

# NEWS AND BREWS

*Spring  
2014*

*Free Magazine of*

*The South Devon Branch of*

***FREE***

**THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**



*John Lawton MD of Teignworthy Brewery receives  
Best Beer in Festival Award (page 6)*



**South Devon  
CAMRA**

*Supporting Real Ale  
in the South West*



# Welcome to *NEWS AND BREWS*

45th EDITION

Spring 2014

I give no apology for including the following information regarding part of CAMRA's campaign to secure an effective Government support package for pubs, in the hope that you can back the petition.

Despite Government promises over a year ago to take action on pubco reform, no concrete progress has been forthcoming as yet, and time is running out if legislation is to be announced in the Queen's Speech in May. A Pubs Bill would give pubs and publicans much needed protection, particularly if all the reforms that CAMRA are calling for are included in the bill. These are introduction of a statutory code, a pubs watchdog, a guest beer right and a market rent to give protection to licensees tied to a Pub Company.

Business Secretary Vince Cable has shown his support for these measures on several occasions and CAMRA now wants him to take action and further the reform proposed. CAMRA's Chief Executive Mike Benner has stressed the urgency of the situation and is calling on CAMRA members to sign the online petition calling for reform, as a measure to put pressure on the Government. The petition, which already has 35,000 signatures, can be found at [www.pubscandal.org.uk](http://www.pubscandal.org.uk). Please sign the petition to show your support for the introduction of a Parliamentary Bill in this year's Queen's Speech.

*Cheers, Tina Hemmings*



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## *Pub News*

Teign Cellars in Newton Abbot has been featured in Beer, the quarterly magazine produced in conjunction with CAMRA's monthly What's Brewing newspaper. Susan Nowak, the author of CAMRA's book Good Pub Food visited recently and praised the pub for its beer and food pairings, saying that the food entertains the taste buds, the craft ales are a revelation, and together they tango with each other. Praise indeed.

Three of South Devon Branch's pubs were winners in the St Austell Tribute Estate Awards, held at a gala dinner in Newquay in February. The Cromwell Arms in Bovey Tracy won the Beer Pub of the Year, The Old Market House in Brixham won the Customer Service Pub of the Year and the Victoria Inn, Salcombe won Pub Floral Display of the Year.

The Tally Ho at Littlehempston has progressed further in its plans to reopen. There are still shares available if you wish to own part of this community pub and they hope to exchange contracts in February with a view to reopening before Mothers' Day on 30<sup>th</sup> March. Once the purchase is completed it'll be all hands to the pump to get the pub ready for opening so if you wish to volunteer please email the pub. Their website [www.tallyhoinn.co.uk](http://www.tallyhoinn.co.uk) is currently advertising for the two key staff that they'll need - landlord/lady and chef, so things are moving apace.

The Embassy Tavern off Paignton seafront has new licensees. Ana and Gareth (who has 18 years' experience of the licenced trade) took over in October and hope to create the traditional atmosphere of a pub local. Doom Bar remains the house staple supported by guest ales some from local breweries.

There are new landlords at Bishop John de Grandisson at Bishopsteignton following the sale of the freehold from Heavitree Brewery. They are currently serving Doombar and Otter Ale.

The Old Inn at Halwell is still serving East Street Cream, despite having changed hands. The previous landlord commissioned the beer through RCH in his previous pub in East Street Newton Abbot and had served this ale continuously since then.

Several other pubs have recently changed hands: Sprat and Mackerel and Rising Sun at Brixham, Welcome Stranger at Liverton, Waterside at Paignton. The Bay Hotel Teignmouth has 2 Teignworthy brews and live music every night, and the Queensbury Arms has 3 ales and 2 ciders in good condition on their 5 hand-pumps.

The Anchor at Chudleigh Knighton has been modernised and business there is brisk.

