Wobbly Brewery still feature on the bar.

There's movement at the long-closed **Castle Inn** at Little Birch at last. Locals are delighted to learn that the charming country pub is due to re-open at 6.30pm on Friday the 18th March with licensee, Haydn Jones, in charge. It's too early to say precisely what the food and beer offer will be, but "good pub grub" should be available from the first Saturday.

Opening times will be: Thursday to Sundays 12-3, then 6pm till finish; (also open evening-only Wednesday)

There is encouraging news on the **Pennyfarthing** at Aston Crews. It is reported to have been taken on by the Williams family, who have links to the Yew Tree at Longhope. Work is in progress at the pub, but no opening date has been given. One for the next *Hopvine*!

Following the registration of the **Plough Inn**, Little Dewchurch as an ACV (reported in the last *Hopvine*) local Parish Councillor Dean Cholmondeley and his wife Steph moved in to run the pub for the community. For the time being they are staying with the regular Wye Valley HPA and Butty Bach on the bar and were planning to start serving evening meals as this *Hopvine* went to press.

Moving into Hereford, the **Treacle Mine (**closed since Summer 2015) was reported in the *Hereford Times* as having been sold at the end of January, although the identity and intentions of the buyer was not revealed. It is one of only five

pubs in the city on the south side of the river.

The **Black Lion** on Hereford's Bridge Street changed hands last autumn and music remains very much on the agenda: live bands being hosted each Friday and Saturday night, alongside regular karaoke and disco events There's even been a successful physic evening! Currently food is only Sunday Roasts, but there are plans to start lunchtime food daily (12-3pm) from late April. The three beers are two from Wye Valley (HPA and Butty Bach), plus Hobgoblin.

The fish fryers didn't last long at the **Saltfish Fish & Chip Bar** (aka. the **Spread Eagle**) on King Street. It has now been rebranded back to its original name. Under the umbrella of the *Number Works Pub Company*, its menus have now moved from 2,4,6,8 to 4,6,8,10 (alluding to prices on the menu). At least the price increase might help them pay for yet another coat of paint on the pub's frontage! Bets are already on for how long this latest incarnation will last. *[as this Hopvine went to press the Spread Eagle was "..due to unforeseen circumstances, closed until further notice" - Ed]*

The **Grapes Tavern** on the city's East Street is

Hereford's new Cosy Club

now under new management, and big changes are already in train.

A reduced emphasis on food now means it is now only served 11-5pm daytimes; the knives and forks set on tables will shortly disappear. Three or four cask beers, reduced to two in the winter months, include Wye Valley and at least one guest. The food is now more about quality snacks (hot dogs, burgers) as much as conventional pub mains.

In March a Champagne bar and 30-seater restaurant was due to open across three rooms upstairs, offering fabulous views down Church Street towards the cathedral - this facility will be used weekends (Fri/Sat eves) only.

At *Heineken's Star Pubs* awards ceremony held late in 2015, the **Lichfield Vaults** was runner-up to the Ship Tavern, Holborn, London in the *Best Cask Pub* category.

The conversion to a pub of the old Farmers' Club in Hereford – first mooted in last summer's *Hopvine* - has now been completed. Trading as the **Cosy Club,** it is one of thirteen such pub-restaurants operated by Bristol-based company *Loungers Ltd*. ranging from Exeter to Manchester to Stamford. The company also operates a much larger number of similar outlets in their *Lounges* portfolio.

Occupying a superb Grade II*-listed building, it sits on the corner of Widemarsh Street, diagonally opposite Hereford's new shopping and dining quarter. On the ground floor is a bar which serves real ale, plus a restaurant with its own bar. Upstairs is a lounge bar and a further large dining area. A regular house beer from Wobbly at 4.0% ABV called Cosy but Wobbly is accom-

Maria and Andy Ward at the Talbot, Ledbury

panied by a guest from local breweries such as Untapped Brewing of Raglan.

The **Rose Gardens ('Rosie')** at Munstone is the subject of an ACV nomination by the local parish council. Although closed, occasional private functions are allegedly still held there.

According to the website of local selling agents, *Sidney Phillips*, the **New Inn** at Bartestree is under offer as at March 2016. Local rumours believe that there is interest in it becoming a bar and hotel. The neo-Gothic pile has been on the market since last summer, after it was the subject of an unsuccessful planning application to convert it into residential units.

It was only a short distance, but quite a change of environment, when Toby Lunn recently moved from the Prince of Wales in Ledbury to run the bar at **Verzons** - just along the A438 road towards Hereford. Toby has overseen the fitting of new handpumps and beer lines, enabling three beers to now be offered. Hobson's Best is accompanied by one from nearby Ledbury Ales, and a local guest. The venue is a country hotel, restaurant and bar offering dining in surroundings both opulent and rustic.

Congratulations are due to Andy and Maria Ward after they celebrated 21 years at the **Talbot**, Ledbury on Tuesday 9th February. The celebrations took the form of a party in this popular town pub with live entertainment being provided by *Del Boy and Dave.* Many of their friends and regulars were able to enjoy the evening where every 21st drink was free which made the event even more enjoyable!

Andy is thought to be the third longest serving landlord in the Talbot since at least the 17th century. He has also been involved in promoting a number of festivals and tourist events in Ledbury, and has been named both as a *Citizen of the Year* and a *Distinguished Citizen of the Year* by Ledbury organisations.

It seems a rare thing these days to have a landlord in the same pub for more than a few years, let alone 21, including surviving a disastrous fire at the Talbot a few years ago. So, here's wishing Andy and Maria many more happy years of pulling pints.

The make-over mooted in the last Hopvine at the **Full Pitcher** in Ledbury was postponed but is now expected to be carried out in May.

Since the Joplin family took over the running of the **Farmers Arms** at Wellington Heath, things have gone from strength to strength. Now up to eight local draught ciders can be found on the bar including three from Westons; Gwatkin No Bull, plus also examples from Wilces, Olivers,

Jacqueline Ann (Jackie) Williams

Jacqueline Ann Williams passed away peacefully at her home above the Bell Inn in Tillington on January 27th, 2016. A strong-minded, determined and independent lady, she qualified as a secondary school teacher in her mid-30s -while raising four children - having been forced to cut short her education when she left her home town of Wrexham at the age of 16.

She enjoyed music, dancing and discussing politics, but her over-riding love was for her children - Brent, Kim, Viki, and Glenn, and their families - taking particular interest in the welfare and development of her nine grand-children and seven great grandchildren who referred to her as 'Nanny Pub'.

Jackie was "the heart and soul of the Bell", which she had run with Glenn and his wife, Kate, for more than 30 years. Her popularity was evident as friends and locals met to celebrate her life at commemorative service held at midday on February 17th.

More than a hundred people ignored the rain and blustery winds to join family members in the paddock behind the Bell for a humanist memorial service, the scattering of her ashes and the planting of a Yarlington Mill sapling in her memory.

Peter Amor, Nina and Bob Newman and Vernon Amor outside the Chequers in Leominster

Butford Farm and Newton Court. The five ales always include one from Gloucestershire's Hillside Brewery.

The last weekend in February was the occasion of a well-supported mini-beer festival at the **Red Lion Inn** at Stiffords Bridge. However, it was also when we learned of the sad news that licensees, Andy & Kim Lannie, are to leave the rejuvenated roadside pub in May. Since taking over in 2012 they have completely transformed the pub's fortunes. Despite flood and tempest (they literally experienced both!), they re-built from scratch a strong food and beer trade - the latter based on local breweries, including Malvern Hills and, most recently at the mini-festival, Hereford's KelPaul Brewery.

The Red Lion was our *Autumn Pub of the Season* for 2015, so they will be leaving the place in fine fettle. They are going to be sorely missed and, doubtless, will be a tough act to follow. Their plans are to leave the licensed trade, although they haven't ruled out returning some day. The *Hopvine* team wish Andy, Kim and their family well in their future endeavours.

The **Majors Arms** at Halmonds Frome changed hands last Autumn as Bernice and Tom Lewis left to give more time to their family, and Rob Weston stepped in. The charming little pub, that boasts incredible sunset views, is tucked away down a narrow lane signed off the A4103 from the top of Fromes Hill. The regular beers remain Purity Pure Gold and Wye Valley Bitter, with one other from Otter or Salopian.

Just a barrel's roll down the hill from the Majors Arms is the award-winning **Green Dragon Inn** at Bishops Frome. In February they altered their Sunday opening hours to 12-6pm until further notice. But there's no need to panic, as this still leaves the remaining six nights of the week to sample the six beers and eight local ciders on offer.

The changes reported in the Christmas *Hopvine* at the **Baiting House** at Upper Sapey have turned out to be more extensive than first planned, and re-opening is now expected in late April.

Following its acquisition by Wye Valley Brewery last year, the **Chequers** on Leominster's Etnam Street is offering Bitter, HPA, Butty Bach and

Dorothy Goodbody's Wholesome Stout, plus Dorothy Goodbody's Golden Ale (or the current monthly beer). Improvements are required in the cellar which, when complete, will enable the choice of beers to be extended.

The **Kitchen Restaurant & Bar** in Leominster, previously the **Ducking Stool**, is now selling real ale in the shape of Ludlow Gold. Whilst the front of this single-room pub is set out for dining, there is a pool table at the rear.

Following close on the tail of Ludlow's Old Tap House, has come a second micro-pub for Ludlow. The **Dog Hangs Well** opened at 14 Corve Street on Christmas Eve. It sells one regularly-changing beer as well as a cider. Open when the tavern lamp is lit Wednesdays to Saturdays 5pm to 9pm. There is a full report on this pub (along with the **Old Tap House**) on page 31 of this Hopvine.

The **Sun Inn** at Leintwardine has been successfully listed as an ACV with Herefordshire Council, following its nomination by the local parish council. The Grade II-listed 'parlour pub' offers one or more beers from Hobsons Brewery, plus up to three local guest ales.

