

NEWS AND BREWS

*Winter
2012-13*

FREE

Free Magazine of

The South Devon Branch of

THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE



*South Devon CAMRA Champion Beer of Festival
St Austell Smugglers Ale Presentation*



**South Devon
CAMRA**

*Supporting Real Ale
in the South West*



Welcome to

NEWS AND BREWS

40th EDITION

Winter 2012-13

After months of campaigning, CAMRA's e-petition achieved more than 100,000 signatures to call for a debate on the scrapping of the beer duty escalator, which increases beer duty automatically each year by a factor larger than inflation. On 1st November Parliament held a three hour debate where 58 MPs from all parties called for the government to hold an urgent review into the beer escalator. Arguments raised, varied from the fact that above inflation increases would not provide more revenue; would encourage home drinking which itself threatens pubs and jobs, and fosters the trend to buy supermarket alcohol, itself a major contributor to binge drinking. The Society of Independent Brewers have praised the debate and the MP support which shows the value MPs place on pubs and the value pubs make to the social and economic health of Britain's towns and villages. The British Beer and Pub Association have released figures from Oxford Economics which show a duty freeze would save approximately 5,600 jobs, and the revenues from these would produce more income than the duty increase, and boost the fragile economy. In the meantime, the rate of pub closures is increasing once more -18 each week, and records show the since the escalator was introduced in 2008, 5,800 pubs have closed permanently.

On 12th December CAMRA is holding a mass lobby of parliament to show the government how angry we are that the government has refused to hold a review in the face of the support evidenced by the e-petition and subsequent debate. CAMRA hopes that over 1,000 members will attend the lobby and a rally afterwards. Show your support in whatever way you can.

Cheers, Tina Hemmings



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Pub News

The Palk Arms has recently re-opened and we have heard reports of them serving very good beer.

The Jolly Sailor in Teignmouth has re-opened and has installed an extra two hand pumps making a total of 5. The first beer through was Jail Ale and was superb. Their current aim is to have four beers on from Friday evening through the weekend reverting to three from Monday to Thursday. The extra beer so far has been Dartmoor Jail Ale or Exmoor Gold.

Ring O'Bells in Alvington has ales in very good order. Serving Otter Amber and a guest beer.

Teignmouth's popular real ale mecca, the Blue Anchor, is currently up for sale.

Café-Ode at the Ness in Shaldon only opened in May this year, and owners Tim and Clare Bouget are now planning to create their own microbrewery. They're hoping to source all the ingredients to make their beer locally. They already emphasise selling local produce especially seafood and fish. Lisa and Darryl Leaman have recently celebrated 5 years running the Star Inn at Liverton. They've transformed the pub into a thriving village local with good food, three good real ales and live entertainment.

The Haytor Moorlands Hotel bar and the Dandelion Cafe (the latter open daytime only except Tuesdays) has one real ale on tap, usually Teignworthy Neap Tide (ABV 3.8%) along with Teignworthy's Old Moggie and Beachcomber bottle-conditioned ales. The bar and cafe are very popular with walkers and tourists with it being a stones-throw from Haytor Rocks.

The Butchers Arms in Abbotskerswell has new licensees, Phil & Victoria Upton took over in September. Currently they have Butchers Best, Doombar and Tribute as the permanent ales, with a guest ale on their 4th Hand pump. On the last two visits this has been Jail Ale, then Otter Ale. They also have Bridge Farm Cider from Cornwall, dispensed on gravity. All the ales and cider are well kept.

The Sun Inn in Buckfastleigh keeps either Sandford Orchard Old Kirton or Devon Scrumpy (or sometimes both) on gravity in the cellar. In Kingsteignton, The Old Rydon has Ashbridge cider on hand pump and the Sandygate Inn, Sandford Orchards 'Old Kirton, also on hand pump. In Newton Abbot, The Locomotive has Hunts cider out the back on gravity.

The TallyHo in Littlehempston is in the process of getting together a team to take on the task of becoming a community pub. There is a way to go as yet, but we wish them well with their endeavours.

Both St Austell pubs, The Victoria Inn at Salcombe and the Church House Inn at Churchstow, have received good reports on the quality of their ales.