Stephanie Doree, the daughter of the owners of The Oak South Brent, has raised ¾ of her target £4000 to fund her month long charity trip to Tanzania in July. Once there, the 17 year old will be helping the community with environmental issues, as well as giving practical help; possibly building walls or mending roofs. The locals in The Oak have helped with the fund-raising enthusiastically - for example, in February there was a sponsored leg-wax.

The Royal Oak Inn at Bigbury had recently been granted Community Asset status, having been under treat of developers. Since then the pub has been bought by a popular regional hotelier who intends to return the pub to its former glory.



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Good Beer Guide Listed

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

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

Quiz nights Thursday (general knowledge) and Sunday (music). Children and dogs welcomed in a real village pub.



## *Brewery News*

Devon Earth Brewery has now moved into a new brew house on the edge of Dartmoor. Using the same 2.5 Barrel equipment, three brews are planned in the next couple of months for Tuckers Malting Beer Festival and selected pubs in Torbay.

Quercus Brewery's ales were the only beers to be nominated for the finals of the best drink in Devon award last November, organised by 'Devon Life' and they were runners up on the finals night held at Sandy Park. Their ales are being served in the newly re-opened Kings Arms in Kingsbridge and the Open Arms in Chillington which recently came under new management. Their new brewer has introduced a fourth line to their portfolio, Devonish 3.8%, an amber ale, which compliments Shingle Bay 4.2% (blond), Prospect 4% and Harry's 4.6% (both dark).

Totnes lost its Lion Brewery in the 1920's but recently The New Lion Brewery has sprung up on a site in Station Road, and is producing 6 ales which up to now are enigmatically named 1 to 6. The launch was celebrated in November with a day-long beer festival at The Bay Horse, whose landlord, Rob Alexander, is one of the four founders of the brewery, and reports customer feedback has been very positive. In addition to cask and bottle sales, there are plans for work experience for people with learning difficulties, limited edition ales to raise funds for local enterprises, apprenticeships and commitment to improving the town's economy. Their head brewer Mat Henney has joined the team from Dartmoor Brewery.

# Brewery News #2

Teignworthy Brewery was well represented at an award evening at the Queen's Arms Brixham, held to celebrate their winning the Best Beer of Festival at the 1<sup>st</sup> Charity Beer Festival hosted by the pub. Six of their ales were on, including Christmas Cracker which had been the winning ale. John Lawton, Managing Director of the brewery was there to receive the award (see pictures on the front page). £1355.24 raised by the event was presented to the charities, Papworth Respiratory Unit and Brixham's Shoalstone Pool.



Ian Cobham, a former Chef Sommelier, has joined Dartmoor Brewery to work alongside Head Brewer, Mike Lunney. Ian has come from Sharps Brewery in Cornwall and has also achieved qualifications as an Advanced Wine Sommelier. He is currently studying for the Diploma in Brewing from the Institute of Brewing and Distilling, and also is in the final stages of his Advanced Beer Sommelier qualification which would make him the South West's only Advanced Beer and Advanced Wine Sommelier.

Hunters held a successful open day in November with beers from £1, brewery tours and food. The brewery continues to expand and they have installed a 4000 gallon fermenter. Recently dispatched was an order for 400 cases of beer from the Cooke Islands.



James and Guy (Exe Valley brewers) on hearing the news.

In February, at CAMRA's National Winter Ales Festival in Derby, Exe Valley's Winter Glow won the award as the Best Old ale in the country.

O'Hanlon's Brewery is under new ownership and is now called Hanlons Brewery. It has moved to the Half Moon Village, Newton St Cyres, where the five O'Hanlons ales are still being brewed to the old recipes.

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## *A look back to 2013*

Another year has flown by and here are a few thoughts on the last twelve months. The early months were cold and horrible.

The first good thing was Tuckers Maltings Beer Festival. I think it is the best in the country - one not to be missed.

Next, was the move of Teign Cellars beer bottle shop into a PUB and still within a stones throw of my office. With the Cider Bar also very close I now have the choice of very good and interesting beers or very good and interesting ciders on my doorstep every day.

