

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTH DEVON BRANCH OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

49TH EDITION

SPRING 2015

FREE

# News & Brews

**CHAMPION YOUR LOCAL.  
AND ENJOY A GREAT NIGHT OUT**



**South Devon CAMRA**

Supporting Real Ale in the South West



# WELCOME

**49TH EDITION  
SPRING 2015**



CAMRA campaigners have enjoyed some great victories recently. In November, the Government was defeated in a Commons vote when MP's voted to introduce a market rent only option for licensees tied to the large pub companies. This followed a concerted campaign by 8000 members who lobbied their MPs. We now must wait to learn how the law will change based on this vote.

For the 3rd year running CAMRA is lobbying the Treasury ahead of the March budget for a cut in beer duty. Scrapping the beer duty escalator in 2013 and 2014 has resulted in huge gains for the pub and brewery industries, and it has been calculated that more than 1,000 pubs have been saved from closure. Beer prices would have risen by 16p a pint more than they have over the period, and 26,000 jobs have been created. The Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) and British Beer & Pub Association have produced a report showing that production and sale of beer currently results in almost 900,000 UK jobs, not only in pubs and breweries, but in agriculture and in the supply chains. Nearly half of these jobs are taken by 16-24 year olds. Any further cut in beer duty would expand the effect and cause more growth for the UK. We must hope that George O can see the merit in cutting this undesirable source of duty.

*Cheers, Tina Hemmings*



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## PUB & BREWERY NEWS

The **George** at Blackawton is currently being extended to make more room for their community events but the work is not affecting their bar or restaurant. The annual beer festival on May Bank holiday to support The Worm Charming Festival will have a 'Wild West' theme, so along with beer, cider, BBQs and music, expect to see cowboys, Indians, sheriffs and possibly an Indian reservation of wigwams in the meadow.

Good reports have been received about the **Welcome Stranger** on the old A38 at Liverton. They generally have 5 beers including a Teignworthy named Welcome Wallop. They are aspiring to be a pub with nice food, rather than a restaurant with beer.

The new Wetherspoon pub in Teignmouth has received council approval. It will be named **Jolly Brise** after a pilot cutter boat. Work will start soon and will create around 45 jobs.

Teignmouth's **New Quay Inn** is being renovated with more emphasis on meals and they are hoping to start serving food again by mid-March. Another Teignmouth development, The **Golden Lion**, which has not been open for about 10 years, has a planning application pending to convert it into flats.

The Coach and Horses in Chudleigh has now re-opened as the **Phoenix**. It seems that it is more of a restaurant, but you can still buy a beer at the bar, possibly Doombar.

Happy news has reached us that The **Cridford Inn** in Trusham is continuing as a village pub, despite news last year that an application had been made to turn the building into a private residence. The 14C pub has one of the UK's oldest known stained glass windows. The landlords have emphasized their commitment to remaining at the community's heart.

Heartstone Inns have recently acquired The **Cockhaven Manor** in Bishopsteignton, following the retirement of Roy and Mandy Extance who ran the hotel for 14 years. This is the 2nd recent purchase by Heartstone Inns who bought the **Riverside Inn** at Bovey Tracey: a total spend in the region of £1.7million.

After some competition from several companies, Mitchells and Butlers have taken on the tenancy of the **Pen Inn** at Newton Abbot on a free-of-tie basis, and will be turning the pub into a Toby Carvery. Major refurbishment will start soon. (The different spellings are thought to originate from a misunderstanding between the local authority and the building's owner.)

The **Maritime Inn** in Brixham has started a blues club which meets on the 2nd Thursday each month. There are floor spots for acoustic blues players and singers.

The **Market Gate** in Newton Abbot has been reopened with interesting use of old doors on the walls and ceiling, an open-plan outlook and a pleasant paved outside area at the back. There are usually two local real ales available including Jail Ale.