On Wednesday 16th and Thursday 17th March the Dilwyn Amateur Dramatic Association will be staging extravaganza *Big Top Time* written by CAMRA member Tony Hobbs at the **Crown Inn** - Herefordshire's only community-owned pub. As well as revealing all the thrills and spills of circus life, the show also features the poignant love affair and no doubt will parody some of the characters in the village. Kick-off time is 7.30 pm with a delicious meal fresh from the Crown chef's kitchen all for just £12.

Deprived of their pub for several years now, the residents of Lyonshall resorted to a Saturday night pop-up pub at the village's Memorial Hall on a Saturday back in February. They remain frustrated at the apparent lack of progress at the **Royal George Inn,** which was bought by local developers two years ago with the stated intention of restoring it as a pub.

Kington's much-loved time-warp pub - the **Olde Tavern** - has started a new food operation. By Easter it should have its own dedicated room to the rear, therefore it shouldn't detract from the serious art of drinking and conversation that is such a hallmark of the Victoria Road pub. The Tavern will also be one of the participating pubs in the *Kington & Radnor Cross-border Beer Festival* due to be held over Easter weekend. (see below). Beers currently on offer are Hobsons Mild, plus up to three guests.

Three omissions from the LocAle List in the Christmas 2015 *Hopvine* have been noted: the Harewood End Inn (Kelpaul); the White Swan, Eardisland (Simpsons); and the Chase Inn at Bishops Frome (Wye Valley, Hobsons, Ludlow).

MULITI-NATIONAL BEER FESTIVAL, BUT THIS ONE WILL HAVE DECENT BEER AND SENSIBLE PRICES *Kington & Radnor Beer Festival: 25th to 26th March 2016*

The inaugural Kington & Radnor Cross-Border Beer Festival [*cripes! That's a mouthful.* Ed] takes place this Easter on Good Friday and Saturday, the 25th and 26th March. Four pubs in Kington are taking part - including the Olde Tavern; Oxford Arms; Swan on the Square, and the Royal Oak. Meanwhile across the border in Radnorshire there is the Radnor Arms and Radnorshire Brewery Bar in New Radnor, and the Fforest Inn at Llanfiangel-Nant-Melan to enjoy. There will be over 35 Real Ales on offer across the piece. Music includes the appearance of *Over the Hillbillies*, who will be playing at the Swan in Kington on the Good Friday night.

All the participating pubs are accessible by the no. 461 bus, which runs from Hereford to Kington and/or Llandrindod Wells pretty much hourly throughout the day, with the last bus back to Hereford at around 7pm. If purchasing a return bus ticket, note that you can break your journey. More pubs to visit, more beers to try!

For those wanting to experience the fabulous Radnorshire countryside at the same time, there is a guided walk on the Saturday starting at the bus stop in New Radnor at 10.30am. It's a hilly five and a half mile walk to the Fforest Inn, but with some splendid views. There is the option of walking back to New Radnor - just over four miles - at about 2pm. Cost is £5 (£4 for CAMRA members) for either or both walks. Sorry, no dogs. Contact details for the walk on page 37.

FROM FIRE-FIGHTING TO FIRE-EATING

New role for the historic Booth Hall

The Booth Hall before the smoking ban
(photo: Hereford Times)

The historic **Booth Hall** re-opened just before Christmas, having been closed intermittently following a devastating fire in 2010. Now in charge of proceedings, and following a major renovation, are young brother-and-sister team Arran and Willow Vidal-Hall. And they seem to have as much energy about them as some of the live acts that have already appeared there.

Open Wednesdays to Saturdays (Sundays might come later) their plans are to establish the Booth Hall as the city's premiere live performance pub venue. And things already seem to be heading the right way: Wednesday is open mic night; Thursday is anything from a range of variety theatre, cabaret to contemporary circus; Fridays alternates each week between live bands and comedy, then on Saturdays it's music again. What's not to like?

Back in 2010, Hereford's firefighters managed to contain the blaze to the building fronting High Town, so damage to the 15th-Century Booth Hall was minimal. The fine hammerbeam roof with alternating decorated trusses is still there.

Very much gone is the old Booth Hall that was on the city's rowdy drinking circuit. With its hints of shabby chic mixed brilliantly with original timberwork, this place will appeal to all. Two beers change regularly, and on a visit in February included Gem from Bath Ales. However, due to the fire, access onto High Town is now boarded up so entry is only via East Street. For more information we recommend a visit to their *Facebook* page at: www.facebook.com/boothhallhereford or at: www.theboothhall.co.uk.

A MARQUEE AT THE ROWING CLUB - SOUND FAMILIAR? BUT THIS ONE'S IN ROSS!

Ross Beer Festival: 30th April to 1st May 2016

Rossbeerfest is the third Beer and Cider Festival being held alongside the River Wye in Ross-on-Wye over the early May Day Bank Holiday weekend. Showcasing locally-produced beers and ciders, the event is being organised as a Charity Fund Raiser by *Ross Lions* and *Ross Rotary* clubs. Open on Saturday 30th April 12-11pm, and Sunday 1st May 12 – 10pm; entry is £5 (includes a free glass and festival guide). Also planned is a full programme of music, with live bands and food supplied by the Ross Rowing Club in a new, large undercover 'beerhall' marquee. Full details, maps and updates are found on the website www.rossbeerfest.org where tickets can also be purchased. See also the festival's Facebook page and Twitter at: @Rossbeerfest.

ARCHITECTURAL MASTERCLASS TAKES PUB AWARD

The Oak at Wigmore named as Herefordshire CAMRA Spring Pub of the Season

Lene Halliday receives the Pub of the Season certificate from Herefordshire CAMRA Chairman Andrew Pearson

The *Hopvine* has already extolled the architectural excellence of the conversion of the Olde Oak from a dowdy Pubco pub to stylish building it is today, where the very old and very new sit so comfortably together.

The Oak Wigmore, as it is now called, is unashamedly a fine-dining establishment - a glance at their *Facebook* page leaves no doubt on that score. But nowadays, real ale is well able to compete with wine as an accompaniment to interesting food, so there is nothing incongruous in recognition from CAMRA.

The staple beers are Hobsons Best and Twisted Spire and the two guests may be new and unusual, or more familiar such as Old Speckled Hen.

The beers can be enjoyed on their own in the bar or the front lounge, where dogs are welcome. In the restored barn to the rear, the side rooms and the discrete rooms upstairs, the Oak is all about dining. On selected days, in addition to the main menu, a small-plate menu is offered, providing an opportunity to explore a range of modern-style dishes.

Behind all of this is Lene Halliday, who insisted on the highest standards for the conversion of the building, and now maintains a family-friendly atmosphere and encourages local drinkers as well as diners.

THE OAK WIGMORE

The Oak Wigmore, Wigmore, HR6 9UJ. Telephone: (01568) 770424. Two en-suite rooms.
Opening Hours: Closed Mon; 6-11 Tue; 12-3, 6-11 Wed-Fri; 12-11 Sat; 12-10.30 Sun.
Meals served: 12-2.30, 6.30-9.30 Wed-Sat; 12-3 Sun.
Website: www.theoakwigmore.com Facebook: theoakwigmore

HEREFORDSHIRE PUBS OF THE YEAR

None of Herefordshire's Pubs of the Year have been quite so well hidden as the Chase Inn at Upper Colwall as its hillside position makes it look quite insignificant from the road. But the inside of the pub is most certainly not insignificant, nor either is the view out across Herefordshire from the rear.

Catering in equal measure for drinkers and diners, it is notable for being one of only two outlets for Batham's Bitter from Brierley Hill.

Presenting the award of Herefordshire CAMRA *Pub of the Year 2015* to landlady Joanne Walker is Herefordshire CAMRA's new Chairman, Andrew Pearson. ►

CIDER IN HAND

Beer in Hand voted Herefordshire CAMRA's Cider Pub of the Year 2015

Winning this prestigious award for the second time in three years, is Hereford's leading real ale and cider pub - the Beer In Hand.

Opened in 2013 by Mitchell and Alison Evans, this independent free house has gone from strength-to-strength, and now boasts a large crowd of loyal regulars. "It's great to receive this award," commented Alison, "and it's always good to have recognition for all of the hard work we put in." Mitchell added that "hopefully the publicity will bring more people to the pub, and that this will increase the demand for traditional ciders."

The Beer In Hand offers ten traditional ciders and perries at any one time – the largest range in the county. Seven of these rotate, and could include offerings from regional cidermakers such as Olivers, Gwynt-y-Ddraig, Apple County and Skyborry - amongst others. The other three are regulars, and number Henney's Medium Cider, Abrahalls Fruit Cider and a collaboration cider from Olivers & Beer in Hand called Showdown at a moderate 5% ABV.

"We went to see Tom Oliver," said Alison, explaining how the collaboration cider came about, "and described the kind of cider that sold well for us - sweeter and of a lower strength than he would usually produce. We tasted some of his blends, and together we came up with Showdown."

Mitchell & Alison Evans with Herefordshire CAMRA's Dave Matthews

As well as the ciders, the Beer in Hand offers up to twelve cask ales - all served direct from the cask, housed in a bespoke array of chilled cabinets. These will always include one or more from Odyssey Brewery. Pizzas and snacks are available Thursday to Saturday evenings.

Beer in Hand, Eignbrook House, 136 Eign Street, Hereford, HR4 0AP.

5-10.30 Mon; 4-11 Tue - Thu; 12-11 Fri & Sat; 12-10.30 Sun; fully accessible; 10p/pint discount for CAMRA members; website: www.beerinhand.co.uk; twitter: @bihhereford

Whilst the Chase is a newcomer to the annual awards, the Prince of Wales has been there before, both as runner up in 2009 and winner in 2013.

Also somewhat hidden, the Prince is tucked away in a delightful cobbled alley leading up to Ledbury's church. It too caters for diners, but the emphasis is on beer with seven cask ales and a wide range of British and foreign bottled beer - enough to satisfy all tastes.

