

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

FREE

61ST EDITION

SPRING 2018



Rebuilt and open for business Ring of Bells, North Bovey



South Devon CAMRA

Supporting Real Ale in the South West



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE



The Ship Inn Kingswear

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WELCOME

61ST EDITION
SPRING 2018



Hello,

Your South Devon CAMRA beer festival is back! Block off 26-28 July on your calendar for the beer festival that will feature up to 65 beers and ciders from around the country. See more on page 17.

Also in this edition:

- **News from your local pubs and breweries**
(pages 6 and 7)
- **Focus on the Ring of Bells in North Bovey, reopened after the devastating fire**
(pages 10 and 11)
- **Bridgetown brewery in profile**
(pages 24 and 25)
- **Grumpy on 'craft'**
(pages 30 and 31)

STOP PRESS Feeling South Devon CAMRA is too Newton Abbot and Torbay centric? The Number 3 Bus Group arranges trips to pubs in the South Hams along the bus route between Plymouth and Dartmouth. Avoid drinking and driving - check out southdevon.camra.org.uk for details of upcoming trips.



Cheers,
Andrew Thomson
Editor

Please enter your monthly What Pub scores by the **6th** of the following month for them to be included on that month's database. For a 'how to' description of scoring see southdevon.camra.org.uk



**CAMRA DISCOUNT
ENTRY SATURDAY 23 JUNE: £7**

THIS PRICE APPLIES TO CAMRA MEMBERS ON PRESENTATION OF A VALID MEMBERSHIP CARD



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CHALLENGE 25

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WHAT'S ON

Branch Meetings and Social Events

Date	Time	Purpose	Location
13 Mar	20:00	Branch meeting - Pub of the Year choice	The Jolie Brise, Teignmouth
21 Mar	11:10	Mid-week to Chagford and Moretonhampstead	Start Exeter bus station at 1110h bus 173
10 Apr	20:00	Branch social	Wolborough then Union, Teign Cellars, Railway Brewhouse
20-22 Apr	AGM	CAMRA members weekend	University of Warwick, Coventry
25 Apr	10:30	Midweek to Kingswear and Kingsbridge	10:30 bus 120 from Paignton bus station
16 May	11:00	Midweek Ashburton and Totnes	1100 Teign Cellars, then bus 88
25 May	20:00	Branch meeting	Staverton station

Beer Festivals

Date	Event	Location
14-25 Mar	Beer Festival	Wetherspoons
22-24 Mar	Bristol Beer Festival	Old Station, Temple Meads
29 Mar-2 Apr	Blue Anchor Beer Festival	Blue Anchor, Teignmouth
30 Mar-2 Apr	Bay Horse Inn Beer Festival	Bay Horse Inn, Totnes
6-8 Apr	Sausage and Cider Festival	The Albert Inn, Totnes
19-21 Apr	SIBA Beer Festival	Tuckers Maltings
25-28 May	Beer Festival	Staverton station
25-28 May	Charity Beer/Music Festival	Railway Brewhouse, Newton Abbot
26-28 May	Beer Festival	Millbrook Inn, South Pool
15-16 June	Beer Festival	Ocombe Farm
22-23 June	Summer Moon Beer Festival	Church End Road, Kingskerswell
29-30 June	Beer Festival	The Albert, Totnes
13-15 July	Kingsbeer	Kingswear Station
21 July	Ippletipple	Ipplepen village green
26-28 July	South Devon CAMRA Sunshine Beer and Cider Festival	Newton Abbot Rugby Club, Newton Road, Kingsteignton

PUB NEWS

It's the end of an era at **The Maritime** in **Brixham**. Pat Seddon has sold up and is retiring. We wish Pat, George, and Mr Tibbs a very happy retirement.

The Queens Arms in **Brixham** raised more than £2,000 for local charity PATH homeless charity at their December charity beer festival.