I have had a couple of great moments whilst on tour:

Walking into a pub in East Moseley to find Old Engine Oil from Harviestoun, a beautiful beer on draught that I had only tried in bottles before.

Walking into a campsite pub at Silverstone to find cask beer from Silverstone brewery lined up for me to try, but they soon ran out!

Visiting the Nutshell in Bury St Edmunds with my family, one of the smallest pubs in England, and we nearly completely filled it.

The start of a new project at the Tally Ho Littlehempston, our first community pub in South Devon.

There were also sad moments in the year.

The saddest being the death of Roy Wheeler, a long standing CAMRA and beer supporter.

No beer festival for South Devon CAMRA.

And the year seemed to end up wet and horrible

Roll on 2014

*Roger Adams*

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## ***Roger's London Trip comes round again***

I had been planning this for some while; a chat in the pub gave me new ideas and the borrowed book 'Craft Beers of London' helped as well.

I arranged to meet family members at Euston Station. It was pouring with rain and as most pubs in London don't open until 12 we queued up with a few others at bang on opening time. The first pub was The Euston Tap situated just outside the station. It is one half of the remains of the old archway which was the entrance to the station. The other half is the Cider Tap, but that will have to be another visit. The Euston Tap is a one-roomed bar with a superb spiral staircase to an upstairs seating area. Downstairs was vertical drinking only. We had to wait to be served giving time to peruse the menu - too many to report here. Nephew Pete had number 23 on the list, I had Magic Rock Ringmaster 3.9% packed with New Zealand hops, A strong ale was available but it was way too early for that. Next, on to The Doric Arch just around the corner and named after the old archway. It was formerly called the Head of Steam being up stairs right on the station, and has a good collection of railway signs and other memorabilia. Now a Fuller's pub, it had the elusive Black Cab Stout on draught; at last I could sample this beer and it was excellent.

Now around to the other side of the station to Bree Louise, a pretty large open one-bar pub. With lots of beers to choose from, local and further afield, hand pump and gravity. I had Titanic plum porter, brother-in-law Stuart had Banks Sunbeam and we all had a pie, the speciality of the house. It was here that it was mentioned that card carrying members could get a discount on ale. This is something I do tend to forget to ask for, but should not; it shows the pub who we are and that we are supporting them. All these pubs were very close together around the station, useful to note for the future.

So downwards onto the tube to Hackney. Close by is the Cock Tavern, with The Howling Hops Brewery sited in their cellar. On the bar were three of their beers, Bramble Porter, Smoked Around and Ruby Red and between us we tried all three. The Cock Tavern is a good place for a pint and a chat; the décor is dark and woody with a miniscule beer garden area. Onwards again a short tube ride to Hackney Wick to find the intriguingly named Crate Brewery and Pizzeria. This was different, an old factory right on the edge of a canal; a large open space, high ceiling, lots of pipes and block walls painted white. The bar and furniture seemed to be made out of old pallets, boxes and anything left around, the light shades were old seat springs. Being the home of the Crate Brewery it would be rude not to drink their beers so I had the Stout, and the Golden Ale and Best were also sampled and found good - but what would you expect in a brewery?

Time to move on, but (a disaster) our next on the list the Pilot in Greenwich, was closed for refurbishment. I had no plan B so we retired to the pub on Liverpool Street Station, The Merchant of Bishopsgate, to consult. Someone bought me a pint of Doom Bar! This was not very good but made us concentrate on a new meeting place, as we had to dine with the ladies so a restaurant was nominated and messages passed on. Well it was a very nice place; the English Restaurant in Brushfield Street had quite a pub-like décor and furniture and it served good food and decent beer, Red Eye from Redemption.

So all was not lost. There had been seven pubs, lots of new beers; mostly local and mostly excellent, and a Good London Day Out.

