

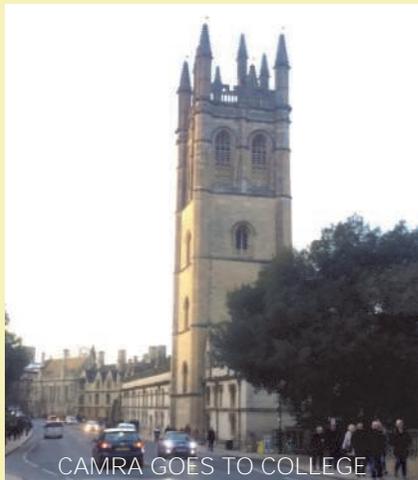
Hereford HOPVINE

The Magazine of the Herefordshire Branch of CAMRA

Issue No 69

Spring 2018

Free



CAMRA GOES TO COLLEGE



YE-OLDE SPRING PUB OF THE SEASON



GOING, GOING...TO BE DEMOLISHED



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The Boot Inn in Orleton is under threat of development. It was closed in July 2017 against the wishes of the community.

The good news is that there is a Community Bid to buy The Boot and return it to the heart of the community, where it has always been a busy and popular village pub with restaurant.

Help us by joining our campaign, like our Facebook page, and if you would like to invest then pledge your support.

This is an opportunity for you to own (part of) a pub by buying shares - which will pay interest. A real living investment to enjoy!

For more information and the full prospectus please go to the website.

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Email - chair@thecommunitybootinn.co.uk

- info@thecommunitybootinn.co.uk

- pledge@thecommunitybootinn.co.uk

www.thecommunitybootinn.co.uk

THE VOLUNTEER'S DARKEST HOUR

Herefordshire Council Planning Committee vote to demolish pub in the face of strong opposition

The Volunteer Inn is the last and only pub in Marden. Yet, despite this fact, back on the 17th January, Herefordshire Council Planning Committee voted in favour of an application that will see the ACV-listed village inn closed and demolished - something that might happen as soon as this summer. Unsurprisingly, the locals aren't at all pleased.

It was in the autumn of 2016 that the community of Marden first became aware of a suite of four related planning applications submitted to Herefordshire Council planners by local firm, S & A Produce. Three of the applications related to a development of housing, agricultural and office buildings in the village, whilst one focused solely on the village's pub – the Volunteer Inn, which was temporarily closed at that time (it has since successfully re-opened). The plan was to demolish the pub and replace it with a new-build "family pub" on an alternative site nearby. This created quite a stir, and it wasn't long before the phones at Herefordshire CAMRA's HQ bunker were ringing.

Bigger and Better

On first inspection the plans submitted seemed to be a spiffing idea: a case of out with the old and in with the new. Whilst the Volunteer Inn would be left to the wrecking ball, on the surface of it, the new pub appeared to be more than a worthy replacement. Its interior is bigger and better configured; it would have a larger garden; more parking; better catering provision, and eight letting rooms upstairs. It even looks to be an attractive building, judging from the exterior design visuals provided with the application. However, the pièce de résistance is undoubtedly the planned provision of a brewhouse. What's not to like?

One might think CAMRA would be completely bonkers to object to such a proposition, but that was precisely what we did. And we were not alone. There were over fifty written objections to the proposal, and Herefordshire Council's own Historic Buildings and Economic Development Officers each objected to the proposals too. Moreover, it spoke volumes that there wasn't a



Destined for the wrecking ball
- inside the doomed Volunteer Inn

single letter of support for what was being proposed. It appeared that everyone except S & A Produce was quite happy to stick with the Volunteer Inn. Why was this?

Dining on the Ceiling

There's an old saying about the devil being in the detail, and doesn't that ever apply in this case. It was a crucial absence of detail on some fundamental aspects of the proposed replacement pub's design and function that gave serious cause for concern. The new so-called "family pub" is to focus on dining. Fair enough, many village pubs do, but the plans for the layout of the interior public area showed 35 tables, about which were set a total of 140 chairs. The tables and chairs were so crammed in, that it would have come as little surprise to discover they were also planning to nail tables and chairs onto the walls and ceiling as well! There wasn't an inch of space remaining that could reasonably accommodate any of the trappings and activities one might normally expect to find in a typical village pub: such as for games, social gatherings, meetings - or just standing at the bar having a drink with friends. This place is going to be a gastro-pub - full stop - and nothing else. As designed, it isn't fit-for-purpose as a replacement village pub. That is if it ever gets built, of course.

In a spirit of seeking co-operation, CAMRA promptly sought clarity via the planners on a

number of matters regarding the interior design and function and, specifically, as to the new pub's ability to be able to accommodate the reasonable needs of the local community - as the Volunteer Inn does today. However, no such assurances were forthcoming. All that came back was a curt statement that the running and management of the pub was not a planning matter (that's telling 'em!), then later the 35 tables and 140 chairs magically disappeared from the plans that would ultimately be put in front of the planning committee!

Revolting Peasants

In later correspondence to the planners, *S & A Produce* stated their surprise and disappointment with the reaction to their plans from so-called "third parties" (a euphemism they seem to apply to the local community). You can almost feel the self-righteous indignation leaping out from the page, when one reads how the new pub project is being promoted by Mr John Davies of *S & A Produce* himself as, quote: "a personal philanthropic gesture for the benefit of the community." It accuses those same "third parties" of being "critical" and "unappreciative", and of raising "trivial" and "frivolous" objections. One can imagine the rage...perhaps only Marie Antoinette could have put it better: How dare the peasants revolt! I'm giving them a brand new village pub! But is this really the case? If someone was really going to build a community a new pub, wouldn't they speak to them about it? Why the stonewalling? What is there to be afraid of? What is it that they have to hide?

It has been this persistent unwillingness of *S & A Produce* to discuss the application with anyone in the local community that has created ill-felling and mistrust. There has been absolutely no effort at all to consult with residents, the objectors or the parish council on the plans at any point. Moreover, on the 26th November 2016, there was a well-attended public meeting at Marden Village Hall, organised by the parish council, to discuss the planning applications (including that for the Volunteer Inn). Two members of *S & A Produce* management were present in the audience at that meeting, but neither took the opportunity to either give a statement, or even to announce their presence. Sneaky...and hardly what might be considered textbook best practice for building trust

and co-operation. This vacuum of information then provides room for unhelpful rumour and speculation to circulate, with one less charitable comment suggesting the new pub, if ever built, would be no more than a social club for *S & A Produce* staff.

In a very detailed and thorough 38-page report to the planning committee, the planning officer set out the issues. Despite Herefordshire Council's own Economic Development Officer stating that there was no evidence presented that the replacement pub could meet the needs of the community, and the council's Historic Buildings Officer adding that the Volunteer Inn was a significant heritage asset (for which he believed retention and sympathetic extension should be a priority instead) the planning officer's recommendation to the planning committee was for approval.

These matters were briefly discussed by the planning committee ahead of the vote, as too was the fact there was to be absolutely no requirement placed on *S & A Produce* to ever build the replacement pub. However, a majority of councillors were content to take it at face value that it would appear at some point in the future unknown, and the application was approved by 7 votes to 4, with one abstention. Thus the Volunteer Inn was condemned to become no more than rubble and memories.

Snatching Defeat from the Victory

This is a very disappointing outcome. But what is more disappointing was that one of the votes in favour was from Councillor J L V Kenyon, who will be better known to many *Hopvine* readers as Jim Kenyon - the erstwhile Mayor of Hereford and owner-operator of both the Hereford Brewery and the city's Victory pub. Jim clearly believes this new pub will be built, and that it will work. We genuinely hope that we are wrong and that he has made the right call, as doubtless will the residents of Marden - who are shortly to bear witness to the closure and demolition of their village pub.

Short Measure?

No price list on display?

Contact Trading Standards 08454 040506

consumeradvice@herefordshire.gov.uk

LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

KELPAUL

Kelpaul beers have been spreading their wings of late, with Bonneville being available at the likes of Dog Hangs Well in Ludlow and the Dog & Partridge in Stoke-on-Trent.

KelPaul's most recent brews have been Fatboy, a nicely-hopped 3.9% ABV American pale ale and Black & Gold, a blackcurrant pale ale with a light malt base that balances well with the sweetness of the blackcurrants. Both are now in limited stock.

LEDBURY

2017 saw growth of over 20% on 2016 volumes with Ledbury Bitter performing particularly well. The six green-hopped beers brewed in the autumn were very well received. Plans are already being developed for the 2018 hop harvest.

Developments include a new "hoppinator", additional casks, and a brand new delivery van. Toby Lunn joined the team at the start of 2017 and he has made a big impact, allowing proprietors Ant and Kate Stevens to get a bit of a better work/life balance!

Dr Rudi's Extra Pale introduced in 2017 will be brewed from April to October as part of the brewery's core range.

ODYSSEY

Consistent demand for Odyssey continues and, in spite of the recent increase in brewing capacity, demand continues to exceed supply leading to increased staffing and the brewery working flat-out for seven days a week. Odyssey have recently been present at *A Glasgow Beer Event* and have brewed a collaboration beer with the Bristol-based Left Handed Giant.

Odyssey was featured in the inaugural issue of a new magazine entitled "Hopped" aimed at the UK craft beer scene. Odyssey continue to brew interesting, beers that are available all over the country, in bottles via Eebria, and from their taphouse at the Beer in Hand in Hereford. Almost every brew is a new recipe, making it impossible for the *Hopvine* to list them all.

However, the standout brews have included:

- Show Me A Hero, a beautifully balanced and well-hopped 7% American IPA

- Regulate Table - a 3.5% table beer with a superb mouthfeel and flavour that defies its gravity.
- True Skool - a juicy, session IPA that offers a spelt oats and wheat base to balance the Citra & Ekaunot hops used in the boil - which is then dry-hopped with Galaxy, Wakatu and Falconer's Flight (itself a hop blend).
- Salted Caramel Latte Export - a 7.0% brew using coffee beans provided by the local *King's Street Kitchen* cafe; this a sticky, sweet chocolate-coffee porter that is as beautiful to taste as the description implies.

SIMPSONS

Having proved very popular, a 5.0% beer brewed to test a new local hop variety has out-lived the supply of the hops and subsequent batches have used Olicana hops instead. The beer is yet to formally receive a name!

SWAN

Free tasting days are being held at the brewery for three new beers; see the ad on page 14. The beers are:

Brewery, Bar & Visitor Centre

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Opening Times:

Monday-Thursday
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Friday
10am - 6pm

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10am - 5pm

Brewery Tours:

Weekdays 3pm
Saturdays 2pm

www.theludlowbrewingcompany.co.uk

- Hero's Ale - a 3.9% smooth chestnut ale brewed with Herefordshire Fuggles and Goldings. The hero in question is Allan Leonard Lewis VC, the only Herefordshire-born recipient of the Victoria Cross.
- Barrel of Laughs - ready for April Fools Day - a 4.4% clouded, chuckleberry wheat beer. A chuckleberry is a hybrid of fruits, but essentially looks like a blackcurrant and grows very well in Herefordshire.
- Swan Love, a 4.0% transatlantic pale ale is a homage to Bob Marley, or a harmonious union of north American and English hops reflecting the marriage of Prince Harry and Meghan.

Black Swan, a 4.5% roasted coffee stout has earned "mmms" from all quarters. It's been available on draught and now in bottles. The coffee comes from *Method Roastery* in Bishops Cleeve.

Joining the bottled beers in March is Swan on the Wye, first brewed for *Beer on the Wye* in 2016.

WOBBLY

The brewery has been taken over by *WeCan Solutions Ltd.*, a go-ahead canning company based at Rotherwas. Behind this deal are *WeCan* Managing Director Andy Hughes and his brother Jason, who is now MD of Wobbly. Head brewer, Darren Clarke, remains in position, but now with Robert White as trainee brewer. The company is in the process of changing its name to Welder Brewery, alluding to the original beer - which is being brewed again after a gap of over a year.

For now, no major change of direction is planned, with the six core beers being supplied to several pubs in the county, and others further afield.