Henry's Bar in Paignton is regularly praised at meetings for the quality of their beers. Plymouth CAMRA started out there prior to a Brewery trip to Bays Brewery. Both of our Paignton locations were appreciated by the visitors.

The Three Crowns in Chagford has recently re-opened after extensive refurbishments. Also re-opened, the Jolly Abbot in Newton Abbot is serving Betty Stoggs, Tribute and Bass. The Cromwell Arms in Bovey Tracey has been selling more unusual St Austell's ales to allow their customers to feedback opinion. Recently they were selling Proper Black.

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Brewery News

Gidley's at Cristow has increased sales and is now providing real ale to The Bridge Inn at Topsham, and Dartmoor Lodge at Ashburton.

Dartmoor Brewery continues to expand, and their output is 25% up from last year. They are now supplying Enterprise and Punch Taverns.

South Hams Brewery has opened a shop for off-sales.

Quercus Brewery are looking for new premises to allow them to expand.

At Summerskills Brewery in Plymouth, Carl Beeson retired at the end of April. Since then he has been busy organising the big SIBA beer festival "BeerX" to be held in Sheffield next year around SIBA's AGM and conference. He and Sue have also been appreciating the English countryside from their motor home. Norman Lewis who has been head brewer for several years has taken over the business and is enjoying the extra responsibility. Best wishes to them both in their new roles in life.

Hunters Brewery welcomes Cornwall CAMRA

Being CAMRA's Brewery Liaison Officer for Hunter's Brewery I generally am informed of other CAMRA branches visits to this Ipplepen establishment. Paul and Eline are known to be hospitable hosts so everyone looks forward to their trip. Recently on a Saturday afternoon the Cornwall branch came to enjoy Hunters Beer and look over the new plant at Hunters.

On arrival they were greeted by Paul and given glasses to help themselves from a barrel of his Denbury Dreamer 4.1% abv. This very popular session beer is brewed with Goldings Hops, originally for the Union Inn, Denbury. Suitably refreshed, everybody then enjoyed a conducted tour around the impressive brewery, taking in the mash tuns, fermenters, bottling plant, and the new conditioning room. Then it was back to more Denbury Dreamer and a convivial gossip, to discuss beer quality and the brewery and other important topics. Then Cornwall branch set off in their coach for the up and coming Queens Arms in Brixham for more cask ale.

Anthony Woodward.



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Philip Wright Roberts 31.5.50 - 27.9.12

Exeter and E Devon branch has lost its most passionate real ale activist in Phil Roberts, who put up a brave fight against cancer. Apart from being their current branch chairman, he was branch secretary for many years, and chairman before that. He was also instrumental in organising beer festivals: over 20 of our branch winter festivals, worked closely with SIBA in promoting their events such as Tuckers Maltings, Devon County Show and the Food and Drink festival, was chairman of the South West Tasting Panel and involved with the TAG group. He was an annual volunteer at GBBF and the NWAf, judging, managing Corporate Hospitality and serving pints! His hard work, dedication, cheerfulness and friendliness have always been a hallmark of his commitment to the real ale cause.

After a career in Environmental Health, he enjoyed an early retirement with more time to indulge his other (non-beer related!) interests, such as walking, car trials, F1 motor racing and canals and narrow boats.

He leaves behind his wife Jane and two daughters, Helen and Elisabeth, and will be sorely missed by everyone who knew him.



Trip on a Train

In my view, it is an undisputed fact that trains and beer go together like nothing else. So when there was a mention of a trip on one of the country's most scenic rail journeys there was also the usual grab for the Good Beer Guide (GBG) and National Inventory (NI) list and a plan began to form. After a great deal of research it all came together.

The route was Settle to Carlisle over the North Yorkshire Moors.

First a rail ride to Leeds, a city with many pubs, so a good place to stop for lunch. Not any pub of course, it had to be the most famous of Tetley Brewery's National Heritage Pubs, the Adelphi. This is only a short walk from the station and is next to the old Tetley brewery itself. It was the brewery tap used by all the brewery workers after their shifts. This impressive tall brick built building is clad with granite and sandstone and has large etched glass windows and a very fine staircase. Several rooms within have grand fireplaces and tiled floors, and there were some interesting local beers (Leeds Pale Ale and Kirkstall Three Swords) and the food was good too.

