West Dorset CAMRA Pub of the Year 2019

Every Town • A Voice from the Sticks • Wassailing & Cider Making
People Power • Beer & Skittles • plus Latest News & What's On

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Welcome...

and congratulations to:

Beerex (see page 7) for making another record breaking profit, expected to be in excess of £15,000 for charity.

Copper Street brewery, a fledgling brewery less than a year old, for scooping first prize at the above beer festival.

The White Hart at Yetminster for being voted West Dorset CAMRA pub of the year. This is the sort of pub that you wish could be your own “local” and space constraints mean that Richards article on page ?? cannot cover the range of offerings available - best you check it out for yourself, you won’t be disappointed.

The Digby tap, Sherborne (digbytap.co.uk), The Red Lion, Weymouth (theredlionweymouth.co.uk) and over the fence, The Green Man, Wimborne Minster (greenmanwimborne.com) for being the Dorset entries in the “i Weekend” “best pubs for good-value grub” article on 16th/17th Feb.

John Parker
Editor
Members of West Dorset Campaign For Real Ale (CAMRA) would like to offer their congratulations to Alex and Blanche Alexander of The White Hart, Yetminster, who have been awarded this year’s West Dorset CAMRA Pub Of The Year award. The White Hart beat off stiff competition and was judged and scored on varying factors by a team of independent CAMRA judges, emerging as the clear winner.

Everything from the initial welcome, service, quality of real ale and ciders on offer and atmosphere are some of the scoring categories; even the standard of the pubs toilets is taken into consideration.

Blanche and Alex took over the tenancy of the free house in March 2017, having previously worked for St Austell and Palmers breweries and, since then, have turned the pub into the focal point of the village, with numerous community events and functions ranging from charity pub quizzes to live music and murder, mystery events, which the locals have embraced.

The pub, which dates from the 16th century and is grade 2 listed, has a thatched roofed, stone mullion windows and a perfect huge inglenook fireplace all help you lose track of time. Pets are welcome as are children. There’s even a place to tether your horse outside! The pub has a well-used skittle alley that’s a tribute to local musicians the “Yetties” and was even used as a location for the 2009 film Tamara Drewe, a modern re-working of the Thomas Hardy book “Far from the Madding Crowd”.

To the rear of the pub there is bed and breakfast accommodation and camper vans can be parked over-night in the pub car park providing the owners use the pub.

They are very keen on localism and supporting the local economy, with all products (within reason) sourced within a 20 mile radius. With this ethos it’s surprising how many local breweries and cider makers are available to the pub as Yetminster is located is only a few miles from the Somerset border. So, on a standard day, beers from Dorset and Somerset breweries usually are side by side.
Food at the White hart is described as “simple and hearty” and I think, on looking at the menu, it’s exceedingly fair-priced. With an extensive selection and changes throughout the seasons, caters for all; there’s even a take-away service available.

On hearing of their success landlord Alex Alexander said “We are extremely delighted and proud to receive this award acknowledging our hard work and vision. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our manager Karen for her work and all the team here who have supported us”.

The pub will now go forward into the Wessex regional finals in the CAMRA “National Pub of the Year” competition, up against other winners from Hampshire, Wiltshire and the Channel Islands.

Rich Gabe

A note for the anoraks

Nine pubs were nominated for “pub of the year” and each were visited at least once by six CAMRA members individually. The winner averaged 66.66 marks out of a possible 80. Three of the six judges scored it their No. 1, Two judges their No. 2 and one judge their No. 3. Only two marks separated the next 4 pubs, The Convivial Rabbit 2nd with 63.83 marks and the Pursuit of Hoppiness 3rd with 63.08, with The Hunters Moon and Blue Raddle breathing down their necks.
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WWW.RINGWOODBREWERY.CO.UK ★
Dorchester Beerex 2019

The organisers of Dorchester Beerex, West Dorset Campaign For Real Ale (CAMRA) and Casterbridge Rotary, are delighted to announce a record year of profits. The total sum raised for local good causes in the area is expected to be in excess of £15K, all due to the overwhelming support of local businesses, breweries and thirsty drinkers.

The festival attendance was not affected in the slightest by the over-night snow on the Thursday evening and customers, both local and from afar, packed into the Corn Exchange over the four sessions to sample a selection of 80 beers and 21 ciders, with many drunk-dry by the end of Saturday night. In total around 1,400 people attended the festival. Local band Shooter played an excellent two sets on the Saturday night and there was a real party atmosphere.