WYE VALLEY

WYE Valley picked up two awards at the 2017 CAMRA *West Midlands* awards ceremony held at the Barton's Arms in Birmingham in December. Butty Bach won silver in the *Real ale in a bottle, light* category and Wholesome Stout won silver in the stout category.

Saturday 29th April will be Wye Valley Brewery's *Land of Hops and Glory Cycle Sportive*. 2018

sees the return of the cycle event that runs through the rolling hills of Herefordshire, between Malvern and the Wye Valley. Hosted at the brewery, the bar will be open for those thirsty cyclists needing refreshments which will include a limited edition beer for the event.

Space Hopper, a 5.2% dark IPA brewed experimentally using a mix of local and American hops, including Mosaic, Cascade, Summit and Jester, has been launched in bottled form and has been very well received.

The monthly special for March is Goddess, a 4.0% hoppy pale ale, followed in April by Malt Teaser a chestnut-coloured ale at 4.2% and in May, Toros, a strong pale ale at 4.6%

Investment at the brewery continues apace with a major eight-month project having begun on the warehousing, racking, cask-washing and transport bays.

HOBSONS

To celebrate their 25th year of brewing, the idea of a collaboration brew occurred to the team at Hobsons - and the fact that the proprietor

of one of London's new wave breweries grew up on a farm that supplies them with malting barley made the choice of partner very simple. So, Tom Hutchings of Bermondsey-based Brew by Numbers came to Cleobury Mortimer to brew Mosaic and Citra, an unfinned extra hoppy pale ale at 4.2%.

The brewing process followed modern craft brewing techniques, and used Citra whole leaf hops in the boil and dry-hopped with Mosaic Cryo-powder - in which the oil-bearing lupulin glands have been separated cryogenically from the leaf and stalk material. This enables a high dose of Mosaic hop oil to be utilised without the astringency that the whole hop would produce. Being unfinned, the beer is suitable for vegans.

LUDLOW

Ludlow Brewery is looking to upgrade its brewing copper with a £20,000 investment this year so as to improve the quality of the brewing process. Head Brewer, Gary Walters has also recruited a new member of the brewing team. Cody Palin, graduate brewer from Herriot Watt



University, joins the current brewers Chris Davies and Joe Jacks so as to meet increasing demand in 2018.

Commented Cody; “I come from the Tenbury area and started to look around at local borderland breweries with a strong reputation...I also like local and small. The Head Brewer is interested in applying a scientific approach to the art of brewing and that is spot on for me. Experience counts and I am learning more every day.”

UNITY BREWHOUSE

Another brewery changing its name will be Unity Brewhouse, situated just over the county boundary in Suckley, Worcestershire. Unity Brew House are the only brewery in the UK that is based on a hop farm and brews with the hops grown in their own back yard. To reflect this unique situation, the brewery will be renamed as ‘The Hop Shed’ during the Spring.

The full story of the inception and growth of the brewery has been shown on television - in an hour-long documentary on *Channel 5* that was aired in January. This can be viewed until October at: <https://www.my5.tv/starting-up-starting-over/season-1/episode-4>

Being located in an old chicken shed, all their beers have been given a chicken breed name: Sebright Golden Ale, Wybar Amber Ale, Pekin Pale Ale, and Frizzle IPA are the core beer range with seasonal beers such as Phoenix Porter.

Within the brewery, proprietors Hani and Sarah have created a tap room and open this to the public on Fridays 4:30 - 9pm and Saturdays 2 - 6pm.

The bar is proving to be a very popular meeting place for the local community, with anything up to 100 people descending on the brewery at once, creating a great atmosphere and buzz. Monthly food events also take place, such as stew & dumplings, BBQs, pizzas and curry nights. Saturdays tend to be a quieter affair with more chance to view the brewery and its bucolic surroundings.

WOOD

In new ownership, albeit without a name change, is the Wood Brewery of Wistanstow, (based just north of Craven Arms), following its acquisition by *Yarrawaddie Brands*. This is a company set up solely to facilitate the transfer of



Edward Wood (centre) hands over the reins of the brewery to new owners Stephen O'Neill (left) and Patrick McGuckian (right).

ownership and is owned by Stephen O'Neill, a drinks industry executive who was formerly Senior Vice-President of Strategy for *Pernod Ricard USA* and Patrick McGuckian, who has spent his career in food distribution. They will be joint Managing Directors of the brewery. Joining the company as Commercial Director is Tony Walsh, who previously worked for Bass and *Imbiba*, a leisure industry capital investor.

The brewery was started by the Wood family back in 1980, and was one of the founders of the *Small Independent Brewers' Association* (SIBA). Edward Wood, who joined the brewery soon after its inception (and who was MD for almost 40 years) said: “Obviously I have mixed feelings about leaving the company, but I believe the new owners can take the business to a new level and are well placed to ensure substantial growth from a robust base.”

Edward will continue in the business as a consultant for some months to ensure a smooth handover.

The brewery was set up in the former stables of the Plough Inn at Wistanstow but the two entities have remained largely independent. The new owners intend to integrate the two businesses and exploit the benefits of their proximity. They don't see a major change of direction in the brewing policy, except to concentrate more on the core brands, and breathe new life into SIBA champion Best Bitter, Pot o' Gold.

LOCAL PUB NEWS

Eight weeks of road closures on the main A4103 Hereford-Worcester road last year had a detrimental impact on business at the **Red Lion Inn** at Stiffords Bridge. However, owners Steve Moorman & Viki Kuhle are now worried that a further four weeks of closures planned for May this year will hit their trade again. They've got a petition underway – which, by the middle of February, had already amassed over 500 names.

However, they're putting a brave face on it, and highlight that there's plenty happening at the popular roadside pub. They now have regular live Jazz every other Tuesday from Malvern-based *Perdido Street Jazz Band*, with a good, old-fashioned pub quiz filling the alternate Tuesdays. Looking ahead, on Sunday the 22th April they're organising a St. George's Day event, which will include Morris Dancers and other activities in the pub and its extensive garden.

Roast Sunday lunches have now started in earnest, being served between 12noon and 3pm. These are nicely complemented by the five beers on offer: Pitchfork and Wye Valley Bitter are regulars, plus three guests from breweries near and far, often rarely seen in the county.

Also on the main A4103 Hereford-Worcester road, the **New Inn** at Storridge could once lay claim to being the only Herefordshire pub straddled by the county border, but not anymore. Undoubtedly hamstrung by years of inept Pubco ownership, it finally ran out of steam when it finally closed for good. Subsequently no-one wanted to buy it as a pub. With not a single ob-

jection to the proposal, on the 20th February, Herefordshire Council planners approved an application to convert it into a modest private dwelling complete with a two-storey extension, triple garage, swimming pool and a gymnasium.

Having been owned by the Elliston family for 40 years, the venerable **Feathers Hotel** in Ledbury has been acquired by the *Coach House Inn Group*, an ambitious company based in Boston, Lincolnshire. There are expected to be changes to the beer offer including a move to more local beers.

Another pub whose future looks uncertain is the unusually-named **Wonky Donkey** at Bailey Lane End. Once called the New Inn, the pub is in a small community just over a mile south of the A40, towards Drybrook in the Forest of Dean. It has been closed now for over two years and there appears to be no appetite to re-open it from the owners - who have been there for over fifteen years.

The **Plough Inn** in Ross-on-Wye is now offering real ale for the first time in many years. Situated just off the town centre on Over Ross Street, this interesting old community-focused local serves a single beer from either Hillside or Bespoke breweries, both based in Gloucestershire. It hosts plenty of events, many of them in its extensive garden over the summer months.

Nick and Andi Philips have relinquished the tenancy of the **Bridge Inn** at Kentchurch, and the pub is closed pending refurbishment by its owners, the Kentchurch estate.

Following an ultimately unsuccessful period as an Indian restaurant, the **New Inn** at St Owens Cross is now in local ownership. An application has been submitted for listed building consent to cover "sensitive minor alterations together with much needed building fabric repairs and a comprehensive programme of internal redecoration and refurbishment."

The application states the owners intention is to reopen the delightful and remote crossroads premises as a traditional English pub, serving the usual range of drinks and food.



The New Inn, Storridge at the end of the road - physically and metaphorically

It will also offer three letting rooms.

The **Castle Inn** at Little Birch is enjoying a more settled existence after the many comings and goings of management in recent years and is now run by Seb Chicken and Emma Steele, With Seb's father Paul Chicken (famous for his charge at the Bull's Head at Craswall during its halcyon days) as chef, it will be no surprise to many that the food here is of a high standard, and is reported to be very good value. Beers are mainly local, with Wobbly (now Welder) Brewery featuring on a visit in February.

The **Crown & Anchor** at Lugwardine held a festive raffle over the Christmas and New Year period, which raised £220 for St Michael's Hospice. The pub was another victim of road closures, when the A438 road across the nearby Lugg Meadows was closed for over eight weeks last summer.

A Hereford pub was in the news for the wrong reasons in January. The pub sign at the **Monument** at Whitecross fell during stormy weather causing minor head injuries to two women.

A spokesperson for the Monument was quoted in the *Hereford Times* as saying: "We are work-

ing with the local environmental authority and we will take appropriate action to ensure this cannot happen again. We have contacted the guests and wish them a speedy recovery."

The **Black Lion** on Bridge Street in Hereford has a new licensee. Wayne James has taken over this historic, sixteenth century inn, together with Pete Edwards, who has been chef at the city's Gilbies Bistro for many years. Meals are served lunchtimes and early evenings and include a Sunday roast. Beers are Wye Valley HPA and Butty Bach, plus a guest beer, often from a local brewery. Live music will be featured, with the band *Two Push Charlie* booked for Saturday 24th March.

The nearby **Firefly** on the city's King Street is now offering an all-vegan menu, along with gluten-free options. As often as is possible, this vegan policy also extends to one of the three interesting and varying cask ales on the bar. Currently the real ciders are being sourced from Somerset's Orchard Pig, interspersed with the more local Snailsbank.

The restaurant area of the **Grapes** on the city's West Street has been refurbished in the style of



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a Black Country backstreet boozier. Particularly noticeable are the marble-topped bar and the period-style light fittings. Named *The Garrison*, it is themed around the BBC TV series *Peaky Blinders*. Three real ales are sourced from far and wide, and change frequently.

The public bar at the **Merton Hotel** in Commercial Road no longer opens every evening, and when it does, the hours appear to be quite variable. Just a single real ale is now on sale - on a recent visit it was Hobson's Mild.

Good news from what was the **Rose Gardens** in **Munstone**. Now renamed the Secret Garden it re-opened on the evening of Friday 2nd March (see the story on page 13).

A pub that doesn't feature in these pages very often is the **Amberley Arms**. It's a roadside pub between Sutton St. Nicholas and Bodenham, that has looked more than a little unloved for some years now. Therefore, it is great news to learn of a planning application to refurbish and expand the place. Facilities are planned to include a new restaurant, lounge bar, shop and holiday accommodation.

Residents in Docklow are concerned about the **King's Arms** pub. The roadside pub on the Leominster-Bromyard road has been shut for three years and is on the market with *Sidney Phillips*. If a buyer doesn't come forward soon there is the possibility it will go for housing.

The **Stockton Cross Inn** at Kimbolton was closed for refurbishment at the end of February, following its purchase by a local independent pub operator. The new owner also has the Baiting House at Upper Sapey in his portfolio of four pubs. If the work here is half as good as that undertaken at the Baiting House, then we're in for a real treat when it re-opens - there's no date at the moment.

Work is continuing at the **Chequers** in Leominster. When sold by a pub company back in December 2015, new owners, Wye Valley Brewery, were faced with considerable work to rectify the fabric of the building. Attention then turned to the outside toilets and now an enclosed walkway has been completed, and the toilets refurbished. The next stage is a sports bar in the former two-storey function room to the rear, expected to open in April. Improvements to this

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pub are protracted due to the need for listed building consent for every change.

Just up the road, the **Bell Inn** has a new licensee in the shape of Andy Wood. Currently owned by Punch Taverns, the Bell is about to transfer to Heineken, so a change of beer range, from the current Wye Valley Bitter and Butty Bach, can be expected.