The **Lord Nelson** in **Kingskerswell** has been getting adventurous with their beer choice, as well as running their usual ales. On a recent visit, Adnams Broadside, Sharps Sea fury, and Arundel Pickled Mouse were on the bar.

James Gilbert is the new landlord of **The Sandygate**, in **Kingsteignton**. Otter, Legend, and Doombar were on the bar at a recent visit.

The Ship in **Kingswear** has a new landlord, Kevin John, well known in the area for also running the Ship In Dock in Dartmouth. The pub reopened recently after a between-landlord refurbishment. Usual beers Otter Bitter, Salcombe Devon Amber and Sharps Doom Bar were joined by guest St Austell Proper Job on a recent visit.

The **Old Inn** in **Malborough** completed their refurbishment and our reporter enjoyed Butcombe Original, Doom Bar and Devon Amber on a recent visit.

There is a new manager at **The Railway** in **Newton Abbot**, after Mike Rowland left to take over the Palk Arms in Hennock. Martin Arliss has been involved with the pub for 6 years. He intends to continue promoting Platform 5 beers and live entertainment. The pub will be putting on a beer and music festival 25-27th May.

A refurbishment has just been completed at **The Ferry Inn** in **Salcombe**. Beers on recently were Palmers Copper, Tally Ho and IPA.

It is expected that the **Kings Arms** in **Strete** will re-open soon as a free house. As we went to press the name of the new landlord was not known.

When this magazine hits the streets the **The Green Dragon** in **Stoke Fleming** will have a new landlord. The pub closed for a few weeks after the Crowthers left for the usual between-landlord refurb and Alan Jones and Georgie Varney have now taken over. We wish them the best with their new business.

The Albert in **Totnes** held their beer festival recently where they showcased all their beers.

The **Rugglestone Inn**, **Widcombe-In-The-Moor**, has been nominated for the BBC Countryfile's Country Pub of the Year. It is one of 5 in the final. We wish South Devon CAMRA pub of the year 2017 the best for the final. We hope to report their success in News & Brews Summer 2018!

BREWERY NEWS

Over £15,000 raised so far for Wildlife conservation by **Bays Brewery**. Their collaboration ale with Paignton Zoo, Crocod'ale, raised a whopping £2,650 for wildlife conservation. This now takes the overall total raised to beyond £15,000 since 2013. »

BREWERY NEWS.... CONTINUED

» **Black Tor** beers have been popular as far as Wales, The North and Scotland recently, and will also be served at lots of upcoming beer festival such as GBBF Winter Ales Festival in Norwich and Bradford Beer Festival. Latest Limited Edition brew available on cask throughout February and March, a refreshing light ale hopped with American Cascade and New Zealand Rakau hops with citrus and stonefruit aromas. Expansion continues at the brewery with new fermenters increasing brewing capacity to 200 casks per week. The brewery is working closely with local historian Michael Downes of Fairlynch Museum in Budleigh Salterton to launch a special ale in May to commemorate 400 years since the death of Sir Walter Raleigh.

Bath Ales newly named Hare Brewery is being built at the existing headquarters in Warmley, between Bath and Bristol. Fronted by flagship ale Gem, the four-vessel brew house will have the capacity to produce more than 50,000 brewers' barrels of beer – more than 14.5 million pints. St Austell Brewery announced its ambitious multi-million pound plans for Bath Ales shortly after the acquisition in July 2016. The independent company, which is still family-owned, committed to a long-term investment growth plan for the Bath Ales brand and business.

Otter Brewery and the Exeter Chiefs joined forces in November to help raise money for the 2017 Poppy Appeal. During the club's Anglo-Welsh Cup match that month against Northampton Saints, 5p from every pint of 'Hiawotter' (the resident Otter beer at Sandy Park) sold across all of the stadium bars was allocated to the Poppy Appeal. The brewery also continued its long-standing tradition of donating 5p from every pint of Poppy Otter sold in pubs throughout Devon, Dorset and Somerset in November and December. The combined beer sales raised a total of £1,505.27 and this has now been presented to the Royal British Legion at the home of England's reigning Premiership Rugby champions.