This year’s main charity was the Fortuneswell Cancer Trust; money raised will go towards specialist training for nurses on one to one care. Around £2K was made on the raffle over the weekend with the benefactor being the Dorchester Youth and Community Centre in Fordington.

Palmers brewery of Bridport sponsored the festival for the 5th consecutive year and representatives of the brewery and Fortuneswell Cancer care were in attendance throughout the weekend.

New Dorchester brewery Copper Street took beer of the festival with their Dark Ages Porter and Christchurch brewery Drop the Anchor came second with their Tucktonia Pale Ale.

Rich Gabe

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Every Town

Long gone are the days when pubs were solely owned by land owners or society’s elite. Family brewery owned pubs are sadly in decline with many historic brewing families selling off their estates or becoming non-brewing pub chains in past years. The vast number of the United Kingdom’s 48,000 pub estate are now monopolised by pub companies and, as a result, in the late 1980’s and early 90’s the UK national brewers were forced to sell off their estates. To a degree big business greed and CAMRA campaigning for guest beers in tied houses are partly to blame for this – though we will of course all drink in denial to the fact we could be partly to blame for “Pub Co’s”! (There’s something to ponder)

It’s somewhat ironic that today in the UK there are more accredited breweries listed than there were prior to WW2 yet, for many, they struggle for a shop window; and with still around 18 pubs per week closing and the staggering fact that around 12,000 have shut since the year 2000, the brewery boom continues. So much so that many breweries are now opening their own “Tap Rooms” in-house.

It would seem there is an undercurrent running through the underclass as there appears to be no credible figure listed of pubs opening per week; yet a relatively new trend of outlets are fastly appearing on the streets to sell the ever increasing portfolio of breweries.

Enter the world of the “Micro pub”, a pure D.I.Y ethos with no real rules. If you can obtain a licence to sell alcohol and find premises with minimum outlay you can start your own micro pub. Some have even started with as little as around £5k!

The first micro pub, named “The Butchers Arms”, was opened in 2005 in Herne, Kent by a man called Martyn Hillier who has gone down in history as the god father of the micro pub movement. This has since created a subsequent boom with now almost 350 micro pubs trading.

But do micro pubs have a negative or positive effect on surrounding pubs? After all, as CAMRA members or lovers of cask beer we should be supporting all outlets that sell quality, well kept ales and surly not admiring the latest emperor’s new clothes just because it’s the new kid on the block.

My personal belief is that the presence of a micro pub in a town will actually boost the economy of rival pubs. For instance, if I go out in a town I seldom stay in one pub but like to take in a circuit, hopefully supporting all. I also believe that micro pubs are bespoke to cask ale or cider drinkers and will in turn where possible encourage rival publicans to have more interesting beers on their bars. Having spoken to other publicans and also brewers they tend to agree with me. I feel it’s extremely important not to suddenly alienate one’s local when a new micro pops up as, let’s not forget, family brewery tied pubs or a town centre free house may have been there for hundreds of years and a micro can pop up then just pop!

One thing I do like to do is talk and - anyone that knows me will happily acknowledge I can talk! I might not make a lot of sense but talk I will and a micro is a personal amphitheatre when it comes down to it. The whole point of these pubs is to leave your inhibitions behind and embrace in what one day will transpire as conversation with a stranger. Imagine that - the ability to communicate without technology! The relaxed and sometimes restricted square-metragre of some micros means conversation rules. There’s no gaming machines, but there might be board games; there’s no loud blaring music, but there may be a piano
or books and newspapers to read. Lots of micro's are set out so everyone is on the same head level seating-wise, ideally looking at each other and so forcing conversation. (Such is “The Butcher’s Arms” mentioned earlier. Ed)

To avoid large commercial business rates the majority of micros are in side streets or discreetly tucked away, ensuring that the more discerning cliental patronise the establishment. However, open a micro wherever and the word spreads and, before you know it, all ages, genders and creed or class will find it. Who would have thought an ex Blockbuster video shop in Bournemouth would eventually take “National CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year”?!?

As I have said earlier, with micro pubs there are no rules and that goes for internal decoration and naming. The pub can have a beer related name like “The Firkin Shed”, a fun name like Weymouth’s “Dog House” or a name to prompt conversation like “The Convivial Rabbit” in Dorchester. Some, like more traditional pubs, lean towards a building's or area’s ancestry.

