

Hereford **HOPVINE**

The Newsletter of the Herefordshire Branch of CAMRA

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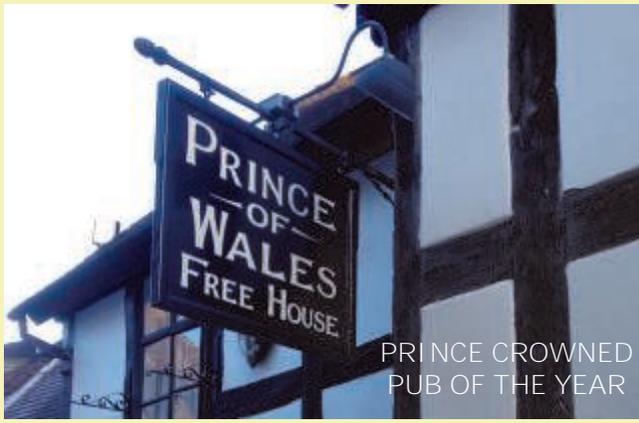
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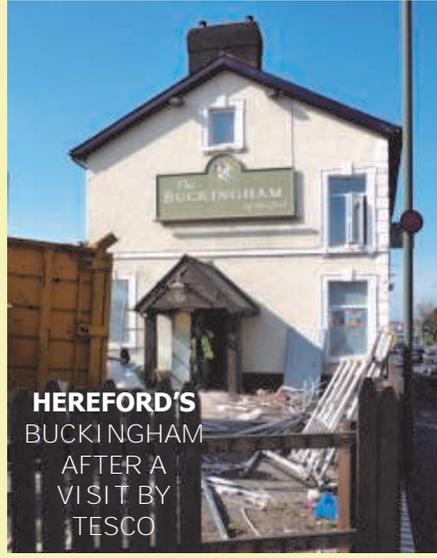
SPRING PUB OF THE SEASON: The Green Dragon



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BEER ON THE WYE X: HEREFORD BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

It'll soon be time to head back down to the river

If the weather is half as good as it was last year, then we're in for a bumper tenth anniversary *Beer on the Wye* over the weekend of the **Friday 11th to Sunday 13th July**. Now recognised as an annual 'must-do' event for the city and county, our giant big top-style marquee will be returning once again to the banks of the River Wye - pitched right in the heart of historic Hereford. It isn't just the great location (in a meadow next to the city's Rowing Club) that makes the festival so enjoyable, it has also gained a reputation for being a friendly 'do' that attracts people year after year from the length and breadth of the UK.

It isn't just visitors who come from afar, so do many of the 100+ cask beers – with a real gamut of beer styles and strengths featuring on the single 120 foot-long main bar. Again we will be offering the largest collection of draught Herefordshire ciders and perries ever assembled under one roof and, for the first time this year, we will be additionally show-casing some



A mixed crowd enjoy the sunshine at last year's festival

of the better ciders from outside the county. The ever-popular *Herefordshire Brewers' Bar* and *Foreign Beer Bar* complete the drinks picture. And with every drink being properly chilled, your beer or cider is always in prime condition when served - absolutely ideal for a fine day down by the river.

But *Beer on the Wye* isn't just about real beer and cider. Hot, cold and vegetarian food ensures that the opportunity is always there to mop up the alcohol, and seven live bands keep the marquee rocking well into the evenings. Various trade stalls, exhibitions and offers complete the picture nicely.

Unusually for a beer and cider festival, we are proud to be family-friendly up to 6pm Friday and Saturday and all-day on our Sunday Family Day. *Beer on the Wye* really is for everyone! By the time we zip the tent shut on Sunday evening, we'll have seen over 6,000 visitors through the door. And remember, if you want to stay over, then there is always the 'festival village' next door where you can affordably pitch tents and caravans.

Need to know more?

Get the dates in your diary now. For more information on *Beer on the Wye X* nearer to the time (including times and admission charges), then please go on-line at: www.herefordcamra.org.uk and click on the festival link.



Great Beer
Naturally

Brewery open to visitors daily
Tel: 01584 873291
www.theludlowbrewingcompany.co.uk

BREW ON

Man in the Moone, a best bitter at 4.0% ABV has been brewed and bottled for Whitbourne Village Community Shop. The name alludes to a book written in the 1620's by Whitbourne resident, Francis Godwin, Bishop of Hereford - possibly the first ever sci-fi book.

HEREFORD

The brewery is experiencing buoyant demand for the core beers. Recent non-core brews include Celtic Gold, a bright gold best bitter with an ABV of 4.5%

JONES THE BREWER

Latest beer is Malty Python. At 4.2% ABV, it is a Munich Brown Ale, full-bodied dark copper-coloured malty ale balanced with German Magnum Hops. Described as very malty with toffee and caramel undertones, it has been well received and will become one of the core ales along with Dennis Hopper and Abigail's Party.

There are still plans to expand the brewery with another fermenter and general upgrades as well as a plan to start bottling.

LEDBURY

The crew of the Portsmouth-based minehunter HMS Ledbury spent the last weekend of February in their twin town. Activities included a formal parade, a visit to Westons cider, and a chance to imbibe a special brew from Ledbury Real Ales. This 4.0% ABV golden bitter was brewed with First Gold, Fuggles and Bramling Cross hops - all from Pridewood Farm.

The commanding officer of HMS Ledbury has asked if the same brew can be supplied for the crew's leaving event in May, when they move to the Gulf for a 6 month stint.

MAYFIELDS

Since the new year Mayfields have refurbished the brewery, altering the layout to give far more room within the building and allow the installation of an automatic labelling machine to keep up with the demand for their bottle-conditioned beers. Their pump clips have been redesigned and a new range of seasonal beers are being produced under the 'recipe' series, formulating more hop forward beers using loads of the best aroma hops available from both Herefordshire

and from around the world.

They are also running a 'win a firkin draw' for pubs that buy more than 3 firkins in a calendar month. The Pub will automatically be entered into the monthly draw for the chance to win a free firkin. Finally Adam is offering the chance for pubs to visit the brewery with free evening brewery tours for around 10 people during the week, they will provide beer and nibbles and show you how they brew their beer. Contact (01568) 611197

MULBERRY DUCK

The latest addition, to fill a gap in the range, is Copper Bottom at 4.6% ABV. This, naturally, is copper-coloured with a hint of chocolate malt.

SIMPSONS

Simpsons have added another beer to their core range following the outstanding success of a seasonal ale. With an ABV of 4.7%, Old English was brewed to be a strong ale with a blend of fruit and spice flavours robust enough to stand up to the winter climate. It has however proved so popular that it has been a constant on the bar at the brewery's tap-house - the White Swan in Eardisland. Its deep colour is derived from a blend of pale and dark malts and as usual is hopped using only UK-grown varieties, namely Beata and Pheonix.



A small on-site bottling facility is currently being commissioned and it is expected that the complete range of beers will be available in 500ml bottles from the late spring.

The brewery has discontinued using the 388123 phone number; and all enquiries should be made on 01544 388635.

WOBBLY

A new lighter brew The Wobbly Wife (4.1% ABV) was launched at the Nell Gwynne in Hereford in November. Wobbly Bob, the 6.0% ABV Chocolate Porter (launched a few months earlier) made a late appearance, unfortunately minus a pump clip. The strong bitter, Wobbly Welder is a regu-



Landlord Gareth Bythell (L) and brewer Kelvin Skyrme at the Nell Gwynne

lar at this pub, just off Commercial Road in Hereford.

WYE VALLEY

A landmark has been reached in that all brewing is now being carried out on the new plant, which does not use steam heating, thus enabling the ageing boiler to be decommissioned.

An IPA at 6.0% ABV has been brewed primarily for the export market, although a quantity sold into the trade in cask under the name Dorothy Goodbody's Glorious IPA has been well received. In a departure for Wye Valley, it uses American hops (Summit, Calypso, Chinook and Centennial) to supplement the main hop Bramling Cross.

Brewery tours are scheduled for 2pm on Saturdays 29 March, 26 April, 31 May and 28 June. Tours cost £6.50 per person (non-refundable), and include tokens for 4 x half-pints of beer. Places must be booked in advance in our brewery shop or on (01885) 490505. Children under the age of twelve are not able to join a tour of the brewery.

Wye Valley's pub in Gloucester, which is managed by Mike Hall (previously of the Bell in Leominster), has been chosen as Gloucester CAMRA's Pub of the Year 2013.

HOBSONS

"Richly deliquorice" Stout (4.3% ABV), was

brewed again in the Autumn - described as an easy drinking smooth stout with underlying liquorice notes.

LUDLOW

The brewery tap is becoming a major venue for charity events. The third beer festival in February attracted record numbers and while 20 brews were on tap from Liverpool Organic to the Bristol Beer Factory the best seller was Ludlow Gold followed closely by Ludlow's Stairway!



THREE TUNS

The Three Tuns Brewery in Bishops Castle is set to smash the £1m sales barrier for the first time in its history. The oldest brewery in England, which faced going out of existence just a few years ago, has seen a change of fortune since being saved from being sold and turned into a block of flats ten years ago. The growing popularity of real ale has helped to create additional demand for its beers which include XXX, 1642 Bitter and Cleric's Cure, with more than 500 pubs now stocking them.

Ross-on-Wye Lions & Rotary Beer & Cider Festival
 3rd & 4th May 2014
 Ross Rowing Club
 2 Sessions Per Day
 11.00-16.00 & 18.00-23.00
 Price £5.00 (including souvenir glass)



For Full Details And Ticket Sales Please Visit Our Website
WWW.ROWBCF.ORG

The **Volunteer** in Hereford's Harold Street has a new landlord. Pub regular, Duane Morris has stepped up to the role, and Amada Young has returned as manager to support him. *LocAle* has been introduced, in the shape of Wye Valley HPA, and there plans to extend meal times to mid-evening. Outside, the smoking shelter has been improved and a rustic children's play area is being installed.

Wye Valley's **Vaga Tavern**, which prides itself as being at the heart of its local community in Hunderton, served up some early Christmas cheer to elderly residents when it served free Christmas lunches for 28 of its senior customers. Licensees, Becky and Ben Andrews, had discovered it was a practice that previous landlords had regularly offered and in keeping with their community ethos thought it a tradition worth retaining.

Wye Valley are hoping to have ended an unsettled period at the **Britannia** in Hereford with the appointment of Mike Pygott as landlord. Mike is aiming to build a friendly community atmosphere and is offering snacks such as sandwiches and pork pies at all times. The main Wye Valley beers are available (Bitter, HPA and Butty Bach).

Linda and Craig Simpson will be celebrating five years at the **Swan** on Hereford's Aylestone Hill in May. Widely recognised for its good-value wholesome food, the community spirit in the pub is less well known. Thanks to a *Race Night* and a few occasional music evenings, they have been able to present St Michael's Hospice with £705.

The **SpreadEagle**, in King Street, was reopened in December by the *Number Works Pub Company*. The historic pub, now renamed the **Spreadeagle**, is the second in the chain has opened under the *Steak & Cider Works* brand. The concept is full table service providing home-cooked food with a twist of cider and ale using the finest Herefordshire beef and locally sourced produce. Wye Valley HPA and Sharps Doom Bar are on offer, together with Westons Old Rosie and Rosie's Pig. The pub opens every day at 10am; closing at 9pm Sunday to Wednesday and 10pm Thursday Friday to Saturday.

The change of the "E" from upper to lower case means that this is the third variant of its original name that the Spread has carried in as many years. For the pedantic, the **Rose & Crown** on

Ledbury Road recently, according to its signage, changed to the *Rose and Crown*. A spokesperson for Greene King was unaware of any policy to scrap the ampersand, and suggested that the "&" is still correct, as on the GK website.