At **Platform 5 Brewing Co**, the team say farewell to Mike Rowland and wish him well in his new venture. Business as usual though, continuing to brew the regular beers and will be brewing small batch seasonal beers through the year available on the bars of The Railway Brewhouse, Molloy's in St Marychurch and Molloy's in Teignmouth. Bottling has commenced and will be available soon.

Roam Brewing Co. is Plymouth's newest brewery, formed by the team behind award winning Tavy Ales.

In early Spring 2018, **Salcombe Brewery** will release a Pale Ale, the first keg product to come from the brewery. The brewers have taken inspiration from the local area and have endeavoured to create a beer to represent this. A classic pale ale with a twist that has its heritage embedded in the Salcombe citrus fruit trade. Using ingredients which could have been found in Salcombe in the 19th century, they have produced a full bodied pale ale with a bouquet of orange, pink grapefruit and anise. This dry hopped pale ale boasts a robust structure and complex flavour. The two brewers, Sam & Chris have been working together to master this new brew. The latest triumph from this duo is that Devon Amber is now brewed using only British hops as the brewers continuously try and source the best British, local ingredients.

South Hams Brewery are making great strides to reposition their Brewery. They are building it on the seaward side of the Shop. You can buy Growlers for £5 and for £5 you can get them refilled.



CAMPAIGN
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Hosted by Coventry & District branch

Please register online at agm.camra.org.uk or complete the form below and return to: CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans AL1 4LW.

Membership # _____ Joint Membership # (if applicable) _____

First Name _____ First Name _____

Surname _____ Surname _____

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If you would like to volunteer, please indicate when you can help and the staffing officer will contact you in due course. Your information will be treated in accordance with CAMRA's Privacy policy.
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Tue AM/PM Wed AM/PM Thur AM/PM Fri AM/PM Sat AM/PM Sun AM/PM

Please circle if you have any specialist skills: first aider / cellarman / local knowledge / logistics / customer service / other.

(Closing date for postal & online registration is Tuesday 3rd April 2018)



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PUB IN FOCUS – RING OF BELLS, NORTH BOVEY

After the disastrous fire that halted its progress through the Good Beer Guide two years ago, the pub is now rebuilt and open for business. We dropped in to get an update from landlord Richard Edlmann.

Richard, how is the building now?

The place was badly damaged, so we employed a conservation architect, good structural engineers and support team to ensure we could save as much as we could in as original form as possible. This is a destination pub and we have to create an environment in which people feel comfortable in an old worldly pub with the modern blended in where we've had to. Every beam we could save we saved; we only lost one, which wasn't structural.



Ring of Bells open for business

The original building was a farmhouse, essentially a 13th century Devon long house with three rooms. The dining room where we are would have been the animal end of the farmhouse. The archway through to the bar area is medieval. We keep our diners separate from the bar itself, so you can come in and have a drink and socialise and not be fighting with chairs and tables! The snug is in the centre. This would have been the family living area, then the bar which would have been the gentleman's lounge area. The stable bar was a stable added much later when it became an Inn.



*Landlord Richard Edlmann
in the Snug*

The first floor was added in the 15th century and we have five letting rooms upstairs where we've uncovered some features, Victorian fireplaces and recesses and added a lot of furniture in keeping with the period. The upstairs being close to the thatch was the most badly damaged area.

Your background?

I bought the pub in Nov 2012 and we ran it for 3 years till the fire, and the last 2 years we've been busy trying to put it back together. So this was my first pub and prior to that I was an accountant in London. We moved down because my wife had a training position at Derriford hospital. We were living in Tavistock and I was working in Exeter. It was always a long term plan to own a restaurant or pub and prior to becoming an accountant I'd done catering degrees, cheffing and worked in catering. The accountancy bit was the last brick in the foundations of setting up my own business. »

RING OF BELLS.... CONTINUED

» It's totally my own business. This is a free house and I took it on as a good going concern. I bought it from people who were experienced pub owners who are still friends today. A free house gives more freedom, it does not make you feel beholden to anyone else.