Internally they can be as basic as can be or imaginable as the owner’s vision allows - however it's always about the beer!

Whatever your pub type preference I believe that the micro pub concept is here to stay. In some cases they can be a wakeup call to rival businesses, in others offer a happy mutual co-existence. Love them or loath them the micro pub is a throwback to the original ale houses and one day “Every Town” will have one or more.

Rich Gabe

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What’s On?
Festivals, Socials & Meetings

March

Weds 13th, Branch meeting, 8pm at the Chalk and Cheese Maiden Newton, all members welcome.

April

Weds 10th, Branch meeting, 8pm at the Carpenters Arms Sherborne, all members welcome.

Thurs 11th to Sat 13th Tuckers Maltings beer festival Newton Abbot. In conjunction with CIBA. Details on the Tuckers Malting Facebook page.

Fri 19th, Sat 20th, Wareham Beerex, Wareham Masonic Hall, see separate article in this edition.

Fri 26th, Sat 27th, Yeovil Beer Festival, Westlands Yeovil. Details on www.yeovilbeerfest.com”

Sat 27th, Branch social and walkabout, Portland. Meeting 11.30 at The Britannia then bottom of the hill walkabout.

May

Sat 4th, Branch social and walkabout Lyme Regis. Meet 12 noon at The Nags Head and it goes downhill from there!

Weds 8th, Branch meeting, 8pm at the Gaggle of Geese Buckland Newton, all members welcome.

Friday 11th, nominations close for “pub garden of the year”

Fri 25th to Mon 27th Spring Beer Festival, The Royal Standard, Upwey. www.theroyalstandardupwey.co.uk

June

Weds 12th, Branch meeting, 8pm at the Pilot Boat Lyme Regis, all members welcome.

Fri 14th, Sat 15th, Bridport Beer Festival, Askers Meadow. Sat includes the culmination of the week long Bridport food festival with dozens of stalls showcasing all that’s best in Dorset. www.bridportfoodfestival.co.uk. One of the highlights of the summer (if the sun shines). CAMRA social at the beer tent from 12 noon.

Sat 15th, nominations close for “cider pub of the year.

Date TBC – brewery takeover at The Spyway, Askerswell, check their Facebook page for updates.

For updated information and details of events later in the year check out www.camrawdorset.org.uk

CITA (CAMRA in the area). Please contact Rich Gabe via rich@camrawdorset.org.uk or call 07771 903 868 for on the day details of where exactly we will be!

All dates correct at time of going to print.
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A Voice from the Sticks

Here we are at the beginning of a new year ever hopeful for peace on earth and plenty of beer in the months to come. I’ve already sat down and sorted the year out; Beerex in February (which will have been and gone by the time this comes out), Bridport Beer Festival in June and Octoberfest in Weymouth. I’m sure I can squeeze Yeovil Beer Festival in at the end of April, around 80 beers at The Westlands Centre.

Then there will surely be the odd festival at a pub here and there. My good lady wife still doesn’t believe me when we “stumbled” on a beer festival in the Summer of last year. We had been somewhere in Somerset for the day and on the way back I suggested stopping for a beer at The Mitre in Sandford Orcas, a cracking freehouse North of Sherborne. Beer selection and quality had always been very good on previous visits. It just happened that on this occasion they had a mini festival on, Oh Happy Days!

Beer festivals, ah beer festivals. The child in a sweetshop moment when you first step through the doors, the vast array of ales afore thee. Then the realisation your hands are trembling and it’s not the DTs from the night before, it’s the excitement that’s been rumbling through your body from the bottom of your boots upwards. Next, the first pour, the taste and satisfaction.

You look around the venue and everyone’s happy. Dark ales in some hands, a frothy blonde in others (I’m still talking beer, the other frothy blonde is drinking rough cider!) The serious beer tickers are about and others are studying the programme to find the perfect pint. I’ve even seen a timer clock on a table with the group set on a half pint every half hour.

Then there’s the memories of past festivals and the people who have moved on, the odd one or two now drinking heavenly brews or perhaps a hellish ale. Cheers to you! I remember Dorchester Beerex in the earlier years when you could guarantee a ticket on the day, now you’ve got to get your ticket early it’s so popular.

A chap who used to live in Puncknowle worked for a Weymouth coach firm and was able to get transport arranged. It started off with a mini bus and then later years, a 50 seat coach. Villagers from Puncknowle, Litton Cheney, Swyre and Abbotsbury and landlords
from The Crown and White Horse would head off to Dorchester and a jolly good time was had by all.