The **Old Inn** at Marlborough opened at the end of February with new management. Also in Marlborough, The **Royal Oak** has been serving Dawkins Ales in good condition recently. A new pub is on the scene is at Hope Cove. The **Cove**, which had been a café, serves one ►

UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP

# THE MANOR INN

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Good beers (Otter Ale & Bitter; Butcombe Bitter; Skinner's Betty Stogs, Exmoor Ale).

Good food, function rooms, patio, large car park, accommodation, good company.

Quiz nights Thursday (general knowledge) and Sunday (music).

Children and dogs welcomed in a real village pub.

## ..... CONTINUED

► draught ale, a selection of interesting bottled ales, and occasionally a key keg from breweries like Arbor.

The **Victoria Inn** at Salcombe is now featuring a guest ale along with the core St Austell beers. The Exmoor Antler (4% abv) was good, and their regular Proper Job was one of the best we have tasted for a long time.

The **Bay Horse**, Totnes is restarting their Friday garden BBQ's from May featuring guest caterers.

The **New Lion Brewery** in Totnes now has an on and off sales licence, so you can pick up a supply of their ales. They have a nifty little 2-litre stainless canister which you can loan on a fully-refundable deposit. Once the weather warms up, the brewery has plans for a Saturday evening pop-up bar in the premises, starting 11th April. Roll on the Spring!

In May, **Bays Brewery** will be launching a new seasonal beer called 'Tall Order' in conjunction with Paignton Zoo. The ale will raise money for Giraffe conservation in Africa, as 10p will be donated for every pint sold. Last year the brewery raised nearly £3000 for Rhino Conservation with its Rhino Ale.

Business minister Matthew Hancock and local MP Anne Marie Morris toured **Teignworthy Brewery** in January. Brewery owner John Lawton lobbied them on a range of relevant topics from VAT reduction for small businesses to employment and National Insurance matters. John thought they seemed quite receptive to the issues raised. They enjoyed the buffet and 'Sea Dog' beer very much.

# A TRIP ROUND THE MIDLANDS

Pub	Beer and Price	Comments
<b>Great Western</b> Wolverhampton	Holden's Bitter <b>£2.65</b>	Well known pub next to the old Great Western low level station.
<b>Glebe</b> Stoke on Trent	Joules Blonde <b>£2.80</b> Joules Pale <b>£2.90</b>	The Joules chain has revived the brewery that was once common in the Potteries and second only to Bass.
<b>Victoria Hotel</b> Beeston, Nottingham	Oldershaw Great Expectations <b>£3.20</b>	Wonderful 1890's hotel with superb artefacts and surprised I had never previously visited.
<b>Criterion</b> Leicester	Sadler's Boris Citrov <b>£3.30</b>	Wide range of enterprising real ales near to the ring road.
<b>Brunswick</b> Derby	Triple Hop <b>£2.50</b>	Extremely well known and a little too close to the station!
<b>Old Harker's Arms</b> Chester	Weetwood Cheshire Cat <b>£3.50</b>	Old canal warehouse with 10 beers, but absolutely no children permitted.
<b>Pied Bull</b> Chester	Pied Bull Bitter <b>£3.40</b>	Hotel and brew pub in the centre of the town giving a 10% CAMRA discount and 1/3 pint taster trays.
<b>Brewery Tap</b> Cheshire	Magpie JPA <b>£3.50</b> Lowest price beer <b>£3.10</b>	Unusual décor with tapestries.
<b>Cellar Bar</b> Chester	Hawkshead Gold <b>£3.10</b>	Young person's pub with live music.
<b>Ye Olde Rose and Crown</b> Stafford	Joules Blonde <b>£3.10</b>	Part of the Joules chain but note the difference in price in comparison to Stoke.
<b>Post Office Vaults</b> Birmingham	Phoenix Hop Sack <b>£3.10</b>	Subterranean pub near New Street Station with a beer/book menu.
<b>Woodman</b> Digbeth, Birmingham	Castle Rock Black Gold <b>£3.00</b>	Wonderfully restored with 10 hand pumps and an abundance of oak and tiling and 10 hand pumps.
<b>Royal Exchange</b> Stourbridge	Batham's Bitter <b>£2.60</b>	Batham's tied pub.
<b>King and Castle</b> Kidderminster	Batham's Bitter <b>£2.85</b>	Free house at Kidderminster station on the Severn Valley Railway.