We soon had to press on to Settle an hour and a half away, and our hotel was only a short walk from the station and another short walk into the town to check out the pubs. Two were on the NI list. The Royal Oak Hotel is not actually a hotel now but it certainly had a fine looking interior, although they tell me that the wooden panelling is actually made out of plaster. When it was built they ran out of money and had to finish it off on the cheap but it still looked great to me and had another grand fireplace. The beers were Black Sheep Bitter and Copper Dragon Orange Pippin.

The next day was THE TRIP on the rails to Carlisle. It was raining but apparently it does that a lot in this area, the train was a very modest two car affair but none of that mattered because the scenery was marvellous. Dramatic moorland crags, valleys and streams and it didn't rain all the time. Carlisle was a bit wet but we wandered about until we found the Cumberland Inn which was not easy to find in the shadow of a Wetherspoons but there it was. A NI pub and worth the visit. The small front opened up inside to a much larger bar with lots of dark wooden panelling (the real stuff here). The staff were very pleasant but that didn't make up for the fact that there was no food apart from crisps and NO real ale and a pint of Newcastle Brown was my best bet. We were given detailed directions to another pub for lunch, not NI but a GBG one. However the Kings Head did serve a good lunch and had decent beer, O'Hanlon's Red Ale, from Devon, and Yates bitter, from Cumbria. The landlord told me that the locals like O'Hanlon's beers.

Back to Settle; the weather was much better now, the views were so different in sunshine and we had a knowledgeable guide on the train. In the evening we went to try the other pub mentioned in the NI list, The Golden Lion. A Thwaites pub with very nice food and the beers were excellent but very little of the original features left so that was not so good. Then back home on the train the next day, but a great rail trip - four NI and one GBG pub it can't be bad. Roger Adams

Footnote - CAMRA's National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors lists those pubs whose interiors are regarded as being in the first division when it comes to pub preservation priorities. CAMRA members passionate about protecting and promoting these interiors help with work on the Inventory, which currently comprises 282 pubs and started in 1991. Entries fall into three

categories:

- Pubs whose interiors have remained wholly or largely intact since before 1945 or, in some exceptional cases, before 1970.

- Interiors which, though altered to an extent, retain exceptional rooms or features which are of national historic importance.

- Outstanding pub-type rooms in establishments like hotels or station buffets.

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Daylight Robbery

Breweries have troubles in this recession like everyone else; theirs can be the same as other traders but when you are a small brewer you can do without a major supermarket making its payment terms 75 days from their receipt of invoice. Now you know why your local beer isn't stocked at the big supermarkets.

Outright theft is another problem to deal with. A Romanian couple from Tottenham, North London have just been caught with 900 stolen beer kegs in a container ready for export, worth a cool £75,000!

Anthony Woodward.



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Grumpy Old Man.

Increasingly I associate half term with kids on the move creating overcrowding on public transport and invasion of the pubs. There is also a trend for grandparents to be custodians for the day which are often the ingredients for the totally unable attempting to get a grip on the utterly uncontrollable! This year, the half term in October/November corresponded with the Wetherspoons' Beer Festival and I was to find out just how dreadful things could get.

I decided to catch a train to the West Country which was my first mistake. Let me give you a tip here. It is always best to catch a Plymouth Train rather than a Penzance one which is always liable to be more crowded. By the time I had crawled over a sea of industrial wheelie bins (aka suitcases on wheels) it was obvious that the train was bursting at the seams and mainly with noisy kids with a natural propensity to run up and down the corridors. Eventually I obtained a seat opposite a rather posh little girl named Annabelle. You have to remember that Cornwall has a high rate of second home ownership and this family were clearly well-heeled. 'Annabelle, please don't jump on the seat. Oh, please get off the seat Annabelle. Oh Annabelle please do as you are told'.