One particular year, some time back now, the coach party set off for the return journey. Trundling through the narrow lanes of the Bride Valley the coach had gone around a bend and met an elderly couple in a car coming the other way. They had just passed a pull in space and logic and law dictated that the car reverse the short distance and let the coach pass. After much arm waving and ranting by the car driver and a poor attempt at reversing this happened and everyone went on their way.

However, Monday morning when our man from Puncknowle went into work he walked in on a telephone call. It soon became apparent that the caller was the man from the car complaining about the rude and inconsiderate coach driver on the Saturday. The complaint was heard and it was then pointed out to the man that on board that coach, beside the driver, were two other PSV drivers, three HGV drivers, a barrister, a couple of solicitors and a policeman. “would you still like to pursue your complaint, hello ... hello... are you still there?”, “he’s hung up”. The fact that all passengers were three sheets to the wind didn’t have time to come into the conversation. Hey ho! Beer Festivals, now, when’s the next one..?

Dave Bird
a rural contributor

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Good Beer Guide listed 2012 to 2019 inclusive
Wassailing and cider making
A story in pictures

The wassail took place at West Milton, where people gathered to partake of the previous year’s cider, made a lot of noise by banging tins and saucepans and sang a song starting with ‘Here’s to thee old apple tree..’. The wassail queen put cider-soaked toast in the branches of a tree and Nick fired his gun to protect the orchard.

The Dorset Star orchard was in full bloom, buzzing with bees and with Hash House Harriers running through Dan’s plentiful trees.

The Lulworth Skipper orchard isn’t big enough yet to supply all Martin’s needs so a lorry load of apples arrived to be shovelled into the washer.

It is a small Somerset orchard where no machinery can get in, so Nigel of Noddy’s Cider got family and friends to collect apples knocked off the branches.
At West Milton, cider is made with washed apples which head for the scrapper to get chopped up.

The pulped apples are wrapped in blankets in layers before the press descends to extract the juice.

And finally to Twisted Cider open day and Ben enjoying the juice of his labours.

Alex Bardswell
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I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association which can be found on our website.

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Beer in Britain

Although the Romans were well aware of beer when they came over to play our boys around 43 AD, they were far more used to drinking either wine and/or water. - but this didn’t stop them from embracing the vulgar drink, cervisia (beer)

The Romans considered beer to be an inferior product, drunk by barbarians, and instead preferred strong and flavoured wines. A poem by the Emperor Julian extolled the virtues of wine as a “nectar”, while claiming that beer smelled like a goat! However, evidence from both Regensburg in modern-day Germany and Trier in France shows that the Romans did, indeed, brew beer nearly 2,000 years ago.

On arriving in Britain, the Romans found that beer was easier to come by than wine – the British Isles were not known for their ability to grow vines – and they soon started to acquire the taste for beer, the beverage of choice even then.

In the 1980s archaeologists working on the Roman fort of Vindolanda in Northumbria discovered wooden tablets recording the purchase of local beers (Celtic ale) from local brewers around 100 AD. It seems likely that this practice was reflected across the rest of the country. One of these records shows that the Romans not only bought beer from the locals but also malt, from which a local brewer, Atrectus, produced beer for the garrison.

Widespread evidence of brewing, both domestic and retail, have subsequently been found all over the country and, in the 3rd and 4th centuries the Romans adapted their hypocaust central heating systems to provide permanent corn dryers and maltings. An example of such a hypocaust can been seen in the remains of the Roman town house in
Dorchester’s Colliton Park.

It was not until the 13th century that hops were introduced to these shores from modern-day Belgium and the Netherlands - before then flavourings such as honey, meadowsweet or mugwort were often used in brewing. And the rest, as they say, is history.

...or is it?

As recently as 23 December 2018 there was evidence of Roman activity in at least one pub in Dorchester. The Blue Raddle, as part of its regular Sunday Cheese Night, decided hold a Monty Python’s “The Life of Brian” event - you know, bags of gravel, big noses, that sort of thing. This was too good an opportunity to miss, so an invitation was extended to any ancient Romans still living in the area - and we managed to snare two! Both the Centurion and the Optio from the First Cohort Durotrigum (otherwise known as Callum and James) - part of Dorchester Roman Tours - joined us in full military regalia. You may have seen them hanging around outside Dorchester’s museum waiting for a very long overdue bus!