Receiving the certificate for Pub of the Year Runner up and Best Town Pub 2015 from Andrew Pearson is landlord Les Smith

Both pubs were fully described in the Christmas 2015 edition of the *Hopvine*.

CONSERVATION IN ACTION – SAVING RARE HEREFORDSHIRE CIDER APPLES

Hopvine's Dave Matthews gets out into the orchard

Most of the commercial cider orchards you see today driving around Herefordshire contain just a handful of varieties – apples such as Michelin and Dabinett – that are proven good croppers year in, year out. But there are hundreds of cider apple varieties in the UK, and many are in danger of becoming extinct. I've taken up the challenge, in a small and local kind of way, of saving some of these threatened varieties by propagating them, and then promoting them by making single-varietal ciders for sale to the public.

Tidnor Mill

Over the last week, I've harvested some graft wood from three varieties. The plan is to graft this material onto rootstock and plant them out in local orchards. I'll also offer graftwood to a couple of local nurseries, so that the varieties can be spread far and wide, hopefully guaranteeing their future. Here are their stories:

Fréquin Audièvre

I came across this lovely little apple on an old dying tree in the garden of a large house between Bartestree and Ledbury. Bright red, small, with a shape described as 'waisted conical', it's a bitter-sweet type of apple, meaning that it's rich in tannins. Originating in France, it gets a listing in the 1885 *Herefordshire Pomona*, where it is described as a 'valuable variety', making 'excellent cider' and possessing the 'highest merit of the Fréquin tribe'. And indeed a gallon of this cider, with a little Foxwhelp for acidity, won me First Prize for Sweet Cider at the *Big Apple* in 2014.

Tidnor Mill

Apple trees usually only live for seventy years or so, but this huge old tree must be more than a hundred. The gnarled old trunk is 8'7" around, and if there was once a graft mark, it can now no longer be seen. The apples are red, medium-sized, with a round-conical shape. It's a bitter-sharp variety, meaning that it has both acidity and tannins, and so can make a balanced single-varietal cider. It was very popular with customers last year, and the flavour has a zesty fruitiness that reminds me of fruit pastilles.

It's possible that this old tree is a named, recognised variety. But I've looked in all of the identification books, and there's no match. So I've named it Tidnor Mill, and hopefully the day of cheap and easy genetic fingerprinting for apple trees is not too far away, and then we can confirm that this old tree is what I suspect - a unique Herefordshire treasure.

Joeby Crab

Back in the 2000's, when I was living in Cardiff, I founded the *Welsh Perry & Cider Society*. The most enjoyable aspect of my work for the WPCS was the conservation of Welsh varieties of cider apple and perry pear, and helping to found the WPCS Museum Orchard at Llanarth. I drove the lanes searching out old local varieties, picked them, and fermented the juice into cider and perry. My detective work eventually took me to a large, five-acre orchard in Monmouthshire. The old farmer (John) had become blind late in life, but he could still 'see' the trees in his mind's eye, and so we set off into the orchard together to find the Joeby Crab. John strode through the orchard fearlessly, so I had to run ahead to lift branches up in front of his head, occasionally having to grab him by the shoulders to direct him away from a rabbit hole. His directions ("turn right after the fifth row, look out for the forked trunk, it's the

Cider Events in and around Herefordshire

Get yourselves out to find some real cider! Here's where:

May 1st & 2nd – Big Apple Blossomtime
www.bigapple.org.uk

June 4th – Yarkhill Field To Fork Festival
www.yarkhillfieldtofork.co.uk

June 25th – Bartestree Cider & Beer Festival
www.bartestreevillagehall.co.uk

Farmer John (front) with Martyn Evans of WPCS

third tree after that") took us straight to one of his Joeby Crab trees. They are probably the tallest apple trees I've ever seen, but with the smallest cider apples. Up until the 1960s, John's Father made cider for his farm workers, and would harvest the Joeby Crab after the main crop, piling them up in a 'tump' outside the farmhouse until January, when he would mill and press them separately to the rest of the apples.

The 1885 *Herefordshire Pomona* describes the Joeby Crab as a *very old variety in Herefordshire, but without any known history. Its name is supposed to be a corruption of "jovial", a tribute to the strength of the cider made from it. When a labourer becomes merry from too much cider, it's a rural pleasantry to say to him "Ah! You've been in the sun, you be soon got joby."*

The Pomona goes on to say that 'The Joeby Crab is very highly esteemed in many orchards in Herefordshire … is a very late fruit … being so late is frequently made alone for home use on the farm.'

Joeby Crab and I met again when I had a phone call last autumn, from a couple who live not five minutes from me in Bartestree. They had some cider apple trees, and would I like to take a look? I expected some of those damned Bulmers Norman trees, and whilst they did have one, they also had three huge old trees with tiny red and yellow apples, each the size of a crab apple. Joeby Crab! Like the Tidnor Mill, these apples are bitter-sharps with acids and tannins, and so much sugar that the specific gravity of the juice was the highest of any of the twenty-six varieties of apple and pear that I pressed this season. And what a cider – balanced and unbelievably rich – one of the best I've ever tasted.

Do you have any local varieties of cider apple or perry pear? If so, please e-mail me at: cider@herefordcamra.org.uk

HEREFORDSHIRE'S CIDER PUBS

Additions to our list of pubs selling four or more ciders on handpull or by gravity:

Hereford Beer House, West Street, Hereford
Farmers Arms, Wellington Heath

For the full and more detailed list go www.herefordcamra.org.uk/cider

RIVERSIDE INN ON THE BRINK

Landmark Ross pub faces planning application for conversion into four houses.

Riverside Inn, Ross-on-Wye in better times

What is it about the term 'River' and pubs? First we have *NewRiver Retail* trying to convert valued community pubs into Co-op convenience stores, and then almost from left of field comes a planning application to convert the Riverside Inn on Ross's Wye Street into four two-bedroom dwellings.

For a host of reasons this is not one of the pubs in Ross that CAMRA ever expected to see a change of use application for. Firstly, its successful trading past (by dint of its scenic position in combination with its relative proximity to the town centre) should always ensure there is interest in running the pub to pick up the business to be had there. Moreover, it is currently owned by a small company who run other respected pubs that have recently seen considerable investment, such as the Cross Keys at Goodrich and the Crown Inn at Whitchurch. It just doesn't make sense.

1980s re-visited

There isn't a lot to justify this move for conversion in the documents deposited with the planning application. Mention is made of the current lack of financial viability (it probably doesn't help that the pub is closed!) and there is mention that three other pubs have been converted in Ross. Notwithstanding the fact that one of the those three pubs closed in the 1980s, and two of them were in Tudorville (an estate nearly a mile south of Ross town centre), it isn't clear what point is trying to be made here. What about the pubs that have newly opened in the recent past (such as the Mail Rooms)? Of that there is no mention, but all this is surely missing the point completely.

The circumstances as they stand today at the Riverside Inn need to be considered entirely on their own merits, and Herefordshire CAMRA will be highlighting those when we send a full report of our findings with a recommendation to reject this application to Herefordshire planners.

Local and national planning policies (and common sense) expect change of ownership to be exhaustively explored before changing the use of a pub. We will be asking the planners what effort has been made by the current owners to sell the Riverside Inn as a pub business before considering an alternative use. We suspect none, and it is also believed they have never even opened the pub for business. How on earth do they know it is financially unviable, as they claim? This is a planning application full of mystery.

What do you think? Have your say!

If you wish to comment on this planning application, you can send your comments to Mr Carl Brace, the Herefordshire Council planning officer overseeing this application to: cbrace@herefordshire.gov.uk The deadline for comments is the end of March.

Doubtless there will be more to report in the next *Hopvine*, but in the interim we will update on any significant developments on our Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/beeronthewye

EVENING BUSES GO

The bad news is that Herefordshire Council is to cut evening buses to Kington, Ledbury, Madley and Ross this April following the withdrawal of a government rural bus grant. This will have a knock on effect for pubs on these rural routes. The good news is that Sunday buses remain intact including the Stagecoach bus to Ross and Gloucester at 1000 and the Yeomans Hay Ho! bus to the Golden Valley and Hay-on-Wye at 1015; both start from Hereford Railway Station and allow for a good day's outing.

THINGS CAN ONLY GET BETTER

A number of developments locally give good reason to be optimistic

It was after returning from a CAMRA outing to Shrewsbury two or so years ago that the question was asked: why doesn't Hereford have the same diversity of pubs and beers that the Salopians do? After all, they're both places of similar size and stature. Well, things have started to change. More pubs opening (and re-opening) with a greater range of beers and ciders now appears to be an emerging theme for Herefordshire.

This edition of the *Hopvine* carries reports of the long-shut Booth Hall and Rhdyspence Inn both re-opening, with the return of the Castle Inn at Little Birch and Slip Tavern at Much Marcle hot on their heals – the former anticipated on March 18th. These can be added to the recent return from the (almost) dead of the Monkland Arms; Oak at Wigmore, and the city's Saracen's Head – all pubs that, if we are honest, CAMRA thought were gone forever. Add to this mix new pubs, such as the Beer In Hand; the Hereford Beer House, and (most recently) the Cosy Lounge on the city's Widemarsh Street, and one starts to detect a shift in the quantum of pubs and drinks on offer in the city and beyond. Could it be we are starting to witness a new confidence in running pubs?

We are also seeing fewer applications for change of use of pub premises. The Riverside Inn at Ross-on-Wye is the first for over twelve months. Mr John Williams, Chairman of local licensed selling agents, *Sidney Philips*, says: "In the last six months activity in the pub market has really picked up, and there are now a lot more people looking to take on pubs with the intention of running them as pubs, as opposed to looking at alternative uses."

All of this has to be good news, but the icing on the cake has to be the ever-improving local beer scene: with the imminent arrival of Swan Brewery that will make a grand total of fourteen independent breweries for the county.