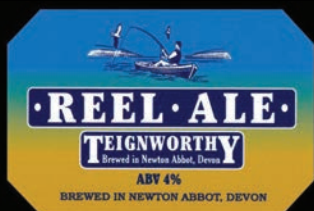
It's a very different job from accountancy. It's great fun doing what we do. I think if you've an interest in people, it's a good job to be in. I always make an effort to get to know my customers.

The Beers?

Even though it's a food led pub it's important to get the beer right for the locals and people do not come in if the beer's no good! And that's the atmosphere - we don't have piped music. Our session beer is Teignworthy Reel, then Dartmoor IPA and a third one we rotate; we've recently had Timothy Taylor Landlord. Dartmoor beers are very popular with our tourist customers. We don't have pumps, it comes straight from the cask. The cellar is next to the bar and that has worked really well.

Events?

Our showcase event is a sheep shearing competition, this year held on 22nd July with entrants coming from far and wide, with food, drinks tent and entertainment. We also run topical food events e.g. Burns, Valentines, Beaujolais Nouveau and theme nights such as Thai.



Beer served from the cask

WHY FRENCH CIDER IS DIFFERENT TO ENGLISH AND WHERE TO TRY IT

Cider apple trees are surprisingly selective in where they will grow. In the UK it's Hereford, Devon and Somerset. In France its Normandy and Southern Brittany. These areas are known for the quality and variety of ciders they produce. In Brittany alone there are no less than 55 varieties of Cider apple trees and most are grown in single varietal orchards and this has been the way since the thirteenth Century. Never forget Cider was then a healthy alternative to the water of the time, this is why French cider is of a traditionally low alcohol content. We had beer instead, this is why our ciders tend to be stronger.

Most Brittany and Normandy ciders are bottled in the manner of sparkling wine, closed with a champagne style cork. Mass produced ciders are in screw capped bottles; this an easy way to tell the difference. Making cider with concentrates, such as a lot of UK ciders, is relatively unknown. A cider marketed here as Cider with a Belgian name is not available on the continent. The area around Bender to Fouesnant on the Southern Brittany coast is the main Cider producing area and quality farm ciders reign supreme. Here any restaurant or creperie will serve a decent cider in a traditional pitcher with bowls, lightly chilled and refreshing. This cider is so good it has an appellation d'origine protégée, on most bottles a sure fire sign it comes from the same address as the label and, must be of a high standard. Next time you hop across on the ferry, indulge in a few bottles to take home, preferably from a market (dates places and times on the area website). I counted six stalls in Morlaix last year and over ten in Corncarneau in June all selling different makes and types of local Ciders. Ask for a taste which they willingly offer to find the one you like most.

Finally buy some Calvados in Normandy or Lambig in Brittany, the distilled Cider or apple brandy. Personally I prefer Calvados for its combined sweetness and sharpness, but both are excellent. For cider I always return to Menez-Brug from Beg-Miel, Fouesnant.

For free wifi to look up offers, tastings and markets go to the local tourist office, the one in Fouesnant has a free car park and comfy armchairs for wifi and like most have someone who speaks English.

Tony Woodmark

REGIONAL WINNERS OF THE CBOB JUDGING

At the Exeter and East Devon CAMRA Festival of Winter Ales in January 2018, the following were regional winners in the two Champion Beer of Britain (CBOB) categories the festival was asked to judge:

Old Ales and Strong Milds: 1st Tintagel Excalibur, 2nd Exe Valley Winter Glow

Strong Ales and Barley Wines: 1st Moor Old Freddy Walker, 2nd Keltek Beheaded

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**CAMPAIGN
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THE FIRST NEWTON ABBOT BEER FESTIVAL

10th-12th September 1993

St. John's Ambulance Hall, East Street, Newton Abbot

With the revival of the Newton Abbot Beer Festival in July 2018 I thought it might be interesting to have a look at the beers and ciders that featured in the first beer festival back in 1993. A large number have gone, but in theory some could return.