Despite the cold weather they turned up bare-legged and bare-armed and joined in the silliness as well as the beer and cheese consumption, as evidenced in the photos. Thanks, guys.

Alex Scrivener

Pub Closures

As mentioned on a number of occasions, too many pubs are still closing throughout the country - but the good news is that the numbers are falling. From a high of 525 closures during the first 6 months of 2017, the last 6 months of 2018 saw 378 pubs close (a fall from around 3 per day to around 2 per day).

CAMRA’s Jackie Parker has attributed this to a trickle-down effect of the planning changes introduced to protect community pubs over the last two years - so watch this space for further improving figures in the months to come.
Anne and Victor welcome you to enjoy real ales, craft ciders and homemade food at the restored and refurbished Rivers Arms. The traditional pub food ‘with a twist’ can now be enjoyed outside on our wooden deck. We have daily specials on the blackboard at the bar as well as lighter fare. After a long campaign by the Village, Cheselbourne has got its pub back.

‘Good Honest food & beer at reasonable prices’
The Dorchester Voice magazine

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People Power

There have been plenty of cases of pubs being registered as “an asset of community value”, but few have the back-story of the Fox and Hounds in the Cotswold village of Great Wolford.

In 2015 Stephen Allely and Jacqueline Harding paid £325,000 for the 500 year-old pub and proceeded to spend another £40,000 on “improvements”. Out went the quintessential English country pub look with inglenook fireplace, low beams, “coffin” front door (large enough to accommodate the necessary trappings of funerals at the local church) and the historic bar. In went shiny pine, a jukebox and a tv.

The local community and other loyal customers took a dim view of this “vandalism” so boycotted the pub and drove to nearby villages when they needed a pint or a meal. It didn’t take long for the pub to run out of steam and the owners applied for planning permission to turn the pub into two houses before putting it back on the market for £550,000. They failed!

Meanwhile, the locals have been trying to raise the funds to restore the Fox and Hounds to its former glory and have protected it from further damage by having it listed as “an asset of community value”. But how do you restore 500 years of history?

Of course, if the pub had held this status prior to its sale perhaps the intentions of the owners could have been nipped in the bud before the history was lost. Is this the next step in the process of protecting some of our most treasured pubs?

Alex Scrivener
(with thanks to The Times 14 December 2018)

It’s The Beer Talking

ISBN: 978-1901927-74-0

“Itan’s book is brimming with laughter, tall stories, great memories and endless rounds of wonderful beer. It’s also a call to arms to save this unique institution.” Roger Protz, Editor Good Beer Guide 2000-2018

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All menus on our website — booking advisable www.thebluevinny.co.uk

Big Boys Made Me Do It
Sometimes you just can’t win! I took my brother-in-law a few bottles of Copper Street’s 871 and this is all he had to serve it in.

Times Pub Signs
Once again dipping into the pages of The Times, the following are a selection from the home-grown signs found outside the country’s pubs by their readers.

**Emsworth, Hampshire** – “Wanted: Customers! No previous experience necessary as full training will be given”

**Chorleywood** – “I don’t want to get technical or anything but, according to chemistry, alcohol IS a solution”

**Pub/restaurant Bradford** – Don’t stand outside and be miserable. Come inside and be fed up”

**Fuengirola, Spain** – Beer is made from hops. Hops are plants. Therefore beer is salad”

**Hawkhurst, Kent next to a bowl of water** – “Water for your dog. Or short people with low standards. We don’t judge”

*If you happen to spot any others in your travels, please send them to me (Ed)*
Overall Beex, run by the Wareham 41 Club has raised and donated approximately £110,000 over the past 25 years and from small beginnings is now a major and successful annual event in the Town’s calendar.

Our major beneficiary for 2018 was the Lexi May Trust, a charity set up to assist very ill children and bereaved relatives, in memory of Lexi who tragically died at a young age. Many other groups, clubs and individuals have been helped including sports and youth clubs, Wareham in Bloom, cancer research and welfare organisations, Scouts, Guides and Brownies and so the list goes on.

Always held on Good Friday and Easter Saturday lunchtimes and evenings, this year’s theme celebrates the ales from the north and south of the UK with a wide choice of dark, mild, hoppy, light, weak and wicked ales from many craft, regional and individual breweries plus some old favourites.

Not forgetting a good selection of local West Country ciders and perrys. Wines, soft drinks and high quality food all available.