## GEORGE INN, BLACKAWTON

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\*\*\*\*\*

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## A TRIP ROUND THE MIDLANDS

► All of these pubs are in the current GBG with the exception of the last entry, but this has been a persistent entry in the past. All are accessible by rail with no more than a 15 minute walk, but often are very considerably less. I accept that it is not a scientific price survey as the strength of the beers has not been indicated and includes both expensive and cheaper areas. Nevertheless, there is still an enormous range in price with the average, if it means anything, about or just over the £3 mark. Chester I would expect to be the most expensive and the more deprived West Midlands much lower. Joules pubs are worth seeking out as sensitive conversations having revived the old brewery name from Stone in North Staffordshire. Note that even here the same beer sells for 30p more a pint in more affluent Stafford compared with Stoke on Trent. By comparison my last 3 visits to Devon pubs saw prices of 3.20, £3.75 and £3.50, but again that was hardly a representative sample.

Chester has very much improved as a real ale destination and I was particularly impressed with the Old Harker's Arms which warned that children were not welcome either inside or out. Given the superb canal side location I can imagine that children would easily take over and dominate. The cheapest beer was from the wonderful Brunswick at Derby followed by the West Midlands based Holdens and Bathams. The Woodman in Birmingham is a beautiful restoration job dominated by a solid oak bar and much tiling and returning the pub to its previous Edwardian splendour. For some reason I had never visited the Victoria in Beeston, but wish I had!

The beer quality was extremely good with only one pub rated as less than good and overall some excellent experiences albeit not always for the first time. There was also an enormous diversity of beers including a very high percentage of dark beers.

*Bob Southwell*

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Website: [www.kentstorquay.co.uk](http://www.kentstorquay.co.uk)

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01803 863214



**Bridgetown Brewery brews Albert Ale 3.8% abv; Bridgetown Bitter 4.2% abv; Shark Island Stout 4.5% abv and recently introduced Totnes Hemp Beer, Green Leaf 4% abv. There is also a selection of craft ales from around the world.**



Yes, it is a pub with a darts team, a weekly quiz, people resolving their crosswords, people talking, joking, arguing and putting the world to rights. Our own ales brewed on the premises, traditional home made pies, curries, Sunday roasts etc.

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## LONDON NOVEMBER 2014

It is the time of year for a family gathering in London to watch tennis at the O2 arena. The family size seems to have grown a lot but that doesn't matter to me. I have to amuse myself and I was busy planning my amusement when I was told that Stuart and Pete would be joining me again. The more the merrier.

Pete lives in London and is familiar with the transport system, and he offered to organise the route after I gave him a list of places south of the river. We arranged to meet at London Bridge tube station at 11 on the 11th; luckily we found each other just before 11 because at 11 everybody just stopped and stood still for 2 minutes and then moved off at their usual 100mph. So with Pete in charge, off we went, tubes and buses and a walk to the Blythe Hill Tavern Forest Hill (GBG & NI listed). Wow! a superb old pub, leather covered settles, old golfing posters on the walls and a great range of beers. Westerham Double Stout looked good but a bit too strong for the first of the day although I did get a small delicious taster. To start it had to be Dark Star Hophead, and 10% discount, which was very good.