Brewery	Beer	Still Surviving?
Arundel	Gold 1035	
Blackawton	Devon Gold 1040	Gone
Blewitts	Best 1039 King's Ale 1040 S.L.C 1054	Gone
Clearbury	Hobson's Best 1038	Gone
Commercial	Worth Old Toss 1065	Gone
Cotleigh	Hobby Ale 1042	
Cottage	S & D Bitter 1044	Gone
Enville	Bitter 1045 Whight 1042 (a rare wheat beer)	
Exe Valley	Exeter Old 1050	
Fullers	London Pride 1040	
Gibb's Mew	Bishop's Tipple 1066	Gone
Hog's Back	Ripsnorter 1052	
Sarah Hughes	Dark Ruby Mild 1058	
Mill	Dark 1040	Gone
Moorhouses	Pendle Witches 1050	
Otter	Ale 1044	
Parish	Mild 1034	
Royal Clarence	East Street Cream 1052 Firebox 1060	Gone, but now recently appeared as Pitchfork
St Austell	H.S.D 1051 Mild 1038	Mild has gone but was reissued last year as part of their small batch beers.
Stanway House	Stanway Bitter 1045	Gone
Summerskills	Whistle Belly Vengeance 1046	
Theakstons	Old Peculier 1057	
Timothy Taylors	Landlord 1043	
Yates	Premium 1048	Gone
Total gone = 10		
Ciders		
Reddaway	7%	
Buckingham	7.5%	Gone and based in Chudleigh Knighton
Tinminers	6%	Gone

On the whole the beers seem a bit stronger on average compared with today and only a few under 1040 and 10 above 1050. The beer was £1.50 a pint (all) and CAMRA membership was £10 per annum. Incidentally, the Chairman was Neil Dodd, who was before my time, but no doubt some of you will recall him.

Bola Southwell



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JULY 2018**



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MIDWEEK MAVERICKS

November saw us have an Out of Branch Experience, as we headed west by various routes to Plymouth, where Looe St., off the historic Barbican, is home to the Minerva, Plymouth's oldest inn, dating from c1540. (No, Grumpy, that's not twenty to four in the afternoon). The long narrow bar dispensed good St. Austell Tribute and H.S.D., Bath Prophecy, and Otter Amber, which we took into the small seating area at the rear. The Grumpy Old Man received a tongue-in-cheek Black Mark for arriving 2 minutes after our agreed start time- such misdemeanours seem to just come naturally to him.

A stroll across the Barbican's cobbled streets then brought us to the Dolphin, long-renowned for its Draught Bass, and another historic gem in the area. 7 further ales accompanied the Bass, and were enjoyed by one and all.

The two 'heavyweights' in the area done, we walked around the corner to The Fisherman's Arms, also in the Good Beer Guide, and offering Summerskill's The Famous Mr. Jones - the only beer of the day that I'd not come across before: Tickers 1, Grumpy 0.

Leaving The Barbican, another short walk brought us to the Inn on the Hoe, with a seating area down some stairs from the bar, which dispensed Summerskill's Westward Ho! Tavy Sound Bitter, and Butcombe Bitter.

On leaving here, the four of us from Brixham left to catch our bus homewards, and Grumpy to catch a train, leaving the remainder of the party to head off to visit the Fawn Club and Fortescue before catching the last train.

Peter O'Nions



Resting at The Fishermans Arms

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AWARDS FOR LOCAL PUBS

Crown and Sceptre

At our South Devon CAMRA branch meeting on Tuesday 13th February we presented David Wheeler, pictured, with a very special long service award, the first of its kind for the branch. It was to recognise the fact that David, and his parents Roy and Heather Wheeler before him, have clocked up over 40 years running the Crown & Sceptre in St Marychurch, and have achieved a place in the GBG for 36 of those years.