Also in Leominster the one-time Queen's Head has received yet another new name. Now called the **Ducker Bar & Beer Garden**, harking back to its 1990's name inspired by the town's chosen method of meting out punishment to petty criminals in earlier times. The pub serves drinkers and diners with meals daily (not Mondays), and features a Sunday carvery. Beers are local - on a visit in early February they comprised two from Hereford's Wobbly Brewery (see *Welder story in Brewery News*).

Andy Link, licensee of the **Riverside**, Aymestry has adopted the *British Hedgehog Preservation Society* as this year's charity. He intends to give the local hedgehog population a helping hand by installing hedgehog homes in the pub's garden. Unsurprisingly, Hobson's Old Prickly is now on draught on the bar.

A little over six months from when the **Monk** in Monkland closed, it reopened in February - under its old name the Monkland Arms. Rescue came thanks to Jed and Ali Dunn, who have moved up from Ilminster in Somerset where they ran a successful pub. Thanks to the 2015 refurbishment they were able to reopen the pub quite quickly, although problems in the kitchen prevented immediate provision of meals. Setting out to be more attractive to the locals, they have already held a quiz evening. Regular beers are Swan Amber, Wye Valley Bitter and Butty Bach with guests from Hobsons, Ludlow and Swan.

Why are we waiting? While the frustrated residents of Lyonshall wait patiently for the **George Inn** in the village to reopen, they aren't staying indoors and drinking supermarket booze. On Saturday 24th March, Lyonshall Parish Council are organising another one of their fun pop-up pubs in the village hall. It starts at 7.30pm, with a (not quite so much fun) village litter pick beforehand.

A pub which once found considerable success for its restaurant in the now-defunct *Flavours of*

WOOD'S

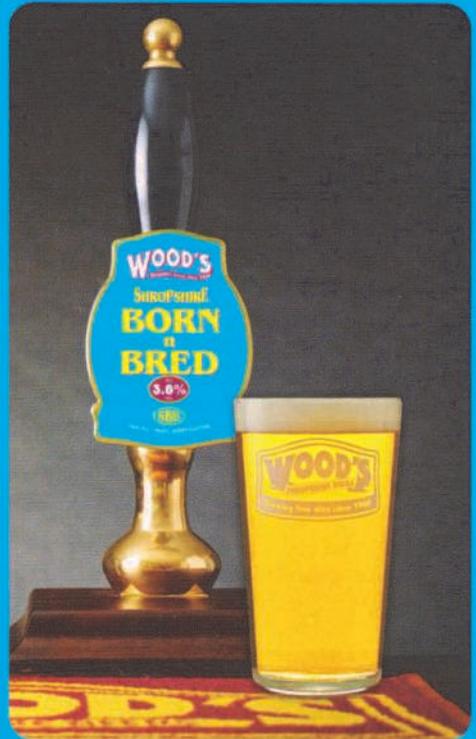
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Hereford Awards, has changed hands. The new owners of the **Sun Inn** at Winforton are Tony and Wendy Evans, who hail from Shrewsbury, where Wendy previously ran a pub for two years. This is yet another pub that suffered from closure of their road - the A438 again - for resurfacing.

Tony and Wendy are aiming to rebalance the operation back a little towards drinking and community activities, while still offering a fairly sophisticated dining menu. The lunchtime offer consists of more traditional pub meals and snacks, although dishes from the evening menu may also be requested. Gluten and dairy-free meals are available. Wye Valley Bitter and The Hopfather are on the bar, and a guest beer is promised for the summer.

Just over the Worcestershire border in Malvern, it will shortly be all-change at the **Morgan**. Located on the town's Clarendon Road near Great Malvern station, the ex-pubco failure (then named the Cavalry Arms) was rescued and renovated by Wye Valley Brewery in 2009. Licensees Martin and Jane McGrath have since

WHAT'S COOKIN' IN DILWYN?

Not a lot at the moment, as the Crown Inn at Dilwyn is looking for a part-time chef. The pub is owned and overseen by Dilwyn Parish Council. Having now got it established profitably on wet sales only, there is a real need to develop a food service Fridays, Saturdays and Sunday lunchtime. This would suit someone willing to take on the kitchen under a franchise agreement, whereby they take the profits from food sales in lieu of a wage. If you want to learn more about this opportunity, or wish to apply, then please contact:

clerk@dilwynparishcouncil.gov.uk

Alternatively you can ring Gwilym on 07799 888324.

done wonders to transform it into a thriving and vibrant community pub, one that is always welcoming and friendly. Lisa Bircham and Paul Caswell (ex-Great Malvern Hotel) will be taking over from Martin and Jane on the 8th April. The *Hopvine* wishes everyone well with their future plans.

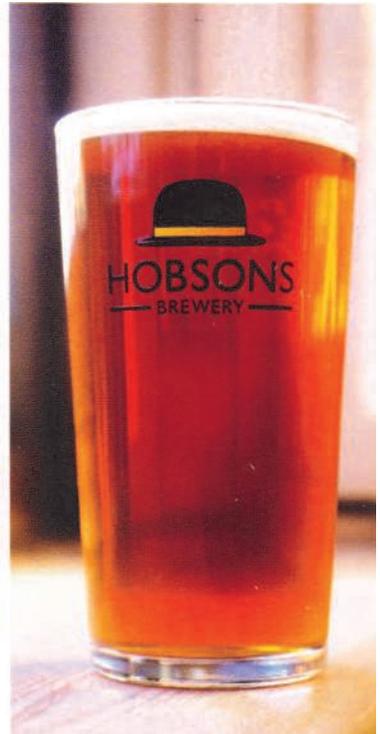
HOBSONS 25 YEAR JOURNEY

Award-winning REAL ALE brewed
with local ingredients for great taste

CLEOBURY MORTIMER - SHROPSHIRE



Visit www.hobsons-brewery.co.uk to watch our 25 year journey in short films



MUNSTONE'S SECRET RE-OPENING

The Rose Gardens (aka. The Rosie) is dead, long live the Secret Garden!

In earlier editions of the *Hopvine* you may have read reports about how the Rose Gardens at Munstone had closed and was only being used at weekends as a wedding party venue. More recently, Herefordshire CAMRA swung behind concerned locals, when they objected to plans to put an executive-style house on the pub's garden. Those plans were refused and a later appeal was dismissed.



However, those dark days are now firmly in the past, as the future looks much brighter for the Rose Gardens - now re-invented and revitalised as the Secret Garden. To local fanfare, and with a ram-packed bar, the pub finally re-opened on the evening of Friday the 2nd March.

Considering its close proximity to Hereford's northern city boundary, the pub has the most exquisite rural setting: to the front is a narrow and winding country lane verged with hawthorn hedgerows, while to the rear beyond a fence is a beautifully-manicured and extensive garden, replete with splendid lawns and a truly majestic willow tree. It's all very nice.

In contrast to its external surroundings, the pub with its blue/grey-painted brick façade and contemporary interior, doesn't pretend to be a Ye Olde Country Inne. But what it does, it seems to do well. On entry is an area with woodburner, two fireplace chairs and a sofa. To the immediate right is a separate smaller bar, whilst the main bar area affords access through to a conservatory that acts as a restaurant. Following a full refurbishment five or so years back, the place is fitted out to a very high spec, with various greys and striped carpets alongside dark wood table clusters and comfortable seating - it all being reminiscent of a quality hotel. However, this place is undeniably a pub first and foremost, although modern and moody lighting does create a more urbane (and perhaps urban) atmosphere. It's somewhere you'd happily go to for a special occasion, but equally the bar is set up to accommodate more casual visitors and drinkers.

Lunchtimes the food consists of snacks (including baguettes), with evening meals just on Fridays (when there is a themed menu with live music) and Saturdays, with modern-style pub food. Beers are Wye Valley HPA and Doom Bar.

Vicky Lightowler, who now runs the pub with her family, explains their business philosophy: "It will be very much family-orientated and we'll soon have an enclosed pitch with goalposts for children to play football in safety, adding to a fully-equipped children's play area; a dog-friendly section, and a welly-rack for walkers".

Visiting the Secret Garden for the first time, one would never guess that it had been closed until recently. It's a great place on a dark winter's evening (with a surprisingly cosy atmosphere), but its real glory will be reserved for fine summer days - when everyone can enjoy the extensive grounds and outdoor decking.

Secret Garden, Coldwells Road, Munstone, HR1 1LH www.secretgardenhereford.co.uk
Tel: 07715953497; Opening times 4-11 Wed & Thu; 12-11.30 Fri & Sat; 12-10.30 Sun;
Meal Times 12-3, 6-9 Fri-Sat; 12-5 Sun

STILL EXPECTING IN LEOMINSTER AND LUDLOW

It's still very much work-in-progress on two new micro-pubs, and plans for another in Ross-on-Wye have stalled.

The last *Hopvine* reported on plans for two new micro-pubs for the two towns in the title of this story: the Blood Bay on Ludlow's High Street, and another (currently nameless) in Leominster's Corn Square. Since then, plans have emerged for Ross-on-Wye's first micro-pub too. This is all great news for beer-drinkers and pub-goers. However, none of these schemes are moving as fast as might have first been hoped.

As so often happens with developments of very old, and particularly listed buildings, the timetable for the Blood Bay in Ludlow has slipped a little, and the projected opening date is now April. Meanwhile, in Leominster, planning permission was granted in mid-February for the conversion of the old TIC into a micro-pub. The work required there is somewhat less than that in Ludlow, and the end of April has been suggested as an opening date too. No name for the pub (or its operator) have yet been announced.

It was hoped that there would be a trio of new micro-pubs to report in this edition, following an exciting new development in Ross-on-Wye. Plans for what was once the 'brewery tap' for the long-closed Alton Court Brewery in the town, envisage its conversion into a micro-pub. Situated on Millpond Street (opposite *Morrisons* supermarket), it is unfortunately located in a flood risk area. Consequently, the planning application for the pub has been delayed whilst a formal flood risk assessment is commissioned and undertaken.

The Ross plan is being pursued by the *Vine Tap*, a Ledbury-based company specialising in mobile bars. As well as the usual portable bars one sees at various events, the company offers two vehicle-based bars - one in an old Citroën Acadiane van and the other in a classic Sinclair horsebox. Proprietor, Nigel Ree, reports that construction is also under way to convert the interior of a 17 foot-long exhibition trailer into a mobile micro-pub. This will be equipped with a fold-out deck and will stock three real ales and a real cider, together with other drinks. (the ales will mostly



Micro excitement in Ross - the town looks set to get its first micro-pub...eventually

be racked bright unless the trailer can be positioned the previous day).

For micro-pub fans in Ludlow, Leominster and Ross, it's a case of needing to be patient. Fingers crossed there'll be three pub-opening stories in the next edition of the *Hopvine*!

Seasonal Specials

BREWERY SHOP OPEN FRIDAYS 9am to 2.30pm
FREE TASTING DAYS on dates shown
swanbrewery.co.uk
 01568 617709
 Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 0LX

f t

SNOW CHAOS

Presentations three months apart are disrupted by snow.

Herefordshire rarely gets troubled by serious snowfall and journeys can be planned with reasonable confidence throughout the winter. Two successive winters 2009/10 and 2010/11 presented some travel problems, after a nearly 20 year gap since the big freeze of 1981/2. So, it was just unfortunate that the planned presentation to the *Winter Pub of the Season* at the Red Lion in Pembridge in December was snowed-off and missed the Christmas *Hopvine*.



Red Lion, Pembridge - minus snow drifts

Fast forward three months to the beginning of March and - against all the odds - more snowy nonsense trips us up again, this time abetted by the 'Beast from the East'. It was to be the Spring *Pub of the Season* award to the Ye Olde Tavern in Kington, which was timed to catch this *Hopvine*. Another one bites the dust!



Cliff Price (left) with Simon Crowther from CAMRA

It wasn't until early January before a date could be arranged with the Red Lion, where Herefordshire CAMRA's Simon Crowther is seen presenting landlord Cliff Price with his certificate (*photo left*).

So, what of the Ye Olde Tavern? An ideal opportunity was already in the calendar, as Herefordshire CAMRA members will be joining local CAMRA organiser, Geoff Cooper, on a walk around Kington on Good Friday, 30th March. The presentation is planned to take place at 4pm, and a full write-up will appear in the next *Hopvine*. See you there!