Now off for lunch to the Herne Tavern at Peckham Rye, but disaster, not opening today until 3 o'clock. A quick check around found the Rose just up the road. A very pleasant pub, not great, but it did food, so it was a pie for lunch washed down with Adnams Lighthouse although Meantime keg was also on offer. Once fed, it was onwards, first to view the Half Moon near Herne Hill. This was on my original list being a very grand pub but it had been closed since 2013 when they had a burst water main which flooded the area. A real shame as it looked great but no sign of it reopening soon. On to the Florence, a home brew pub. It had one of the smallest breweries you have ever seen in a glass box in the bar. The brewer was cleaning it out getting ready for the next brew. This was a modern-style pub, minimalistic decor, modern furniture and very few decorations but it did have free water available on the bar. I was much more interested in the beer of course and Weasel, their home brew, was excellent. They were also serving Franklins Mama Knows Best and Rooster Buckeye so we stayed a while to try the lot. Then we had a phone call, the tennis had finished early so our company was requested but we hadn't done many pubs yet. Anyway we plodded on to the Joiners Arms (NI) in Denmark Hill. Superb tiling with woodworking tools featured in the tiles and yes, a good pub, with Robinson's Trooper to drink. After another call we decided to go to meet the ladies, and from the tube we took them to the Pilot at Greenwich. We knew the beer would be good in this Fullers pub. Sadly, the Black Cab Stout was on keg; however they did have East London Brewing Co Nightwatchman, a dark but not black brew and very very good to wash down the fish and chips.

So it was only five pubs, but all worth visiting and in a new area of London for me with lots of new beers. Another good London pub crawl.

*GBG - Good Beer Guide NI - National Inventory.*

*Roger Adams*

# THE VIGILANCE

wetherspoon



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March 13<sup>th</sup> – March 29<sup>th</sup> 2015

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## MIDWEEK SOCIAL IN NOVEMBER

Besides an ability to constantly cock things up - usually 'Grumpy' Bob's fault - an abiding feature of our disparate band is that, whilst the rest of us only drink halves, Philip invariably insists on a pint, often leading to suggestions of his being able to 'Drink for England'. Thus it was a surprise that before the two of us left Brixham, a quick half in The Vigilance was just that.

Subsequently meeting the other three members of that day's party in Newton Abbot, we set off for Bovey Tracey, on the edge of Dartmoor. On arrival, we headed straight to The Cromwell Arms, last year's winner of St. Austell Brewery's 'Beer Pub of the Year' award - no mean feat, as the brewery has an estate of some 170 pubs. The Proper Job; Dartmoor Best; Tribute; and stronger Tribute Extra were all on fine form - as would be expected.

We went onwards to Chudleigh Knighton, and the Claycutter's Arms, our lunch stop; various good sandwiches to go with the Tribute and Jail Ale on offer. A sense of déjà-vu here for Bob, who pointed out that the Gents used to be part of his late grandmother's next-door cottage. By now the day's first mishap was long overdue, and we duly contrived to miss our bus, which had the temerity to be something near on-time, with whom else but our leader swearing it always ran late. There was nothing for it but to head back to the Claycutter's, as the other pub in the village didn't open until later. Making sure we caught the next bus, we in due course trooped into the Bishop Lacy in nearby Chudleigh, where we were welcomed by a roaring wood fire in the imposing stone fireplace. The pub gained Brownie points as Robin, the landlord, brought out pizza to accompany the good Black Tor 'Resolution' and 'Pride of Dartmoor' on offer in this former branch Pub of the Year. Reluctantly dragging ourselves away from the fire, it was off to Exeter in search of the Beer Cellar, of which Bob professed to know the location. After heading off in the wrong direction, we found this small, basic bar serving 3 cask ales and a large variety of craft and bottled beers. We variously tried the Otter Autumn Ale, Wold Top Bitter, and Penpont St. Nonnas. With return bus times looming, we just had time to visit the Well House in Cathedral Square, where we rounded off the day with Ringwood Best, Sharp's Coaster, and the once-funny Dog's Bollocks from Wychwood.

*Peter O'Nions*

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or quantities and are unable to resolve this with the  
service provider.