The **Grandstand** in Hereford has undergone an extensive refurbishment including relocation of the toilets and a new egress to the smoking area. The dining and family areas have also been renovated to provide more booth-style seating. The pub has retained the new budget-priced *Hungry Horse* menu, though currently serves only the 5.0% ABV Abbot Ale in cask. The work coincided with Greene King's celebration of the anniversary of the first opening of the Hungry Horse concept in January 1994. Over two hundred *Hungry Horse* pubs nationwide took part in the 20th birthday promotional weekend.



The **Barrels** has added to its list of accolades taking the title of "Hereford's favourite pub" in the final round of the *Discover Hereford 2013* competition. The competition inviting people to nominate their favourite places to eat, drink and shop in Hereford was set up by *MP for Hereford and South Herefordshire* Jesse Norman and was timed to tie in with the run-up to Christmas. The Wye Valley Brewery pub was singled out for its outdoor area, friendly welcome and, of course, the range and quality of its beers.

Second place went to the **Stagecoach** in West Street where licensee James Smith was praised for the quality of the pub's food and the "cosy" atmosphere. Third place went jointly to the **Broadleys** (Ross Road) and the **Horse and Groom** (Eign Street).

The **Saracen's Head** on Bridge Street is one of Hereford's true landmark pubs, and is run by Des Davies, who can lay claim to being the city's longest continuous serving licensee, with over 31 years behind the bar at the Saracens and other Hereford pubs before that. However, the pub is now up for sale, and is currently on the market based on £300,000 with local licensed selling agents *Sidney Phillips*. A lot of work needs doing to the pub, but is without doubt in a great riverside location. It will be interesting to see what transpires.

Just outside of Hereford, the **Yew Tree** at Priors Frome, well known as Len Gee's Restaurant, is on the market with Sidney Philips at £250,000

Another route has been added to the county's series of 'Loop Walks'. The Peterstow to Bridstow loop was launched in January when more than 30 walkers joined local parish councillors to follow the two-and-a-half mile, stile-free walk along the boundaries of the two parishes. The walk is easily accessible by bus (service #33 Hereford - Gloucester) alighting close to the **Yew Tree Inn**, then accessing the route through one of the nearby, newly installed kissing gates. Refreshments are available at the Yew Tree Inn (with parking available for patrons) and, during the summer months, a mid-walk break for cream teas and/or Cider can be made at Broome Farm.

Well-known local hotel managers, Matt and Sally Perkins, have taken over the running of the **Royal Hotel** in Ross-on-Wye. Matt, a chef with 24 years' experience, will take charge in the kitchen while Sally will supervise front of house. Owners Greene King have planned a major refurbishment to the Old English Inns hotel, which be closed on April 27th and re-opening in June. The extensive refit covers to all areas of the building, including all bedrooms, the function suite, Riverside Bar and restaurant

Last year's *Linton Festival*, held in the grounds of the **Alma Inn** over the mid-summer weekend, raised a total of £4,200 for local charities. including the *Air Ambulance*, *Hope Support Services*, and Linton Church and local Brownies. The *Linton Summer Sessions* – a one-day acoustic event, held annually in the same venue, added a further £1,000 to the charitable donations made. Cheques were presented at a charity night held in the Alma last October. Headlining the 2014 *Linton Festival* are Walter Trout (Friday), Vintage Trouble (Sat) and Geno Washington and the Ram Jam Band (Sun); tickets are now on sale.

The **Royal Oak** in Much Marcle narrowly avoided serious mishap on two occasions spanning the New Year. The first, on Boxing Day, when a passing car hit black ice causing it to lose control, before crashing in to the front porch of the pub completely destroying it. Luckily the accident happened at 9.30am, when the pub was empty and the driver of the car received only slight injuries. Almost a month later fire crews from Ledbury were called to extinguish a small fire behind an LPG boiler at the pub. Again no one was injured and the pub remained open.

Following an active campaign by villagers, planning

Fred, Sadie & Molly welcome you

The Oxford Arms

*Duke Street, Kington, Herefordshire
HR5 3DR*

Tel: 01544 230 322

www.the-oxford-arms.co.uk



We offer good, wholesome food all cooked on the premises using local produce from local businesses including the Grapevine for our fruit & veg and A ward -Winning Butcher, Glynn Slade-Jones

Food served

Mon. to Wed. 6pm -9pm only

Thur. to Sat. - 12noon-2.30pm & 6pm-9pm

Sunday Lunch - 12pm-2.30pm Roast only

One course - £7.50, Two courses - £10.50

Three courses - £13.50

Sunday Evening - 6pm - 9pm

Roast & Normal Menu

*During the summer we are open all day
on Thu, Fri, Sat & Sun*

We run an old traditional style pub, (no sky tv or juke box), and serve great local real ales. We are family and dog-friendly and you will always receive a warm friendly welcome from us and our staff.

permission to convert the **Slip Tavern** at Much Marcle into a six-bedroom home has been turned down. See page 22. Meanwhile the Farmers Arms in Wellington Heath has reopened - see page 11.

Promoting the launch of its new take-away fish-and-chip service, the **Chase Inn**, Upper Colwall held a special charity night. Proceeds from the sale of fish and chips on that evening were donated to the *Colwall Orchard Group*, in support of its work preserving traditional orchards around the village.

The **Red Lion Inn** at Stiffords Bridge seems to have successfully rebuilt its once-burgeoning food trade. It is very rare to pass by and not see the pub's car park full. An exciting new development is that nearby Malvern Hills Brewery are brewing a beer specifically for the roadside pub. Called *Lanny's Quaffing Ale*, the light-coloured,

sweetish and florally-hoppy brew is named after popular landlord Andrew Lanny. Unusually, the 3.7% ABV beer is neither a re-badge or a blend. It is actually brewed bespoke for the pub, and is selling very well.

The **Live & Let Live** on Bringsty Common has been named as one of UK's top dating locations. Situated off the beaten track on the edge of Bringsty Common the pub is included in the 'Great Date Guide' - a collection of top dating locations and activities produced by relationship website *eHarmony* - who describe the pub "as an ideal place if you are after a date with countryside comforts". Adding "It's testament to the beautiful setting and rich history that, even though it has stood empty for eleven years, someone believed in it enough to perform a miracle resurrection."

The **Live & Let Live** at Whitbourne (not to be confused with the pub above) looks like it might be set to become the second community-run pub in the county. Following the sale of the failed *Enterprise Inns* pub to a local developer late last year, the community are now making plans to take on the lease, with the aim being to run the village pub via a tenanted operation. Whitbourne locals have expertise in this area, as there is already a successful volunteer-run shop next door to the pub. Currently negotiations are ongoing with the owners.

The **Wheatsheaf** at Fromes Hill closed unexpectedly in December. This was a particular shame as the pub's fortunes seemed to be improving based on its carvery operation.

A new regular venue has been added to the Bromyard folk circuit. A new music session began at the beginning of February at the **Majors Arms**, Halmonds Frome, and takes place on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. Participants can enjoy Wye Valley Bitter and Purity Gold.

The **Temeside** in Little Hereford closed unexpectedly just before Christmas when licensee John Leonard was diagnosed with serious health problems. John's son Jamie has stepped in to run the pub, which has now reopened. The *Hopvine* wishes John every success with his operation and a speedy recovery.

Since changing hands last November, the **Stockton Cross** at Kimbolton has strived to throw off its mantle as a gastro pub and return to its roots as a village local. The pub is now being

PUB HERITAGE RECOGNISED

The chief focus of CAMRA's national list of *Real Heritage Pubs* is the pub interiors have not changed since before the second world war. They don't always have to be very grand, or architectural gems, but simply represent pub life in a bygone age. The citation for the Duke of York at Leysters describes it as a beautifully kept country pub and notes the fine curved settle and quoits table in the bar, plus the two side rooms. It also comments on the attached smallholding.

Landlady of 15 years Joy Pember and her daughter Lyn are photographed with CAMRA's Alan Simpson, and the certificate recognising the pub's importance. However CAMRA has never managed to convince Joy that, in spite of low turnover, the pub could stock real ale.



run by local businessman, George Bedford and his wife Carol, whose inclinations are towards quality beers and ciders, wholesome pub food and friendly service. George and Carol are passionate about using local suppliers and Wye Valley HPA & Butty Bach remain the regular beers. These are supported by a changing guest beer from other local brewers. The Stockton Cross is soon to introduce some theme nights and will be hosting a fire walking evening on the 1st June in aid of *Little Heroes* - a charity which provides support to children with cancer.

Another pub that is a target for a community buy-out is the **Lamb Inn** at Stoke Prior, although to date the community efforts have met with a barren response from the owner. What gives concern are the sales particulars for the pub which is on the market for £230,000. It came as a great surprise to read the pub described as a "former pub". Unaware that its status had changed, we put in an urgent phone call to local agents, *Cobb Amos*. We asked them politely if it wasn't a pub then what, in fact was it? It turns out that it is still a pub after all, albeit a closed one! Regrettably, the agent has declined to correct or clarify the particulars, which leaves us to point out to any prospective buyer that if they do acquire the Lamb, then they are buying a 100% *bone fide* public house. Should they buy it for either a dwelling or development then they will require to get full planning permission first. The locals will have strong views they might wish to share with the council planners, should that happen.

Firefighters were called to an incident at the community-owned **Crown Inn** at Dilwyn, in January. Little damage was caused and crews from Kingsland were able to extinguish a chimney fire using chimney rods.

On taking over as licensee of the **Bell Inn**, Yarpole, Ben Fleet consulted the villagers via a questionnaire to determine what they would like to see in their pub. As a result he has moved the food offer more towards "pub classics", and welcomes drinkers as well as diners. Opening hours have been extended to all day, including Mondays. Current beers are Black Sheep Bitter and Timothy Taylor Landlord, with Wye Valley HPA as a guest.

The former **Maidenhead** in Orleton has reopened as the **Baker's Arms**, reflecting the bakery that has been installed as part of major refurbishment works.

While retaining the air of a traditional English country pub, the 300-year-old building has been fitted with some of the latest eco-friendly technology. Using ground-source heat pumps, combined with state-of-the-art insulation throughout the building, it is expected to reduce the fuel bill to less than a quarter of heating by conventional methods. The new owners, Martin and Annie Jones, are serving meals daily, lunchtime and evening, naturally featuring home-baked bread. Hobsons Best Bitter, Otter Amber, and a guest beer are served.

The **Castle Inn** at Wigmore has morphed out of the former **Compasses**. Completely refurbished, it now caters for fine dining, whilst continuing its role as a village pub. The compact bar has been relocated and is equipped with a pool table and a quots board, and offers bar snacks and meals. The whole of the front of the building is given over to the lounge and restaurant which offers high-end dining at perhaps not quite so high end prices. The two regular beers and the guest are sourced from national breweries, except when the guest is Hobsons - and is always enthusiastically consumed by the locals.

page 10 ►

BEER on the **Monnow**

Friday until Monday
23rd - 26th May

15 Traditional Ales and Ciders

Live Music featuring
Saturday
FlutatioUs + CROWSAW

Sunday
B.B.C.

Barbecue Camping

The **Bridge** Kentchurch

01981 240 408
bridgeinnkentchurch@hotmail.co.uk

A TAKEOVER, BUT WITH A HAPPY OUTCOME

The Green Dragon at Bishops Frome is named Herefordshire CAMRA's Spring Pub of the Season

The Green Dragon is your archetypal English village pub; stone flags on the floor, oak beams, a range of good ales, roaring open fire and a pleasant beer garden. Hence it is the ideal candidate for the *Spring Pub of the Season* - when you have to contend with typical English spring weather. Snowing outside? Stay in the bar and warm yourself by the fire. Sun's out? Sit in the garden and soak up the rays.