CARRY ON UP THE BROADLEYS

The Broadleys might still be the subject of a planning application to convert it into a convenience store, but over one year later the community pub is still trading normally and progress has been made.

The annual Christmas Party last December at the Broadleys on Hereford's Ross Road was very well supported. The local community were there in force to take the opportunity to celebrate the festive season with favourite carols amongst friends in their local pub - like they have always done. However, just twelve months ago many doubted the pub would still be open and thriving to host the annual shindig.

The outrage and upset created back in January 2015 by then new owners *NewRiver Retail,* when they announced that the Broadleys was to be converted into a Co-op convenience store seems but a distant memory now - but fourteen months on there is still an outstanding planning application to do just that. The Broadleys isn't out of the woods yet.

Mickey Mouse denial

However, things have moved on. The listing of the Broadleys as an *Asset of Community Value* (ACV) with Herefordshire Council back in February 2015 meant that plans by *NewRiver Retail* to convert the pub without planning permission, as they had originally intended, were now in tatters.

They would now have to consult with the pub's users and the local community via the planning process. How dreadful is that for them? They will now need to fully justify their plans and the consequences for those that use and work in it - and that isn't going to be easy with a still-trading community pub, one of only four for an adult population in excess of 16,000 who live south of the river in the city. And their problems don't end there. It would be an insult to a certain *Walt Disney* cartoon character to call their glossy cut-and-paste traffic assessment (that accompanies their planning application) a Mickey Mouse affair. *Highways England* were particularly unimpressed with its contents, and they are still waiting for a new traffic assessment to be done over twelve months later.

As far as the pub-users are concerned *NewRiver Retail* have elected to be quieter than the North Korean Tourist Board regarding this planning application. Time passes and the silence endures: the planning application just sits collecting dust in Herefordshire Council's Planning Offices on Blueschool Street.

Then in November last year, came some news to report: the pub's popular landlady, Tina

Better than Another Shop: Carols in full swing at the Broadleys Christmas Party

Carey, heard verbally via her bosses at Marstons Brewery (who currently lease the pub from *NewRiver Retail*) that the pub was "safe". The conversion wasn't going to happen. What wonderful news….or was it? Celebrations were about to kick-off, until it dawned that no-one was able to extract a written statement to this affect from Marstons and the council later confirmed the planning application was still live. Dirty tricks, perhaps? What a desperately cruel thing to happen on the eve of Christmas.

Co-op comes clean

However, while *NewRiver* sat on their hands, CAMRA was happily engaged in a series of meetings at Chief Executive level with the Co-op, at which the Broadleys was one of six UK pubs threatened by conversion to a Co-op that were on the agenda. Following the conclusion of these meetings, the Co-op gave an unequivocal public undertaking not to be party in the future to converting any more pubs into convenience stores, without first consulting with potentially affected local communities via applying for full planning permission (even in cases where it isn't required). And credit where credit is due: the Co-op are to be commended for talking this stance. The full Co-op undertaking is set out in the box (*left*).

This all prompts the reasonable question: why is it there is still a live planning application to convert the Broadleys into a convenience store? Only the pub's owners, *NewRiver Retail*, can answer that question. NewRiver's newly-appointed Retail Director, Jackie Moody-McNamara recently afforded CAMRA an interview, in which she went on record to say the great majority of the 359 pubs that they own nationally will continue to be pubs and will be run as such, although she states that: "we accept a minority of sites are unviable and alternative use may be an option." She concludes by saying: "I'm acutely aware of the sensitivity around pub developments and, where possible, we want to alleviate tenant concerns."

It's Time to Put up or Shut up

In light of these words, CAMRA believes, fourteen months on, it is now high time for *NewRiver Retail* to alleviate not only the tenant's concerns at the Broadleys, but also the concerns of the community who rely so much on the Broadleys for employment; leisure activities; and as a place to meet friends.

Regarding the planning application that is outstanding: isn't it now high time for *NewRiver Retail* to finally put up or shut up? Herefordshire CAMRA will be writing to Ms Moody-McNamara on this matter shortly and we'll let you know how we get on in the next edition of the *Hopvine.*

In the meantime, it can be happily reported it is still business as usual at the Broadleys.

CO-OP PUB PLANNING AGREEMENT

The Co-op has become the first major retailer to commit to protecting Britain's valued community locals - by joining with CAMRA to develop a set of development principles for convenience stores on pub sites.

The Co-op has stated that in the future it will:

- Only develop pub sites using the planning permission process, rather than rely on Permitted Development Rights.
- Continue to assess each trading pub that it is offered as a lease or development opportunity to assess the pub's social value prior to an agreement to convert a site into a convenience store.
- Give further investigation to pubs with an Asset of Community Value (ACV) listing ahead of any decision to proceed with a lease or redevelopment.
- Listen to the views of the local community, including individuals, groups, CAMRA, and local elected representatives, and to be willing to meet appropriate local representatives to discuss concerns.
- Not stand in the way of any group seeking to acquire and run a community pub.
- Develop land adjacent to an existing pub in a way that enhances the viability of both the new convenience store and the existing pub.

Short Measure? No price list on display?
Contact Trading Standards 08454 040506
www.herefordshire.gov.uk/trading-standards

NEWTOWN INN JUDGMENT DAY

Pub-owners to be prosecuted for failing to comply with planning enforcement notice.

It is now four years since the current owners of the Newtown Inn bought the closed roadside pub on the A4103/A417 crossroads at Lower Eggleton for a bargain price of £135,000 - this following the parent pub-owning company going bust. It has remained closed ever since. Moreover, it is more than three years since they then converted it into a house – furnished completely, and no planning permission either. [*Planning permission is just SO passé.* Ed]

As we crossed the threshold into 2016 the patience of the local community finally snapped. Fed up with being without their local pub and seeing no sign of action to enforce two earlier planning refusals, on the 7th February, they presented a petition to Herefordshire Council asking that a previous planning enforcement notice (issued by the council back in May 2014 against the pub's owners) be acted upon. This notice requires the owners to cease using the former public areas of the Newtown Inn for domestic purposes – something they have consistently not complied with, despite being afforded more than twelve months to do so. Before this, the pub's owners previously had a retrospective planning application refused and a year later an appeal to the Secretary of State was also dismissed.

Yarkhill Parish Councillor, Ian Carr hands a '*Save Our Pub*' petition to Herefordshire Council's Deputy Leader, Cllr Patricia Morgan

Chickens M'Lord

It looks like the chickens are now starting to approach the runway for the owners. In an article in the *Hereford Times* on the 17th February regarding the ongoing inaction at the Newtown Inn, Herefordshire Council confirmed that legal action is now to be taken against the owners for non-compliance with the enforcement notice. And about time too! It is both extraordinary and most unsatisfactory that the owners have been allowed to blatantly disregard the planning laws for so long. CAMRA is looking forward to joining the locals on the front row of the public gallery when the case goes to court later this year.

Earlier in January, following its nomination by the local Yarkhill Parish Council, the Newtown Inn was listed as an *Asset of Community Value* (ACV). Just like London buses, the owners now get two reality checks together in the same few weeks. Quite how they are going to wangle their way out of this mess remains to be seen. Up to now procrastination, bluster and self-denial appear to have been the main themes in their scheme to get a four-bedroom detached country property on the cheap. It's our view that's unlikely to be quite enough to satisfy the judge. on the day.

THE NEWTOWN SAGA GOES ON

Spring 2012: Current owners buy the Newtown Inn for £135,000 freehold and frustrate interest from other breweries and pub operators. It had closed the previous year owing to the insolvency of the parent PubCo, *Penn Street Taverns*.

Summer 2012: Work is in hand to convert the premises into a residential dwelling without planning consent.

September 2012: Following a complaint by CAMRA to Herefordshire planners, there is an investigation by the planning enforcement team, who explained to the owners that any work undertaken by them without planning consent would be entirely at their own risk. The work continues regardless.

October 2012: A retrospective planning application for conversion of the pub into a dwelling is made. Yarkhill Parish Council and the locals vow to fight for the pub.

November 2012: Herefordshire Council planners refuse the planning application. It is highlighted the pub had only been marketed for THREE WEEKS for £135,000, and that the owners had bought the pub despite interest from others who wished to run it as a pub. The residential conversion work now appears to be complete.

Summer 2013: The owners appeal the planning refusal to the Secretary of State.

November 2013: The Government planning inspector dismisses the owners' appeal. Besides noting the pub could be viable again, she agrees that the marketing of the business in 2012 was inadequate.

May 2014: Herefordshire Council issues an enforcement notice against the pub's owners. They are required to desist from using the pub's public areas for residential purposes by a deadline of July 2015.

July 2015: The owners are still using the public areas for residential purposes in contravention of the planning enforcement notice.

January 2016: The pub is successfully registered as an *Asset of Community Value* (ACV) by Herefordshire Council.

February 2016: Herefordshire Council state they are to prosecute the owners for non-compliance with the enforcement notice. There remains interest from pub operators in taking on the Newtown Inn as a pub.

ASSETS – ARE YOU LOOKING AFTER YOURS?

Listing your local pub as an Asset of Community Value provides valuable extra benefits

Nationally CAMRA has set a target of getting 3,000 pubs listed across England as *Assets of Community Value* (ACV) before the end of 2016. As part of this wider initiative, Herefordshire CAMRA has been doing its bit. By the end of February 2016, technical work had been completed by Herefordshire CAMRA which assisted Hereford City Council in nominating twenty pubs in the city for ACV listing with Herefordshire Council. The Plough Inn on the city's Whitecross Road and, more famously, the Broadleys had previously been successfully listed.

If all of these nominations are ultimately successful, it will bring the AVC total for the city alone up to 22 pubs on top of around another 20 pubs already listed across Herefordshire. So, why are CAMRA involved in this process?