Roy and Heather took over the pub in 1975 back in CAMRA's formative years and ever since then it has not only been a hub for real ale in the Torquay area but has always been a community focussed pub with a strong local following. Sadly Roy and Heather passed away in 2012 and 2015 and were a hard act to follow but David has done a great job since taking over the role of landlord and the pub is still as popular as ever.



Dave Wheeler with his award

Up to 8 real ales are served and although more food is served these days it is still very much a pub where conversation over a quality pint of real ale is king, and it is a pub that is packed full of character.

Queens Arms, Slapton

A bus load of CAMRA members descended on the Queens Arms in Slapton recently for the chairman to present an award marking 10 years in the Good Beer Guide to Kevin and Sandra Watson, proprietors of this free house situated in the heart of the picturesque village of Slapton.



Branch chairman Bob Southwell presents the award to Kevin and Sandra Watson

Grumpy

And finally, an award to Grumpy who, despite taking a swipe at most things over the years, has managed to avoid creation of a letters page in News & Brews - so far!



A proud Grumpy with his award



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South Devon CAMRA Pub of the Year 2017



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BREWERY IN PROFILE – BRIDGETOWN BREWERY



Landlord Giles Hawkins

It's been ten years since Giles Hawkins became "mine host" at the Albert Inn - home to the Bridgetown Brewery, a decade which has seen a remarkable transformation in the fortunes of this particular Totnes hostelry, the only pub on the "other" side of the River Dart in the town.

"I was working for Venture Inns who spotted an opportunity to purchase a pub with the potential to have its own brewery," explained the genial Hawkins.

"They knew I fancied brewing - so I was sort of parachuted in. I jumped at the chance," he said.

Few are better placed to document just how difficult it is to start up a brewery while trying to turn round the fortunes of a pub.

"When I got here I found a run-down building, replete with home-made wiring and bodge jobs. Let's just say it was a challenge, converting a former chapel of rest into a 2-barrel

plant brewery, especially when we discovered that the sole water supply was one outside tap," laughs Hawkins.

"The other slight snag was that I had no brewing experience. I was a cook with plenty of enthusiasm. My bosses explained to me that as cooking was similar to brewing, I should give it a go," he said.

So, armed with a newly-purchased brewing plant from Red Rock Brewery, Bridgetown Brewery was born. Early results were not encouraging.

"I didn't have the luxury of experimenting, so the first beer we brewed - Albert Ale - we served. It was horrible. Thankfully the beer improved with experience," grimaces Hawkins.

In 2010 one of those quirks of fate occurred that changed life dramatically at the Albert (named, incidentally, after the scientist, not Queen Victoria's consort).

A parent wandered into the pub and asked if Giles could take on her brewing-mad son as an apprentice brewer, before "he blew up her garage". Enter George Langabeer, aka Ed Sheeran....

Langabeer, at a tender 15 years of age, promptly became the youngest commercial brewer in the country. »



Giles with liaison officer Grizzly

BRIDGETOWN BREWERY... CONTINUED

» Now, into his eighth year of brewing, “Ed”, sorry, George, is completing his professional brewing course and achieving the consistency aspired to by all brewers. His portfolio has grown from one to seven beers, with more to come.

“Giving George his chance was one of my better decisions,” admits Hawkins. *“Everyone can see he is maturing as a brewer, and, from a business point of view, the beers are enjoyed by our regulars, and at the Nowhere Inn, Plymouth and the Kings Arms, Buckfastleigh,”* says Giles.

Hawkins also acknowledges CAMRA's role, culminating in the Albert's inclusion in the 2018 Good Beer Guide.

“I'm lucky to have an excellent CAMRA Brewery Liaison Officer, who is also the Pub's Liaison Officer. I've known him for many years - I first met him when I had hair! We work well together,” says Hawkins.