Since the Green Dragon was saved from mediocrity by previous licensees, Simon and Alison Durrant back in 2005, the pub went from strength to strength, winning a fistful of awards including *Herefordshire CAMRA Pub of the Year* in 2010.

The pub is now run by Adam Durrant (yes - he's a relation) and his partner Zoe, and it is pleasing to see that it is as good as it has ever been, and just as popular with the locals. The beer is still excellent, with a few tweaks to give probably an even better range than before. Meal times have been extended, as has the menu. It just keeps getting better - so, an ideal pub to take this award.

The Green Dragon, Bishops Frome, WR6 5BP. Telephone: (01885) 490607. Open: 5-11.30pm Mon-Thu; 4-11.30pm Fri, 12-11.30pm Sat; 12-4pm, 7-11pm Sun. Food served: Tue-Fri 6-9pm; Sat 12-2, 6-9pm; Sun 12-3pm



Simon Crowther (L) with licensees Zoe Dickinson and Adam Durrant

► Pub news in brief (continued)

The **Old Oak**, Wigmore's other pub is still undergoing the refurbishment work which commenced over a year ago. Changes to the front elevation - previously rendered - are well under way and the timber framing is now exposed. Reopening is expected in time for the Spring bank holiday. Full report in the next *Hopvine*.

The **Red Lion** at Weobley is reopening as an Indian and Bangladeshi restaurant, in early April. It is not known if it will be selling cask ale.

A planning application in respect of the **Royal George** at Lyonshall has been withdrawn - see page 20.

The first of this year's beer festivals to be held at the **Oxford Arms**, Kington, is across the Easter Bank holiday and runs from Thursday 17th until Tuesday 22nd April. Visitors can expect about a dozen locally-produced real ales with some ciders and perries. The second of these popular events, between 19th and 24th June, coincides with the final weekend of the annual Kington Festival.

This year's *Dorstone Sloe Gin Competition* proved

a closely-fought affair. The competition held annually at the **Pandy Inn**, is divided into three categories, the best entries from each receiving Top Tipple or Highly Commended rosette for their efforts. Although competition organiser, Zoe McLean claimed three of the top six places in the Vintage class, it was veteran sloe maestro, Anna Lonsdale who took the title of *Grand Master of the Sloes*; an honour marked with a pewter hipflask. While not drinking sloe gin, the customers could enjoy the regular Three Tuns XXX and Wye Valley Butty Bach.

Beer on the Monnow returns to the **Bridge** at Kenchurch, running through from Friday 23rd until Monday 26th May. Now established as a regular springtime beer festival, and showcase for local entertainers, this year's event will feature fifteen traditional ales and ciders plus live music on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday (see advert on page 9 for details).

Situated between Little Hereford and Tenbury Wells, the **Rose & Crown** at Burford will hold its fourth annual beer festival from the evening of Friday 11th until Sunday 13th of July. Twenty local ales and ciders will be available plus food and live entertainment.

WELLINGTON PUB DOESN'T MEET ITS WATERLOO IN THE END

Village pub re-opens after locals successfully fight for its survival.

When the *Enterprise Inns*-owned Farmers Arms in Wellington Heath closed back in 2012, the villagers feared that its future as a pub was under threat, and took steps both to get it registered as an *Asset of Community Value (ACV)* and to raise funds to purchase it themselves. They completed the former objective in early 2013, but sadly, when the pub came to auction, the not inconsiderable sum that they had mustered proved insufficient to meet the reserve, and the pub was withdrawn from sale.

Then villagers were concerned when, just after the auction, they learned that a local builder had been successful with a bid. Disappointment turned to relief when they learned that the new owners, John and Jo Baker, in fact had plans to renovate the pub and were looking for the "right tenant" to take on and develop the business.

On March 18th, the Farmers Arms quietly re-opened, under the stewardship of the Joplin family - previously of the Bell Inn at Yarpole.



The newly refurbished and re-opened Farmers Arms awaiting its first customers

Prior to them taking on the latter, it had been a Ludlow-style eating house, so they carried it on in roughly the same style. However, with the Farmers Arms, they are seeking to widen the pub's appeal.

With four handpumps on the bar (initially offering Ludlow Best and Otter Amber, plus a guest beer), together with pool, darts and table skittles in the public bar, they are clearly aiming to please drinkers. The classics on the menu should please diners as well.

So, what of the building itself? Externally, one obvious change is that the fairly grand main entrance has been replaced by a door off the patio, up steps to the left. Internally, things don't look radically different. The single bar servery remains, as do the three distinct areas which are not quite separate rooms. The public bar/games room is to the right of the old main entrance. In the centre is the main lounge/dining area with its large fireplace, whilst the room to the left can double as restaurant or function room. Overall there is generally a much lighter feel.

All of this is regarded by the pub's owners as phase one of the grand project. Phase two, which is currently just aspirational, would see a second storey added above the public bar which would include letting rooms.

Farmers Arms, Horse Road, Wellington Heath, HR8 1LS. Telephone (01531) 634776. Open Tuesday to Sunday 11-11. Food available: Tuesday to Saturday 12-2.30, 6.30-9; Sunday 12.30-3.30

THE BARRELS



HEREFORD'S LOCAL

69 ST. OWEN STREET

01432 274968

FULL RANGE OF WYE VALLEY BREWERY BEERS

PRINCE NO LONGER THE BRIDESMAID

Popular Ledbury pub finally takes the big prize as Prince of Wales is named Herefordshire Pub of the Year

Herefordshire CAMRA has been running its *Pub of the Year* competition every year now since 1992. In that time, a good number of county pubs have won the coveted prize – in both town and country. The Prince of Wales in Ledbury has so often been the ‘nearly’ pub. Most recently it was named Pub of the Year runner-up and best Town pub for 2010, but the main prize always seemed to slip through its fingers, despite it being in the last cut on so many occasions. Now all that has changed – the Prince of Wales is no longer the bridesmaid, it can proudly take its rightful place as *Herefordshire CAMRA Pub of the Year* for 2013.

For those who frequent the Prince of Wales it will come as little surprise it has won. In fact, the regulars there could be forgiven for wondering quite why it has taken so long. All that can be said in reply is that it’s better late than never!

The Prince of Wales is undoubtedly *the* pub in Ledbury for drinkers. Not only does the bar muster a range of seven local cask beers that wouldn’t look out of place at a beer festival, the range of character, strength (along with ever-consistent quality), ensures no visitor to this internally-altered 16th century half-timbered pub is ever disappointed. Furthermore, if that weren’t enough, it offers a range of foreign beers (both in bottles and on draught) that would happily grace any bar in central Brussels. This place is the real deal for the beer connoisseur.

The Prince of Wales is so much more than just beer - as great as that is. The food offering is wholesome, unashamedly straightforward, and near-legendary for its value for money – with filling dishes such as cottage pie to the fore. Sunday lunches are so popular you need to book. However, it is a pub that first and foremost is at the heart of its community. Whilst the food is kept to the bar at the rear, the front two bar areas are where conversation, regular live music and a



Les and Russell Smith (along with Kerry Clarke, centre left), receive the award from Herefordshire CAMRA Chairman, Simon Crowther (right)

friendly atmosphere are nurtured by the light touch of hosts, Les and Russell Smith. For many people they probably feel as comfortable sat in the bar chatting as they would be at home.

This award comes at a welcome time for father-and-son team Les and Russell. It’s been a tough few years for them. First there was a protracted legal battle to secure the freehold of the premises – that dragged on through the courts. Then in 2013 Des’s wife, **Elaine**, was seriously injured in an accident in the town. Hopefully, this award now signals only better times ahead for them all, at a pub that is affectionately known in Ledbury as simply ‘The Prince’.

A number of subtle improvements have been made since the freehold ownership of the pub was secured, helping it evolve into a real treasure. These include interesting curios in the bars; some upgrading of the facilities, and a new outdoor courtyard for smokers. However, the icing on the cake has to be the restoration of the splendid traditional pub sign that hangs over the picturesque cobbled alleyway to the front of the pub. It really does set the scene for what you find once across the doorstep – a traditional pub of the old school that welcomes all.

Mark Haslam for Herefordshire CAMRA says: “The Prince of Wales is a pub of which the residents of Ledbury can be rightly proud – it stands

as a beacon representing the very best of what the market town has to offer. This outcome is entirely down to the very hard work put in over many years by Des, Russell and his team. The pub now goes forward to be judged against other winning pubs at the next level in the CAMRA Marches Region.

The Prince of Wales, Church Lane, Ledbury, HR8 1DL. Telephone: (01531) 632250

Website: www.powledbury.com.

Open 11am-11pm (10.30pm Sun), Food served daily 12-2.30pm; 6.30-8pm

BEST IN THE COUNTRYSIDE — YET AGAIN!

The Alma Inn at Linton named Runner-up and Best Country Pub

When you walk into the **Alma Inn** you might be surprised by its ordinariness at first, but don't be fooled by outward appearances at this superb three-bar village pub. The first clue you might find to suggest it is something rather special are the seven CAMRA certificates proudly affixed to the wall. This pub has previously won the lot: Pub of the Year Runner-up, Best Country Pub, Joint Winner and overall winner. It clearly has an exceptional pedigree.

The Alma is a rare beast. It might surprise many rural publicans, let alone customers, that it is a country pub that doesn't do food – not so much as a ham sandwich, let alone an Hawaiian pizza or soup in the basket. The beer range surprises too by differing to the norm, it nearly always includes Malvern Hills Black Pear, Oakham JHB and Butcombe Bitter.

This is a pub for those who enjoy excellent beer, along with good company and a friendly atmosphere. Longstanding hosts Graham and Lin Webb take pride in their pub being the heartbeat of the small village of Linton. On a typical evening the place comes into its own. On arrival, a customer can expect to find gentle conversation in mid-flow, normally aided (but never dominated), by the presence of one of the pub's many games teams, or from a gathering of one or more of the numerous local clubs and societies who choose to meet in front of the roaring open fire to conduct their business. On other occasions it will be live acoustic music - a semi-regular feature and guaranteed on the first Thursday of each month.

The highlight of the year at the Alma is the well-established and

nationally-recognised *Linton Music Festival* held around June solstice weekend in the pub's extensive lawned grounds to the rear. Both the acts (and over 1,000 people each day) come from all over, and there's a full-blown beer festival to ensure proceedings always go with a swing.

However, what really makes this place tick is undoubtedly the dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of the owners – Graham and Lin. The genuine welcome afforded to all those who cross the threshold is without doubt the reason they enjoy such a loyal local (and not so local) following.

The Alma is just a few hundred yards across the fields from the M50 Motorway, and Junction 3 is only a mile away, yet it feels so much more remote – tucked away down a delightful criss-cross of narrow country lanes. To let finding the Alma dissuade you from visiting this fine example of a genuine and thriving village pub would be to miss out on something special, very special indeed.

Alma Inn, Linton HR9 7RY. Open Mondays to Fridays: 6-11pm; Saturdays: 12-3 & 6-11pm; Sundays: 12-3 & 7-10.30. Telephone: (01989) 720355. Website: www.almainnlinton.co.uk



Graham Webb (2nd left) receives his seventh award from CAMRA members Paul Lelievre (L) and Alison & Des Clarke

DOUBLE CELEBRATION AT THE BEER IN HAND

It was cider in hand when Herefordshire CAMRA's Cider Pub of the Year award was presented, in the company of Tom Oliver, the current Pomona Award winner

Herefordshire Cider Pub of the Year

Micro-pubs have been appearing all over the country in the last few years, most notably in the South East of England. Herefordshire's first foray into this genre appeared last August - and it isn't actually that small!

Apart from its size, the Beer in Hand in Eign Street, Hereford, ticks all the boxes for a micropub, most important of which are no keg products, no lager (unless cask conditioned), no spirits, and only limited snacks to eat.