## JANUARY JAUNT IN KINGSTEIGNTON

Alighting the no.2 bus from Newton Abbot at Kingsteignton, the four of us crossed to the Kings Arms, a functional pub that seemed to major on live music - alas, none while we were there - and offered Legend and Tribute. We were joined here by John, a member who lives nearby. Moving around the corner we came to the Bell, an open-plan pub opposite a now-closed butcher's, where the original tiling bearing the shop's name was still in place, making a pleasant break in the eye-line of buildings either side. We were joined here by a further three, bringing the party to a respectable eight - something of a recent record. Snacks were duly taken, to accompany the Jail Ale and Doombar.

Along to the Old Rydon, with its tiny bar, arbour'd conservatory, and large lawned garden (but maybe not in January). The Tribute, Proper Job, and Hunter's Half Bore were all drinking well. Whilst half of the party then had to walk, I wangled a lift to the roadside Ten Tors Inn, with its welcoming wood-burning fire, around which our three ladies promptly arranged themselves. More Proper Job and Tribute here, along with the new Cornish Best from St. Austell - the replacement for Dartmoor Best, now being brewed by Dartmoor brewery in conjunction with its own Dartmoor I.P.A.

After a pleasant sojourn, we reluctantly dragged ourselves away from the fire, for the short walk up the road to catch our return bus.

*Peter O'Niows*



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## CALORIES IN YOUR GLASS

There have recently been reports in the press that public health doctors want a calorie content label on alcohol to help reduce obesity, as this is likely to deter some consumers. It has been pointed out to me that a pint of 4% beer contains around 180 calories and that a fish and chip supper around 1400. Mmmm! Share a fish supper or have 3 pints with a friend? No contest.

*The Little Pub with the Big Garden*

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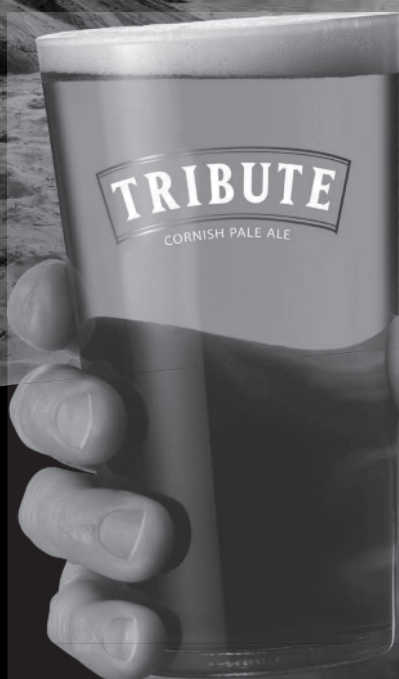
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# HISTORY IN YOUR GLASS

I have drunk from a pewter pot for most of my drinking life. In fact, until the end of the Victorian era pub-goers mostly drank from pewter, and sometimes leather. These vessels hid the bits of sediment and the cloudiness that beer had in those times. Gradually, pubs became better lit, and improved filtration at the breweries started to result in a clearer beer. As beer drinkers began to take more notice of the clarity of their pint, glass became the norm. The first of these was the 10-sided handled pint pot mug in about 1920, which became better known after the 'Beer is Best' poster of the 1930's. At the end of WW11 it was moved out of fashion by the dimpled pint mug, made with thick glass, and said to resemble a hand grenade. Both dark and light ales looked so much better in the refracted light of a dimpled glass mug. Then in the 1960's this mug went into a terminal decline. Brewers said that 'drinkers wanted a lighter, straighter glass'. Many styles were produced; nonic, tulip and conical to name but three. The history of dimpled versus straight is shrouded in myth.



*Early branded beer glasses*



*10-sided, pewter, straight, leather, dimpled*

Southerners say it is a northern thing, northerners say it is southerners who brought in this change of fashion, with several derogatory remarks flying north and south.