Annabelle had no intention of listening to her grandmother and carried on regardless and as more corrective measures were clearly required, I got very close to applying them! Any moment I expected her, and her ilk, to ride their ponies down the train, merely to be told to be a little quieter. I had enough of this and jumped ship (apologies for the mixed metaphor) and headed towards the nearest Wetherspoons pub with the 'grump' factor already raised.

On approaching the pub it was obvious that I had to endure a dash through the smokers who somehow always manage to look a little seedy and appear as older versions of schoolboys skulking behind the bicycle shed. Once inside there was a considerable number of push chairs and children were heavily in residence and there was also a very dominant smell of chips. At the bar an elderly gentleman with a small boy about 10 years of age (should he be at the bar at all?) was waiting to be served.

"Granddad, can I have a milk shake" ? Foolishly, this order was repeated over the bar.

"We don't sell milk shakes Sir" What a surprise and when was the last time that this old duffer was in a pub?

"Granddad, can I have a choc ice" ?

This was also repeated over the bar producing the same, and obvious, response from the bar person. I felt like shouting out that it's a PUB and not an ice cream parlour. Grandmother now joined in with something about onion rings and extra cheesy chips. Now, all I wanted was a pint, but it was not to materialise in the near future. They all wanted weird combinations of soft drinks, food with lots of chips without knowing

...continued

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Grumpy.....continued

... .. their table number and were paying by credit card. Save me from all of this chaos. Eventually it was my turn and I ordered a pint of Okell's Steam Beer which subsequently proved to be excellent. However, before the order could be executed grandmother returns, and interrupts, enquiring about the location of the tomato sauce. Given the interruption the barman forgets my order which needs to be repeated. The grump factor is now rising rapidly and I now retire to a quiet area in the expectation of calming down. On the way, I notice a child crawling across the floor which was not only stupidly dangerous but remarkably unhygienic. At least the parent was in attendance. I get out my newspaper and start to settle down, but not for long.

"glugalugaglug

I look up to see a small child with a dummy in its mouth standing at the end of the table without any apparent supervision.

"globagibishk" .

At least, the conversation was not offensive as some of the xenophobes and the whipping and thrashing brigade often are. Neither was it especially boring when compared to people like the bus ticket collector identified in previous articles. Things now take a turn for the worse as the child lurches towards the table and I grab my pint for its safety. Suddenly, an elderly woman rushes over and apologises, but the reason for her absence was readily apparent. She reeked of cigarette smoke and her breath was worse than my cat after he has eaten sardines. I am now in favour of having a compulsory decontamination unit attached to pubs where, at the very least, they must stop until the stench factor makes them fit to return to civilised society. However, the grump factor had now gone off the scale! The Grumpy Old Man, Aka Bob Southwell.

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Wednesday Marauders

The monthly Wednesday bus trips out and about seem to no longer be the sole preserve of myself and The Grumpy Old (Chair) Man as, for the last couple of months, we have been joined by the recently-retired Richard Wilson, towards whom propriety prevents me referring as Victor, and who seems to have become a permanent addition. This month we made our way to Shaldon, where we met in the Clifford Arms. Also present was our ex-chairman and Shaldon resident Mike, as well as a first for our trips - a couple from Essex who were down for a few days on holiday (and who were most welcome). We sampled the very-local (and drinkable) Ringmore Oarsome as well as Dartmoor I.P.A. and Legend, and Bay's Devon Dumpling. Mike then took us to Shaldon Conservative Club, which had the local Teignworthy Reel Ale and Hop Back's Summer Lightning - one of the original golden ales.

Mike having left us, we caught a bus to St. Marychurch, and the characterful Crown and Sceptre, where we enjoyed good Betty Stoggs and Tribute - there were a further 6 beers on offer, including Teignworthy's very strong Russian Imperial Porter at 13%abv, which was bottled and served in small 'shot' type measures because of the strength. This was tried by our visitors - the 3 of us had drunk it before and were pacing ourselves. The original plan was then to visit the other pubs in St. Marychurch, but on a whim we thought our guests might like to see the Cary Arms. Thus followed a walk along Babbacombe Downs followed by the steep descent of the narrow road to the pub, which is at sea level. On arrival, our reason for taking them down became apparent, as we all admired the magnificent views along the coastline. The other reward for the trek was well-kept Bay's Topsail, Red Rock Devon Coast, and Otter Ale. They also stock Bay's Windfall cider.