While the pub has developed into a good, unique local community asset, with good food featuring as well as its' own beer, Hawkins knows that he cannot stand still.

“We have plans for the brewery to increase brewing and to start bottling, and we want to re-invest in the fixtures and fittings of the pub itself - and of course having got into the Beer Guide, we would very much like to stay there. It's a case of onwards, ever onwards,” concludes Hawkins.

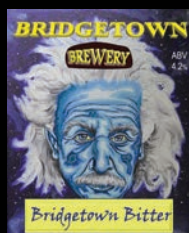


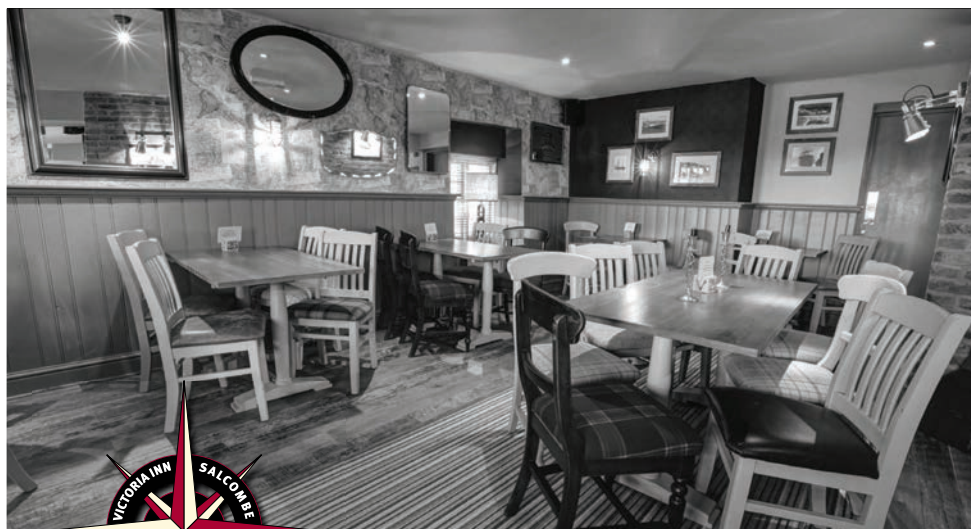
Brewer George (Ed) Langabeer



Bridgetown product range – which to drink first?

Grizzly





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THE GRUMPY OLD MAN EXAMINES THE MURKY WORLD OF CRAFT BEER

It's that time of the year when the grumpiness of The Grumpy Old Man reaches its peak (or should it be nadir?). The kid's half term is nearly upon us and I always look forward to the invasion of their needs in to the pubs with their cheesy chips and all too often their scooters and their incompetent parents merely watching them run riot. There is also the delight of Valentine's Day where the marketing brigade go in to overdrive trying to persuade us that it is not just your partner who deserves that special pub experience, but anybody who could be considered a love in the broadest sense. All this nonsense is nicely topped off by Mother's Day whereby the pub is swollen out by mothers and grandmothers who probably only go to the pub just once a year and have not the slightest clue when they arrive with all their dithering and confusion. Please save me from all of this, but I have previously written on all these issues and they are not the subject of this epistle.

We all seem to be up to and it would seem that the world has gone crafting mad. There is craft bread and breadcrumbs, *craft* chocolate, *craft* eggs, *craft* cheese, *craft* cosmetics and *craft* just about anything else and, of course, there is **craft beer and cider**. I am just crafting this article having made a craft cup of coffee and contemplating some craft gardening. I fully understand why the term craft has been so enthusiastically adopted by the marketing fraternity as it is impossible to define and therefore lending itself to many an abuse from its imagery. It implies, or directly uses, the concept of individual artisan skills (another buzz word for marketing people) with the cosy and romantic idyll of small scale individualised production catering for a variety of consumer needs and as such is the complete antithesis of mass production. Here we have the small man experimenting with his ingredients to produce the perfect pint free from the environment of the corporate shackle or so the image implies.