More interestingly is why the UK has so few beer glass styles, when the Germans and Belgians have countless branded glasses for every style of beer. There were various branded moulds i.e. Worthington E and Watney's Red Barrel, hoping to create a national brand image, but apart from being 'collected' they soon became tied to the bland fizzy keg beers that brewers were heavily promoting, and so were rejected by real ale purists. Often discussion centres around the

affect of the shape on taste, and whether thick glass keeps the beer cooler because of the handle, or does the beer warm up when your hand is clamped around a straight glass. George Orwell swore that beer tasted better out of china, in fact one of the regulars in my local uses a pottery ale mug, but I'll stick to my Victorian pewter tankard.

*George Hemmings*



# DARTMOOR'S FINEST

The UK's highest brewery at 1,465ft above sea level, Dartmoor Brewery creates handcrafted cask conditioned real ales with authentic Dartmoor character from its heartland in Princetown. Since its formation in 1994, Dartmoor Brewery has gone from strength to strength producing top quality ales using the finest local ingredients, which remain highly regarded across the South West by licensees and real ale drinkers.



Dartmoor Brewery Ltd, Station Road, Princetown, Devon PL20 6QX

Telephone: 01822 890789 Fax: 01822 890798 [www.dartmoorbrewery.co.uk](http://www.dartmoorbrewery.co.uk)



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# WHAT'S ON

## Branch Meetings and Social Events

Date 2015	Time	Purpose	Location
10th March	20:00	Branch Meeting	Court Farm, Abbotskerswell
12th March	20:00	Quiz Night	Exeter Inn, Ashburton
17 - 18th April		CAMRA Members Weekend	Nottingham
25th April (provisional)		Brewery tour to Quercus Brewery Details TBA	

## Beer Festivals

Date 2015	Time	Purpose	Location
2th - 14th March		Bristol CAMRA Beer Festival	Old Temple, Meads Station
2nd - 6th April		Blue Anchor Teignmouth Beer Festival	
3rd - 6th April		Bay Horse Beer and Cider Festival 24 ales, 15 ciders BBQ	Totnes
16th - 18th April		Tuckers Maltings SIBA Beer Festival	Tuckers Maltings, Newton Abbot
1st - 3rd May		George Inn Beer Festival in conjunction with Worm Charming Festival	
22nd - 25th May		Devon Diesel Society Beer Festival	Staverton Station
30th - 31st May		Kernow CAMRA Beer Festival	St Ives
19th - 21st June		SummerMoon Festival	Parish Centre, Kingskerswell
10th - 11th July		Plymouth CAMRA Beer Festival	Plymouth Pavillions
31st July - 2nd August		Seale Hayne 2nd Beer and Music Festival	
11th - 15th August		Great British Beer Festival	Olympia, London
28th - 31st August		Devon Diesel Society Bank Holiday Beer Festival	Staverton Station
25th - 27th September		Dartmouth Beer Festival proposed	TBA

# SUMMER MOON FESTIVAL 19th to 21st JUNE 2015

## KINGSKERSWELL PARISH CENTRE KINGSKERSWELL

Now in its eighth year, this is a well-established beer, cider and wine festival showcasing dozens of the South West's best real ales and ciders, plus wines from around the world.

Live local bands/groups will be playing throughout the weekend.

The fun starts at 5pm on Friday 19th June. Challenge 25 applies (under 25's please bring a valid ID).

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## NATIONAL PUB OF THE YEAR 2014

The Salutation Inn in Ham in Berkley, Gloucestershire, has won the prestigious CAMRA National Pub of the Year. Judging of the 16 regional winners resulted in a South-West winner for the third time in the last 9 years. This is even more exceptional because the couple running the pub have had no experience of pub trade prior to taking over this free house 2 years ago. Described as a rural gem, the enthusiastic landlords provide an inspired selection of ales and eight real ciders and perries. The pub has two cosy bars with a log fire and a skittles alley.