Mitchell Evans, who with wife Alison bought and converted the launderette in Eign Street, explained "We are micro in philosophy, and concentrate entirely on real ale and cider".

The most striking feature is the racking, which consists of a bank of glass-fronted, chilled compartments - designed and built by Mitchell's father - from which the beers and ciders are dispensed by gravity. These consist of typically a **minimum of five real ales, rising to ten at weekends, plus five real ciders**, all predominantly local but with some interesting additions from further afield.

Just inside the front door is a comfortable seating area, which opens out to the bar itself at the rear, together with a small alcove. A selection of bottled beer and cider from around the world is available to take out or drink in.

Commenting on the award, Herefordshire CAMRA chairman Simon Crowther said "When I heard where this pub would be, I wasn't optimistic, thinking it was on the wrong side of the ring road and had no parking. But I was wrong and Mitchell and Alison's confidence has proved to be justified"



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

12 (4 Tue & Wed)-11; 11-10.30 Sun; fully accessible; 10% discount for CAMRA members

website: www.beerinhand.co.uk; twitter: @bihhereford



CAMRA Pomona Award

On a damp and dreary day in October Moorhouse Farm in Ocle Pychard was host to a coach party which included Andrea Briers, chair of APPLE (CAMRA's cider arm). As well as drinking lots of cider, the party was presenting various awards around the county. Herefordshire CAMRA felt it appropriate to give Tom's achievement more local recognition, the Beer in Hand being a most appropriate venue, as it always stocks a number of Oliver's products

CAMRA's Pomona Award is presented to a person, organisation, or place for outstanding achievement in promoting real cider and perry nationally. The Pomona Award for 2013 went to Tom Oliver of Oliver's Cider and Perry for his work in securing the existence of UK orchards and preserving the tradition of perry production.

Tom, who was also recently named as one of CAMRA top 10 cider campaigners, is famed not just for his ciders and perries but for his inspiration for new and up-and-coming producers. Andrea Briers congratulated Tom on his win.

WASSAIL!

Popularity of these events continues to grow

In spite of being one of the wettest Januarys on record, the year opened with more public wassails around the county than ever before. All were well supported, with over 200 turning out, (despite heavy rain) to witness the 30th *Leominster Morris' Twelfth Night Wassail*. Though performed at different locations across north Herefordshire, this is always held on January 6th - regardless of which day of the week that falls on. The **Sun Inn** at Leintwardine was the focus for this year's merriment and starting point for a torchlight procession to the nearby Whitton Orchard. Here the traditional ceremony was carried out: the placing of a cider-soaked piece of toast on the branches of an apple tree and sprinkling cider around its roots; lighting torches, dancing and singing the Wassail Song - all before returning to the Sun. Here a Downton Apple sapling was re-planted in Flossie's memorial garden. The evening continued with a mummings play with music and dancing and quaffing of local Marcher Man cider, plus a special premium real ale brewed by Hobsons Brewery - aptly named *WassAle*.

Earlier that weekend, the Silurian *Border Morris-men* were treated more kindly by the weather for their annual Wassail in Much Marcle. Beginning with a traditional wassailing dance at the Weston's Cider mill, where a collection in aid of St Michael's Hospice was taken, a torchlight procession led to a nearby orchard for the ceremony blessing the trees and thanking them for the fruit they provide - before sharing cider from the Wassail cup.

There were four Wassails held in the Golden Valley area, three of which were carried out by the Moccas-based *Foxwhelp Morris*. In Dorstone, over 120 people joined another torchlit procession as it made its way from opposite the **Pandy Inn** to a local cider apple orchard, where bonfires were lit, accompanied by dancing and the usual cacophony designed to wake up the trees and drive away any bad spirits. This was accompanied by a toast in cider, made from the apples from this orchard, drunk from an applewood wassail goblet (made by local craftsman Bob Barnard). It was then back to the barn at Pips Cider for the traditional mummings' play.



Wassail at the Sun Inn

The following Tuesday, it was a wet and windy evening when the *Foxwhelp* side found themselves in Longtown. A torchlit procession snaked through the village to Longtown's ancient castle keep where a great circle of fire - made up of blazing torches and 12 bonfires - had been arranged in the courtyard. By the time the wassailing of the castle's single ancient apple tree began, the rain had stopped. The usual rituals were accompanied by the firing of a shotgun from the castle keep, before returning though the village to the **Crown Inn**, for the Mummings Play.

The last of this year's trilogy saw *Foxwhelp* in Preston on Wye where the **Yew Tree Inn** proved a popular venue. The side holds its traditional Wassail on the 17th January - the old Twelfth Night. The Wassail concluded with a reprise of their very non-PC mumming play which extols the adventures of St. George and banishing the demon banker to the fires of hell.

The fourth of the Golden Valley Wassails took place at Moorhampton Park Farm, Abbeydore, when *Leominster Morris* visited the home of Gwatkin Cider. The farm's sheep had taken over the music barn for the Winter, meaning the post-Wassail festivities, including food, mulled cider and a selection of ciders and perries had to be moved into the farmhouse dining room, complete with the mounted stag's heads on the walls.

Wassailers also met that evening in the centre of Colwall, where a torchlit procession (complete with drums and horns) progressed from Colwall Stone to the new Community orchard. Following the traditional wassail, organised by the *Colwall Orchard Group*, hot food, mulled wine, apple juice and cake was served around a bonfire along with sparklers and Wassailing songs.

LOCAL NEWS

Vats and Tankards

Award-winning cidemaker, Denis Gwatkin has recently installed two oak cider vats at his farm in Abbeydore. The vats, which can each store over one thousand gallons of cider came from fellow Herefordshire cidemaker Ivor Dunkerton and are thought to be over sixty years old.

Denis and the Dunkertons (Ivor & Susie) were each recently presented with a tankard by the CAMRA APPLE committee in recognition of many years of service to the traditional ciders and perry industry. Only ten of these awards were made throughout the whole of the country.

Denis Gwatkin said: "It's a great accolade from CAMRA coming after all the years of effort that all the staff at the farm have put in. And not just our farm, our neighbours across the valley often find themselves giving us a hand! It's also great that these two wooden vats are going to be used for cidermaking for years to come; Ivor Dunkerton has made sure that these historic vats have gone to a good home and are going to be fermenting apple juice into cider well into the future."

Denis Gwatkin has confirmed that Moorhampton Park Farm in Abbey Dore will host another three-day music festival at the end of July.

Tanks and Kegs

Cider maker *H Weston & Sons* is also investing in new equipment following a significant increase in demand in recent years. The company has invested heavily in its manufacturing capabilities since 2010 and is now to procure additional storage tanks and kegs, valued at around £1.3 million, to meet the increased production.

A fund-raising weekend at Westons Cider Visitor Centre raised a total of £535 towards the *British Heart Foundation's* 'Ramp up the Red' initiative. Staff at the visitor centre dressed in red for the event and all money collected from tours of the cider mill on February 7th were added to the proceeds from the raffle

Sell-off

The Co-op is to sell its farming assets including its orchards in Tillington, which it has been farming since 1946. Ten years ago, the firm saved a rare apple variety - *Tillington Ladies' Finger* - that



Denis Gwatkin, with his presentation tankard

had been grown in the orchards at Tillington since the 1800s, and was threatened with extinction when a contract to grow them ended. Blended with Bulmers Norman, Michelin, Dabonet and Yarlinton Mill varieties, *Tillington Ladies' Finger* can be sampled in the Co-operative bespoke brand *Tillington Hills Premium Dry Cider*.

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Opera in the Orchard

Ross Cider has announced its Calendar of Events to be held at Broome Farm during 2014. The season begins on Wednesday 18th June with a Charity BBQ in aid of this year's chosen good causes - *Hope Support* and *The Music Pool* - who will benefit from all donations received on the day. The evening will comprise of Morris Men, Music and Food! That weekend sees a mid-Summer Celebration on Saturday 21st June and a chance to enjoy live music, guest beers, excellent food and, of course, some interesting ciders!

Clementine Lovell and her company *Pop-up Opera* return to Broome Farm on Sunday 13th July when they will be performing Mozart's much-loved comedy, *Così fan tutte* in the barn and finally the annual Cider Festival will be held over 29th, 30th and 31st August, with tickets going on sale in June as usual.



Picnic

Colwall Orchard Group are adopting a flexible approach for the coming season and the annual Blossom Picnic will be of a 'pop-up' variety in the hope of catching good weather and blossom. Details of the event will appear on the group's website <http://colwallorchardgroup.org> closer to the date

OTHER CIDER DATES FOR THE DIARY

Friday/Saturday 2nd/3rd May. CAMRA 'National Cider & Perry Awards' Judging takes place as part of and during Reading Beer & Cider Festival, King's Meadow, Reading, which runs Thursday-Sunday 1st- 4th May

Saturday, 3rd May. Big Apple Cider & Perry Trials at Putley Village Hall, Herefordshire. Entry forms can be downloaded or phone Jackie Denman, Tel. (01531) 670544. Results will be on view the following two days.

Sunday/Monday 4th/5th May. Blossomtime Festival with the Big Apple. A seasonal celebration of English Apples and Cider in the Herefordshire Parishes of the Marcle Ridge. Further information send SAE to 'Big Apple', Woodcroft, Putley, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 2RD or phone (01531) 670544.

Wednesday, 14th May. International Cider & Perry Competition at the Cider Museum, Ryelands Street, Hereford. Further details from Cider Museum, Tel. 01432 354207.

Friday - Monday, 23rd-26th May. Welsh Cider & Perry Society Festival at the Clytha Arms, Clytha, near Abergavenny. Opening at 6.00pm on Friday and 12 noon on the other three days until 11.00pm Tel. 01873 840206.

BY GEORGE! CHANCELLOR KNOCKS 1p OFF A PINT!

The Budget will be helpful for pubs and brewers, but will come too late for some



At the Budget on the 19th March, the Chancellor George Osborne knocked 1p off a pint of beer - for the second year running. CAMRA are delighted that (again) the government have listened regarding the plight of our nation's pubs. A penny off a pint might not sound a lot, but this needs to be viewed in the context of the alternative - an increase in line with inflation or even higher than inflation, as had been the norm year-after-year up to and including the Budget of 2012. The Chancellor went further this year, and switched off the duty escalator (where duty rates rise each year at inflation +1%) for all alcohol sales, and then froze the duty for both spirits and what he referred to as "ordinary cider".

In welcoming these initiatives, Mark Haslam for Herefordshire CAMRA said: "This will no doubt help our brewers, cider-makers and publicans. It is unlikely that pub-users will see a reduction in the price of their pint at the bar, but it may at least prevent (or reduce) future price increases, as the tax break will help offset some of the substantial increases in energy and raw material costs that brewers and publicans face."

It is unclear at the moment if things are improving in the pubs sector, certainly more publicans are reporting a slightly improved trading environment, but this optimism needs to be offset against some recently published and very sobering CAMRA data - that indicates pub closures nationally have increased to around 28 every week. Mark added: "We are not out of the woods yet - not by a long way - but things are most definitely moving in the right direction."

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A RIGHT ROYAL PUNCH-UP AT THE GEORGE

Punch Taverns attempt to asset strip village pub thwarted again

In March 2014, just a few days before it was due to be considered by Herefordshire Council planning committee, a planning application to build a house on land at the **Royal George Inn at Lyonshall** was withdrawn, this following the withdrawal of a near-identical application back in 2012.

The latest proposal by financially-troubled owners *Punch Taverns* would have seen the pub lose over half its garden and car park to allow for the construction of a four-bedroom executive home with detached garage - the proceeds from the sale of which would go solely to *Punch Taverns*. In other words, the community of Lyonshall were being asked sacrifice a large part of their pub's commercial facilities for absolutely nothing in return. The pub was to be asset-stripped to finance *Punch Taverns* debts, and damn the consequences for the village pub. Charming!