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

The Pelican Inn

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

Telephone 01452 387877



Perfectly positioned between Gloucester cathedral and Kingsholm rugby stadium. The Pelican Inn serves the entire Wye Valley range plus two guest ales from other breweries. 8 Real Ales and 6 Proper Ciders and NO LAGER, this is a traditional pub where Real Ale is at the heart of everything we do.

DRAGON & APPLES

Congratulations to Adam and Zoe Durrant at the Green Dragon Inn at Bishops Frome on the occasion of being named Herefordshire CAMRA's Cider Pub of the Year for 2017.

It's a previous winner and a lovely country pub with real fires; a warm welcome, and a range of real ciders to complement the real ales and excellent food. The Green Dragon is the quintessential English, black and white, low-beamed country pub. It has an unspoiled warren of small, discrete rooms - each with its own real fire and the centrepiece of a grand inglenook fireplace.

It is much sought after as a destination for walkers and coach parties with its tradition for good quality ales, cider and food.

Adam and Zoe have been at the Green Dragon for almost five years and offer six cask ales, alongside an expansive range of local ciders. In the early days there was Stowford, Strongbow and a couple of boxes of Henneys, but they have transformed the offer with a variety of Celtic Marches (e.g. Thundering Molly and Lily the Pink) and Westons (Rosie's Pig) ciders. The fruity variants (e.g. Tutti Frutti, Hand Brake and Flat Tyre) are particularly popular during the summer months. Two that impressed were Bartestree's 'Fiona and Vicky' cider and the Henry Weston Perry.



CAMRA's Russell Sutcliffe (left) presents the certificate to Adam & Zoe

Adam and Zoe take pride in what they sell and obtain quality produce from local suppliers which may even be flavoured with cider during cooking. The apples for the some of the ciders actually grow in the village!

They normally hold a beer festival, which usually takes place over the last weekend in June, and, as any archetypal village pub should, it is also home to many other community-orientated events.

Runner-up in this year's competition is the **Crown Inn** at Woolhope. The Crown is at the heart of the village of Woolhope, next to the ancient Church of St Georges. Matt and Annalisa Slocombe have a reputation for serving great local produce, simply cooked with a varied menu of rustic, wholesome dishes alongside more restaurant-style options. The pub serves over 30 local ciders and perries, all from within a 12 miles radius of the Crown - including award-winning, home-milled ones. They know that real cider matches good food and will arrange cider tastings and flights for you to enjoy with your meal or a good cheese board!

Green Dragon, Bishops Frome, WR6 5BP Tel (01885) 490607 www.thegreendragoninn.com

Opening Times: 5-11 Mon-Thu; 4-11.30 Fri; 12-11.30 Sat; 12-6 Sun; Winter 4.30-11 Mon-Thu; 4-11.30 Fri; 12-11.30 Sat; 12-6 Sun Meal Times: 6-9 Tue-Fri; 12-2.30, 6-9 Sat; 12-3 Sun

Crown Inn, Woolhope, HR1 4QP Tel: (01432) 860468 www.crowninnwoolhope.co.uk

Opening Times: 12-3, 6-11.30 Mon-Thu; 12-3, 6-Midnight Fri; 12-Midnight Sat; 12-11 Sun

NEW HOP FILM AND EXHIBITION

Fans of the British hop may be interested in a new film made possible by *National Lottery* players. *Stories from the Hop Yards* brims with archive photos, film, and newly-recorded interviews. It is part of a larger project, *Herefordshire Life Through a Lens*, produced by Hereford-based Catcher Media. Funded by a National Lottery grant, the project has been inspired by the rediscovered Derek Evans' photographic collection.

His extraordinary images of life in the hop fields in the 50's and 60's have evoked many fond memories, including capturing stories from hop pioneer Peter Davies and Munderfield's Barry Parker before their recent deaths. The early autumn period of high intensity, sweat, toil, and laughter too, changed with the appearance of the Bruff machine, putting to an end annual migration of pickers from the Black Country, South Wales and the Gypsy community.

Of those farms that have survived, some are several generations strong, and with new farmers investing, there is a renewed vigour in the industry. The hop has confidently stepped into the 21st Century.

The 'Stories from the Hop Yards' film is being shown at venues across the county through the Spring, starting with a dementia-friendly screening at the Courtyard, Hereford on Friday 30 March 2018, 2pm. Full details may be found at www.herefordshirelifethroughalens.org.uk. (Look for FILM AND EXHIBITION DATES and click on the picture below) The photographic exhibition is currently on view at the Courtyard, Hereford until April 2nd, when it moves to Leominster Library (April 23rd - May 14th) and Kington Library (May 15th - June 5th)

The *National Lottery* funded exhibition featuring Derek's photos of pickers can be seen at The Courtyard, Hereford alongside new work created by students from Hereford College of Arts until 2nd April.

NEW HORSE AT FAIR OAK

The horse-drawn cider mill at Fair Oak farm in the Golden Valley, believed to be the only one now making cider commercially in the country, has a new horse, as well as a new cider-maker. Tommy, the Gypsy Cob who has now started working the mill, is slightly larger, at 14 hands, than his predecessor, Pye, and being a gelding rather than a stallion, perhaps more amenable.

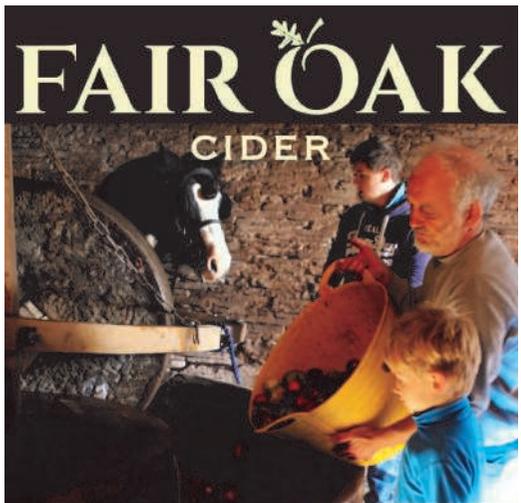
Alan McCardle, who has been making Fair Oak cider for five years, has been joined by a new helper, Ed Budd.

A new website, www.fairoakcider.co.uk, includes a half-hour documentary made by David Bishop, which tells the story of the restoration of the Fair Oak mill and press, and shows how the cider is made, from harvesting to wassail.

The cider is now on sale in five local shops, and is on tap at The Bridge Inn, Michaelchurch Escley. A tasting will be held at Oakchurch Country Store at Staunton-on-Wye on Easter Saturday, March 31, 1-5pm

The mill will be open during *National Mills Week-end*, on Saturday May 12, 2-6pm. At other times, visitors are welcome to taste and buy cider by appointment:

Fair Oak, Bacton, HR2 0AT. Tel (01981) 241210.



FAIR OAK
CIDER

HORSE-POWERED IN HEREFORDSHIRE



www.fairoakcider.co.uk

Made with old varieties of cider apples from Golden Valley orchards, in the only horse-drawn mill in Herefordshire, Fair Oak cider is pure and simple – just like cider used to taste.

Sally Lavender: 1971 - 2018

It is with deep sadness that the *Hopvine* reports the shocking news that Sally Lavender, one of the great characters of CAMRA in our region, passed away in Birmingham City Hospital on the 4th February, just three days after suffering a catastrophic stroke. It was all very sudden.

Although Sally was a beer-drinker, it was cider and perry that she tirelessly championed, being closely involved with CAMRA's annual *West Midlands Perry Competition*, that has been hosted at Herefordshire's own *Beer on the Wye* festival for many years. A larger-than-life character with her trademark fedora, she was fondly known by many of Herefordshire's small cider and perry-makers. She always seemed to have the most disarmingly cheeky smile on her face.

Originally from the Potteries, she lived in Birmingham with her partner, Mark Parkes, who is CAMRA's *Brewery Liaison Co-ordinator* for the West Midlands. She was Chair of Birmingham branch of CAMRA and a great organiser. Tutored beer-tasting events were a speciality of hers.

When not devoting her time to CAMRA and cider, Sally's day job was teaching the French language in schools across North Staffordshire - a role in which she was very popular, and excelled.

Friends from all over the country came to Sally's funeral, held in North Staffordshire, to share memories of her all too brief life. Family and her many friends decided to split the wake between two of her favourite pubs, and so it was that a marquee was erected linking Wellers and the Lymestone Vaults



Blocking Pepper Street for Sally, with her partner, Mark in the foreground

same article: "It is difficult to put Sally into words, she was a constant in the campaign."

Mark Haslam for Herefordshire CAMRA says: "Sally will be a very hard act to follow. They threw away the mould when they made her. Her spirit and her steadfast commitment to the campaign for cider and perry were invaluable. It won't be quite the same at this summer's Beer on the Wye without her smile and zest for life.

"Her friends at Herefordshire CAMRA send their sincere condolences to her partner, family and friends. Good night Sally."



Sally with trademark fedora
...and pint

across the tiny Pepper Street in Newcastle-under-Lyme (in the process requiring consent to have the road officially closed). That's a measure of the respect Sally commanded.

Further, a one-off beer - called Sally's Strawberry Stout - was brewed specially for the occasion by nearby Weal Ales Brewery (owners of Wellers) with Sally's smiling face (what else?) beaming out from the pump clip.

Many tributes have been paid to Sally:

Partner, Mark, was quoted in the *Stoke Sentinel* newspaper as saying: "Sally was very eccentric and was loved by everyone".

Dave Glenwright, *Young Members' Officer* for West Midlands CAMRA, added in the

Jean Nowell 1930 – 2017

It is with great sadness that we share the news that Jean Nowell passed away on the morning of Sunday, 5th November 2017.

Jean has been at the heart of the Big Apple since its beginnings in 1989. Early visitors will remember being welcomed to Lyne Down to watch the cider and perry-making, originally Jean together with her husband Terry, and then going solo after Terry's death.

Jean went on to develop a reputation of excellence for Lyne Down Cider and Perry, winning many awards. More importantly, she shared her experience, knowledge and enthusiasm with many others, encouraging and supporting some who have gone on to number amongst Herefordshire's best-known and finest cider and perry-makers.

When she moved to a smaller property nearby, she carried on making cider and perry, often with others and at a reduced scale but with no less vigour. Jean's plan for last Saturday afternoon was to press apples with a friend, but that was not to be.

So many people have fond memories of Jean, and we are especially grateful that she was fully involved with our most recent Harvesttime weekend. She was out and about visiting venues, finding and making friends at every turn and taking enormous pleasure in unveiling her son Max's sculpture of a perry pear at Gregg's Pit, demonstrating both her wicked sense of humour and her deep understanding of place. She enjoyed the great gift of friendship with those of all generations who shared her passion for craftsmanship and tradition which will be continued by those that she nurtured and inspired. Jean will be greatly missed but we will continue to enjoy her legacy.

Jean's funeral took place at Hereford Crematorium on Thursday 16th November.

Russell Sutcliffe



Jean receives CAMRA's 2007 *Pomona Award* on behalf of Big Apple from John Lewis

RADNORSHIRE CAMRA Llandod Ale Trail & Cider Nouveau Festival



Four venues in Llandrindod Wells:

Arvon Ale House
Conservative Club
Llanerch Inn
Middleton Arms

Total 41 ales, 36 ciders & perries.

Friday 4th to Monday 7th May

An advertisement for Westons Visitor Centre. At the top, it features the Westons logo and the tagline 'INSPIRED BY NATURE, CRAFTED BY TRADITION.' Below this, it says 'The home of traditional cider making' and 'WESTONS VISITOR CENTRE'. The text continues: 'CIDER MILL TOURS DAILY - 11.00AM, 12.30PM, 2.00PM AND 3.30PM' and 'OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK | CIDER SHOP | RESTAURANT & CAFE'. A call to action reads 'Arrange your visit today call 01531 660108'. The bottom half of the ad shows a landscape with a cow grazing in a field, a tree with fruit, and several bottles of Westons cider and perry.