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## DRINKING FOR CHARITY

The 2nd Beer Festival at The Queen's Arms in Brixham in December went very well with visitor numbers up and more ales to try. From the blind tasting of the 28 beers, two big national beers came out top, and both, despite their high alcohol content were judged to be well-balanced. Attila (7.5% abv) from Oakham Ales, and Elland Brewery 1872 Porter (6.5% abv) - which has just won CAMRA's Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2015 - came first and second. A local brew from Otter, their Autumn Ale (4% abv), was third. In February the pub held a presentation night where winning certificates were presented to the brewers, along with a cheque for £1556.65 to the charity Pride in Brixham, a volunteer group who donate their time and efforts to making Brixham look beautiful for residents and visitors to the town.

1872 Porter has won Champion Winter Beer of Britain in 2010, 2013 and 2015, and CAMRA Champion Beer of Britain in 2013.



*Chris Simmonds and  
Mary Thompson from  
Pride in Brixham*



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12/10

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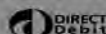
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Banks and Building Societies may also accept Direct Debit instructions from some business organisations.

## GET TO THE PUB – ON THE RIVIERA LINE

Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership's Citizens' Rail project is linking up with South West CAMRA branches to promote the message 'Get here on the Riviera Line'. Beer mats (pictured) encourage pub goers to get to the pub by train. Pubs near to Riviera Line stations can be viewed at [www.therivieraline.com/pubs](http://www.therivieraline.com/pubs) which links to the CAMRA 'What Pub' website.

CAMRA recently linked up with First Great Western, the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership and Dartmoor Brewery at Dawlish Station in a photo call in support of local pubs in Dawlish affected by the 2014 winter storms. In the last News & Brews we reported on the CAMRA campaigning event in Dawlish in September to support the town's pubs following the reopening of the railway line after disastrous storms of the winter. First Great Western, the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership recently revisited, along with Dartmoor Brewery who presented donations for two local Dawlish charities. The brewery from Princetown had brewed a special ale 'On Track' which was enjoyed on draught by the 60 plus CAMRA members on the day. Numbered bottles of the beer were sold and 50 pence was donated to the Dawlish charities, The Snooky Trust and Assist Teignbridge, both receiving over £200.

The Project Officer of the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership is Celia Minoughan and can be contacted at [celia@citizensrail.org](mailto:celia@citizensrail.org) or on 07929 243510.



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**Last date for submission for the Summer magazine - 17.5.2015**

## CONTACT US

**Branch Chairman** - Bob Southwell ecosochistoryman@hotmail.co.uk

**Vice Chairman** - Ian Packham ian@southdevoncamra.com

**Secretary** - Ray Ellmore 07886002482 ray.ellmore@btinternet.com

**Treasurer** - Edgar Halton ehalton@mac.com

**Pub Liaison Coordinator** - Phil (Billy) Kidd 07718924126

**Membership Sec.** - Ray Ellmore 07886002482 ray.ellmore@btinternet.com

**Web Site Editor** - Ant Veal . ant@southdevoncamra.com

**Newsletter Editor** - Tina Hemmings 01803 854486 tinahemmings@hotmail.co.uk

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Ad Size	1 issue	2 issues	3 issues	Year
1/4 page	55	65	90	110
1/2 page	75	100	125	150
full page	100	160	200	240
back page	-	-	-	330

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# NO CHRISTMAS CHEER FOR GRUMPY

Let me be very clear from the start that I am no lover of Christmas and approach the whole subject with the jaundiced eye of a cynic and in general regard the whole experience as a 'tax on the unwary'. Oliver Cromwell, the Puritan, famously once tried to ban Christmas and its festivities and I wonder what he would make of a modern Christmas? I obviously realise that some pubs are fairly desperate for business, but do we really need to be advertising Christmas booking arrangements as early as August Bank Holiday with summer, beaches and ice cream still in reasonably full flow? Perhaps we should hold a competition to find the earliest example of 'Christmas bookings now being taken' and the way things are going this could well be Easter! The August Bank Holiday experience was also accompanied by a large banner and all that was missing was a BOGOF. Buy now for 2015 and get 2016 free. Often the dreadful '*why not*' is thrown in as in '*why not* book now and treat your family and friends?' This awful enticement has become endemic - *why not* treat yourself to an extra side dish for £2 etc.