Mindful of Grumpy having to catch a train, in due course we three locals set off on the climb back to the bus stop, leaving our guests to take in some more of the view and the local ale.

Peter O'Nions

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Awards and Accolades



Chris Simmonds from The Queens Arms in Brixham was recently presented with the South Devon CAMRA award for Most Improved Pub. He opened in December 2011, and since then has taken the pub to being a core of the community, with events such as charity fundraisers, Meet the Brewer nights, fishing trips and brewery visits. He now has thriving darts and euchre teams, and hosts Brixham Town, the local football team. He regularly has 5 real ales sourced from around the country, and a selection of local beers, which always includes a brew from Hunter's Brewery.

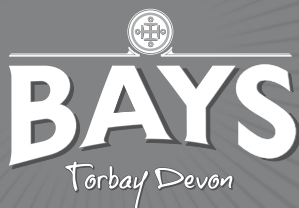
Following their success at the huge Peterborough CAMRA Beer Festival, where they won Silver in a blind-tasting of Stouts and Porters, Paul Walker and his wife Eline who own Hunter's Brewery were presented with their certificate by Peterborough CAMRA member John Rice.



A contingent from South Devon CAMRA went down to St Austell last month to present the shield for winning Champion Beer of the Festival at South Devon CAMRA Beer festival.

St Austell's Smuggler's Ale is generally only bottled, but a few casks have been released recently and have proved very popular.

At the festival, Smuggler's Ale was judged against more than 100 other ales and won the Strong Ale class before going on to win against all the other class winners. Director of Brewing, Roger Ryman was delighted to receive the commemorative shield award, and on the evidence of this and the cover photo they all had a good time.



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Battle o' the Beers

Wednesday 19th September saw the 'Battle of the Beers' at the Queens Arms in Brixham. This entailed a blind tasting of the two 'Dartmoor' beers - Dartmoor I.P.A from Dartmoor Brewery, and Dartmoor Best Bitter from St. Austell. Two of the pub's six hand-pumps were accordingly labelled 'Dartmoor A' and 'Dartmoor B' and customers invited to try both beers (which were on sale at a bargain £2 a pint) and decide which was which. About 30 people turned up on the evening, including a number of S. Devon CAMRA members. While people deliberated, live entertainment and snacks were provided. Two charity presentations were then made. Firstly, local celebrity Capt. Bob Curtis received a cheque for £567 for Great Ormond Street Hospital, the money having been raised by landlord Chris's daughter and her friends through a charity day full of various events. Then a cheque for £127 was presented to the Golden Vanity Trust, which enables disadvantaged young people to go to sea in this restored sailing vessel. Meanwhile, as well as the two competing beers, everyone enjoyed Hunter's Denbury Dreamer; Oakham's hoppy Endless Summer; and the classic Thornbridge Jaipur. 17 people entered the beer-identifying contest, and of these 7 got it right. These entries were then drawn from a hat, with the winner getting £15 to spend behind the bar, and the runner-up £10, courtesy of Chris. As with one of my CAMRA colleagues, I could differentiate the beers by their colour in the glass, but if that sounds boastful, it still didn't win either of us a share of the prize fund. Peter O'Nions



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Newton Abbot Festival Report

We returned to the racecourse in mid-August after a gap of three years, having last been there in 2009. The weather was not very kind on the Thursday and Friday, and this partially explains why our attendances were down. On reflection, we probably needed to have put more work into the publicity. The racecourse is a large venue and, if not full, can become a little soulless. Nevertheless, many of you told us that you were pleased that we were back at the traditional venue and we had numerous compliments regarding the impressive beer range and quality. After all, it was a beer festival and on that basis it was a resounding success. There were of course a few gripes—especially regarding the token system, but we are giving some thought to its revision. In the past the usual pattern on Saturday night was for people to drift off into the town from about 9pm so it was deemed uneconomic to put on a band. Perhaps inevitably, there were those disappointed at the absence of any music.