Since April 2015, when an amendment was made to the planning rules, any pub listed as an *Asset of Community Value* (ACV) enjoys certain additional planning protection. Currently a developer, by using *Permitted Development Rights* is legally entitled to convert any pub (irrespective of its trading

ACV CASE STUDY: NO SLIP-UP WITH THE SLIP TAVERN

Throughout last year the Slip Tavern at Much Marcle was closed and its long term future looked uncertain. The then owners didn't feel inclined to sell the premises to anyone who had visions of running it as a pub and, instead, they sought to sell it to buyers who it is believed were looking to convert it into an Indian restaurant. This was something the owners were perfectly entitled to do and *Permitted Development Rights* would allow them to convert it into a restaurant without the need to apply for planning permission. It looked like it was a done deal.

Here's one we did earlier: improvement work in progress at the Slip Tavern at Much Marcle.

However, the local community acted quickly and decisively. After speaking to CAMRA, they promptly collected the necessary twenty-one signatures and before any sale was able to be closed they had nominated the pub as an ACV with Herefordshire Council. Just the mere action of its nomination alone was sufficient to suspend the *Permitted Development Rights.* Any potential new owner would now require full planning permission to convert the Slip into anything else – including an Indian restaurant. The local community would therefore now have a say in the matter, and the proposal would be tested against planning policies. Within days the sale fell through.

This summer the Slip Tavern will be re-opening as a traditional village pub once more after a full refurbishment. New owners are replacing some of the acres of gravel car park with a front garden, and there'll be new letting accommodation and tenant's living quarters to help transform the pub's fortunes. Now back in safe hands, the villagers' efforts mean they will soon have their local pub back to enjoy – and all with the help of a simple ACV.

There will be a full report on the Slip's happy re-opening in a future *Hopvine.*

circumstances or importance to the local community) into certain other uses without the need for planning permission. Moreover, unless a pub is an historic listed building or is sat in a defined conservation area, it can also be demolished without planning permission. But by listing a pub as an ACV the *Permitted Development Rights* are suspended and planning permission is then required, as it is for demolition too - regardless of what the pub's circumstances are.

Therefore, at the stroke of a pen, the listing of a pub as an ACV means that any pub-owner seeking to convert a pub into an office, shop, supermarket or restaurant now requires planning permission. This doesn't mean that a pub will automatically be saved, but it does mean that the merits of the individual case will be properly considered against planning policy, and the local community will have a say. This doesn't sound like too much to ask of a developer.

Have you listed your local pub as an ACV yet? Perhaps you're just content to blank from your mind the prospect of it falling into the clutches of a property developer? Maybe you're hoping someone else will do it? But, if you do care enough about the future of your local pub, then you'll be pleased to learn it's a relatively straightforward process to nominate with Herefordshire Council. You can lobby your Parish Council to do it on behalf of the local community or, alternatively, you can get twenty-one signatures from people (preferably those who use and support the pub) and you're on your way.

There is an ACV application form you can download on the Herefordshire Council website. Further, there is plenty of information to be found on the CAMRA national website to guide you along the way (which includes a pro-forma you can print-out for collecting the twenty-one signatures). Have a look at:

www.camra.org.uk/list-your-local

BEER DUTY: THE GOOD, THE BBPA & THE GREEDY

A backlash from pub operators has been prompted by the usual suspects hiking beer prices yet again ahead of the Budget.

On the 16th March, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne will have delivered his annual Spring Budget to the House of Commons. For the past three years on the trot he has reduced the Duty on beer. Well done, that man! But what will he do this year? With the state of the public finances as they currently are, the clever money at *Hopvine* HQ is that we'll get a Duty freeze this year - which will still be very welcome.

Ahead of the Budget announcement, CAMRA joined forces with others in the beer industry to call for another cut in Duty this year. One of those industry organisations also campaigning for a Duty cut is the *British Beer & Pub Association* (BBPA). But, as cheerleaders for the Pub-Cos and big brewers, they are likely to be calling for a reduction for entirely different reasons to CAMRA.

Good versus Evil

CAMRA sees the benefit of a Duty cut in terms of reduced overheads being passed down on hard-pressed publicans, and then (to a lesser extent) on to pub-goers. The BBPA, however, speaks for those in the industry who actually INCREASE their wholesale beer prices year-on-year, irrespective of any Duty reduction, and this in a business environment whereby they are currently benefitting from falling production and transport costs (doubtless helped by the plunge in oil prices).

Yes, you've guessed, it's our old friend again – corporate greed. And let's not forget, it's this greed that is closing pubs; ending businesses ,and putting people out of work as the price of a pint of beer in the pub becomes increasingly unaffordable for too many pub-goers.

GREED PARADE: FEBRUARY 2016		
Brewer	Price Hike	x Inflation
Heineken	2%	10
Guinness	4%	20
Charles Wells	2%	10
Molson Coors	c1%	5
AB InBev	1.5%	7.5
Carlsberg	2.1%	10.5
CPI Inflation as at January 2016 = 0.2%		

However, this year the big boy's gravy train has come in for some sharp criticism from quarters uncomfortably close to home. It was recently reported in the *Publican's Morning Advertiser* (PMA) trade newspaper that fourteen influential pub operators had written an open letter to George Osborne ahead of the budget, describing recent price increases from the big brewers as "unjustifiable" and damaging for the industry, as well as criticising the BBPA's campaign to cut beer duty. Oo-er!

The same PMA article interviewed Tim Bird, who runs a Cheshire-based pub chain. He is quoted as saying: "These annual increases are becoming almost the norm. Every year there seems to be a reason for not holding prices. The price of raw materials is coming down and fuel remains very competitive. We use micro-breweries alongside the big name brands in all our pubs, and they haven't put their prices up for more than two years…" Fascinating.

Alien pricing at Heineken

The *Hopvine* has undertaken its own local (but slightly unscientific) survey, and we have been unable to discover a local brewer who has increased their prices this year - and that includes Wye Valley Brewery. Their Managing Director, Vernon Amor, told *Hopvine* that providing Beer Duty didn't increase in the budget, there is absolutely no reason to increase the cost of a pint. He added: "For Wye Valley the costs of raw materials, energy and transport have generally eased downwards, so there is no need for a price increase this year." In comparison, Heineken justify their 2% price hike this year by pointing out it was 4% last year! Well, what can you say? These people must live on another planet!

Golf and Bollinger

In defence, the big brewers might tell us that the costs of golf club membership; second home ownership in the Seychelles, and crates of Bollinger have sky-rocketed in price this year. CAMRA can only repeat the mantra that it's time to buy

local. Independent pubs need to buy more of their beer from the family and smaller independent breweries – who will (and do) pass on some of the savings. Perhaps only when pub operators start voting with their money will the greedy few start to get the message.

In the meantime, one can only sympathise with those publican's under the yoke of the big brewers and PubCos. Not only will they lose custom as prices rise, but just how do you explain to a customer the hike on the price of a pint, when the Chancellor is on TV at the same time boasting of his largesse to the drinking masses? That's a tricky one, but it isn't a problem the BBPA are going to lose any sleep over.

PUBCO REFORM SURVIVES CONSULTATION AMBUSH

Full mandatory powers of regulation for the PubCos to arrive in May 2016

In the last *Hopvine* it was reported that the massed forces of darkness were labouring devilishly hard at the eleventh hour in a last-ditch attempt to undermine the final enactment of legislation designed to afford PubCo leaseholders a fairer crack of the whip. Following the conclusion of the Government's post-legislation consultation exercise, the excellent news is that the lobbyists' free lunches and cheese and w[h]ine soirées have all been to no avail, as the Government has ultimately held its nerve and all the key provisions of the Pubs Code will be coming in on time from May.

PubCo publicans will soon be able to request a Market Rent Only (MRO) option at periodic rent review or lease change from their parent PubCo, whereby they can then buy their beer legitimately from another (probably a lot cheaper) supplier. It will be interesting to see what now unfolds. Any shrewd pub-owning business would have already realised it is worth their while to offer their leaseholders more choice of beers upfront, therefore reducing the attractiveness of the MRO to them, but then don't forget we're dealing with the PubCos.

The name of the adjudicator, who will have mandatory powers of regulation as part of the Pubs Code will shortly be announced. The PubCos have even more to fear now, as it has been announced this watchdog role will enjoy full retroactive powers: thus binding judgements will apply on disputes dating back to March 2015. Therefore, any PubCos who've been less than scrupulous in their dealings with their leaseholders in the past twelve months could now be in for a nasty shock. Doesn't that thought give you a warm feeling inside? No-one likes a bully.

The words of Andrew Griffiths MP, and chair of the all-party *Parliamentary Beer Group*, seem appropriate here, when he suggested that the adjudicator could be "swamped" with complaints upon taking office. What a dreadful indictment of how the industry has been run so far. No wonder it's time for a fairer deal.

CIDER TAX THREAT RECEDES FOLLOWING VOCIFEROUS CAMPAIGN

In previous *Hopvines*, a mortal threat posed to Herefordshire's 50 or so small cider and perry producers has been highlighted, whereby a tax exemption they currently rely on could be scuppered by the EU. We even took our 'Save our Cidermakers' petition, collected on the Cider Bar at last summer's Beer on the Wye, to 10 Downing Street in a high-profile campaign to support local small cider and perry-makers, many of whom would be forced to give up production if the tax concession was removed.

With so much at stake (including a whole way of life for many), there now comes some welcome news. West Midlands MEP, Daniel Dalton, had previously taken up the cause of our embattled producers with the EU Commission. Subsequently, the EU have announced a formal consultation on the matter, and state that the exemption will remain for at least the duration of that consultation. More cynical *Hopvine* readers might notice this pushes the issue to the other side of the UK's EU Membership Referendum, set for the 23rd June, however, there is absolutely no doubt that we are now moving in the right direction of travel. Mr Dalton says: "This is a significant victory, and one that signals reform is on the way. The EU recognises small vineyards and micro-breweries, and I believe cider and perry should be treated in the same way." Let's hope the EU Commission ultimately agree with him.