Entertainment including the renowned Ukulele band ‘The Mother Ukers’ and magic fiddler Nina Garcia will keep feet tapping. At £10 per ticket something of a steal and all for good causes. Make a note of the dates 19th and 20th of April at the Masonic Hall, Wareham.

Tickets on line at www.beerex.org.uk, on the door or from Bullock and Lees, North Street, Wareham.
A New Year; a New You? I wonder how many of us start the next twelve months full of good intentions. In truth, I abandoned any pretense of sticking to a resolution some years ago. In fact I soon forgot what great intentions they may have been. Has it ever been to drink less? No, despite the continuing propaganda about why we should have fewer drinks - surely there can be no-one out there who has failed to notice? My capacity for drink, and that is quantity as well as the inclination to drink as often, has declined as my years advance. It seems to be happening naturally! Recently I learned that one of my favourite beers - Morlands ‘Old Speckled Hen’ - is soon to be available as ‘Low alcohol’ - or is it ‘No alcohol’? It depends on how one measures it, apparently. Still, at 0.5%ABV it would take eleven pints to total the amount of alcohol present in the widely available version. I was perusing the shelves of a local shop recently and espied bottles of Adnams ‘Broadside’. Weighing in at a fairly hefty 6.3%ABV I purchased one - after all, it’s not a beer oft seen. I also took a look at their web-site for the first time for some while and discovered that they, too, produce a “no-alcohol” beer. ‘Ghost Ship’, also at 0.5%ABV is described as a pale ale with ‘assertive pithy bitterness, biscuit flavours and fresh citrus aromas’ and, whilst I balk at the thought of yet another beer with the citrus qualities (I'm with you there. Ed), I salute Adnams for taking the plunge into this area of the market. I’m not sure how I missed this, as it did take a Bronze in the 2016 Champion Beer of Britain awards. Checking several sources, they all report the same; it was awarded the accolade in the ‘Strong Bitter’ category, a contradiction I’m still working on (It appears to be on sale at 4.5% and at 0.5% in similar bottles - so beware. Ed). Will you give these beers a try? Will I give them a try? Indeed I will but, like so often with these ideas, the crucial part will all depend on how the taste compares with the familiar product as well as the perception of it being virtually devoid of anything intoxicating.

This time of year always signifies the half-way stage of the skittle season. How has yours been? Better than ours, I have little doubt. To lose by a handful of pins consistently takes some skill and we are getting better at it all the time. Frustrating it may be, but that’s the game of skittles for you. Within most leagues the captains have regular meetings and, at a recent such event, it was lamented that, although the number of teams has decreased over the years for a multitude of reasons, the closure of so many pubs has resulted in a dearth of alleys. This is particularly worrying although, in the area in which we perform, several social clubs have more than one alley. One of these is Tintinhull, which has had two alleys for some years; Yeovil Snooker Club has three. Popularity of any game tends to wax and wane, and perhaps our ‘beautiful game’ is on the wane, having being subject to many influences. Snooker and billiards appear to have had their time at the top and, after a decline in popularity, darts is heading back up again. This game first appeared regularly on our screens in the early 1970’s when it was part of a programme named ‘Indoor League’, screened during the ‘Children’s Hour’ time slot, hosted by Fred Truman, pint in hand and sucking on his pipe! As someone who had become a regular pub-goer by this time (to the chagrin of my parents) this cemented my relationship with pub games, even though it was a few more years before I first picked up a ball at league skittles. Growth in the interest of darts increased along with the size of the awards trousered by professional dart players. This continued until the comedy duo Mel Smith and Griff Rhys
Jones – ‘Alas Smith and Jones’ - tore them to pieces with their interpretation of the game with some brilliantly-named spoof players and appalling on-screen behaviour. Without going into detail about the hilarious sketches (one can find them on YouTube) it had a profound effect on the sport and interest plummeted, consequently taking some time to recover. On a slightly different tack, I see that the game of golf in declining to such an extent in Japan that the list of abandoned golf clubs is continuing to grow.