Those of you who are familiar with the Royal George will be aware that it is on a very tight double-bend in the village. There is no realistic alternative on-street parking nearby to make up for any loss of car parking at the pub. There were no suggestions in the application as to where these displaced customers might park in the future. At another pub in another village was considered to be the most likely outcome.

We double our money, you lose your pub

Over 150 letters of objection were received by planners to this proposal, including two letters from previous landlords who had recently run the Royal George. They stated that the proposal would dramatically undermine business at the pub, to the extent that its future profitability would be brought into question - a view that CAMRA fully endorsed, and which probably explains why there has been no interest to date in buying the residual pub premises (minus parking and garden). Of course, many local people believe if the pub was rendered non-profitable, that would give *Punch Taverns* an ideal opportunity to convert it into a dwelling and further cash in on their assets.

Mark Haslam for Herefordshire CAMRA says: "It is disappointing that *Punch Taverns* persist in trying to flog off the majority of the Royal George's garden and car park, without giving any meaningful consideration as to the likely consequences it will have on the pub's trading situation. In twenty years of Herefordshire CAMRA being involved in pub planning matters, never before have we dealt with a planning application so completely bereft of merit. It was no surprise that there was such a strong local reaction to what was a thoroughly rotten proposal."

Gallows humour

The expectation is that *Punch Taverns* will be back with another application in the future, but the local opposition isn't going to disappear anytime soon, nor are the material facts likely to change. On reflection, it seems most appropriate that the address given for the applicant *Punch Partnerships* [sic] was Gallows Hill - a real case of gallows humour, perhaps?



PUNCH TAVERNS CRISIS FILE

- Punch have sold off a lot of their pubs, but still own around 4,100 pubs that it leases out to publicans. That equates to a debt in excess of £550,000 per pub, when many of those pubs aren't worth even half that figure.
- They are currently trying to "restructure" their debts with their creditors (bondholders), but so far they have been unable to agree a plan. If this is not agreed by the 14th April then they may be in default of their banking covenants and could be forced into administration.
- Their share price at the beginning of March 2014 was only 11p per share. You could own five Punch Taverns' shares for less than the cost of a packet of crisps. It is uncertain which is the better investment.
- Punch continue to sell-off the family silver, as a part of their quaintly-titled "non-core pub disposal programme". Many of these pubs are being sold only for alternative use, therefore communities continue to be robbed of their local pubs.

ROSS-ON-WYE PUB GOES TO THE DOGS

Pub likely to become a Veterinary Clinic following a series of planning decisions.

Many words have appeared in the pages of the *Hopvine* on the matter of the **Vine Tree Inn** in Tudorville, Ross-on-Wye. Back in 2008 Herefordshire CAMRA supported a successful campaign by locals to save the community pub from a proposal to convert it into a house. After this success, the current owners bought it and ran it as a pub. Then a few years down the road, we were back to square 1 - when in 2012 they also applied for change of use, but on this occasion we didn't know what to. Even the owners were unable to state what the pub's alternative use would be in their planning application! Thus one of the most bizarre planning episodes CAMRA has been party to was about to unfold.

Doom and Gloom at Wetherspoons

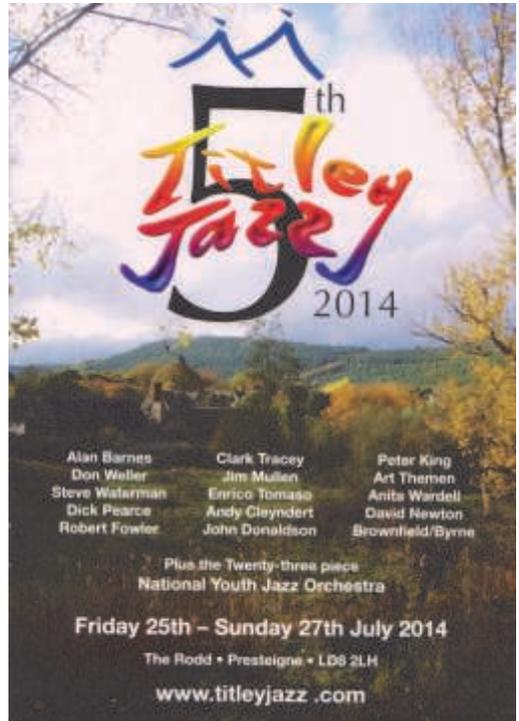
What the owners of the Vine Tree had to say in support of their 2012 application was quite intriguing, if not somewhat wide of the mark. They painted a terminally gloomy picture of Ross's pubs - to paraphrase, they are all doomed. Before there was time to reach for the scissors to slash one's wrists and end it all, came the *piece de resistance* in the shape of an assertion that the Mailrooms in Ross was the least successful of all the *Wetherspoons* operations in the UK. This greatly surprised us. Setting aside how the owners might have come across this information (it seemed unlikely they had access to *Wetherspoons* in-house financial data), it didn't seem to fit with the reality on the ground. CAMRA queried this statement (along with quite a few others that were also not supported with evidence), but the planners were happy for it to stay on public record with neither comment nor question. And thus the tone was set for this and subsequent planning applications for the Vine Tree. Franz Kafka would have had a field day!

Glossed over quite nicely

Of greatest concern to CAMRA was that the original asking price for the Vine Tree Inn, ahead of the 2012 planning application, was well adrift of its likely true market value. Surprisingly, this went without comment from the planners, as did many other legitimate arguments put forward by CAMRA, locals and pub-users. There was a feeling from the locals that planning consent was a foregone conclusion from the outset. And thus consent was granted.

However, whatever transpired from this unsatisfactory outcome, one issue that undoubtedly sank the Vine Tree Inn was apathy from many of the locals. The majority of them elected not to write and object to the 2012 planning application. Perhaps people were battle weary; having written one objection they saw it being a waste of time to do another? Perhaps they saw the second consecutive business failure as indicative of the pub being commercially unsustainable? In the final analysis, it is not for CAMRA to tell people what to do and fight for them, but to suggest a course of action and support them.

Perhaps a key lesson to be drawn from the Vine Tree is that it ultimately lies with the locals (the pub-users themselves) to speak up to save *their* pub. CAMRA cannot support a pub's retention where there isn't local support. Sadly, this was the case that played out at the Vine Tree. However some good news is that it can be reported that the Mailrooms in Ross is very much alive and kicking!



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NO SLIP UP IN MUCH MARCLE

Slip Tavern saved from conversion to a dwelling following unanimous vote by planning committee

More good news since the last *Hopvine* is that a planning application to convert the once-popular **Slip Tavern** at Much Marcle into a dwelling has been unsuccessful. On the 11th December 2013, the proposal was thrown out in a unanimous vote of *Herefordshire Council Planning Committee*, this after county planners recommended refusal.

Not like school games at all

There is always sympathy with those involved when a pub business fails, especially as it is a livelihood that has gone down the drain. Further, over recent years many publicans, when it comes to selling up, have been forced to sell their pubs at considerably less than what they originally paid for them - as the reality of a depressed licensed property market has bitten hard. They recognise, just like with one's home, that property values are not a one-way bet, and can go down as well as up. Sadly, that's the brutal nature of business: it involves risk and



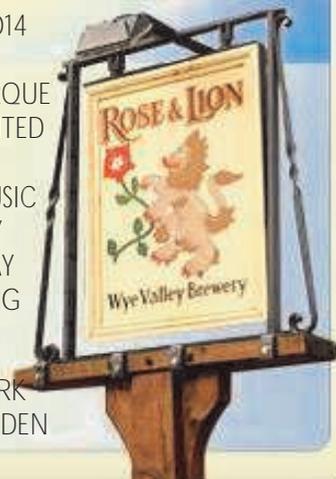
(unlike school games day) not everyone can be a winner.

However, sympathy dissipates quickly when we come across less scrupulous pub-owners, who are content to market their pub for sale at a grossly inflated price, with the expectation it will then deter potential buyers. They then merrily trot off to the planners to seek conversion to a dwelling, using the fact there is "no interest" in buying their pub as justification. These people are only out to cash-in by selling the pub as a house at a premium price. This is an insult to the majority of hard-working and honest publicans who have done the right thing, and made an effort to sell their pub at an appropriate price.

Cunning Plan slips up

This latter situation is what appears to have been the plan with the Slip Tavern, when a planning application to convert the pub into a dwelling was justified to planners on the basis of it being placed on the licensed property market for £350,000.

In a report to Herefordshire Council planners, Herefordshire CAMRA criticised the marketing of the Slip Tavern. Our report contained a detailed comparative pricing exercise, where the £350,000 asking price for the Slip Tavern is compared to the selling prices of a number of other similar (and even superior) pubs that had actually been sold in and around Herefordshire in the previous two years. The asking price for the Slip simply did not stand up to analysis. The pricing exercise suggests it was grossly over-valued, and this probably explains why the pub



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had remained unsold. Moreover, CAMRA wasn't alone in arriving at this damning conclusion. Herefordshire Council planning committee sought the expert view of the council's own asset manager - who, by very good fortune, happens to have once earned a living valuing and selling pubs. He agreed with the CAMRA assessment.

Funny hand shake and a flawed fellowship

There was a lot of hand-wringing from the owner's agent upon reading our report. They pompously, but politely, pointed out that Herefordshire CAMRA don't have a Fellowship of the *Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors* [we didn't renew this year, Ed]. It transpires wasn't about funny handshakes, but was the agent seeking to imply that they have a monopoly of knowledge on such arcane matters as pub valuation. Thus, they provided the planners with some alternative pub sale prices to compare to the Slip Tavern – and these prices were broadly in line with the price being asked for the Slip Tavern. However, even with their collective expertise set against us mere hapless amateurs, they omitted to spot the simplest of flaws in their counter-argument: namely, the prices of the pubs they were comparing the Slip with were only *asking* prices, not actual selling prices i.e. they were merely aspirational prices untested by the market – just like with the Slip Tavern, and so are meaningless as a measure of market value. Also of note was these other pubs were also unsold - some for a number of years.

Waiting for an answer

CAMRA asked the applicant's agent last year a question: show us examples of SOLD prices for similar pubs (any pubs at all) that stand reasonable price comparison with the Slip Tavern's asking price. Suffice to say, we are still waiting for an answer.

Thankfully, local and national planning guidelines require a pub-owner to make a *genuine* effort to sell a pub as a pub first, before considering alternative uses. A pub is not there to be cashed in at the first opportunity as a 'get out of jail' card for their failed enterprise. Therefore, it was not a surprise when the planning application was dismissed by the council, following a

strong recommendation from planning officers. It also helped that there was strong support from the local community too, including a petition with 150 names on it.

The decision document issued by the council states that any future planning application for any change of use of the Slip Tavern will only be considered if the pub has been marketed for a period of no less than twelve months for an asking price based on £275,000. Therefore, it is disappointing to see the pub going back on the market in February 2014 at an asking price of £320,000. A case of heads in the sand and plough on regardless?

Buyer frustrated, but for how long?

Sadly, the Slip Tavern stands closed today. However, what is saddest of all about this case, is that there is an individual (a credible locally-based person experienced in running pubs), who is keen to buy the Slip Tavern as a vibrant pub business. They have already had one good offer refused, and so the clock ticks on. At some point the alarm bell will ring, but will the buyer still be there? Only time will tell.

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PUB AT CROSSROADS COMES THROUGH

Planning inspector criticises lack of marketing and role of previous pubco-ownership in dismissing appeal

In the last *Hopvine* we told you about how new owners had converted the **Newtown Inn** at Newtown Crossroads (on the A4103/A417 junction) into a private residence without planning permission. Moreover, this situation hadn't changed, even after Herefordshire Council planners persuaded the owners to apply for (and subsequently refused them) planning consent for change of use as far back as November 2012. Whilst the locals, deprived of their pub, pondered if the owners might enjoy some form of legal immunity from the planning regulations, the owners appealed the refusal to the Secretary of State. This would now decide matters once and for all.