On the Thursday afternoon we held the judging for the Beer of the Festival. It was pleasing to see 40 judges turning up made up from CAMRA members, pubs, brewers and others many of which had travelled some considerable distances. All 100 of the beers were blind judged. The overall winner was the relatively rare St.Austell's Smugglers Ale and a presentation was arranged at the brewery in October.

We have already held two meetings with regard to next year's event and would hope to make an announcement soon regarding the venue and date. In 2010 we were unable to secure a venue being let down at the last moment and are keen this does not happen again. There are several things we have to take into account. Firstly, the size of the venue - it is probably better to go smaller for a more intimate atmosphere. Secondly, the time of the year. It is possible that the reduced attendances in 2012 were due to it being held in the height of the holiday season in August. However, we are still aiming for a summer festival, but possibly earlier in May or June. We must also be very careful not to clash with other local events and beer festivals. Finally, it would be nice to have a venue with outside access in the hope of decent weather.

Bob Southwell

Coast Path Pleasures.

In September my good friend Ian and I walked a further stage of the South West Coast Path from Wembury to Sidmouth, a distance of about 105 miles in eight days. Whilst Ian pre-booked the B&Bs and luggage transfers, I was responsible for the train and cab/bus travel from Surrey plus (the most important bit) the pubs in the evening, using the GBG and some good local knowledge.

Upon arriving in Wembury on Monday afternoon we relaxed with a nice cream tea at The Old Mill with good views over the beach and what may be called Prison Island. In the evening we went to The Odd Wheel for dinner where the staff and locals were very friendly. Whereas Ian went for Betty Stoggs, I particularly liked Summerskills Devon Dew - ideal prep for the following days walk to Bigbury-on-Sea we felt.

Tuesday required an early start to get the 10am ferry over to Noss Mayo before tackling the mainly undulating high-level path to Bigbury of 14 miles - we also needed a cab to get us round the River Erme. At Bigbury we particularly wanted to try The Pilchard Inn on Burgh Island. What a treat - lovely place, lovely staff and great beer: South Hams Eddystone and St Austell Pilchard Ale. Another early start on Wednesday to get the ferry across the Avon for the 14 miles to Salcombe where we had Palmers Copper Ale at The Ferry Inn before moving on to The Victoria Inn for dinner with Proper Job and Trelawny. All very nice. An even earlier start on Thursday to get ferry across the harbour for a tough 14 mile day to Slapton where our B&B recommended The Queens Arms. Amazingly we were soon joined by a young couple from Berlin we had first met in the cab on Tuesday as they were on a similar walking holiday. We enjoyed a good meal together and appreciated the fact that they had taken a genuine liking to our real ales, Otter Bitter and Dartmoor Jail Ale on this night.

Friday was a slightly easier 10 miles to Dartmouth with this couple and with whom we had a lovely evening together in The Cherub. Whilst the others went for Tribute and HSD, I took full advantage of Skinners Pasty Gold served from a polypin - just perfect!

Saturday was yet another early start together to get the ferry for the tougher 11 miles to Brixham where we all ate at The Blue Anchor enjoying Dartmoor Bitter and Proper Job and live modern folk/country style music. We then went up the hill to The Queens Arms which was excellent - Hunters Royal Hunt and Half Bore to the rockin live music of the Stormin Norman band. Both pubs had really good music and fun staff.

On Sunday Ian and I were off to Babbacombe (via Torquay), about 13 miles in total, where the Berlin couple joined us from Brixham for dinner in The Cary Arms suitably lubricated with Bays Topsail which was first class. Also tried Devon Coast IPA.