Now what could there be to grump about with craft beer? I have absolutely no problem with brewers experimenting with different hops and other ingredients to produce new beers, if that is what they are, and I accept that the result can be a matter of taste and therefore opinion. However, over hopping strips the lining off the top of your mouth and sour beer is a step too far. A brewer recently told me about how a colleague produced a failed batch, but decided to spice it up by adding sours and giving it a silly name only for it to be well received by public. I would suspect that the public in this case might constitute tickers who would probably drink alcoholic liquid manure under the banner of Triple Hopped Growers Special Delight or something similar. Craft beer is also eye wateringly, and jaw droopingly, expensive at times and especially in the more 'trendy' establishments and not so long ago I paid £9 a pint in Manchester but I have seen even higher prices in London. (Warning-look at the price list first!) This is partly because of the heavy concentration of hops which have generally been rising in price following the fall in value of the pound and partly from key keg dispense. This is an officially endorsed form of dispense involving putting gas pressure on the outside of a plastic container thereby forcing the beer out when the tap is opened. Why is it so ridiculously cold (freezing). »

GRUMPY.... CONTINUED

» I am not an Eskimo and what is the point of having my oesophagus subjected to anaesthesia, my hands frozen holding the glass and failing to taste anything at these low temperatures? There is also the not inconsiderable cost of the membrane that has to be passed on to the consumer and worse still this type of plastic cannot be recycled creating environmental and pollution concerns in these days of anti-plastic. There is also an issue with the methods of dispense which can, and do, create confusion involving some obfuscation. Everybody knows what to expect with a hand pump, but beyond that the waters become very murky. Key keg and kegs are often dispensed from the same multiple T font arrangement and most establishments in my experience do not make the differences clear or explain what key kegs actually are. On a recent visit to a GBG pub in Cardiff I was confronted with a wall of taps coming out of a wall some of which were real in the accepted sense, some keg and others key keg. Upon asking what was what the reply was unhelpful and even evasive. What are they trying to hide? I was very much left with the impression that they were trying to disguise the keg element in amongst the genuine dispense. Let's face it a lot of craft beers are keg albeit better than the Red Barrels of yesteryear, but after all that is not very difficult and they are still keg. Have we come all this way for keg to be accepted in via the back door under the euphemism of craft beer supported by trendy advertising?

The world is always changing and there is always the argument that craft introduces a new generation to beer and who will possibly move on to draught. The term craft could be seen as an insult to the brewers of the 1970s. Were they not craft and artisan in the traditional and long established sense in opposition to the Keg Revolution which was about as industrial as you can get? There is one issue that I just cannot accept and that is canned craft beer even and especially those covered in trendy hieroglyphic squiggles. My early and illegal drinking was from those monstrosities such as the infamous Party Seven with the special spanner opener. Even then as a teenager I thought the beer was dreadful and am now scarred for life and obviously prejudiced against cans.

Bob Southwell

Aka the Grumpy Old Man

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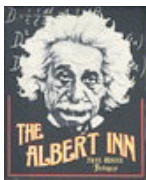
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SOUTH DEVON CAMRA BRANCH CONTACTS

Branch Chairman and Transport Officer - Bob Southwell
chairman@southdevon.camra.org.uk

Vice Chairman and Treasurer - Ian Packham
vicechairman@southdevon.camra.org.uk

Secretary and Branch Contact - Edgar Halton
secretary@southdevon.camra.org.uk

Web Site Editor - Kate Halton
webmaster@southdevon.camra.org.uk

Pub Liaison Coordinator - Phil (Billy) Kidd 07718 924126
beerscoring@southdevon.camra.org.uk

Membership Secretary - Ray Ellmore 07886 002482
membershipsec@southdevon.camra.org.uk

Magazine Editor - Andrew Thomson 07974 308827
magazine@southdevon.camra.org.uk

Visit our website at www.southdevon.camra.org.uk

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