Whilst we continue to lose pubs at a rate regularly publicized it’s always encouraging to see the lengths that the incumbents of some pubs will go to in an effort to make their pub viable. Another correspondent kindly culled some articles from a newspaper for my perusal and, listing a few of the achievements, it just shows what can be done. The Saracens’ Head near Ashbourne in Derbyshire serves takeaway meals, sells local artisan products including milk, cheese, fruit and vegetables, bread, cake and pastries, so there is a knock-on effect to other businesses, creating two more part-time jobs as did so. The Halfway House at Polbathic, Cornwall has a micro-library following the withdrawal of the mobile library. Books are refreshed every couple of weeks. The Boot at Freston, Suffolk has a small cinema and the landlord, Mike Keen, is clearly a man after my own heart as he does not like television in a pub as it ruins the atmosphere. There are four screenings a week, complete with a twenty minute break for refreshment! Other facilities I’ve come across are Post Offices, community cafes, foreign language classes and even readings by local authors and theatrical performances. If you have a pub near you that has this sort of activity I would be delighted to hear about it. Ladies and Gentlemen of the Great British Pub, I salute you!

Continuing on the subject of games viewed on ‘Indoor League’, we saw table skittles (as mainly played in Northants/Leicester), devil amongst the tailors (known as table skittles in this region – the ball on a chain version) pool, bar billiards, arm wrestling (whatever happened to that?) table football and even shove ha’penny (although the board used always could’ve done with a serious application of French chalk). Taking time out to view Youtube videos of the ‘Indoor league’, one doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry - people smoking at the oche, drinking (alcohol) and apparently competing in side-bets for the most ridiculous comb-over. No wonder the kids of today are etc etc - having been subjected to that sort of corrupting influence. (satirical comment, by the way). Doubtless this was cheap television back then. The prize money up for grabs was often £100, which seemed like a lot of money - indeed it was to me, it being about two months wages at that time. Now in an era with multitudes of channels we are blessed with many programmes all utilizing a same basic theme (hospitals/ambulance/emergency, myriads with antique themes, house/home/decor/moving) and all clearly so relatively cheap to make, so why not bring this one back for something a bit different? I, for one, would watch, although I would cynically suspect hype and contrived events would spoil it.

One thing is for certain, if the programme was revived, there would be no smoking, no drinking alcohol, (hopefully) no dodgy haircuts and comb-overs. Unlikely also, a host greeting us pint and pipe in hand, with an ‘Eh up’ and a finishing with ‘Ah’ll sith ‘ee’!

A Happy New Year to you all!

c. PABaxter2018 skittlealley@hotmail.com
Report from Micro Kullens Bryggeri (Brewery)

On this occasion I visited one of the smallest micro-breweries in Sweden, Kullens Bryggeri. It is situated in the well-known city of Höganäs (Highnose) of which I have reported before.

There are four distinguished gentlemen running the brewery. Besides their affection for good beer they have civilian jobs. During my visit I met with Fredrik who is a chemist and with Magnus who earns his living as layer of roofs made of reed. Of the other two, one is working with marketing and advertising, and the fourth partner is professor in materials for the nuclear industry.

They present Kullen as “A small brewery with a great taste”, and right they are. They started out of pure curiosity and to learn about brewing. Eventually, people became more and more interested in sampling the beer and they created the formal brewery. Now Kullens are supplying local restaurants and pubs. The are also “listed” at Systembolaget, which is the monopoly outlet in Sweden for alcoholic beverages. Finally, they also have a low alcohol 3,5% beer for the daily goods trade.

The brewing practise is indeed by hand and the annual production is about 6-7 m³ a year.

A sampled a good part of the production with two experimental beers. The first was the “Blonde BIRA – Belgian Ale, 6,0% alcohol. It was very Belgian - I know from spending 20 years in Brussels. It had a nice bitter balance of hops. “Hoppy Ale”, also 6,0%, is an American IPA with a little bit more bitterness in a positive way; a perfect summer ale. The recipe is to my understanding the oldest one.

We continued into a darker field with “Svart (Black) IPA, 6,5% and it really was black! It is the kind of dark beer I like. A nice bitterness of roasted malt and only a very light sweetness.

We now took a break for making sampling experiments from the tank. One was a strawberry beer that had initially some bitter taste and with a nice strawberry aftertaste. The second experiment was more innovative - beetroot! It had a good dark red colour and a very significant beetroot taste. I liked both and I am looking forward to seeing these two
possibly bottled.

In the third session we went into higher alcohol content. The first one was the “Lazy NEIPA, 8,4% brewed also with oats. It was a bit too sweet for my taste.

The final was my favourite - “Humle (Hops) Bomb”, 9,8%, a triple IPA. I liked it because of the richness in taste and bitterness. It sort of reminded me of the very good Blond Trappist produced in Belgium.

I did not include REVOLT in the sampling because I know it quite well. It is a nice easy to drink 5% good lager.