Roger Adams

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## ***Thursday Thirsties***

Eschewing our usual Wednesday, January's Midweek Mob outing took place a day later, to visit pubs in Ashburton and Totnes. Boarding the 9.35 bus out of Brixham at its second stop, I met my travelling companion, who had boarded at the station – and had already had a pint at The Vigilance. He assured me that this showed dedication to the CAMRA cause, but personally I was somewhat sceptical. On arriving in Newton Abbot some 90 minutes later, and with time to spare before our next bus, we headed for the Richard Hopkins (No, this article isn't sponsored by J. D. Wetherspoon) where we opted for Caledonian 'Auld Acquaintance' - our first/second beer of the day (at this somewhat more civilised hour).

It was then off to join the rest of the Usual Suspects on bus 88 to Ashburton. On arrival at the Exeter Inn, we found Sally, who had travelled from South Brent, waiting for us - on this occasion minus her Squeeze Box, which has livened up many a quiet midweek afternoon in rural pubs in the past. Along with its usual Dartmoor I.P.A., The Exeter also had that brewery's Legend; both of which were up to the pub's usual high standard.

A short bus ride later, we alighted at Peartree Cross, home to the Dartmoor Lodge Motel. At first sight, this isn't the sort of place you would associate with good ale, but the owner was formerly in charge at the Great Western Hotel in Exeter, twice winner of Exeter CAMRA's Pub of the Year competition. So it was that the Dartmoor Jail Ale, Hunter's Crispy Pig, and Exe Valley's Dobs met with warm approval, along with the tasty baguettes at this, our lunch stop.

Replete, it was back on the trusty 88 bus, this time to Totnes, where we disembarked at the railway station, and crossed the road to climb the path that took us to our next port of call, the Bay Horse. This friendly pub at the top of the town now has its own 'New Lion' brewery, named after the original Lion brewery that was once in the town. On offer was Jail Ail and New Lion No4, suggesting that we had missed its first 3 beers.

After three successive Good Beer Guide listed pubs, for our final stop of the day it was time to go 'Off Piste' as we headed to the backstreet Waterman's Arms at the bottom of the town, where we had been told to expect beer served straight from the barrel. We were duly greeted by Greene King I.P.A., though a few of us still opted for the Jail Ale on hand pump.

*Peter O'Nions*

# THE KENTS

Kents Pub, 1 Ilsham Road, Wellswood, Torquay. TQ1 2JG

Tel: 01803 292522 Email: [info@kentstorquay.co.uk](mailto:info@kentstorquay.co.uk)

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## *Viewing Progress in Retrospect*

Since the increase in real ale pubs, there has been a small increase in off-sales, with 2 and 4 pint plastic containers being used to convey some cask ale home. Since the 1960's, however, the majority of beer alcohol sales for home consumption has been through supermarkets, or possibly off-licences. Prior to legislation in 1964, pubs were the place to go, and many pubs sold to the public who carried the beer home in their own containers. Often called 'jug and bottle' or vice versa, they were frequently a small area, a corridor or tiny room, sometimes with a hatchway for customers to make their purchases. Occasionally there were a few seats to allow for a quick drink while they waited, and it wasn't unusual for women to meet their friends there, while collecting their husband's or father's ale.

In the vast majority of public houses, the space allocated to these bottle and jugs has long gone - the area included in the pub's main lounge or used as a store room - so evidence of their actuality is rare. Occasionally you might find a pub with etched windows that shows of the past presence of such a room, and more commonly the incidence of an unused door on the outside of a licensed premises, or an unused hatchway within it, might give you a clue to its past existence.

In those times, it seemed that the granting of licenses to corner shops and grocers was a forward step, but in view of the binge drinking phenomena, fuelled by cheap and often imported supermarket booze, a return to former times could be a possible solution.

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## The South Hams by Mini-bus

The beginning of February heralded our annual visit to the South Hams. This year, we started at The Ashburton Arms on the A379 at West Charleton, just outside Kingsbridge. This roadside pub is geared towards dining, with tables the length of the bar and a Dining/Function room at the far end. On offer ale-wise were S.Hams Devon Pride and Otter Ale. Farther along this road is Frogmore, and The Globe- our stop for lunch. The pub is entered down some steps from the car park, and offers a wide selection of food, from lunchtime snacks such as baguettes to more substantial meals, all washed down with good Betty Stogs, S.Hams Eddystone, and Otter Ale.