I have an intense dislike of Christmas decorations that 'go over the top' and merge in to Santa's Grotto experiences and am sure that some pubs would willingly hire reindeer and import snow if the economics was right. Some pubs glorify in a positive plethora of streamers, baubles, decorative bells, over large Christmas trees strewn with glitter and tacky fairy lights. So dazzling can these arrangements become, that a pair of sunglasses would not be out of place! I have even witnessed nativity scenes which were probably asking for trouble with the possibility of customer rearrangement; on one occasion I can recall some comedian replacing the biblical figures with small plastic super heroes and vehicles. Again, let's set up another competition for the most over-decorated pub and the most tasteless décor. However, my general memory this year is of more modest levels of decoration in keeping with more austere times, and as a result there would be fewer entries than normal for this prestigious prize category.

And why does Christmas encourage brewers to add some 'alien' contents to their beers? I have come across cinnamon, coriander, curry, nutmeg, mace and all spice appearing in beer with some revolting consequences. If you put this in beer at any other time of the year there would probably be a massive consumer reaction, but brewers seem to think that they can get away with it because it is Christmas and that consumers will drink anything at this time of the year. Please remember that these additives *belong in the kitchen* and *not in your beer* and the most polite comment I can make is to refer to them as 'novelty' beers which would be more at home in an amusement arcade.

As for the names of these Christmas beers: any title with Santa, reindeer, sleighs or elves seem to abound. There was an abundance of Santa's sacks, presents, delights, deliveries and surprises etc. Elves were willing helpers and reindeers were dashing and prancing to deliver and there were plenty of Rudolphins. Am I right in thinking that there were generally more elf beers this year? All of this together with lurid pump clips and some with illuminated and red flashing lights including one that lit up Father Christmas' nose! What next, smellorama? ►



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## GRUMPY CONTINUED

► The pub itself undergoes a complete metamorphosis at Christmas and usually from the addition of some people who do not usually use them. The amount of wastage is enormous as people are exhorted to have one more, or a spirit, which are invariably only half finished and left lying around. People who don't normally drink get noisy and silly far too easily and very quickly the atmosphere becomes a children's party for normally sensible adults. All of this is accentuated by fancy dress and the appearance of the inevitable green and red elves. Christmas Day itself is probably the worst with unknown people easily outnumbering regulars, blocking bars and drinking very little, and despite the crowds comparatively little spending is going on. A 10% beer was being sold and every table had seemed to have bought a half, but very few had got anywhere near drinking it. Although not a problem for the publican it would have broken the brewer's heart to see his beer treated in such a cavalier manner. The beer was being bought for 'novelty' value and all too easily discarded, which too many would sum up as Christmas spending in general.

In my opinion New Year's Eve is the most over-rated night of the year and dominated by people who feel that they should be having a good time, but in reality are probably not. January is named after Janus who looked both back to the old year and forward to the new, and as such it was a time of hope and expectation having moved on from the more difficult past. Such neo-philosophical concerns have long fallen by the wayside and Bacchus has taken over, given the legendary excesses of that evening. Perhaps we should rename January as Bacchusary if it were not such a mouthful. In previous New Years it was possible to move around pubs, but no longer so, given private parties with tickets sold in advance excluding the casual visitor. This is a great pity and has taken out the spontaneity of the evening. Finally, why does everybody want to kiss you, or shake your hand, whilst wishing you a happy new year? Given that the same people totally ignore you for the rest of the year this is the best excuse I can think of to be home before midnight.

*Bob Southwell*

*Aka Grumpy Old Man*

# SOUTH DEVON CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR 2014

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