On Monday we left for Exmouth which included two ferry crossings - walk distance about 15 miles. We enjoyed a light lunch on the sea front at Teignmouth and the sight of gulls clearing the next table vacated by four business folk. In Exmouth we went to The Grapevine for dinner with Butcombe Bitter and Gold. Tuesday was our last walking day of 13 miles to Sidmouth via Budleigh Salterton where we experienced the only rain (of about 10 minutes) during the eight walking days. Upon arrival at Sidmouth we duly celebrated this year's walk with



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lovely large ice cream cones. Later we went to The Marine which took me back about 46 years! Having been at Wembley to see the 1966 World Cup Final as a 19 year old, I loved the large image of Bobby Moore holding the cup above his head and all the framed autographed football memorabilia displayed on the walls. Here we had Exeter Brewery Ferryman and Branscombe Vale Summa That. Recovering my composure we trotted along for dinner at The Dukes with Branscombe Vale Draymans Best Bitter which concluded our journey very nicely.

Reviewing this walk on our return trip to Surrey the following day we both agreed that the coastal scenery, bays, beaches and countryside were fantastic - a wonderful stage of the SW Coastal Path. The pubs and ales were also a real treat with plenty of choice. We particularly liked The Pilchard Inn on Burgh Island, The Cherub in Dartmouth and The Cary Arms at Babbacombe, although it has to be said that it was a close call as we enjoyed the good beers, company, atmosphere and lovely staff in all the pubs visited.

Cheers to all the lovely folk of Devon

Donald MacLeod

Albert Inn Ales

A party of us had a great time at the Albert Inn Beer festival in October. After revisiting old friends, Mighty Oak's Oscar Wilde, Castle Rock Harvest Pale, Jaipur IPA, Harviestoun's Schiehallion and best of all Orkney's Red McGregor, we discovered a gem. Bridgetown Brewery, homed at the back of this Totnes pub has just produced Shark Island Porter 4.4% abv. A black, smooth and slightly sweet ale with a creamy mousse head and great head retention, it has coffee and sherbet flavours and we drank this for the rest of the evening. Well worth trying if you get a chance. We have added our request to others, that Giles (landlord and brewer) keeps this star in the brewing portfolio.

What's On

Branch Meetings and Social Events

Date	Time	Purpose	Location
10 Dec 2012	19:30	Branch Christmas Social.	Richard Hopkins, Newton Abbot
8 Jan 2013	20:00	Branch Meeting	The Bay Horse, Totnes
12 Feb 2013	20:00	Branch Meeting	The Blue Anchor, Teignmouth
12 March 2013	20:00	Branch Meeting	Nelson Inn, Kingskerswell

Beer Festivals

- 22 Dec 2012 - Axminster Christmas Beer Festival . Axminster Guildhall
100% local beers and ciders. 12:00–23:00
- 18–19 January 2013–Exeter CAMRA Festival of Winter Ales - Exeter City FC,
St James Park Exeter. 60 real ales plus cider and perry.
11:00–23:00

Grumpy Replies to Critics

May I thank all of you who have taken the trouble to have a pop at me, which at least proves that my articles are being read. Not all of you are critical and only recently somebody informed that they would never look at a pub menu in the same light again without casting a caustic eye over the marketing verbosity. Apparently I am too flippant and should become more serious and write heavy campaigning articles which nobody would read. I am campaigning in my own inimitable style and constantly get to heart of many CAMRA issues revolving around pub life. There is also the Doombar affair. Note that I have never criticised the beer in any form. My comments are, that it is everywhere and is easily Britain's fastest growing draught beer (22% growth



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Grumpy Replies ...cont

in 2011 alone). I am accused me of being hypocritical by criticising tickers and bottlers and yet completing all of the beers at the Wetherspoons beer festival. I cannot but help seeing the green eyed monster of envy in these utterances. I do not regard my activities as ticking, but merely as a scientific enquiry into variations in beer styles..

Howard Newton takes me to task over my attack on mothers and Mothering Sunday. I was not attacking mothers, but merely the institution of that dreadful Sunday. Yes Howard, I do have a mother, but she would hate being taken out to the pub for this annual event being more than content with a trip to the garden centre for a meal and a cup of tea. In any case, the trip out on Mothering Sunday is often to assuage guilt for not seeing them for the rest of the year, a crime which I am definitely not guilty. However, thank you Howard for suggesting that I might well be a cuddly old softie and for correctly pointing out that real ale drinkers can also be the greatest dithers at the bar before finally making their choice.