The *Hopvine* can happily report that on the 11th November 2013 – almost twelve months to the day from the refusal by Herefordshire planners – a government planning inspector dismissed the appeal. The original decision stood.

Money's too tight to mention

It is often the case, bereft of reasonable argument and with nowhere to go, that a pub asset-stripper will flail around looking to make the most tenuous case in support of a get-rich-quick conversion scheme. After all, money matters more than anything else in the world, and the owners of the Newtown Inn stood to win BIG TIME if they could swing their scheme past the planners. Success for them would mean owning a substantial detached four-bedroom property (with significant outbuildings and land) for a sum of c.£135,000. Not bad for them, but in the process the community loses its local pub and can go and rot. That's the bit where CAMRA gets involved in the process.

Pint of DERV and a packet of crisps please?

In her appeal determination, a document running to 50 paragraphs, the government planning inspector dismissed a host of increasingly desperate arguments put forward by the owners in support their appeal. Perhaps the most absurd was that the nearby *Texaco* petrol station would affect the pub's drinks business [*maybe they have happy hours on the*

unleaded? Ed]. More significantly, the inspector agreed with the original CAMRA (and Herefordshire Council) findings, in which it had been concluded that the pub had not been properly marketed to attract a buyer seeking to run it as a pub. Further, the inspector acknowledged there had originally been interest (and at a much higher asking price) from the licensed trade, but criticised the fact the pub was only marketed at £135,000 for three weeks before being sold - a period referred to as "extremely short". It was also acknowledged there was evidence that queries from the licensed trade had not been followed up. Surely, it wasn't a stitch-up?

Carry on Regardless

CAMRA believes the owners deliberately pushed on with work to convert the premises into a house (despite advice not to do so by council planners), so as to render it uneconomical to be later restored to a pub. The inspector had some interesting things to say on this matter, when she concluded: "the level of investment likely to be required does not render the pub unviable. The investment required could be taken into account in the purchase price." Not a good omen for owners out to grab a bargain property! To the inspector's credit, she went on a pub crawl of other pubs within a five mile radius of the Newtown Inn and noted: "The appeal property, prior to the works undertaken by the appellant, was not aesthetically inferior to the other pubs". She clearly wasn't too impressed by the owner's removal of the "attractive porch" and the addition of a breeze-block front door.



The inspector wasn't too impressed with the new breeze block-effect front door at the Newtown Inn

Pubco disaster zone – where have we heard that before?

In confirming the view the pub could be commercially viable under new ownership, the inspector added that the pub previously being under *pubco* ownership contributed greatly to the decline of the last business. Specifically, the inspector noted that evidence included an absence of basic maintenance; high rents, and high wholesale beer prices. Now, where have we heard all that before?

CAMRA learned that the owners had contacted a number of local publicans and asked if they would write a letter to the planners saying how hard it is to run a rural pub, but it is understood they were unsuccessful in their quest. They might think that this was down to local pub-owners not wishing to upset CAMRA, but it seems more likely that hard-working publicans don't want to waste their time supporting the mercurial asset-stripping of the pub industry. A much better idea would be for the owners to now write a letter explaining how hard it is to

asset-strip a community pub in Herefordshire. Now, that would make for interesting reading!

Fun and Games

This battle isn't finished yet. The owners may have nowhere to go on the matter of change of use, having lost their planning appeal, but well into 2014 the pub was still being brazenly used as a residential property - in direct contravention of the planning laws. With their track record, and the amount they stand to gain financially if they pull off this stunt, it would be unwise to not expect fun and games in the near future. In the meantime, the unsatisfactory matter of the owners continuing to live in the pub has been taken up with Herefordshire planners. More news in the next *Hopvine*.

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USE IT AND LOSE IT!

Local views and commercial viability count for nothing as supermarket chain Tesco looks set to convert another Hereford pub

That old cliché 'use it or use it' is often wheeled out by those who know better than us - the humble pub-user - when they tell us it is the only way of keeping a pub open. If only that was really the case. These people have clearly failed to acquaint themselves with what our giant supermarket chains are doing at the moment. In partnership with the much-loved, grossly indebted, and avaricious pubcos, they are merrily converting pubs into supermarkets - irrespective of how profitably a pub might be trading and how vital a role it has in a local community.

Unfortunately, due to a planning loophole, it is perfectly legal to convert a pub into a supermarket without the need for planning permission. So, the upshot is that you can use your local pub until the cows come home and still lose it when the supermarket chains come knocking at the door. So much for 'use it or lose' it then?

Wishy-washy

If you don't believe us, just ask the community who once used and relied on the Gamecock Inn on Hereford's Holme Lacy Road. In 2011 they were upset enough when Tesco and *Enterprise Inns* formed an axis of evil to convert their pub into a *Tesco Express*, but they were appalled and outraged when they discovered they would have no say whatsoever in the process. Tesco and *Enterprise Inns* just got on with it – no need for them to dirty their corporate hands with wishy-washy consultation with the local community. Despite a petition with over 1,500 names, the planners could do absolutely nothing - it was a done deal.

Tesco 5 Hereford 0 (after extra time)

CAMRA understands the dark shadow of Tesco has descended over Hereford again – this time their target is the **Buckingham** on the city's Whitecross Road. It is believed that *Punch Taverns* are teaming up with them to convert the Buckingham into the firm's fifth store in the city - not bad for a city with a population of just over 60,000. One could be forgiven for thinking Hereford will soon be renamed Tescoville.



Every little doesn't help: the curse of Tesco strikes again in Hereford - this time at the Buckingham

It has been hard to find out what is happening – non-consultation by Tesco and Punch even extends to the council. As this *Hopvine* went to press, the contents of the Buckingham were being heaved unceremoniously into a skip, so we took the opportunity to visit. CAMRA asked the workers undertaking this task who they were doing this for, but they were unable to tell us – just like those mysterious uniformed gentlemen who have suddenly appeared in the Crimea. "We know nothing!" was all they had to say to us.

With no requirement for the supermarkets to justify their actions with the planners, Tesco will doubtless carry on regardless. Nor is there any need for *Punch Taverns* to first offer the pub to an independent operator (heaven forbid we end up with another freehouse in the city!). Just like at the Gamecock, it's a big two fingers up to those people who once used and worked in the pub, and to any small brewers looking to buy or lease a pub to get their beers into Hereford.

Morals versus Shareholders

It would be a complete waste of time asking the big supermarket chains if it is morally acceptable that communities should lose pubs without

at least being consulted (that nonsense wouldn't go down too well with their shareholders), but we can ask government to make it a legal requirement. The supermarkets would then be forced to behave more responsibly with the local communities they purport to serve. Sadly, it appears that legal compulsion is the only language the supermarkets are going to understand.

CAMRA is now campaigning very hard nationally to close the planning loophole that allows pubs to be converted into supermarkets without first obtaining planning permission. The government is being asked to make a straightforward amendment to the planning regulations that will require the supermarkets to first demonstrate that there is no longer a need for the pub in question, or that no other operator is interested in running it. This will stop them closing down pubs that are trading profitably and allow the local community to have a voice before a conversion is agreed. Is this really too much to ask? So far the government has indicated an unwillingness to take action, which speaks volumes about the stranglehold the supermarkets have over this country's legislators.

Two pubs a week becoming supermarkets

In the meantime, the situation is fast developing into a national crisis for our pubs. Two pubs every week were converted into supermarkets during 2012 and 2013 alone. That's a lot of pubs and a lot of communities that haven't had a say on the matter. CAMRA research shows that Tesco are the worst offenders, having converted 110 pubs in the past two years, with Sainsbury trailing behind on 29. CAMRA's Chief Ex-

ecutive, Mike Benner, says: "The supermarkets appear to be targeting pubs for conversion despite the fact these pubs are often profitable and popular. Allowing pubs to be converted without planning permission is ludicrous."

What is for sure, whilst the politicians vacillate on this matter, they will doubtless continue to enthusiastically echo and support complaints about the corrosive effect drink-related anti-social behaviour has on our streets – whilst conveniently forgetting it is too often washed down with lashings of cheap supermarket alcohol. Now, there lies a tale!

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LET'S NOT LET THE PUBCOS OFF THE HOOK

Get signed up! Your chance to send a message to government on pubco reform

Hopvine readers will be familiar with the tale of the typical pubco leasehold pub. They appear to be in a semi-perpetual state of chaos – so often characterised by chronic underinvestment in their fabric and facilities; a high turnover of landlords, and some seem to be shut as often as they are open. That is when a pubco isn't trying to convert them into something else to offset their astronomical debts. The current situation with the pubcos is neither sustainable nor desirable for the future of our pub industry, and so it was that the government promised to act after the pubcos had repeatedly failed to come up with a form of self-regulation that actually delivered results. Echoes of our friends in the banking sector here.

CAMRA is now calling on Business Secretary Vince Cable to match his words with action and introduce the necessary reform in the shape of mandatory regulation of the pubcos, as had been promised more than 12 months ago.

CAMRA has long supported reform of the relationship between the pubcos and their tenants. It is our view that what is good for the publican must ultimately be good for the pub-goer. Concern is mounting that the government has missed key deadlines, and that time is running out if its promise is to be kept and appropriate legislation included in the Queen's Speech in May. There are genuine fears that lobbying by the pubcos is seeking to kick this issue into the long grass. Greg Mullholland, MP and chair of the *Parliamentary Save our Pubs Group*, has made a Freedom of Information request asking to see the minutes of meetings between the HM Treasury and various pubcos. It looks like the pubcos may be using their considerable lobbying

WHY PUBCO REFORM IS NEEDED

- A 2013 survey found 57% of publicans renting from large pubcos reported earning less than £10,000 per year.
- Typically pubco publicans must buy their beer via that pubco – **even though the pubcos don't brew the stuff themselves**. This can inflate the price of beer by around 50p a pint
- The large pubcos have disposed of many pubs for alternative use and will continue to do so given the opportunity.
- 96% of people responding to a government consultation on the matter declared their support for an independent Pubs Watchdog.

muscle to try and stop the government from acting. This would be a disaster for the British pub industry, and a real kick in the teeth for all those who run and use pubco-owned pubs. We must not allow it to happen.

CAMRA's Chief Executive, Mike Benner, states: "We are backing the government's plans to act, but the words need to be translated into urgent action, via the introduction of a statutory code; a pubs watchdog; a guest beer provision, and a market rent clause."

In January an **on-line petition** was set up by CAMRA to impress on the government the importance of acting on this matter. If you want to do your bit to help redress the balance between publicans and their pubco owners, then you can do so by adding your name to the petition at: www.pubscandal.org.uk

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HAVE YOU PROTECTED YOUR LOCAL YET?

Herefordshire shines as CAMRA hits target of 300 pubs registered as Assets of Community Value

Has your community protected its pub yet? More than 300 pubs nationwide are now registered as *Assets of Community Value* (ACVs) under the provisions of the *Localism Act*. Of those 300, Herefordshire can boast seven pubs registered, but we need more.

What are the benefits of registering a local pub? By getting your local pub registered (whether it is in a town or in the country) an ACV provides it with additional statutory protection. Most significantly, a pub registered cannot be offered for sale without the knowledge of the local community, and the community are automatically afforded a right to bid to buy it, should they wish to do so. Furthermore, it helps greatly should a planning application come along in the future that proposes to convert a pub into a dwelling. There can be little argument that a threatened pub is of vital community value, if it registered as an ACV. This then gives the council planners greater ability to resist 'change of use' planning applications in the future.