Doubling back on ourselves towards Kingsbridge, we then looked into The Crabshell, a modern building on the main road, which was made busy on this Saturday afternoon by a fair number of younger drinkers. It also offered the widest beer choice of the day: Proper Job; Tribute; Jail Ale; and Doom Bar. Driving back over the bridge into Kingsbridge, we headed for the Kings Arms, a smart pub in the main street. It changed hands a while back, but you can still try 3 beers in third of a pint glasses in lieu of a pint. On the downside, the beer range has been reduced from 4 to 3, whilst unfortunately quality has been somewhat compromised.

Continuing back along our previous route, we turned off the main road and headed for the picturesque village of South Pool, at the head of Southpool Creek. The village is home to The Millbrook Inn, with its welcoming fire and stream at the back which drains into the creek. The tiny bar dispenses 3 beers from Red Rock- Rushy Mede, I.P.A. and 'Red Rock' and the pub has developed a reputation for the quality of its food. The highlight of the day *...continued over*



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CASK MARQUE  
THE TASTE OF A GREAT PUB

The advertisement features a central image of a bar with several beer taps. The taps are labeled with various beer names: 'DARTMOOR', 'BETTY STOGS', 'BAY'S', and 'DOOM BAR'. The background is dark, and the text is white. In the bottom left corner, there is a 'Wi-Fi' logo. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for 'CASK MARQUE' with the tagline 'THE TASTE OF A GREAT PUB'.

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.....*Mini-bus trip*

...occurred on leaving, as our Route Planner's cowboy hat caught a gust of wind and blew into the creek. The resultant recovery attempt detained us

for what seemed like an eternity, but we were denied the spectacle of his actually joining it in his attempts to retrieve it.

By now it was dark, as we headed off to Slapton's Queen's Arms, our final stop of the day, where we were greeted with another blazing fire and Jail Ale along with Otter Bitter and Bright. With thanks to the hatless Tony Woodwark for planning the route, and particularly Peter Lister for driving the minibus and having to abstain while everyone else was ale-testing around him.

Peter O'Nions

*The Little Pub with the Big Garden*

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## **Meet The Brewer. Jack Leggett. Black Tor Brewery**

Jack's passion for brewing started when he was a member of the Real Ale Society at university and was nurtured by a short employment at Brains Brewery in Cardiff. From home brewing it was a big step to take on the 5 barrel brewery at Christow in the Teign Valley, but he is full of enthusiasm for his new vocation. He took over the brewery (previously Gidley's) 8 months ago and for the first 5 months he also had a full time job, brewing and doing the paperwork in the evenings and weekends. He was happy when he was able to brew full time.



It was a chance event that led him to details of the sale of Gidley's equipment and when he saw it he thought he'd have a go, although he admits to being terrified when he first started. With help from a friend, Simon Gilchrist, who gained his own experience at O'Hanlons Brewery, they formulated recipes from Jack's own home-brew recipes and produced new ones. Since then he spent time working hard to retain consistent brews. In the beginning there was a lot of trial and error involved, but the brewery now has a portfolio of 5 ales, the biggest seller being the session bitter Pride of Dartmoor 4%. Resolution is the latest beer developed, and uses Wakutu hops from New Zealand, which give a vanilla sweetness. Resolution is fast catching up in sales terms.

Black Tor produces 30-40 casks per week, but Jack hopes to expand the equipment to a 10 barrel plant by the summer, doubling its capability. Jack told me he was enjoying all aspects of his occupation, the brewing, the admin, the design, even the deliveries. He has gained a lot of useful feedback from talking to landlords while delivering, enabling him to tweak the recipes successfully.