I am grateful to Chris Moore for a more academic approach in his criticisms. In referring to pub quizzes I suggested that we should have some 'real' questions including some on third century Babylonian architecture. Apparently, Babylon was at its peak in the first century and had disappeared by the third. However, it does, in a sense, prove a point in making the question even more difficult! Well spotted Chris. As far his suggested formulae for the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle I am afraid I have not got round to checking that one out.

Keep the comments coming - I am man enough to take on all comers. Given that my last two articles touched on St. Peter and potentially religious issues followed by kids, grandparents and the half term I have little doubt that my inbox could well start filling up very rapidly.

Bob Southwell

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French Ales - a sample to try

We all know about French Beer don't we - Stella Artois and Kronenbourg 1664, brewed in Britain, sold cheaply in supermarkets in bogof offers. However, there are some super ones out there waiting to be enjoyed. On a recent holiday I tried out quite a few on your behalf and here are three to try, so next time you go to France you will be able to go straight to the supermarket with confidence and decision.

First up is **La Goudale**, a blonde beer de garde, akin to golden ale with a foaming lacy head, a lovely flavour reminiscent of fruit and spices, superb in the mouth and having a refreshingly bitter after taste. At least 7.2% often more. **3 Monts** at 8.6 % from the St Sylvestre Brewery is a cracking light champagne style bottle conditioned beer. Flavour is light clean citrus flavour that zings round the mouth.

St Erwann. A Brittany beer named after Brittany's 12th Century patron saint of Lawyers. He gave his services free to the poor and was the only lawyer never to cheat them. This is more a Barley wine than a beer but very pleasurable for all that. 7% means it's one to savour with a full amber colour, creamy head and pleasant fruit finish.

Anthony Woodwark

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Belgian Brewery tours

Smisje (pronounced a little like schmishga) is a tiny brewery based in Oudenaarde and is 20 miles SW of Gent, where the brewer, Johan Brandt, produces 4,400 gallons per year, some of which are sold under the name Smiske (easier to pronounce for English speakers - Schmiska). His hand-crafted beers often contain fruits, herbs or honey from his own bees. And as he is also a printer, he prints off his own labels for the bottled beers and a newsletter of the brewery events.

We tried 2 of the beers listed on the blackboard in the brewery's spacious visitors' room. This was full of ancient radios, artefacts from the blacksmith shop that was there before and breweriana. Preferring a hoppy ale, the Smiske Extra was right up my street with clove, grass and apple flavours.

George went for Catherine the Great, described as an imperial stout and full of smooth, fruity, smoky flavours. We were also lucky enough to be allowed to sample the rare Smisje Grande Reserva, full of caramel malts and dark fruit flavours that finishes with smoky woody flavour and hints of cherry sourness. The Grande Reserva is not normally available as it has been commissioned by an American buyer, and most of it is exported.



Johan Brandt with 2 of his brews

On another occasion we were able to visit De Dolle (translates as The Mad Brewers). We were given an entertaining guided tour by the brewers' 95 year old mother who told us she drinks a bottle of their Oerbier every day, and if it keeps her fit and healthy, it must be the thing to drink. She told us that she had encouraged her sons to brew their own beer when they were students, as she said she could not afford to pay for their beers, and from this start the brewery eventually came into being. All along the route there was a perch or stool for her to sit while she described the brewing processes and the health benefits of beer. She also had a pretty decent stock of jokes, one of which was that brewers make beer from water, and visitors make water from beer!

For a relatively small brewery (22,000 gallon annual production), the visitors' area was very spacious, and full of reclaimed furniture previously thrown away. One of the tables showed scars of repair from WW1 bullet holes. There is also a great collection of paintings done by Kris Herteleer, the brewer. We had to have some of the Oerbier – after all it had come well recommended – and found it a dark ale with plummy malty flavours. I also tasted the Arabier, a complex pale ale where I detected vanilla, citrus and hoppy flavours. Once more, we were able to try the Special Reserva 2010, which was full of hints of coffee, tobacco and cherries which balanced each other well and made a delicious ale.



A wonderful advert for her sons' beers

Tina Hemmings

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