In the meantime, we must remain steadfast on this issue - the campaign goes on.

LITTLE & LARGE IN LUDLOW

Drinking venues of very different sizes featured on a recent expedition to Ludlow.

An impressive space: Ludlow Brewery's Railway Shed

A cold and wet Friday in late January was an ideal opportunity to head north across the county line to Ludlow. So it was nineteen hardy souls from Herefordshire CAMRA caught the 4.54pm train from Hereford and arrived at Ludlow station eager with anticipation.

Just a few yards from the station we were warmly welcomed to our first and main destination for the evening – Ludlow Brewery's home - the remarkable Railway Shed. Trains don't visit the shed anymore, but you can still hear trains rushing past periodically on the adjacent main line. Built as a goods shed in 1857, shortly after the opening of the *Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway*, it is has been transformed into a most remarkable space.

Large timber roof buttresses (with original oak beams fully restored) span over a large, open and airy public area with bare brick walls and a grand log-burning fireplace. Furnished stylishly with leather sofas, bench seating and chunky tables it achieves an admirable amalgam of the traditional and the more modern - not unlike Ludlow Brewery itself, in fact.

Rear-end Shunt

At the front end of the shed is a mezzanine floor accessed via a steel staircase. Ascending this, one is soon treated to various items of rail memorabilia adorning the walls - including a display covering the story of the Ludlow train crash of the 6th September 1956. Pictures and diagrams explain in detail the dramatic circumstances when, just a platform ticket's flutter from the very shed you are in, the 2pm Penzance to Crewe Parcels train collided at 50mph into the rear of the 4.45pm Penzance to Manchester Express. Miraculously, and despite all the wreckage and devastation that ensued, there were only three injuries and no fatalities. It's time for a beer....

At the opposite end of the same shed is the main bar, with the six Ludlow beer pumps stood proud and erect. The pumps keep good company with various brewery merchandise (including bottles) for sale, and a selection of excellent value hard-core, locally-bred pork pies and scotch eggs. It is above this area, and to the side and rear, that the brewery complex is located, part of it on display for visitors to admire. It all makes for a most impressive scene.

Having sampled one or two of the beers, we were soon greeted by our tour guide for the evening in

the shape of Ludlow Brewery employee, Glynn Pugh. He provided a brief potted history of the brewery, and told us how, in 2006, Gary Walters set up the brewery (using second-hand brewing equipment) in an old malt store on the town's Corve Street. The previous and now defunct Ludlow Brewery having closed way back in the 1930s.

Can you smell the hops? The CAMRA group in the brewery

Six of the Best Bitters

The first beer brewed by Gary was Ludlow Gold, and this is still today the brewery's most popular and best-selling brew. Ludlow produce six beers, which have been gradually developed over the years. Very soon after starting, their beers began to pick-up more and more awards, and with this recognition came increasing sales. The operation soon outgrew its small Corve Street premises and, in December 2010, the brewery switched production to a brand spanking-new 20-barrel capacity brewing plant in the newly-renovated Railway Shed (the one the brewery still occupies today). All this had been achieved by Gary and his team in less than five years – truly an astonishing achievement.

Getting back to the brewery tour, where Glynn was now explaining the brewing process, no-one in our group was brave enough to say they already knew what was involved. Thus, we were told it's a mixture of treated water and malted barley, which is then boiled in a vessel and hops added later. It is then fermented using brewer's yeast. Frankly, it all sounded very messy and quite time-consuming.

Pausing momentarily in the hop store, Glynn talked us through the various hop varieties that Ludlow Brewery use in their beer recipes, with hops from as far afield as the Czech Republic, Poland and the United States in residence - as well as more traditional British varieties such as Fuggles, Goldings and Bramling Cross. Glynn confided in us that the hop store is his favourite room in the brewery. We wondered if the fact the common hop is related to the cannabis plant had any bearing on his preference.

Beer at Gas Mark 8

The last stop on the tour was the fermenting room. This is where the yeast works its biological magic and converts a sickly-sweet brown non-alcoholic liquid into bona fide beer in typically three days. Like everything else about the brewery set-up, this room can only be honestly described as state-of-the-art, with six immaculate fermenting vessels all sat quietly bubbling away with a foam on top that looked like a Yorkshire pudding mix waiting to go into a hot oven at Gas mark 8.

At the conclusion of the tour, we thanked our hosts (in particular Glynn) for their time and hospitality, and reflected on what a thoroughly professional operation it all was. Ludlow Brewery brews and despatches seventy brewers' barrels of beer each week – that equates to over 20,000 pints. On top of this is a successful bottled-beer operation. Unusually, Ludlow don't do 'seasonal' or 'one-off specials', just their core range of six beers that include their Gold, Boiling Well, and the dark and delicious Black Knight.

Gary explained to the *Hopvine* after our visit: "We're not convinced that taking the risk of changing beer recipes regularly to create specials is the right way to go. We prefer instead to focus our time and investment in maintaining and improving the quality of what we already brew." The future of brewing in Ludlow certainly looks to be in safe hands.

Downstairs is the bottle shop.....

Tenth Anniversary

This year sees the brewery's tenth anniversary celebrations take place. There are already well-made plans to have a gee-whizz brewery Open Day at the Railway Shed on the May Spring Bank Holiday weekend, featuring free brewery tours, displays and other activities. Definitely a date for your diary if you want to see it all for yourself, otherwise, if you want to try some of the Ludlow beers closer to home then pubs in Herefordshire that regularly stock the stuff include the Grape Vaults in Leominster; the Olde Tavern in Kington, and the Merton Hotel in Hereford.

Having now visited by far the largest licensed venue in Ludlow (certainly in terms of internal volume and ceiling height) it was now time to brave the wind and rain and head for two small (in fact, very small) venues, in the shape of two new micro-pubs that have recently opened in the town.

Secreted away up a narrow and winding staircase above Artisan Ales bottle shop on Old Street is the Old Tap Room. A single room on the first floor, it opened before Christmas, and on the occasion of our visit was impressively mustering five different cask beers: one each from Ludlow and Salopian Breweries, along with a 5.5% ABV Mud City Stout form Sadlers, plus two very interesting beers from Chapel Brewery (a new one-barrel capacity brewery based near Ellesmere in Shropshire). The pub is able to serve this number of beers simply due to the fact they use 4.5 gallon pins and even smaller *KeyCasks*. This is an strategy more pubs (especially those with a low beer turnover) could do well to learn from.

A to Z of micro-pubs

About the size of a student bedsit (with a separate room off, where the beers are served from), there's no Baby Belling cooker or black and white TV to be seen in the mash room; instead it is rammed full of old adverts; flourishes of Rococo design; candle-lit tables; a sofa, and a lively and convivial atmosphere. The bar itself is a very basic timber affair, with a domestic stand-up fridge and (bizarrely) a filing cabinet behind. Over an excellent pint, the party happily speculated if the filing cabinet was there for listing banned customers A to Z by name. With a commanding view of the street scene below from the window, the Old Tap Room is an interesting place: friendly and eccentric in almost equal measure, it is a definitely a welcome addition to Ludlow's pub scene. We were all quite sad to leave.

.....upstairs contemplating the art of filing with friends and beers

The next place isn't easy to find. It was known that the Dog Hangs Well is on Corve Street and that it doesn't sully its reputation with such vulgar marketing edifices such as a pub sign. The only way to seek it out is to see if the tavern lamp (above an otherwise anonymous front door) is lit, or hope to spot the single sheet of A4 paper discreetly placed in the window of what otherwise passes as a nice Georgian terraced town house.

Is this Britain's only A4-size Pub Sign?

Superlatives and a pub sign missing at the Dog

Once located, the Dog Hangs Well is a surprise at every turn. Its attributes are truly charming and even more unusual than its name. Initially you enter via a wide and well-presented hallway with a timber floor, bench seat and chandelier - the sort of ante-room one might expect to find upon first entering a well-to-do solicitor's practice. This is called the 'beer lobby' which has a reassuring ring to it. You then have the choice of two small rooms: the one off to the left is called the kitchen and has a simple bar with antique furniture; copper-topped tables; stuffed pheasants in a glass case above the fire place, and book cases - with the pub's single toilet beyond.

However, as to the room off to the right - well, where does one start? It is an absolute marvel to behold. The wallahs of the *Oxford English Dictionary* haven't yet invented the superlatives necessary to adequately describe this room. Appointed in the style of a fine gentlemen's club from Victorian London, the Parlour Room holds twelve people and boasts amongst its many interesting features: fine antiques prints; a chaise lounge-style sofa; four antique upholstered fireplace chairs, and Georgian-period stools - all set against brooding dark blue-grey wallpaper. One could be forgiven for thinking one had strayed accidentally onto the set of a 1950s Sherlock Holmes film production.

Georgian splendour at The Dog Hangs Well

Old School charm in the Parlour

If you like your pubs seriously old-school, oozing with uninhibited character and charm, then you won't be disappointed with this place. It's almost as if a bit of the past has been plonked down right in the middle of Ludlow. Considering the low-key advertising strategy so far employed at the pub, it was pleasing to see how popular it was. The Dog Hangs Well has a sensible policy of selling one frequently-changing cask beer (which changed over whilst we were there). This gives confidence that the beer is always going to be in tip-top condition, simply because it is always turning over so quickly. Since opening on Christmas Eve, by March it had already sold 34 different beers from 16 breweries. It also sells cider.

This place is a true enigma, but the jig-saw pieces soon come together to create a clearer picture when one realises this is the project of Jon Saxon, who also publishes the superb *Dog House* maga-

zine (that champions Britain's historic pubs so magnificently), as well as the equally enjoyable *Ludlow Ledger* from offices at the pub. In effect it's a publishing business that doubles in the evenings and weekends as a pub.