BETTER ON THE WYE

Beer on the Wye returns to its giant riverside marquee at Hereford Rowing Club from Friday the 6th to Sunday 8th July - and with it will come a number of welcome improvements. Festival planning is now well advanced, and what YOU have told us YOU want has been taken fully onboard:

- There will be an increase in the amount of seating, which for the first time will include bench seating.
- Another improvement will be the provision of posher loos - no more using the portaloos!

The Oxford Arms



Duke Street, Kington,
Herefordshire
HR5 3DR
Tel: 01544 230 322

Traditional style pub, great local real ales, family & dog friendly

We offer good wholesome food, all cooked on the premises using local produce

Open all day Fri, Sat & Sun, evenings only Tue, Wed & Thu

Food served

Tuesday – Thursday 6pm - 9pm only

Friday & Saturday 12noon – 2.30pm & 6pm – 9pm

Sunday Lunch 12noon – 2.30pm Roasts only

Sunday Evening 6pm – 8.30pm Roasts & Normal Menu

Bed & Breakfast

We have six rooms available with their own bathroom facilities, either ensuite or private - please see our website for more information and booking details

Events

Mothering Sunday – Sunday 11th March

Our **Mother's Day** menu will be available to view on our website and facebook page. Booking would be advisable.

We will also be serving a Special Easter Sunday menu on Sunday 1st April.

Saturday 21st April

Live music. We will have a local band playing for the Kington Spring Walking Festival. 9pm start, all welcome.

Kington Walking Festival will run from the 20th – 22nd April.

For more details please check our website www.the-oxford-arms.co.uk and/or our facebook page



The main beer bar at Beer on the Wye XIII

- For those camping in the Festival Village next door, there will be priority re-admission to the festival at busier times. (camping already comes with 24-hour access to proper toilets and showers, plus a hot breakfast service from 9am)
- Finally, the World Beer Bar this year is being sponsored by the *Hereford Beer House* and will feature a much more diverse and interesting selection of foreign beers, including a number on draught.

As usual there'll be over 24,000 pints of beer, cider and perry to sample - all accompanied by nine musical acts and plenty of hot and cold food (including vegetarian options). On the Sunday is *Family Fun Day* with entertainment for all; £1 admission (kids free), and 60p off a pint. It all promises to be quite a party!

If you want to know more about *Beer on the Wye*, then go to www.beeronthewye.org.uk and nearer the time have a look at our *Beer on the Wye* Facebook page.

MAD TAX 3

The third in a series of Hopvine articles highlights the impact Business Rates increases are already having on our pubs.

After a significant downturn in pub closures in recent years, it can now be reported that the numbers closing each month have now increased – and many of those closures are being attributed to recent increases in Business Rates.

The *Hopvine* has previously reported how many pubs across Herefordshire (both in town and country) are facing up to the prospect of increases in their Business Rates bills - some of which aren't small. Even some of our most rural pub businesses are facing hefty four-figure increases, extra money they are going to struggle to find. At the very least it is going to mean increases in prices at the bar, at worst we are going to see valued pubs closing.

In an article in the trade newspaper, the *Morning Advertiser*, the Chief Executive of the industry body, the *Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers* (ALMR), has gone on record to state her concerns. Kate Nicholls is quoted as saying: "A number of recently-closed venues I spoke to confirmed that increases in Business Rates played a part in their closure. And she concludes by saying: "If the government does not

do something to fix the broken rates system, more businesses will close their doors."

Further, in the same *Morning Advertiser* article, rent and rates specialists, CVS, stated there would be a tsunami of pub closures if the promised rates relief scheme was not extended.

To their credit, it needs to be acknowledged the government is providing rates relief of £1,000 a year to those pubs facing this tax hike, which is obviously very welcome. However, CAMRA believes this figure should be higher – up to £5,000 per annum. Moreover, of equal concern, is that this relief is only a short term measure, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirming its further extension for twelve months at the autumn budget.

This relief affords pubs some breathing space, but for those pubs who operate on very tight margins (especially more rural pubs) it is an absolute lifeline – without it many of them might close. CAMRA is keen to highlight the fact the current rates relief on offer is only an interim measure and, therefore, it represents a mere sticking plaster – just delaying the inevitable. Like a rates version of the Sword of Damocles, these increases-in-waiting cast a long shadow over pub businesses, and when the relief is finally removed it will be time to face the taxation music. This has the potential to wreak havoc with pubs in town and country the length and breadth of the county.

To the average pub-goer this is a largely invisible problem. Yet, the current situation is a ticking tax time-bomb, and probably represents the largest existential threat faced by many of our pubs. If it is not addressed, then ultimately we will see the loss of many pubs with real harm inflicted on those communities that rely so much on them. CAMRA and others in the industry continue to fight for a fairer and more proportionate system of Business Rates for our pubs, but is anybody really listening?

LET'S BUY OUR LOCAL! ORLETON ACTS TO OWN ITS OWN BOOT

Fears about the future of one of Herefordshire's more charming and popular village inns has stirred a community to direct action

It was in July last year that Orleton's Boot Inn suddenly closed. Since then, the distinguished and historic Grade II-listed, two-bar village inn has remained shut. Further, the owner has recently placed the pub business into voluntary liquidation. There is now a real fear the liquidators may seek planning permission to convert the pub into a house and/or develop the pub's land in an effort to maximise its value. This prospect has galvanised the local community to positive action.

The Boot Inn is currently on the licensed property market with local agents, *Sidney Phillips*. This represents a golden opportunity for the local community to make a bid for, and take control of the 17th Century pub. With a current asking price of £550,000 freehold, it certainly won't come cheap - especially as the owner has gone on record to claim that extensive repairs are needed to the premises. And then there's

the issue of the dealing with the liquidators, who have been appointed by the owner - who is also believed to be the majority (voting) creditor. That's going to prove interesting.

No doubt difficult times lie ahead, but all is not lost – not by a long stretch. Orleton Parish Council have already stated they will vigorously resist any threat to the pub, and are reassured that there are serious bids coming from private buyers looking to buy it as a pub. However, a group in the local community have now grasped the nettle and, at a packed public meeting in the village on the 19th February, announced that a co-operative company was shortly to be incorporated with the aim being to buy the pub.

Boot Inn Limited

In a presentation to the meeting, it was explained to those present that the aim of *The Community (Boot Inn) Limited* is to raise capital



Seeing the pub despite the trees...Orleton's Boot Inn in happier times

(via the selling of community shares) to fund the purchase and refurbishment of the Boot Inn. It would then be run as a not-for-profit operation for the benefit of the community, once a tenant licensee had been appointed.

This proposal isn't as crazy as it might seem. It's a model of community ownership that has been applied successfully elsewhere around the UK, with around 80 pubs having already gone down this exact same route. Numerous pledges of money have already been received, and they have now issued a full Share Prospectus (see the advert on the inside front page for full details).

What will give locals and potential investors confidence with this particular enterprise, is that the majority of those other community-owned pubs - prior to their acquisition - were far more marginal operations than the Boot Inn. In comparison, the Boot is in an entirely different class: it's an outstanding country pub in a thriving and vibrant village, and one with a long history of trading satisfactorily. It really ought to be a no-brainer. And it's further reassuring that not one community-owned pub has yet failed.

Herefordshire's first Co-operative Pub?

Herefordshire CAMRA is getting fully behind this initiative, as is the *Plunkett Foundation* (a charity that specialises in working with community-funded enterprises). If this exciting venture is successful, then it will be Herefordshire's first co-operative-owned and run pub, but (strictly speaking) will be the second community-owned pub. (The Crown Inn at Dilwyn was the first, when it was bought by the parish council in May 2012).

Your chance to own a Pub

If you fancy a cut of the action, or just want to know more about the community's plans for the Boot Inn, then do have a look at their Share Prospectus. One of the fun aspects of owning shares is that you can tell your friends and family that you own a pub (well, sort of), and shares can be a great Christmas gift too! To find out more, including contact details and how to obtain the Share Prospectus, go to:

www.thecommunitybootinn.co.uk

The Tram Inn, Eardisley



Traditional Country Freehouse
Real Ales - Home Cooked Meals
Lovely Family Garden

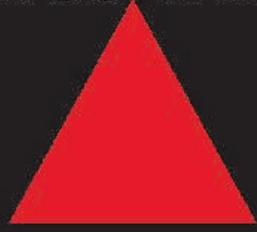
Herefordshire CAMRA 'Pub of the Season- Summer 2012'
Good Beer Guide 2017

The Tram Inn
Eardisley
Hereford
HR3 6PG



www.thetraminn.co.uk - info@thetraminn.co.uk

The DOG
HANGS WELL



Bass

14 Corve Street, Ludlow, SY8 1DA
www.doghousemagazine.co.uk/pub

Thursday through to Saturday
5pm til 9pm

OPEN WHEN THE LAMP IS LIT

IT'S NO LUCKY DIP

Selecting pubs in Herefordshire for CAMRA's flagship Good Beer Guide each year is a serious undertaking that requires rigour, transparency and fairness - especially as there are always more deserving pubs than there are slots available.

At the end of each February, Herefordshire CAMRA completes a list of the county's pubs that will feature in the next edition of the *Good Beer Guide*. As this edition of the *Hopvine* goes to press, we are feverishly concluding this process for the 2019 edition - which will hit the nation's bookshelves this September.

The question is often posed as to how pubs are selected for inclusion in the country's number one independent pub guide. Unlike some other so-called pub guides, no money changes hands nor is it a random or secret process. There are no lucky draws, pins in maps, or hush-hush discussions in smoke-filled rooms (the latter obviously being impossible following the smoking ban). Rest assured pubs are selected by CAMRA members on merit alone.

So, how does the selection process work? It starts on the very first day after the list is sent to CAMRA HQ for the previous year's guide. Therefore, there are 365 days of data being collected by CAMRA members covering every single pub in the county – most of it anonymously. Those members feed into something called the *National Beer Scoring System* (NBSS), giving numerical scores for the various beers they drink in the pubs they visit. These results – and there are thousands of them for Herefordshire alone – are then fed into a computer database, which gives every pub an average score. In the final analysis, the pubs with the highest average score are going to cross the threshold. The final list is then compiled and confirmed at an advertised open meeting, which this February was held at the Sun Inn at Leintwardine. The process then starts all over again...

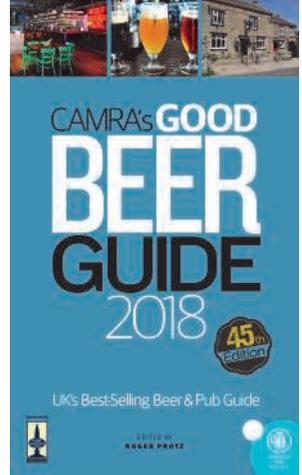
This selection system has a number of advantages and built-in safeguards:

- It puts a fair and transparent methodology for *Good Beer Guide* selection in place. By scoring pubs using a common and understood national system ensures pubs are ranked fairly in relation to each other. It provides a more

level playing field and takes the mystery out of the selection process.

- Data on pub beer quality is being collated potentially every day of the year, thus ensuring those pubs that are ultimately selected are up to the standard across all four seasons. Pubs have to sell *consistently* good beer to be worthy of an entry, and they can be successful irrespective of the number of beers they sell. Just because a pub might sell six or seven beers doesn't guarantee success.
- Nor is it just restricted to Herefordshire CAMRA members to score using the NBSS system. Any one of CAMRA's 190,000 members can score any pub's beer(s) anywhere in the UK. This means that we get scores for Herefordshire pubs from members who live outside the county. Besides adding to the mass of data, these visiting scores further reinforce the objectivity of the process, and further ensure remoter pubs (and those on or near the county boundary) always get a fair crack of the whip.
- To prevent manipulation of the system (either by individuals or groups) there is a minimum threshold of the number of individual scores (and members' visits) that a successful pub needs to achieve. Also avoided, is the risk of vested interests turning up mob-handed at a meeting with their aim being to 'bounce' a favoured pub into the guide, regardless of its merits. If a pub doesn't have a high enough average score, then it won't be going in the *Good Beer Guide*. It really is as simple as that.