His ardour for ale comes through when he talks, and he is very passionate about hops, being knowledgeable about the characteristics each lends to his brews. His current favourite hop is Cascade; he likes the aroma and the citrus taste it imparts. Pride of Dartmoor includes Cascade, Perle and Mt. Hood which has a gentle pine aroma and overall imparts quite a fruity characteristic to the beer. Dartmoor Pale Ale 4.5% is very light and hoppy and contains Goldings and Palisade with Perle for gentle bitterness. Templars IPA 5.8% is unusual in that it has a red hue, gaining its colour from Cara Red malt from Germany. Hops are Brambling Cross and Palisade.

Bottling plans are still a way off although he has done some experimentation. As Black Tor beers are brewed to be served through a hand-pump, Jack does not feel they taste as good when provided as a bottle conditioned bottled ale. He will be working on this aspect of his business in the future.

It is nice to see a man being able to enjoy what he does so thoroughly and making a success of it. Black Tor's Christmas ale, Advent, was joint runner-up at The Queens Arms beer festival, along with Branscombe's Summa That.

# DARTMOOR'S FINEST

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# What's On

## Branch Meetings and Social Events

Date	Time	Purpose	Location
11 March	20:00	Branch Meeting	Jolly Abbot Newton Abbot
12 March	12:00	Pub tour of Teignmouth starting at Blue Anchor	
8 April	20:00	Branch Meeting	Pig & Whistle, Littlehempston.
13 May	20:00	Branch Meeting	TBA
May		Visit to Yeovil Brewery.	Details TBA

## Beer Festivals

17-21 April 2014.	Blue Anchor Beer Festival.	Teignmouth
24-26 April 2014	Tuckers Malting Beer Festival. SIBA festival	at Newton Abbot
1st-5th May 2014.	George Inn Beer Festival	at Blackawton, in conjunction with Worm Charming Sunday.
22-26 May 2014	Blue Anchor Beer Festival,	Teignmouth
23-26 May 2014	Devon Diesel Society Mixed Traffic Weekend and Beer Festival,	Staverton Station
20-22 June 2014	SummerMoon Beer Festival,	Kingskerswell.
12-13 July 2014	Plymouth CAMRA Beer Festival,	Plymouth Pavillions
19 July 2014	Ipple Tipple at Ipplepen	Playing Field
21-25 August 2014	August Bank Holiday Beer Festival.	George Inn, Blackawton.
23-26 August 2014	Devon Diesel Society Rails and Ales Beer Festival,	Staverton Station
13-14 September	Somerset CAMRA Beer Festival,	Minehead Railway Station
19-21 September	AbbFest 2014. Fermoys Garden Centre,	Newton Abbot

## Bruges Visit and Beer Festival

At the beginning of February 2014 on a trip with friends from Exeter I managed to have a couple of days in Bruges, Belgium. Very fortunately the 6th Annual Brugge Beer Festival was on.

To start the weekend we all had dinner in the Cambrinus Restaurant ([www.cambrinus.eu](http://www.cambrinus.eu)) in the centre of Bruges, it not only serves over 400 beers, but their main menu uses beer in the cooking! I plumped for the rabbit with prunes cooked in the house bier Gambrivinus. Boy, can those Belgians cook well. I had a liquid dessert, a bottle Kreik Lambic from Girardin. A classic sour cherry beer from a small family old brewery



A tasting opportunity at Cambrinus

near Dilbeek, the centre of Lambic beer production. Most commercial fruit beer producers use fruit juices to flavour their beers but traditional brewers like Girardin, Hansons and Cantillon macerate whole fruit to extract the fruit flavours and these kreiks have a natural secondary fermentation like champagne and can be aged for several years.