Relaxing in the quixotic Parlour Room at The Dog Hangs Well

Royalty and Corruption

So, what about the pub's name? The similar-sounding *Gate Hangs Well* is a traditional Midlands pub name associated with old toll houses and medieval town gates - such as would have once been found in this part of Ludlow. However, the name as corrupted here denotes the punishment meted out to deer poachers caught on the Royal Chase estates in nearby Mortimer Forest, who had their much-prized hunting dogs hanged – thus the name The Dog Hangs Well. It's obvious really!

Having now thoroughly enjoyed visiting two littles and a large in Ludlow, it was time to hurry back to the bright lights of Hereford. Thus it was thoughts of the 2pm parcels train from Penzance were forcefully banished from our minds as we safely boarded our train home.

BEER ON THE WYE VOLUNTEERS' REUNION

Annual festival 'thank you' trip heads out west

Another cold and wet Saturday at the beginning of February saw 47 CAMRA Members gather for the annual *Beer on the Wye* volunteers' trip. The day started with a short journey out of Hereford along the Brecon Road to the **New Inn** at Staunton on Wye, a 16th Century inn with low ceilings and a floodlit petanque court outside. There were two beers on offer, Wye Valley Butty Bach and Haresfoot Brewery Lock Keeper's Launch Ale, a 3.9% ABV easy-drinking ale from Berkhamstead, which proved popular.

Following a very welcome lunch of sandwiches and chips provided by licensee Clive Gregory, it was time to move on to our next venue of the afternoon - the **Boat Inn** at Witney on Wye. Here we found a choice of Black Sheep Bitter a 4.4% or Doom Bar. Sadly, the persistent rain prevented members enjoying the panoramic views of the Black Mountains beyond the River Wye, so instead, many of our group made use of the pool table in the bar area for a little friendly competition.

The real log fire and cosy lounge and bar of the **Three Horseshoes**, Norton Canon helped create a fantastic atmosphere at our next stop, and for most this was the highlight of the day. On offer was the full range of four ales from the in-house Shoes Brewery: Norton Ale (3.6% ABV), Canon Bitter (4.1%), Peploe's Tipple (6%) and Farrier's Ale - the infamous 15% ABV ale which is served in asbestos-lined wine glasses.

Many of our group had not visited the Horseshoes before and welcomed the opportunity to squeeze into the four-barrel capacity brewery which was established in 1994. Licensee Frank Goodwin explained how he managed to turn his home-brewing hobby into a real life brewery and a bit about the alchemy involved in getting the Farriers ale up to its improbable 15% ABV strength.

Finding a real ale pub that can cope with fifty diners, without excluding their normal trade is not easy, and our Volunteer's Organiser Andrew Pearson is keen to support pubs that are not normally in the limelight. And so we made our way to the **Kinnersley Arms** at Kinnersley. This large pub, built at the same time as the Hereford, Hay & Brecon Railway, is divided into a number of rooms including a bar, games area, snug bar, restaurant and function room.

The real ale on offer was Golden Sparkle (3.8% ABV) from Mulberry Duck Brewery. Once again some of our group enjoyed a few games of pool whilst others took the opportunity to catch up on the Scotland v England 6 Nations rugby match. We were soon called to be seated in the spacious function room for a very enjoyable meal topped off with delicious desserts.

Despite the weather an excellent day was had by all and thanks must go to Andrew for organising a great day out.

MONKLAND *By our Transport Correspondent*

Leominster was for many centuries surrounded by ecclesiastical lands and the manor of Monkland was no exception, hence the name. The monastic group of the Abbey of St Peter Castellione came here from Normandy in order to farm the rich pastures of the Arrow valley. No doubt they also brewed ales to quench their thirst and perhaps to keep the locals happy too. The church at Monkland is where they settled and dates principally from the 1100s. It was subsequently restored in the 1860s when Henry Williams Baker was the vicar, renowned as the editor of Hymns Ancient and Modern.

The easy 4.5 mile walk starts in Ivington at the bus shelter by the church, passes near the half-timbered Ivington Court before crossing the Arrow and common land to Monkland. It returns via water meadows so this walk is not recommended after periods of wet weather! There's an extension back to Barons' Cross, just over a mile, where there are regular buses into Leominster making a 5-6 mile walk in total.

There are two pubs and the superb Monkland cheese dairy and café; it sells bottled beer and cider from local producers as well as fine cheese. The recently reopened village pub, the Monk, was fully described in the Christmas *Hopvine*. When we called in Hobsons Best Bitter and Town Crier plus Oakham Citra and Tiny Rebel Cwtch were on tap and in good condition. The Baron's Cross is the second pub for those making their way back to a bus stop into Leominster. It had Marstons Bitter on tap when we passed by and sells fresh ducks eggs too!

Start from the bus shelter opposite Ivington Church. Turn right at the junction and follow the road to the ancient farmstead of Ivingtonbury. Opposite the buildings, look for a double barred gate just beyond an orchard. Go through them (and tie up the string too!) and walk ahead to second double gate and onwards across a large field to a double stile in a hedge. Cross it and proceed ahead again towards another stile. Do not cross it. Turn right instead to walk over a red brick bridge spanning the River Arrow. Ivington Court is to the left.

Ivington Common

Once across go slightly left over an iron footbridge and turn right. Within a few paces aim slightly left, through a gap over a ditch, then onward to stiles and a footbridge in a hedge. Once through, bear slightly right in the next pasture to a barred gate, aiming for Monkland Church. Go through it and walk ahead to cross a stile by a gate. The right of way is to the right of the buildings and then left through barred gates between barns, but this is not easy. Local people now walk ahead to pass to the left of the farm buildings to turn right after the green barn, through a barred gate between buildings and onto the lane by the church.

Monkland

Walk along Cow Lane (very appropriate) to the main road. Go left along a wide verge alongside the A44 to the Monk. The dairy and cafe is to the right, across the main road and down a lane. Before reaching the pub car park there's a drive on the left. Turn left onto it then immediately right to go over a stile by a barred wooden gate. Walk ahead through the pasture to a remnant gate post; bear left through a gate into the next field. The path cuts left and right to a corner where you go right and proceed until you reach a gap. Go left here and immediately right to pass through a barred gate then follow the hedge left down to bottom of the field. Go through another gate and head slightly left across a bridge and towards the right end of a line of hawthorns, the Stretford Brook; go left here and through a bridle gate.

You soon reach a bridge. Proceed through the gate on the right across the Stretford Brook then aim slightly left to a bridle gate, through a spinney to another bridle gate. Walk ahead and through a barred gate, rising up a brow to a junction of tracks. Go left to follow a hedge on the right until you come to a stile and lane. Cross the stile and turn right down to a junction. Turn left to return to Ivington.

Extension to Baron's Cross

Buses are limited from Ivington so you may wish to walk back to Baron's Cross. In Ivington village keep ahead at the junction and walk past Iving-

Factfile

Explorer map: 202 Leominster & Bromyard

Travel from Hereford to Ivington

Lugg Valley Travel 501 bus leaves Hereford Railway Station (then Country Bus Stn, Whitecross Rd) at 1100 and 1355 on Mons-Fridays, 1120 only on Saturdays

Return buses at 1308 (Mon-Fri) and 1338 on Sats

Travel from Leominster to Ivington

Lugg Valley Travel 501 bus leaves Leominster Bus Station at 1000 and 1300 on Mondays to Fridays and 1330 Saturdays only.

Return bus at 1432 Mon-Fri.

Travel from Leominster to Baron's Cross (Cornhill Road)

Lugg Valley Travel 401/406 every 30 minutes 05 and 35 past the hour; returns at 15 and 45 minutes past the hour.

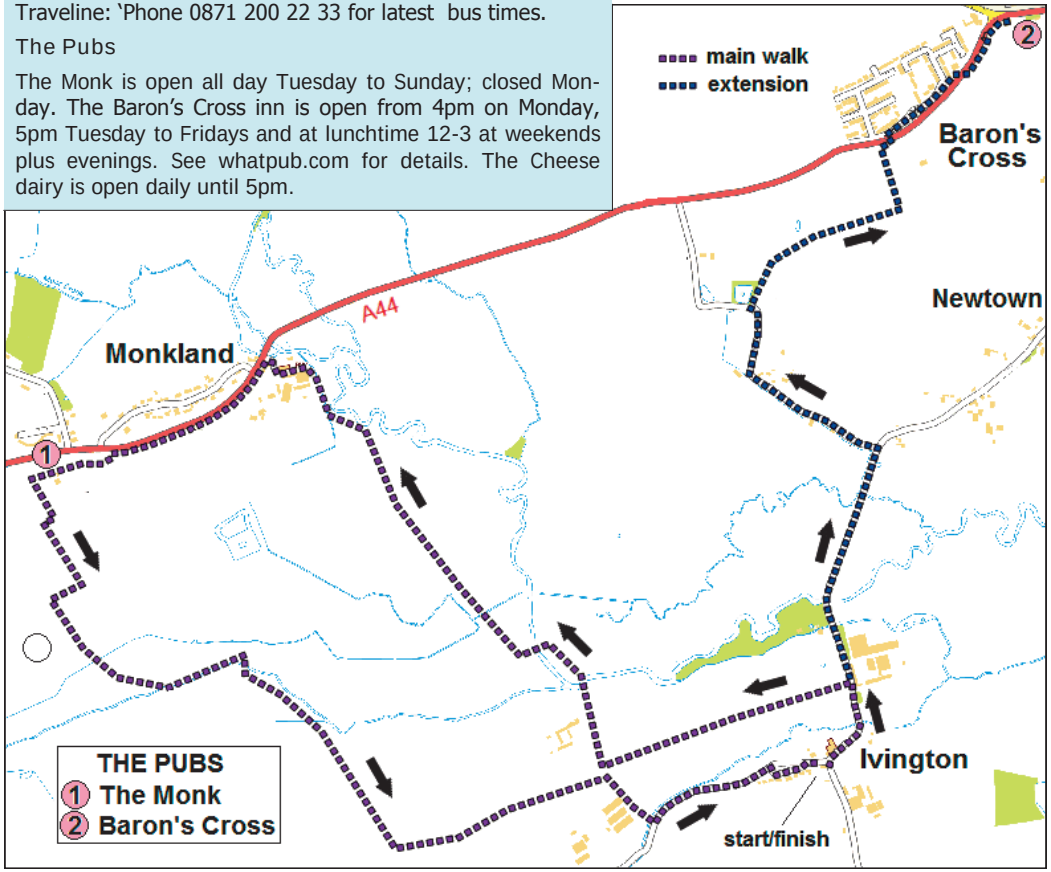
For more information see website www.traveline.info.