However, there are some issues to face. One is that Herefordshire doesn't have enough slots in the *Good Beer Guide* for all the pubs we would



like to put forward. We have to select 26 each year, not a single pub more. This has been the case for more than a decade now, and it's getting harder – as new pubs open and others discover good beer and are raising their game. Put in a nutshell, there are pubs in Herefordshire that would normally deserve to go in the *Good Beer Guide*, but owing to the limitation on the number entries, they don't get in. Moreover, we consequently get a small 'churn' of pubs from year to year, owing to the closeness of scores the system can produce. In effect, every pub enters a 'beauty contest' from the outset for each year's guide. A pub already being listed gives them no advantage for the following year – their score card goes back to zero. The results may be scrupulously fair, but show absolutely no sentiment when it comes to naming the winners and losers. It's a brutal process if you're the publican that misses out.

This lack of slots is very frustrating for us, let alone how it must be for the licensees who miss out - and is unlikely to be an issue restricted to Herefordshire. There have been a number of efforts to increase the number of pubs featured in the *Good Beer Guide* over time. However, notwithstanding the fact that the book is already at the production limit in terms of its number of pages, a pro-rata increase (along with every other CAMRA branch) wouldn't be sufficient – we need a *substantial* increase in slots for Herefordshire, and that could be viewed -perhaps understandably - as opening Pandora's Box by those who already work so hard each year to compile and publish the guide.

However, all is not lost for those pubs that just miss the cut. Previously, we published three best-selling and award-winning county pub guides. *Herefordshire Pubs* was a guide to every pub in Herefordshire, where the better pubs (and not just those that featured in the *Good Beer Guide*) were given expanded entries, many with photos. Since then the digital world has come upon us, so we now have the excellent and comprehensive 'What Pub' website, where every pub in Herefordshire (and the UK, for that matter) gets a write-up and a photo. If you haven't visited the 'What Pub' website yet, then the address is

set out at the end of this article. And, of course, there is the *Hopvine* magazine and the *Beer on the Wye* Facebook page - both of which actively promote local pubs to thousands of people around the county and beyond.

The *Good Beer Guide* is not only the elder statesmen of pub guides, but is also the best (we would say that). Its strengths are that it is scrupulously independent and thorough in its selection of pubs, such that the pub-goer can be confident that they're being directed to a good pub. However, as the British beer revolution moves on apace, and more pubs sell better beer, then thought needs to be made to reviewing what the future shape of the guide should be. It certainly gives you the best pubs for beer, but wouldn't it be better still if it could give you even more? That's the challenge.

Web addresses: <https://whatpub.com>
www.facebook.com/BeerOnTheWye

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COURTYARD
 HEREFORDSHIRE PUBS

LAMB SURVIVES ANOTHER CLOSE SHAVE

The Lamb Inn at Stoke Prior survives an attempt to convert it into a private house, this less than twelve months after an earlier planning application for a house in the garden was refused.

In January 2017, Herefordshire CAMRA rallied behind the locals of Stoke Prior by objecting to a planning application submitted by the owners of the Lamb Inn, that would have seen a house built on the pub's garden. On that occasion, it was CAMRA's view that the owners had been poorly advised by a business consultant they had engaged, who recommended they sell off the garden as a development plot to provide a financial 'get out of jail' card for their struggling pub business.



Lamb Inn - with wall and ornamental gates as optional extras

Herefordshire CAMRA argued this was unlikely to do the pub (or their business) any good in the long term. The loss of its garden would reduce the pub's future trading potential, and any monies realised would just be a one-off windfall that would in all likelihood be swallowed up by what was, by their own admission, now an unviable business. For the owners it would have likely been no more than a stay of execution, but for the Lamb Inn it would have been the first of a thousand cuts, and possibly the end after that. That application was eventually refused by Herefordshire Council planners on the 3rd March 2017.

Consultants Mark II

Not twelve months later, on the 16th January this year, came forth a fresh planning application. And this time the stakes were much higher: the new proposal was to convert the Lamb Inn into a private dwelling. And, again, were the finger prints of a (different) third party on the application. This time the owners had engaged the services of a 'change of use' consultant. He provided a thirty-eight page glossy document to accompany the application that sought to justify the proposal. There was a lot to read, but once the almost comedic inaccura-

cies in the cut-and-paste report were ignored (it certainly suffered due to a lack of local knowledge), and it was acknowledged that the current owners' business was no longer viable, then it only left the elephant in the bar-room to consider. The fatal flaw in the argument presented was that no effort had been made to market the Lamb Inn for sale as a pub business before considering its conversion to an alternative use. It's been written in these pages too many times before that local and national planning policies raise that expectation: a case of change of owner coming before change of use. The application was subsequently declined by Herefordshire Council planners on the 16th February.

There were over 70 objections lodged with this application, and the comments in many of those objection letters tell a sorry story. Sadly, the owners have clearly lost the confidence of the vast majority of the community in which they live and, until recently, traded. That's always going to be a killer when you're running *the* village pub, and this comes after they had such a bright and positive start back in December 2014. In fact, at the time they took the helm CAMRA were only too happy to oblige with a

full picture feature in the *Hopvine* supporting their new venture. It all looked to be heading the right way.

However, it turned sour all too quickly. Looking back, the owners missed an opportunity by choosing to disregard the responses from a survey of the local community, which sought views on what the community wanted from their local pub. The consultant's report stated that the owners' business plan was not designed to accommodate what the residents - i.e. their customers - wanted. This is very telling. Isn't there an old adage that you should always listen to your customers? Perhaps, they might have done better to employ the villagers as consultants instead?

Town versus Country

Although the owners arrived with experience of running a pub, it was a town pub they had previously run. In contrast, running a village pub is an entirely different proposition - it requires certain skills and it's a hard fact of life that not everyone is so equipped with those skills. You have to work damn hard to get people through the doors. However, this said, it's never nice to see

a licensed business fail – it's someone's livelihood after all - and there is little doubt they were sincere in their intention to make a go of the place. They should also be commended for refurbishing the pub throughout to a very high standard. But it's now time for them to pass on the baton to someone else.

Where does this leave things? Currently the pub is closed and the barricades have gone up, with a newly-erected wall and gates resplendent across the front of the pub's car park (see *photo opposite*). Such a gesture might be a way to stick two fingers up to the local community, but it's not going to solve the situation in the longer term. Stoke Prior wants its pub open, and plans are being already being actively developed to buy it on behalf of the local community. However, there is the minor material fact that it's not currently for sale. It might be a while yet before it does get put on the licensed property market, and the owners might yet choose to take the refusal decision to appeal. Regardless, CAMRA is happy to continue to support the community with any action they deem necessary to see the Lamb Inn open and trading once more.



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OXFORD BREWS

A walk (and drink) in the hallowed footsteps of past Prime Ministers, Nobel laureates and great writers awaits in the city of dreaming spires.

It was the poet Matthew Arnold who, in 1865, famously described Oxford as the City of Dreaming Spires. It's not recorded by scholars as to whether or not he regularly enjoyed a pint down his local, so it is left to others to give the city's pubs the once over. Thus, on a pleasant Saturday in mid-February, Herefordshire CAMRA jumped aboard a train at Hereford station.

To get to Oxford from Hereford and Ledbury required a change of trains - either at Great Malvern or Worcester. Some elected to change at Worcester and enjoyed a Titanic Black Star IPA at a naughty 7.5% ABV in The Postal Order (the JD Wetherspoon pub a short walk from Foregate Street station). Meanwhile, in contrast, those who changed at Great Malvern instead, enjoyed a white coffee at a more moderate 0.013% CBV (Caffeine by Volume) in Lady Foley's Tea Rooms, which are conveniently located on the station.

Arriving on time and in milky sunshine, our party were greeted at Oxford station by a statue of a bull. Perhaps they knew we were coming from Hereford? How nice of them to lay on a reception! With its historic university colleges, world-famous museums and striking Cotswold stone architecture, the city's students have to fight for space amongst the multitude of camera-toting tourists. And then there are the locals, for underlying a veneer of history, privilege and beauty is the beating heart of a



A bovine greeting awaited in Oxford

workaday city - one with many contrasts, which throw up their own social tensions. Not every street is home to pipe-smoking academics and partying undergraduates, there are poorer areas too. It would be interesting to see how this 'town versus gown' dynamic played out in the city's pubs.

Marmalade AWOL

First on the list was the **Jam Factory** on Park Street. Just a short walk from the station, this modern, post-industrial bar was once the home of Frank Cooper's Oxford Marmalade. Sadly, like too many other British culinary icons, its production in Oxford ceased in 1967. Despite it retaining the name 'Oxford' in its title, it now doubtless harks from an anonymous industrial estate in eastern Poland. However, it wasn't just the marmalade that had gone



The Royal Blenheim, complete with joss stick, ten hand-pumps...and great value for money

AWOL. The real beer had too! Not a drop to be had. A surprising situation considering the weekend had still some way to run. We didn't hang around.

Moving on past the city's ruined castle towards its commercial centre, there was much speculation as to whether the Jam Factory sub-contracts its beer-ordering to a local chickenless *Kentucky Fried Chicken* franchise, before the now very thirsty group arrived at the threshold of the **Royal Blenheim**

on the corner of Pembroke and St. Ebbe's Streets. A Victorian pub hidden away to one side the Westgate Shopping Centre, this place had everything the Jam Factory didn't – i.e. beer! There were ten handpumps offering nine beers and a cider – five of them (including a mild) were from the local White Horse Brewery, who also run the pub. It was to prove to be the biggest single beer selection of the day.

Consisting of a large bar area with a snug off to one side at the rear, it has timber floors, much original wood panelling and alcove seating, along with walls all adorned with photos and rowing memorabilia. It even advertised a weekly cheese raffle. More incongruous than that, was a smoking joss stick protruding from the wall next to a photo of the Pembroke College Women's Eights boat crew. Unexpected too, were the prices charged for the beer and food. There had been a collective dread on the train coming down that Oxford's pubs were going to maul our wallets like a Rottweiler on steroids, thus we had all arranged mortgages beforehand. However, this place absolutely confounded those expectations – it was excellent value. In fact, the pub claims to be the second cheapest in the city (after Wetherspoons), with food (such as fish and chips) coming in comfortably under £10.



Inside, the Royal Blenheim offered the most beers - and a cheese raffle too!



St.Aldate's Tavern, with its ornate and interesting frontage, but with some weird goings-on upstairs

stairs, where our arrival seriously surprised a pre-booked party whose attire equally surprised us. In sight was a fully-costumed ensemble that might best be described as a cross between the Freemasons and the cast of a Gilbert & Sullivan operetta. Or perhaps the Bullingdon Club were holding their annual fancy dress reception?

Honest Sepp

One beer that warranted particular mention at the Royal Blenheim was Sepp Ratter. At 4.2% ABV and brewed by the Rat Brewery in Huddersfield, it is named in honour of the scrupulously honest ex-FIFA President, Sepp Blatter. A hoppy, golden ale, with a slightly sweet finish, a generous addition of Mosaic and Wakatu hops makes for a well-rounded and delicious pint. It was a good opening salvo.

Now fed and watered (and, remarkably, still financially solvent), we moved along to the **St. Aldates Tavern**. Located opposite the Oxford Museum - where the city's last sub-£3 pint was proudly on display in the foyer - it's a very different pub to the last in terms of interior, clientele and (especially) prices. A narrow bar stretches far back from the busy street outside, with fine original windows set to the front and parquet floors and timberwork inside, all ably confirming its pedigree and long history. With a buzzing city crowd in (waiting for rugby to start on large-screen TVs) it seemed sensible to make for the advertised 'Blue Room' up-



Rolling down our trouser legs and promptly returning downstairs to the real world, it was noticeable the blackboard behind the bar advertising the beers needed updating. But, as if to atone, the selection of five ales could by no means be described as humdrum with Shotover, Butts, XT and Wild Weather breweries featuring alongside a stout from Hook Norton. One of the party opted for the Butts Organic Jester, but was underwhelmed, describing the beer as like mineral water with melon added, but with the excitement extracted. More successful was Wild Weather's Colour of Desire, a 5.6% ABV naturally hazy Oatmeal Pale, with American hops to give a fruity flavour to balance nicely with its fullness of body. Like many other strong beers at the top of their class, its flavour cleverly not betraying its considerable ABV.