Next to our hotel was a tiny new bar that was a revelation. The t'Brugs Beiratelier ([www.brugsbieratelier.com](http://www.brugsbieratelier.com)) just open a year, serves 12 artisan beers direct from 25 litre kegs in fridges in full view directly under the bar. The selection changes regularly but one thing is certain, the beers are truly fresh and give a brilliant introduction to Belgian beers. I particularly enjoyed a new beer from a new Bruges brewery Fort Lapin. They make only two beers, a glorious ....*Continued overleaf*



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...golden triple and a dark and brooding quadruple. Other brews come from the like of Delirium, La Chouffe and Steenbrugge. They also serve artisan cheeses and continental meats sliced in front of you on an old butcher's slicer.

The following day after a walking tour of the city the festival beckoned. Held in a hall just outside the old city, the festival boasts 367 beers from 76 brewers. Unlike a traditional British festival with rows and rows of 9 gallon casks on stillages, each of the breweries had little stands and served their own beers.

And the brewers were arranged by region. Each brewer had their own little bar to wash your glass and serve their beer. In addition to the regions there were two stands one for the Lambic beers and one for the 9 Abbaye breweries. There were too many beers to comment on and to be honest I was a very happy beer hunter.

I did meet the owner and head brewer of Fort Lapin ([www.fortlapin.com](http://www.fortlapin.com)) Kristof Vandenbussche whose command of the English language was better than mine by that time! His triple was a simple top fermented golden ale flavoured with spices. It had a brilliant white head and slight hazy golden hue. His quadruple was monumental. Dark multi-layered with sweet malt, a heady hop punch and a long spicy finish. To me the best beer of the festival.

Entry was 20 euros for two which included a lovely wine glass shaped commemorative glass each & 4 tasting tokens each. Extra tasting tokens were 1.50 euros apiece. As most of the beers were over 6% some 10% plus the samples were small but as the beers were so packed full of flavour was I bothered? No! Outside were plenty of clean loos and the ubiquitous mussels, chips and sausage stalls.

Over all a great colourful afternoon meeting the locals and brewers who were very happy to share their passion for their beers. Also no beers ran out either! The 2015 Bruges is being held on the 7th and 8th of February and is well worth a visit.

Roger Hanley

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**Last date for submission for the Summer magazine – 21.6.2014**

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## **Grumpy Old Man Says Let Dogs Speak.**

Those of you who have read my previous article will remember Ned, the lugubrious Staffordshire bull terrier and his sardonic thoughts. As a result, he has become somewhat of a minor celebrity with quite a substantial fan following. Unfortunately, it has all gone to his head and was certain 'to end in tears'. Rather pretentiously he wanted to start reading and initially selected Bertram Russell's *History of Western Civilisation*. This was a bad choice for an aspiring canine as it is generally beyond the cerebral capability of most human beings and so he settled for Charles Dickens. *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times* were no problem at all and he was quite capable of recognising subtle nuances in Dickens' critique of both classical economists and utilitarian thinkers, but *A Christmas Carol* was a very different matter. He started to get dreams which started off fine, but soon deteriorated into nightmares.

Here are his dreams in his own words.

### **Dream 1 and the Ghosts of Dogs Past.**

When I was young my owners recognised that I was unsuitable for the pub. I was likely to jump up at people and would have been an absolute nuisance to others. I was tied up outside, but I still had a great time. In those days the kids were largely outside and they used to play with me and feed me crisps and peanuts. The other outsiders stank abysmally and came outside to perform the strange ritual of setting their mouth on fire. You have to understand that my power of smell is much more intense and each outsider was probably the equivalent of 200 ash trays to a human being, but I tolerated it as some of them also wanted to play with me. This was a good dream and reminded me of the good days of my youth.