Mark Haslam of Herefordshire CAMRA states: "It is great news that so many communities in Herefordshire have already acted to protect their local pub. The county is punching well above its weight, but we need more pubs to register. I strongly implore communities who have not done so to do so soon. There is no room for complacency. Communities have nothing to lose by affording their local pub this extra protection."

Your local pub needs you! Getting a cherished local pub registered isn't difficult. Just go to the CAMRA website www.camra.org.uk and follow the links *Campaigns/Current Campaigns/List Your Local*

ACVs: The Magnificent Seven:

- *Moon Inn*, Mordiford
- *Castle Inn*, Little Birch
- *Farmers Arms*, Wellington Heath
- *Brewery Inn*, Ledbury
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LIVERPOOL REVISITED

Bargain train fare precipitates hastily arranged day out

Since we first used it in 2010 and 2011, *London Midland's Great Escape* offer has reappeared at regular intervals, tempting us once again to visit the great pubs of Liverpool. To add interest, the 2014 *Good Beer Guide* revealed a number of new pubs for us to try.



Admiring features in the snug at the Globe

After a dead-on-time arrival at Lime Street, a short walk took us to the diminutive two-roomed **Globe**, a community pub providing an oasis of calm amongst the busy shopping streets. Our almost unanimous choice was Hanlons Mild, aside from the otherwise well-known national beers. Yes, O'Hanlons have dropped the 'O' prefix, reflecting a change of ownership of this Devon brewery.

Another short walk led to the **Hub**, which couldn't be more different in style from the Globe. Occupying a Grade-II-listed, ex factory and warehouse, this large and very modern establishment boasts a fine display of air-conditioning ductwork. It also supports local breweries, with two beers from Dunscair Bridge Brewery in Bolton, as well as offerings from Liverpool Organic and Lancaster.

Just two minutes away is another very different pub. Taking its name from both the original use of its building and the vast new shopping complex opposite, **Liverpool One Bridewell**, is where prisoners arrested in the town (and awaiting their appearance in court) were locked up. The cells are still there too, but with rather more

comfortable furniture than the manacles that forced the original inmates to remain standing. Beers on offer here were Lees The Governor, Lancaster Blonde and Liverpool Organic Kitty Wilkinson (a chocolate and vanilla stout).

One disappointment was that the advertised local speciality - scouse - was not on the menu for lunch.

Time Warp

Within minutes of leaving the Bridewell, we were aboard a bus taking us away from the city centre to an old favourite, **Peter Kavanagh's** (pronounced hereabouts with emphasis on the second syllable).

The moderately ornate Victorian exterior does not prepare one for the time-warp inside. A dimly-lit corridor leads to a main bar area with two small rooms off. These rooms boast original *art deco* fireplaces, copious stained glass and extensive wood-panelling - the latter adorned with original murals painted in the late 1920s by Scottish artist and *Royal Academy* member, Eric Robinson. These time-and-nicotine-darkened murals are based on Hogarth and characters from Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*, plus (we were informed) Mr Kavanagh himself. To top it all, the highly distinctive bar tables are of an identical design to those made for the *Lusitania*.

A third, larger, room houses an extensive collection of curios hanging from the rafters, including



Miss Haversham's home - the Caledonia

a mad collection of chamber pots and various old radios - the latter ranging from early wireless receivers up to 1980s tranny sets.

The Northern Brewery beers that featured here on previous visits were still here, but renamed Blakemere after the Cheshire village where the brewery is now located. Also on tap was Green Bullet from George Wright.

With the majestic bulk of the Anglican Cathedral's tower looming over the terraces of Georgian ex-merchants' houses, we made our way to the **Caledonia**. This spacious pub, with *pop art* décor clearly thrives on live music, but the stars during the daytime are the two very cute resident dogs *Miss Haversham* and *Husky*. The latter is named after William Huskisson, who is celebrated in a nearby street name. A native of Malvern, he was amongst the dignitaries at the grand opening of the *Liverpool and Manchester Railway*, where he sadly lost his life after being hit by Stephenson's *Rocket*.

Local beers featured strongly here, including Peerless Brewing Oatmeal Stout, Liverpool Craft Hop Beast, and one from Mad Hatter brewed less than a mile away.

Continuing back towards the city centre, and our next target, we caught sight of the characteristic shape of the Roman Catholic Cathedral (somewhat disparagingly nicknamed *Paddy's Wigwam* by the Anglicans at the other end of Hope Street). But we were now right outside our next objective



Grade 1-listed loos hidden behind a fine façade

Women in the Gents (legally)

This grand building, grandly named the **Philharmonic Dining Rooms** loses none of its grandeur when one goes inside. The spectacular stained glass, the walls, ceilings and floors the original tiles, ornate woodwork and cornices all combine to overwhelming effect.

Famously, the grandeur even extends to the gents toilets (grade I-listed, of course) where women quite welcome to take a look.

How the place comes to have this unique heritage harks back to the days around the turn of 20th century, when the great ocean-going liners were at their zenith. Many were fitted-out in the city's shipyards, but during lulls in this work the craftsmen were redeployed to pub-fitting.

The pub's operators, Nicholsons, recognise that a great range of ales is appropriate for such a great building. Most of the breweries were fairly well-known, but the beers themselves were much less so - beers such as Camerons Tontine Milk Stout, Batemans Black & White or Wadworths "Beer Kitchen" Orange Peel, Moorhouse's White Witch.



View of the Anglican Cathedral from the Grapes

Oblivion

Tucked away in the narrow streets on the way back to the city centre, we found the Grapes, with signage proclaiming Mellors Noted Wine & Spirits. In fact this was a brewing company, James Mellor & Sons, which merged with Higsons in 1974, subsequently achieving oblivion by way of Boddingtons and, inevitably, Whitbread.

The nine handpumps featured obscure (to us)

breweries such as Black Edge (Horwich), Melwood (Knowsley), Tatton (Knutsford) and First Chop Brewing Arm (Salford) plus a single real cider from Wilcox of Cheddar.

Deafening

Aiming for pubs not visited on our previous trips, we needed to cross the city centre towards the financial district. Three of our group eschewed the taxi ride, and were only minutes behind after a brisk mile-and-a-bit walk. The **Excelsior** is getting good reviews following a refurbishment, but late Saturday afternoon was not the time to enjoy it. We managed to get seated away from the television screens, but there was no escaping the deafening sound. Was it really necessary to set the



Splendour and calm at the Lion

volume so loud? Beers included George Wright Longboat and Liverpool Organic Honey Beer.

With football also highlighted in the description of our final planned pub, the Victoria Cross, we diverted to the tried and trusted **Lion**, finding refuge in a quiet back room. This is another fine multi-roomed Victorian pub with much original woodwork, mirrors and tiled bar fronts. Beers Conwy Clogwyn Gold, and The Lion Returns (a house beer from George Wright)

A brisk walk brought us back to the station, looking very welcoming since the Lime Street Gateway project removed the eyesore shops that had accumulated along its frontage. There was time to stock-up on snacks and coffee for the incident-free journey home.



The de-cluttered frontage of Lime Street Station

BEER ON THE WYE IX VOLUNTEERS' REUNION

Day out gives an opportunity to visit some less familiar Herefordshire pubs

Saturday 25 January was the day of the reunion for volunteers at Beer on the Wye 2013, a trip round several pubs in the north-east of the county with a short hop into Worcestershire. The day started with a glimpse of blue sky and sunshine, a welcome change from the incessant January rain and perhaps a good omen for the trip ahead. I joined 20 or so other volunteers at Hereford Railway Station, where just after 12:30 we boarded the coach and linked up the dozen or so participants who had set-off from Kington.

After a half-hour drive through the Herefordshire countryside, passing evidence of hop-growing along the way, we arrived at our first stop, the **Oak Inn** at Staplow. This a reasonably spacious open-plan pub, where a mix of diners and drinkers contributed to a pleasant atmosphere. Three beers were on offer Wye Valley Bitter, Ledbury Gold and Bathams Best, the latter something of a rarity in the county.

Next stop was the **Herefordshire House** at Stamford Bishop. Situated well out in the countryside this was a striking pub, not least because of the vivid pink exterior and the downpour that greeted us. Inside on the right is a bar with seat-



In the Pink at the Herefordshire House



Gathered at the Majors Arms, Halmonds Frome
ing round the periphery and enough room for a pool table and a television. Straight ahead from the entrance is a small lounge, which might more accurately be described as a snug. By the time half of us had packed in there it was living up to that description. Here the beers available were Greene King IPA Gold and Wobbly Wife. The latter was provided by Herefordshire's newest brewery, specially at the request of the trip organiser and almost without exception was the beer of choice. We must have made a significant dent in the contents of the cask, but fortunately for the locals, there was another in reserve. After a light lunch of sandwiches and chips provided it was time to move on.

The third venue of the day was the **Talbot** at Knightwick. This is a large multi-roomed pub and, on what had become a cold and dampish afternoon, was warm, inviting and nicely busy. Teme Valley Brewery is situated behind the pub and unsurprisingly Teme Valley This, That, T'Other and Porter were all available, with the Porter in particular getting favourable comments. A trip round the brewery had been arranged for those who wanted it. Brewer Chris Gooch not only gave a very interesting and informative explanation of the working of the brewery and the brewing process. The beer provided for us with a sample was Tipple XXX, which had been brewed for a special occasion the previous November. For me this was the nicest of the Teme Valley beers that I have tried.

Heading back into Herefordshire our next port of call was the **Majors Arms** just outside the hamlet of Halmonds Frome. The pub is a little off the beaten track, up a fairly steep and narrow road, which provided one or two challenges for our coach driver. This also is a two-roomed pub - the entrance leads into a bar featuring bare stone walls and a high ceiling and with a cosy feel to it. To the right is a medium-sized room refurbished in a more modern style. Two beers were on offer, Wye Valley Bitter and Purity Gold, which is less common in these parts and very popular with those who partook of it.

Our last stop was at the **Green Dragon** in Bishop's Frome. This pub has several inter-connecting rooms each warmed by a welcoming real fire. There was a wide range of beers available, Purple Moose Snowdonia Ale, Theakston Best Bitter, Otter Amber, Timothy Taylor Golden Best, Wye Valley Butty Bach and Ledbury Gold. All the attendees sat down to an eagerly anticipated and very enjoyable meal, which our hosts did an excellent job in providing at relatively short notice (after the original venue became unavailable).

The early promise of better weather turned out to be something of a false dawn but the trip itself did not. The pubs covered a wide spectrum, each having its own attractions and each well worth visiting. I had been told by fellow branch members that I needed to get out more and I'm very glad that I did. I recommend that you do too.

Finally thanks must go to Andrew Pearson for organising an excellent trip.

Paul Lelievre



Beer on the Wye dinner kicks-off at the Green Dragon

BACK ROADS TO WEOBLEY

By our Transport Correspondent

The lush land that lies between Westhope and Wormsley has an appeal that beckons to those of us who seek out the old ways. It might be the mysterious conical hills of Pyon and Badnage that are so intriguing, or Chadnor, a wooded ridge above King's Pyon that stands steadfast above encroaching farmland. More likely, it is simply because this part of Herefordshire is off the beaten track.

With half timbered farms that once had hop kilns, cider presses and dovecotes as well as acres of orchards, this lovely walk is best enjoyed in Spring blossom time. Admittedly, there are not that many footpaths in the direction we are heading, but there are lanes, beautifully quiet lanes that see few cars; so step out on the back roads to Weobley through an enchanting corner of Herefordshire.