Oxford's Pub Movement

Bear-ly believable - the Bear Inn seems to have changed places at least once since 1242.

diminutive **Bear Inn**. Squeezing into the absurdly small three-bar corner pub, it was difficult to get to the bar at first, but we persevered. In residence were a mix of students dining with well-to-do parents, confused tourists and college dons wrestling with their cryptic crosswords. This pub is a little treasure: with straight edges definitely banned and low ceilings in good measure, and onto its wood-panelled walls are affixed a unique and extensive collection of ties – there must be thousands of them, all mounted and carefully labelled in numerous illuminated glass cabinets.

It was now a short scurry along the delightfully narrow and cobbled Blue Boar Lane to stumble across the

On an A-board outside is made the claim as to it being the oldest pub in Oxford, dating back to 1242, but there is a problem with this. It seems almost churlish to point out that an older pub of the exact same name was once in a different place, albeit nearby. With no wheels, castors or rails visible beneath the pub building, it wasn't possible to ascertain how it had managed to move to where it is today – telekinesis perhaps, or maybe plate tectonics was responsible? Otherwise, the mainstream beer offering on the bar from Fullers was eschewed in favour of a solitary beer from the local Shotover Brewery. Their Prospect at 3.7% ABV is a dark amber-coloured beer with little discernible hop flavour or aroma. The conclusion was that the pub is a lot more interesting than its beer.



It's very much 'Old school tie' at the Bear Inn



Next up was a long trek away from the dreaming spires. Crossing Magdalen (pronounced 'Mawdlin') Bridge, we trudged eastwards into the Iffley suburb of the city. En route was the university's Iffley Road Athletics Stadium, where on the night of the 6th May 1954, a 25-year old medical student called Roger Bannister famously became the first person to run the mile in under four minutes. On that special night pandemonium broke out, but on the day of our passing all there was to witness was faint tinny music emanating from a small jerry-built spectators' stand. The party wasn't quite moving at the pace of Sir Roger on that day, so it was a good 20 minutes later

by the time we landed at the **Chester** on (surprise, surprise) Chester Street.

Once called the Chester Arms, this fine, brick-built late Victorian pub is a trendy reinvention of what a decade ago would have been a typical backstreet pub. Now opened out into a large 'L' shape bar area with an open kitchen, it has stripped timber floors, wood-burner, fashionable refectory-style seating, and bare-bricked intervals amongst its powder-blue painted walls. An interesting feature in one corner is the so-called 'beer shop' from where you can buy bottles and tins of beer to take-away. In an area of Oxford that has undoubtedly been gentrified over the years, the pub looks to have a loyal following from a community of aspiring professionals who live in the many terraced houses that fill the adjacent streets. There was an extensive and interesting range of both real beers and keg craft on offer. The three cask ales were from North Cotswold, Loose Cannon and Abingdon Bridge breweries.



The Chester - a trendy re-invention of the backstreet boozier, reflecting the changing face of suburban Oxford



Talking Shop: in the background is the Chester's wall-mounted 'Beer Shop'

something very much from the old school. The beer of choice was Hoperation from Arkells, but unlike its name suggests it wasn't especially hoppy, with it being a light, balanced beer, but with too little in terms of distinctive flavours and aroma. More hops needed!

Suicide sheepdog

There was another pub in Iffley that caught our eye at the planning stage for this trip, but we decided there wasn't quite room in our beertastic schedule to squeeze it in. The **Isis Farmhouse** conjures up fascinating

With such an eclectic selection of beers to choose from, and with the weather now growing ever more threatening, it was a strain to press on to the **Rusty Bicycle** on Iffley's Magdalen Road. The pub's name suggested this was likely to be another trendy reinvented pub, but one with a very conventional twist, and one markedly different from the last. Until 2009, it was the Eagle Tavern, and from the outside this is unmistakably an inter-war suburban pub not dissimilar to hundreds of others that have long since closed. However, even with its hipster credentials much to the fore (retro-lighting, stripped wood furniture etc) it still has a strong feeling of a community pub serving its local community, albeit one today made up of mainly professionals and students. There were six handpumps and a further seven craft keg fonts, with five of the handpumps dispensing different Arkells Beers – some-



The Rusty Bicycle - not your typical Arkells pub



thoughts of Oxford's first and only Jihadist pub. However, visions of staff brandishing Kalashnikovs and Border Collie sheepdogs attired in suicide vests patrolling the pub garden, were soon banished from our minds when it was learned that Isis is the name for the River Thames in Oxford.

Oxford's Turf Tavern with tourists in the foreground, inside and behind back over Magdalen Bridge to get back in and at those dreaming spires. The eighteenth-century **Turf Tavern** is one of the most famous pubs in Oxford, if not *the* most famous, which is surprising as it's a devil of a place to find. It's secreted away down a small alleyway off Holywell Street, charmingly sandwiched between Hertford and New Colleges and only a stone's throw from the majestic Bodleian Library - it even has an extant section of the old city wall running along one boundary. However, it is the quaint and multi-roomed pub's inclusion in virtually every tourist guide on this Earth that brings in the tourists, many tourists...too many tourists. This inevitably brings with it the risk that the place doesn't need to try too hard, which it doesn't, judging by a memorably forgettable beer offer (and its inability to serve a cup of coffee). If it were needed, its tourist credentials are absolutely nailed by blackboards outside the pub boasting it was a location in Harry Potter films, Morse TV film shoots, and that various world luminaries (doubtless during their misguided youth) drank too much, too often on the premises. Frankly, it was surprising the likes of Bill Clinton et al ever got past the tourists to even order their drinks at the bar. It is a most distinguished pub, but one better visited on a quieter day. It was time for a beer somewhere else.

It was time to cross



Narnia, Middle Earth and some Muzac

Owned by St.John's College, the **Eagle & Child** is located on one side of the amazingly wide thoroughfare that is St.Giles and, rather bizarrely, is nicknamed the Bird & Baby. The place can lay claim to having had the likes of C.S.Lewis, J.R.R.Tolkien and Colin Dexter (of Morse fame) as locals. The former two used to meet here for lunch in the 1950s, until the room they used was 'improved' out of existence and they took their trade - along with Narnia, Aslan the Lion and Middle Earth with them elsewhere. However, despite this, there is still something of interest to see: towards the front are two superb small snugs, built of timber either side of an entrance passageway, that are probably as they were in 1684, when the place was recorded as being a 'beer house'. However, to the rear is more depressingly modern and functional with intrusive muzac. It might well have been an historic beer house once, but with it now being leased to Young's, there was little on the bar to excite the visiting drinker. Although they could run to a coffee, a pint of Timothy Taylor's Landlord was by far the best of an indifferent selection of three. Maybe it was just a bad day?

Through the wardrobe were three beers from the Youngs range and irritating muzac

Diametrically opposite the Eagle & Child was the last call of the day. Also on St.Giles, and also owned by St.John's College, is the **Lamb & Flag**. The pub can't boast the history and lineage of the Eagle & Child, but it still has a history and much character, even if it has been opened-out. It comes in three parts: to the rear is medieval in origin; the middle (with its snug off) is c.400 years old, and even the more modern front bar area is Georgian. Above the pub has been converted into student accommodation. Imagine that? Being a student and having a pub downstairs! Moreover, it was a great relief to see seven handpumps on the bar, with beers from Skinners, Palmers (including a house beer) and XT breweries featuring, alongside a handpump dispensing Theakston's Old Peculier - ideal for a nightcap at the close of a long and interesting day. Wallets systematically emptied, it was now time to head back to the station.

Scores on the College Doors

The Royal Blenheim was probably the best pub of the day, otherwise it was too difficult to call the best beer of the day. With high beer prices and too many pubs offering safe and unimaginative beers, Oxford probably shouldn't be 'top of the pops' for the beer connoisseur on their travels. However, it is doubtless a great place to visit if you enjoy superb city pubs. For the historic and fascinating treasures in the centre, it is probably wise to pick quieter times to visit (try 5am for the Turf Tavern), but there is also a new generation of pubs coming through - re-invented for a future they might not have otherwise had.



Last call of the day - the Lamb & Flag is a pub downstairs, student digs upstairs

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QUEENSWOOD COUNTRY PARK AND BODENHAM

By our Transport Correspondent

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, with help from New Leaf, has achieved much since taking on the management of Queenswood and Bodenham Lakes. Needless to say, both places are dear to the heart of many Herefordians. In the early years of the 20th century the slopes of Dinmore Hill were forested on a rotational basis, but were felled completely during the First World War. Thanks to the endeavours of the Council for the Protection of Rural England Queenswood was saved for the public in 1934 and the woods have mostly regenerated naturally except for the extensive arboretum of exotic trees which were planted in 1953 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's coronation.

Bodenham Lakes, on the other hand, are flooded gravel pits. These have been given back to nature progressively since the 1950s to the end of excavations in the 1980s. Some 40 plus years later we have an exceptional nature reserve and orchards attracting a wide range of wildlife and over wintering birds.

The moderate 5.5 mile walk starts and ends at Queenswood, but the bus services at certain times of the day enable it to begin and end in Bodenham or to be a one-way 2.75 mile walk starting from either end (although there is no early evening bus from Bodenham to Hereford).

The walk follows an old bridleway leading down to Bodenham and then returning via the Lakes and climbing up a hillside path to return to the bridleway and back. There is one climb and a few stiles on the route. The featured pub is mid-way on the walk, the England's Gate Inn at Bodenham. Dating back to the 16th century, this half-timbered inn welcomes locals and visitors alike to sample a range of beers on handpull, usually from Hobsons or Wye Valley breweries; there's always a choice. The pub interior is larger than expected with flagstone floors and original beams and you might like to sit outside this characterful hostelry on warmer days.

Sighting Tower

Start from the bus stop adjacent to the car park at Queenswood. Cross the busy A49 road with care using the refuge in the middle, and at the other side, go left to walk along the grass verge for about 80 yards. Cut right through a small gate into the wood. Keep ahead and you might see a round, stone sighting tower dating from the 1850s, erected to help the railway navvies to dig in the right direction from either end when building the first Dinmore tunnel beneath. When the tunnel was complete the tower became one of several ventilation towers in the vicinity. On reaching a junction, keep right and the track soon leaves the wood and passes Henhouse farm to the left.

Factfile

Map: Explorer 202 Leominster & Bromyard

Yeomans 426 bus starts from Hereford Shire Hall and Merton Hotel 3 mins later to Bodenham - alight at **England's Gate**
Lugg Valley 492 bus starts from Hereford Railway Station and Country Bus Station 3 mins later - alight at Queenswood Country Park.

Return departure points are close to the set-down points. Arrival times in Hereford on Saturdays differ by a few minutes from weekday times. The same services also depart from Leominster to Bodenham or Queenswood and return.

Times in *Italic* - Not Saturdays. Additional buses aimed at schools also run, but are not listed here. Use www.traveline.info to verify times

Hereford	0845	0915	0945	1045	1145	1200	1245	1330	1345	1445	1545	1645	1805						
Bodenham						1237		1407											1837
Queenswood	0915	<i>0949</i>	1019	1119	1219		1315		1419	1515	1626	1726	1840						
Leominster	<i>0927</i>	<i>1000</i>	1030	1127	1230		1327		1430	1535	1640	1740	1855	1908					
Leominster	<i>0815</i>	0900	1000	1100		1200		1300	1400	1500	1600	1715							
Queenswood	<i>0826</i>	0911	1011	1111		1211		1311	1411	1511	1611	1726							
Bodenham					1113		1243												
Hereford	<i>0856</i>	0940	1040	1138	1153	1240	1323	1338	1440	1538	1640	1755							

The Pub

The England's Gate Inn is open all day and serves lunches. Check details with What Pub. **There's a café and shop** at Queenswood open daily.