Traveline: 'Phone 0871 200 22 33 for latest bus times.

The Pubs

The Monk is open all day Tuesday to Sunday; closed Monday. The Baron's Cross inn is open from 4pm on Monday, 5pm Tuesday to Fridays and at lunchtime 12-3 at weekends plus evenings. See whatpub.com for details. The Cheese dairy is open daily until 5pm.

tonbury along a straight stretch of road. On reaching a junction, go left down a narrow lane which winds by a few dwellings to a bend and wood. Look for a stile by a barred gate on the right. Cross it, walk ahead to another stile but do not cross it. Aim slightly right up the field, through a gateway, and head slightly left across the field to a stile. Do not cross this one! Instead go left along the field's edge to a stile which exits onto the main A44 road so take care. Turn right to walk along the verge for 100 yards and cross over to walk right through the open space to the bus stop on Cornhill Road or continue to the Baron's Cross Inn along the road on the right. The return to urban life is something of a shock after the tranquillity of the moors surrounding the Arrow.



IT'S GLOUCESTERSHIRE AGAIN FOR NATIONAL HONOURS

After the success of the Salutation at Ham last year, and the Old Spot at Dursley before that, a Cheltenham Pub is named CAMRA Pub of the Year for 2015.

Just three years after being opened on the site of a former nightclub, the Sandford Park Alehouse in Cheltenham has been named CAMRA *National Pub of the Year.*

Pub-owner Grant Cook put in an offer on the Grade II-listed building while on holiday in Thailand. He created the new pub by putting up extra walls, installing a Georgian-style stairwell and converting the main dance floor into a cellar. The result is a friendly, stylish old-and-new pub with a large garden and comfortable furniture.

The award-winning pub has ten real ale hand pumps and one dedicated to real cider, which means it is able to cater for a wide range of real ale lovers. Food consists of a wide range of modern style dishes served lunchtimes, evenings (not Sunday) and all day Saturday.

The Alehouse also holds an annual cheese and cider festival.

Pub of the Year organiser Paul Ainsworth said:

"*The Sandford Park impressed the judges on every level, but especially the quality and choice of its real ales, where the scores were among the highest ever recorded in the contest. Judges also appreciated the stylish modern decor, the knowledgeable, welcoming staff and the lively atmosphere. Given the all-round excellence of the other three finalists, a win this year is a great achievement.*"

The three other finalists were the Drovers Rest, Carlisle; the Kelham Island Tavern, Sheffield and the Yard of Ale, Broadstairs

Sadly, the death has recently been reported, at the age of 46, of Steve Herbert, who was in charge at the Old Spot, Dursley in 2008 when it won the CAMRA *Pub of the Year* award. Recently he has been running the Beehive in Cheltenham to great local acclaim.

Herefordshire CAMRA

What's on

Branch Meetings.

Wednesday 30th March: Tump Inn, Wormelow 8pm. Come along and learn about local pub happenings and trips.

Wednesday 27th April: Crown Inn, Dilwyn 8pm. A chance to visit our first and only community-owned pub.

Wednesday 25th May: Cottage of Content Carey. 8pm.

Beer Festival Meeting

Monday 14th March: 8.00pm at the Barrels, St Owen Street, Hereford. Come along and join the team as we plan for Beer on the Wye XII in July 2016. No special skills or experience necessary!

Social Events

Saturday 26th March: Kington & Radnor Cross-Border Beer Festival: Geoff Cooper will lead a walk from New Radnor to the Fforest Inn at Llanfihangel-nant-Melan starting at 10:30. Return by bus to Kington. Further details contact Geoff by e-mail: Southbourne@kayoss.co.uk

Saturday 23rd April: Mini-bus day trip around some village pubs in Gloucestershire. If you are interested please contact the Social Secretary by the 7th April.

Saturday 14th May: By train to Stoke-on-Trent for Potteries Mild Trail. (Details to be confirmed).

Sunday 15th May: CAMRA Blossom Time Walk: Catch Stagecoach 32 bus at 10am from Hereford Railway Station (calling at Country Bus Stn and Broad St) to Peterstow. A five-mile walk, calling at the Lough Pool and then through orchards to Broome Farm (for Ross Cider) and finishing at Yew Tree. Some stiles and a few gentle climbs. Back at Hereford for 3.45pm. Leader: Les Lumsdon 01584 877588

Saturday 11th June: By train to Bath.

Contact Social Secretary Paul Brinkworth for details, unless otherwise stated. See page 39.

www.herefordcamra.org.uk/diary.

If you know of any event that might be of interest please contact the editorial team (details on page 39). Deadline for next issue May 13th 2016

CAMRA BEER FESTIVALS

Friday 15th to Sunday 16th April. Coventry Beer Festival. Coventry Rugby Ground, Butts Road, CV1 3GE. 90+ real ales; cider & perry; foreign beers. 12-4; 6-11. www.coventry,camra.org.uk

Wednesday 20th to Saturday 23rd April. 19th Stourbridge Beer Festival Wed 7-10 (CAMRA Members only); Thu 7-11; Fri 12-11; Sat12-close. Stourbridge Town Hall, Market Street. 100 beers; 25 ciders and perries.

Friday 8th to Sunday 10th July. BEER ON THE WYE. See poster page 2.

LOCAL BEER FESTIVALS

Friday 25th to Saturday 26th March. Kington & Radnor Cross Border Festival. 5 pubs + 1 brewery. Bus service between pubs. e: southbourne@kayoss.co.uk see page 12 and opposite.

Saturday 30th April to Sunday 1st May. Ross Beer Festival - see page 12.

Saturday 14th May to Sunday 15th May. Ludlow Spring Festival - see ad on page 7. Note Beer Festival opens on Friday 13th with a *Meet the Brewer* evening.

Friday 3rd to Saturday 4th June. Pelican Beer Festival. 4 St Mary's Street, Gloucester, GL1 2QR. Three bars; 36 real ales; 10 ciders and perries. Live music.

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

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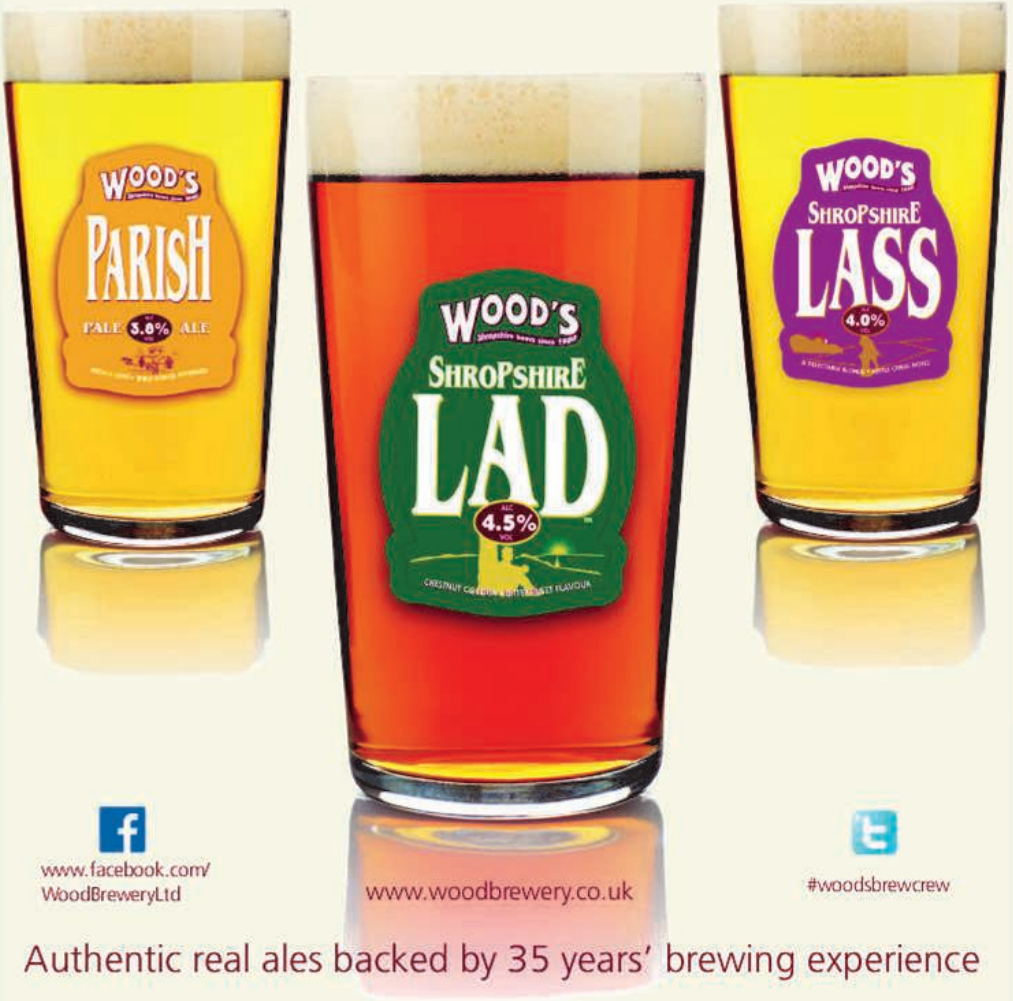

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