### **Dream 2 and the Ghosts of Dogs present.**

Yippee, I am now inside the pub as I have mellowed with more mature years and my owners recognise that I can now be trusted within a pub environment. It is also much warmer and a more comfortable place to lie down and sleep. The problem is that the kids had now joined me inside, but their behaviour was similar to me as a puppy. Kids get bored very easily, get restless, start to move about, misbehave or cry or complain and make themselves an irritation to others. They would prefer to be outside, as indeed they should be if they misbehave. Why, if my owners were responsible enough not to let me in to the pub as a puppy, do parents allow their children to behave like St. Trinians monsters in the modern day pub? I know there are plenty of sensible parents (and children), but there are many more who totally abrogate all responsibility and allow the children to commit mayhem. I have witnessed some amazing things including food being thrown around, chasing, fighting and why on earth do we allow scooters and kid's bicycles into the pub? For most of the time I can ignore this and am happy enough to sleep through it all.

I was also getting a taste for some beer. The hoppy golden stuff was dreadful with the intense aroma of the cascade hops nearly blowing my head off, bearing in mind my intense sense of smell. I quite liked some dark beers, but that cough mixture smell of some of them was as bad, if not worse, than the hops. I came to prefer basic bitters of fairly low gravity having had a bad experience with strong beers and Baz's Bonce Blower in particular. I am not stupid and know that I have four legs, but was neither capable of counting them or, more worryingly, using them. I was also getting very attached to crisps and pork scratchings and almost became a junkie with no visit to the pub complete without my fix.

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We all like a bit of television, but as a dog with my enhanced sense of hearing it was positively deafening. When adults complain it is too loud, then how do you think I feel, and why does everybody assume to think that all dogs like football?

All in all, it was a good dream reflected in the comfort and warmth of my new home in the pub, but there were worrying signs of things to come. One day I was dozing gently and the couple nearby had ordered their food. When it arrived the woman looked accusingly in my direction and yelled "I hope your unhygienic hairs will not infect my food". I was furious as it came from someone who looked as if she had never washed her hair in her life, let alone other parts of her body. I was tempted to tell her that my hygiene was second to none, and I doubted whether this would be the case with her. I was also thinking of demonstrating that I was no ordinary dog and was about to embark on a discussion of the relative merits of Sartre and Camus until I spotted her *Daily Mail* and realised the limitations of any potential intellectual discussion.

### **Dream 3 and the Ghosts of Dogs future**

I am now getting quite old and again found myself outside the pub and clearly the *Daily Mail* muncher and her ilk have won the day by getting all dogs banned leaving me to enjoy the company of the 'setting the mouth on fire brigade'. It is drizzling and I am cold and frankly fed up and depressed. All I can do is look through the window to see what I was missing and a world of horror was there to greet me. The children were in full swing, literally in this case, as there was also a slide and a climbing frame and not to forget the sand pit. Had there been more room I was sure that a skateboard park would have been provided. The adults had been isolated and were cowering in one corner, whilst looking considerably forlorn and clearly wanting to escape to the garden, but had been beaten to it by the earlier arrivals. How ironical it was that once upon a time it was the children who were confined to certain areas including the garden, but now it was the adults! A large sign displayed a warning to single men not to approach the children's territory and a 'bouncer' was there to enforce it. He was also in charge of the parking meters for the numerous buggies, prams, bicycles and scooters. The stench of cheesy chips and pizzas percolated through the door and the noise was horrendous both from the kids and the televisions with football having been replaced by cartoons and CeeBeebies. It was also clear that more milk shakes than beer were being served. This was a frightening, and dystopian view of the future, but suddenly the dream changed and I was being poked around by a vet who accused me of being overweight and in danger of premature death. "No more beer or pork scratchings for you" he roared out. I then attempted to enter in to a discussion on the meaning of existence, but this was cut short and I was sent to see the doggy psychiatrist. You are a dog, I was told, and you should concentrate on chasing sticks, chewing bones and long walks and you should forget this intellectual reading rubbish. And if you must read, choose something *simple*. Fortunately, the dream then ended, but I had seen the light and was determined to change.

A few weeks later, I was in the pub and heard my owner say "I don't know what is wrong with him these days. He seems to have gone right off his pork scratchings and the other day I even caught him reading the *Daily Mail*. What is that he is reading now? - please tell me that it is not Barbara Cartland."

Bob Southwell Aka The Grumpy old Man

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