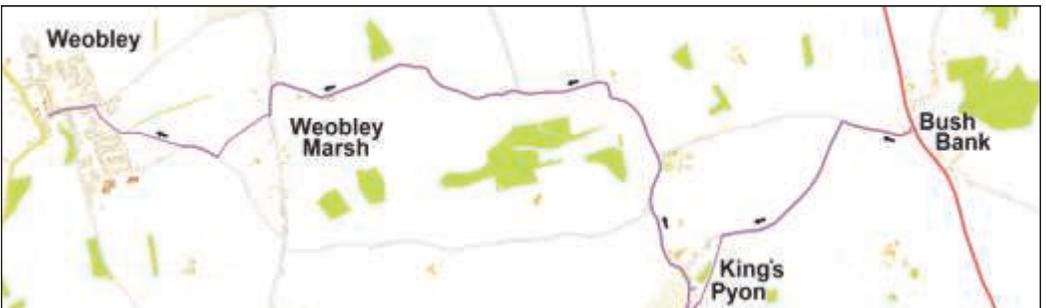
This easy 4-mile walk starts at the Bush Inn, Bush Bank, a hostelry set well back from the road across an expanse of tarmac. The Bush dates back to the 18th century and was known as the Corners for a long while, and evidently it has also been a private residence too. In recent years the pub has been modernised with two lounge bars and Wye Valley Bitter usually on tap plus a changing guest; there's always a warm welcome here. The walk finishes at the Ye Olde Salutation Inn at Market Pitch (no market now) in the centre of Weobley. There's a basic bar to the left, warmed on a cold day by a wood-burner which makes it cosy. On the other side is the lounge bar and restaurant with oak beams, an attractive fireplace and comfy seats to rest awhile. There are usually three beers on handpull and when we visited Hobsons Old Prickly, Mulberry Duck, and Wye Valley Butty Bach were on tap.

King's Pyon

The bus stops right outside the Bush Inn. From the entrance to the pub turn right and right again along a lane. Look out for a standing stone on the left, a curiosity about which we know little, but it may well be the base of a preaching cross. Pass a group of houses and turn next left on a lane to descend by hop fields and orchards. The road bends right and you will see the outline of King's Pyon church ahead (the King being Edward the Confessor who held lands here). Look for a fingerpost on the left in about 200 yards. Go through the barred gate here into a field and cut slightly right across to a stile. Cross it and rise up alongside a fence and by a wood to reach another stile. Go left over it, pass considerably across the corner of the garden to another stile leading onto a lane. Go ahead to the road with the church on the right, dating mainly from early medieval times and with superb woodwork and monuments including that of an unknown



Ye Olde Salutation Inn at Weobley



knight and a lady dating from the 14th century. Turn right to dip down by a large tree and keep ahead at the junction to rise past Brook House, with its superb half timbered dovecote; it is in need of some loving care.

Weobley Marsh

Continue up the hillside, ignore the turning to the left, and keep ahead to walk above Hill Farm to the right. Continue ahead at the next junction and the road bends left with Chadnor Hill Wood to the left and great views across the county to Titterstone Clee Hill on the right. Ignore the two turnings off to the right towards Dilwyn; stay on this back lane for about a mile as it winds its way down to Weobley Marsh. At the junction turn left through the common, where horses sometimes graze, but not for long. Within 200 yards go right through a gate at the fingerpost and walk alongside the hedge ahead. This bends right, but you head slightly left across the field to a barred gate. Cross the stile next to it onto a lane. Turn right and as the road bends left go through a bridle gate on the right beneath a tree into a field.

Weobley

There's a well worn path now as you approach Weobley. Go through a bridle gate into a remnant orchard and the path is ahead at first then curves left to another gate. Continue on a tarmac path to a road. Go left and ahead at the next junction. Note the signpost to the Pyons! On the right is the Unicorn pub (no real ale on the last call) and you reach a junction. The bus stop for Hereford is to the right and there's a good view down Broad Street. Weobley is justifiably one of our finest Black and White villages; there are a number of interpretation boards explaining the village's heritage, but whatever you do, don't miss the Salutation.

FACTFILE

Map

Explorer map 202 Leominster & Bromyard

Travel to Bush Bank from Hereford
Lugg Valley bus 501 departs from Hereford Railway Station Stand 1* Mondays to Saturdays at 0945, 1245, 1500**, 1745

* Country Bus Station +2min; City Bus Station +5min

** Service No 504 on Saturdays

Travel from Weobley to Hereford

Sargeants bus 461, departs Weobley (Broad Street) to Hereford Railway Station Mondays to Saturdays at 1215, 1320*, 1415, 1515, 1615, 1835, 2036, 2231**

* Service No 462 ** Saturdays only

It is easy to download timetables from the website www.traveline.info.

Traveline: 'Phone 0871 200 22 33 for up-to-the-minute bus times.

The Pubs

The Bush Inn, Bush Bank is open at lunchtime from 12 noon until 1430 and from 1900 evenings. Closed on Mondays. Tel: (01432) 830206

Ye Olde Salutation Inn, Weobley is open all day. www.salutation-inn.com

Check www.whatpub.com for details.

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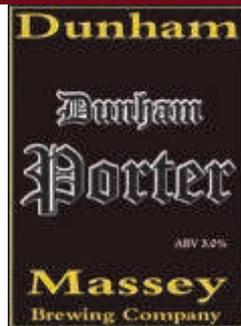
CHAMPION WINTER BEER OF BRITAIN

Dunham Porter was crowned CAMRA's Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain at the National Winter Ales Festival in Derby. This is the second year a porter has won the overall Championship.

The winning beer with an ABV of 5.2% is brewed by Dunham Massey Brewery (Altrincham, Greater Manchester), and described as a classic old-style English porter; creamy, full-bodied and packed with flavour.

The Champion Winter Beer of Britain competition judges the best of the best in terms of classic winter warmers – from thick, rich, dark porters and stouts, to sweet and strong Barley Wines. The competition has been given even greater significance in recent years, with the last two winners going on to win the Overall Champion Beer of Britain held at the Great British Beer Festival in the summer - proving these once lesser-known styles are perfect for drinking all year round!

SIBA also went for a dark beer in their annual (national) competition - Supreme Champion was OSM (Old Sodbury Mild) from Cotswold Spring Brewery .



Bus Imbibers

Bus imbibers will be pleased this summer as two popular Sunday/Bank Holiday buses return for the season. No. 783 the Castle Connect, from Ludlow to Bishop's Castle will start at Easter weekend and runs through to early September. Not only does it serve the Sun Inn at Leintwardine but also passes the Clun brewery and near the Three Tuns brewery at Bishop's Castle, making it ideal for a day's outing. Timetable available at www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk

The second bus this season is the No. 34 Wye Valley Wanderer; it starts on Sunday May 4th and departs from Hereford Railway Station (plus Country bus station, Maylords and Broad Street) at 10.00 and operates direct to Ross, Goodrich, Whitchurch and Monmouth. It then makes two round trips between Ross and Monmouth before leaving for Hereford at 17.15 (back at 18.25). Attractive day tickets available as well as accepting concessionary passes.

Also bus No. B17 makes three circular trips each Sunday south-east from Hay-on-Wye. It always goes the same way round, via Capel-y-ffin, Llanthony, Llanvihangel Crucorney, Pandy, Longtown and Craswall. Departures are at 10.25, 12.45 and 15.45 and the full loop takes just over two hours.

NB confirm operating dates before planning to travel. More details can be found at www.slowtravelmarches.blogspot.co.uk or timetables at www.travelinewestmidlands.co.uk

Gloucester CAMRA Pub of the Year 2013

The Pelican Inn

4 St Mary's Street, Gloucester, GL1 2QR



Telephone
01452 387877



The Pelican Inn serves Wye Valley's full range of ales in a delightful position between Gloucester Cathedral and Kingsholm Rugby Stadium. Open all day between 11 and midnight, you will find draught cider and perry as well as five Wye Valley ales - and sometimes a guest ale - served through a real ale python system and water-jacketed beer engines. Proudly we serve Real Ale, cider and twenty different types of rum.

Herefordshire CAMRA

What's on

Branch Meetings

Wednesday 26th March 8.00pm at the Rosie, Munstone (previously the Rose Garden)

Wednesday 30th April 8.00pm at the Barons Cross, Leominster

Wednesday 28th May 8.00pm at the Volunteer, Harold Street, Hereford

Beer Festival Meeting

Monday 31st March: 8pm at the Barrels, St Owen Street, Hereford.

Radnorshire Branch

3 May. Rural pubs tour by mini-bus. Meet 11-30am at Llandrindod Wells Tesco car park, by the recycling bins. See *

14 June. Presteigne pubs crawl. Meet 12-30 at the Royal Oak.

5 July. Rural pubs tour by mini-bus. Meet 11-30am at Llandrindod Wells Tesco car park, by the recycling bins. See *

9 August. Llandrindod Wells pubs crawl. Meet 1-00pm at the Middleton Arms, Tremont Road.

* Places limited please phone 01982 570230 at least one week beforehand. Cost 10pp.

Social Events

Saturday 5th April Trip by train (Hereford 09:54; Leominster at 10:07) to Shrewsbury - to visit all 8 of the towns GBG pubs and one or two other notable others. Return full fare is £20.70p Please let Mark (markpeters.21@hotmail.co.uk) know if you intend going, in order that he has an idea of numbers and can look into eating options.

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 14th 2014



CAMRA BEER FESTIVAL

2nd CAMRA Gloucester Beer and Cider Festival. Blackfriars Priory, Ladybellegate Street, Gloucester. Over 100 beers plus ciders and perries. Foreign beers available. Gloucestershire cheese stall. Food and entertainment. Admission including commemorative glass and programme - £5. Free pint for card-carrying CAMRA members. Open 11.30am to 11pm both days. Wheelchair access.

LOCAL BEER FESTIVALS

Friday 28th March to Sunday 13th April. Kings Fee Hereford, Mail Rooms Ross-on-Wye, Dukes Head Leominster. Up to 50 beers, inc ten from around the world, spread over 17 days; all beers £1.99/pint.

Thursday 17th to Tuesday 22nd April. Oxford Arms, Kington: A dozen locally produced real ales with some ciders and perries.

Friday (eve) 9th to Sunday 11th May. Ludlow Castle-SIBA Beer Competition/Ludlow Spring Festival: 150+ ales from Wales & West region

Friday 23rd to Monday 26th May. Bridge Inn, Kentchurch. Beer on the Monnow: fifteen ales and ciders; BBQ; Live music; Camping available.

Tuesday 17th to Tuesday 24th June. Oxford Arms, Kington: A dozen locally produced real ales with some ciders and perries.

Friday (eve) 11th to Sunday 13th July. Rose & Crown Burford: 4th annual beer festival; twenty local ales and ciders; food; live entertainment.

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March 2014

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

The *Hopvine* is produced four times per year and, of the 4,000 copies of each issue, most are distributed to around 160 pubs in the county, where they may be read many times over by different customers. Others go to real ale pubs further afield, plus beer festivals etc.

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

Completed ads can be accepted in .doc, .pub, and .jpg format, or just send us your information, and perhaps a logo, and we can compose the ad for you.

Current advertising rates (from)

Full page	£110
Half Page	£66
One third page	£44
Quarter page	£36

Do you miss issues of the *Hopvine* or live away from Herefordshire? You can get copies by post from David Powell, 18 Chatsworth Road, Hereford, HR4 9HZ. Send any number of stamped, self-addressed envelopes for A5 up to 100g OR 6 x 2nd class postage stamps for 4 copies (11 for 8 copies) OR cheque payable to Herefordshire CAMRA - £2.50 for 4 copies (£4.50 for 8 copies)

WYE'S WORDS No. 17



“ ONE GOOD ROUND ”
DESERVES ANOTHER

Butty Bach is a Welsh term for **little friend** — and this smooth and satisfying premium ale has certainly made a few friends in its time. Brewed using locally grown Fuggles, Goldings and Bramling Cross hops, Butty continues to delight thirsty fans both old and new. **4.5% ABEV**

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