Hampton Court

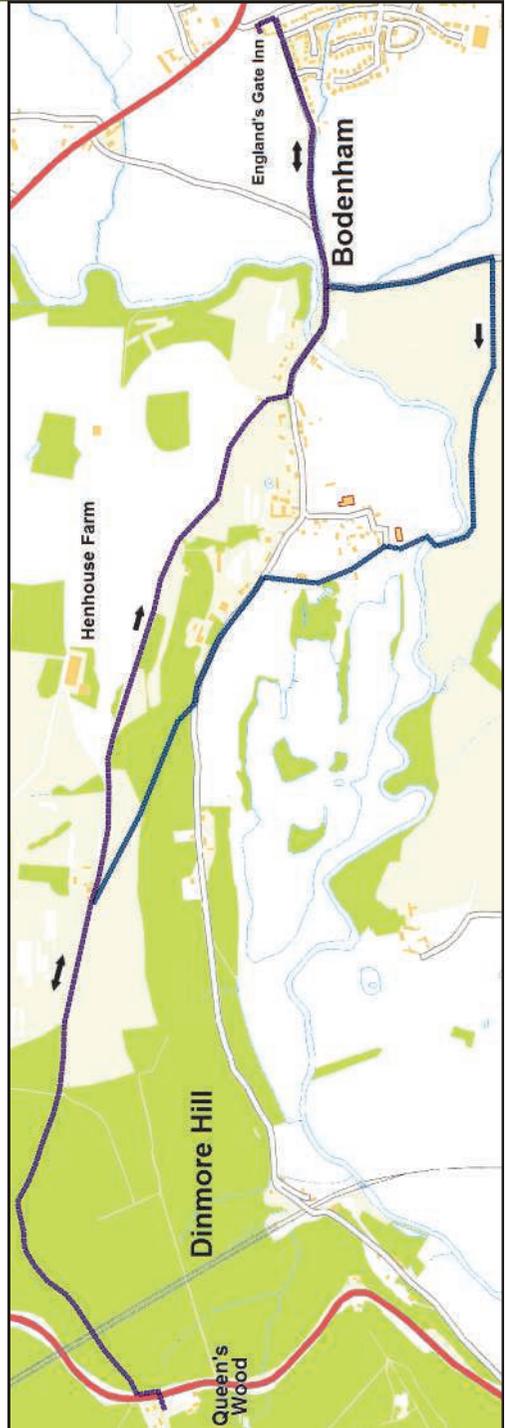
Proceed through a small gate by a cattle grid and walk alongside a row of young oak trees. You will see Hampton Court below in the Lugg Valley. As the track bears left keep ahead, through an old metal gate and alongside a wood at first, then over a field to pass through a field gate. Continue ahead along the field's edge to a third gate and descend now between tall hedges to yet another gate in a sunken green lane, and then the track bends right and slightly left to the bottom corner of the field. Go through a gate and ahead along a tree lined track to join a lane by a house. Turn right and then at the next junction go left to pass through the village of Bodenham.

Bodenham

Follow this road, Millcroft Lane, ahead for approximately half a mile to the England's Gate Inn for refreshment. Now retrace your steps along Millcroft Lane to the first turning on the left. Go left along it until you come to a cross path. Go right through a kissing gate here and head slightly right across a large field to climb a stile beneath an oak tree. Go ahead again and cross another stile following the River Lugg around to a footbridge. Proceed over it towards Bodenham Church which has a number of medieval features of interest including an effigy of a woman and child.

However, once over the bridge, go left on a path with the Lugg now to your left. Enter Bodenham Lakes Nature Reserve through a gate and then keep right to walk up by buildings to a car park. Leave the reserve along an entrance drive up to a lane. Go left and continue ahead until you reach a turning on the right. Just beyond, go right at the footpath sign on a narrow path which climbs fairly steeply at first up to a cross track. Keep left for 20 paces, and then go right up steps. The path rises up to a stile to exit into a field. Pass to the right of a round spinney and cut left to join the track you walked on the outward leg.

The track passes the farm and rises to the wood, Church Coppice, where you keep slightly right at the first junction and left at the next one, making your way back to the A49 and Queenswood. On reflection, this is a walk which shows off the work of the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and with an opportunity to call into a long-standing pub to boot. What could be better?



HOWZAT! CRICKETERS BEST IN THE UK

A Merseyside pub saved from closure has been named the best in the country

The Cricketers Arms in St Helens has won the prestigious Pub of the Year title from CAMRA, just five years after it was boarded-up and closed.

When owners Andy and Denise Evans took over the running of the pub in 2013, it hadn't served cask ale since the 1980s. The Cricketers Arms is now a well-established local community pub with an excellent selection of thirteen (yes, thirteen) locally-sourced ales, and up to 20 ciders in the summer. That's not bad for a pub that was once not viable!

Plans are already in the making for a microbrewery to open in the next few months, and customers of the pub are to be tasked with naming the new brewery's beers. Visitors can also take part in a number of social nights including regular beer festivals, dominoes, jam nights, pub quizzes, karaoke and pool teams, as well as enjoy a new whisky and gin bar.

The Cricketers Arms regularly wins local CAMRA awards, but this is the first time it has won a national title. Paul Ainsworth, CAMRA's National Pub of the Year Co-ordinator said: "After winning the regional award in both 2015 and 2016, it's a well deserved third time lucky.

"In less than five years, Andy and Denise have transformed a closed pub into a true destination for beer lovers across the country. What impressed me the most is that the Cricketers is a genuine community pub, where people from all walks of life come together to socialise. It is a shining example of how a pub, which seems destined for closure, can have its fortunes turned around when in the right hands."

Co-owner and licensee Andy Evans added: "We are over the moon to be named the top pub in the country after just a few short years of renovations. We've done everything we can to make this a welcoming community pub and still have exciting developments ahead of us. As well as expanding the beers available, we created a beer garden and put greens in the ground, and have big plans to install a microbrewery this year. We are very proud to be part of the cask ale scene and look forward to celebrating with our locals!"

Runners-up in the competition include the Wigan Central in Wigan, the Stanford Arms in Lowestoft and the Weavers Real Ale House in Kidderminster. Pubs in the competition are selected by CAMRA volunteers and judged on their atmosphere, decor, welcome, service, community focus and most importantly of all - the quality of the beer (and cider).

Cricketers Arms, Peter Street, St Helens, WA10 2EB Tel: (01744) 361846 Opening times: 12-11 Mon-Thu; 12-1am Fri & Sat; 12-11 Sun. Nearest station St. Helens Central (¾ mile walk); by road take M6 to J23 or M62 to J7.



Almost as many flowers as beers in residence at the Cricketers

LOCAL BEER FESTIVALS

Wednesday 14th to Sunday 25th March. **Wetherspoon Spring Festival.** Kings Fee, Hereford; **Duke's Head,** Leominster; Mail Rooms, Ross-on-Wye. Up to 30 beers spread over 12 days, including beers brewed in the UK by overseas brewers, plus 5 ciders.

Friday 30th March to Sunday 1st April. **Beer & Music Festival 2018.** Gordon Bennetts, 8 St Peters Street, Hereford. Tel (01432) 360250

Saturday 5th to Sunday 6th May. **Rossbeerfest,** Ross Rowing, Club HR9 7DD. Sat 12-11; Sun 12-10. www.rossbeerfest.org

Friday 11th to Sunday 13th May. **Ludlow Castle.** SIBA Wales and West Beer Competition bar open to public from 5pm Friday. Over 250 beers and "meet the brewer" Continues Sat/Sun as Ludlow Spring Festival.

Herefordshire CAMRA

What's On

Branch Meetings

Wednesday 28th March, 8pm: The Red Lion, Stiffords Bridge. An opportunity to visit this re-opened and revitalised pub. This meeting kicks-off the 2018 *Pub of the Year* process..

Wednesday 25th April, 8pm: The Black Swan Inn, Much Dewchurch, Continue 2018 *Pub of the Year* process at Herefordshire's current *Pub of the Year* runner-up. Also hear feedback on the Revitalisation Project following the CAMRA AGM in Coventry the weekend previous.

Wednesday 30th May, 8pm: The Black Lion, Bridge Street, Hereford. Now under new ownership, a chance to see what's happening. at this historic venue. Nominations will be taken for *Pub of the Year* in Hereford.

Beer on the Wye Festival Meeting

Monday 9th April: 8.00pm at the Barrels, St Owen Street, Hereford. Come along and join the team as we set out on planning an even better Beer on the Wye for next year. Help required in all areas!

Social Events

Saturday 24th March: Leominster Medieval Pageant. Leominster Priory. 10-4.30 free admission. Meet from 11am. Contact on the day 07500 557010

Friday 30th March: Good Friday in Kington. Book in advance for daytime guided walk + forest beer bar! (see also page 15) Later at 4.00pm, at the Olde Tavern, Victoria Street for Spring *Pub of the Season* presentation. All welcome.

Friday 13th April: Friday the 13th is 'Nightmare in Ludlow'. An evening trip by train to the town's pubs (inc the micro-pubs). Meet at Hereford station at 1730 for 1753 train.

Saturday 12th May: Trip to Sheffield by train to present BotW Champion Beer certificate to Abbeydale Brewery + visit around Steel City pubs. Train: 0839 from Hereford; return from Sheffield 1755 or 1940. Book early for cheap advance fares. Please notify Social Sec if coming, as numbers limited at brewery.

Contact Social Secretary, Mark Haslam for details and booking. See page 39 for details. Updates on:

www.herefordcamra.org.uk/diary.

If you know of any event that might be of interest please contact the editorial team (details on page 35). Deadline for next issue May 11th 2018

CAMRA BEER AND CIDER FESTIVALS

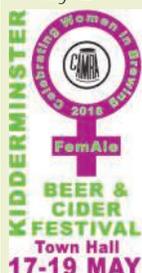
Thursday 26th to Saturday 28th April Stourbridge Beer Festival, Stourbridge Town Hall (10 min walk from Stourbridge Town Station) Preview Wed 7-10 CAMRA members only (non-members may join); Thu 7-11; Fri 12-11; Sat 12-9. Entry £2, www.stourbridgebeerfest.org.uk

Friday 27th to Saturday 28th April 6th CAMRA Gloucester Beer Festival: Blackfriars, Ladybellegate Street, GL1 2HN: 11.30-11 each day. Entry £6 to include glass.

Friday 4th to Monday 7th May Llandod Ale Trail & Cider Nouveau Festival. Four venues in Llandrindod Wells (Arvon Ale House, Con. Club, Llanerch Inn, Middleton Arms). Total 41 ales, 36 ciders & perries.

Thursday 17th to Saturday 19th May Kidderminster Beer & Cider Festival, Kidderminster Town Hall (10 min walk from Kidderminster Station) Thu 6-11 (4pm CAMRA members only); Fri, Sat 11-11. Entry £2, (£3 Fri eve after 5pm) CAMRA members free entry all sessions. Souvenir glass £2 (refundable).

Friday 6th to Sunday 8th July. BEER ON THE WYE See preview on page 21 - full details in Summer *Hopvine*



Join up, join in, join the campaign



You are just moments away from a year in beer heaven!

From as little as £25* today, be part of the CAMRA community and enjoy discounted entry to around 200 beer festivals, exclusive member offers and more. Discover all the ins and outs of brewing and beer with fantastic magazines and newsletters, but even more importantly support various causes and campaigns to save pubs, cut beer tax and more.

Join CAMRA today

Enter your details and complete the Direct Debit form below to get 15 months for the price of 12 for the first year and save £2 on your membership fee.

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

Your details:

Title Surname
Forename(s)
Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy)
Address
..... Postcode
Email address
Tel No(s)

	Direct Debit	Non DD
Single Membership (UK & EU)	£25 <input type="checkbox"/>	£27 <input type="checkbox"/>
Joint Membership (Partner at the same address)	£30.50 <input type="checkbox"/>	£32.50 <input type="checkbox"/>

*For information on Young Member and other concessionary rates please visit www.camra.org.uk/membership-rates or call 01727 798440.

I/we wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association these are available at camra.org.uk/memorandum

Partner's Details (if Joint Membership)

Title Surname
Forename(s)
Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy)
Joint member's Email
Joint member's Tel No

Signed
Date

Applications will be processed within 21 days of receipt of this form. 04/17

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March 2018

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 190 pubs in the county, where they may be read many times over by different customers. Others go to real ale pubs further afield, plus beer festivals etc.

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

Completed ads can be accepted in .pdf .doc, .pub, and .jpg format, or just send us your information, and perhaps a logo, and we can compose the ad for you. Deadline for next issue: May 11th.

Current advertising rates (from)

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

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

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

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