The samples are all unfiltered and thereby a certain carefulness is needed when pouring up the glasses. When you make a sampling like this you use small tasting glasses. All in order not going into a nice fog.

By the keyboard, your foreign correspondent

Bo Caperman

We are a husband and wife team and embarked on the adventure of owning our very own pub which came into fruition the Summer of 2018.

The quaint little village of Askerswell, near Bridport in Dorset, offered everything we could of hoped for and more. The Spyway Inn offers not only everything we envisaged in way of local Ales, ciders and locally sourced produce; But a warm and welcoming community and a view to feast our eyes upon. We’ve made a few little changes so far which have been warmly received.

We have increased the range of well kept real ales and dogs are now welcome within the main bar area - We even have treats!

During peak season we are open 7 days a week during specific lunch and evening hours. In the winter, we’ll be resting our weary feet on Monday lunchtimes and open as per usual come 6pm.

We hope you enjoy your visit and we look forward to welcoming you soon Mark and Laura
The majority of our craft ales and ciders are sourced from within a 20 mile radius of Yetminster

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www.YetminsterWhiteHart.pub
West Dorset
Cider Pub of the Year

A presentation was made at Octoberfest of a certificate for the Cider Pub of the Year to Darren and Alison of the Woodman in Bridport. Five pubs were put forward for judging. The Woodman has been open again for only fifteen months, but has a well deserved reputation for keeping many local ciders and interesting beers.

My apologies to Alex and to Daren and Alison for omitting this from the previous edition of the Giant Dongle. Ed

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Trading Standards

If you have a dispute with a pub such as failing to serve full measures, beer strengths, spirit substitution or food descriptions and you are unable to resolve this informally on the spot, CAMRA encourages you to report it to Trading Standards.

To get advice about a dispute with a pub and to report it to Trading Standards please contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service visit www.adviceguide.org.uk or phone 03454 040506.
Back in Issue 34 of the Giant Dongle I threatened to continue with Richard Boston’s words on the role of the ale-conner or ale-taster, possibly England’s first attempt at consumer protection.

In the fourteenth century an attempt at consumer protection was made by instituting the post of ale-conner or ale-taster. The job involved going around making sure that ale was not being adulterated. H.A. Monckton describes the ale-conner’s method thus:

“The official ale-taster wore leather breeches and there is a story which tells of this test for the quality of the product. He would draw a tankard of ale, pour it on to a wooden bench and then sit in the pool he had made. He would talk and drink for half an hour being extremely careful not to shift his position. If his breeches stuck to the place whereon he sat, the ale was not considered to be of the highest quality as it revealed that it had a high sugar content. The object of fermentation is to convert sugar into alcohol, and therefore if the ale-taster’s breeches did not stick to the bench he could pronounce that ale as good”

This story is repeated by virtually all authors of books about beer, both before and since Mr Monckton, though some tell us that if the leather breeches stuck to the bench the ale was of the right quality. Doubtless one version or the other will continue to be narrated in all future books on the subject, but I must record the fact that I have searched in vain for any evidence to support a story which, however colourful, seems highly improbable. Why go to the extraordinary trouble of sitting motionless and risking a damp bottom (or worse) when you could achieve the same result with a piece of leather that contained some reasonably heavy object other than an ale-conner? Furthermore, anything with a sugar content high enough to be detected by this peculiar test would be so sweet that only a very eccentric ale-conner would choose to register it with his bottom rather than his taste buds. This is of course what he did, and on a generous scale too, if the ale-conner in The Cobbler of Canterbury was at all typical:

A nose he had that gan show,  
What liquor he loved I trow;  
For he had before long seven yeare  
Been of the towne the ale-conner.

That his services of consumer protection were needed – however he carried them out – is made clear by the climax of one of the fourteenth-century Chester miracle plays, where we find that a special fate is reserved for the brewster. Christ redeems the various characters from damnation, all except one who admits:

Some time I was a taverner  
A gentle gossip, and a tapster  
Of wine and ale, a trusty brewer  
Which woe has me bewrought.

Of cans I kept true measure,  
My cups I sold at my pleasure,  
Deceiving many a creature,  
Tho’ my ale were nought.

Demons carry her off to Hell and the play ends.

And, in conclusion this time, I also give you the Wikipedia entry for Richard Boston.

Richard Boston (29 December 1938 – 22 December 2006) was an English journalist and author, a rigorous dissenter and a belligerent pacifist. An anarchist, toper, raconteur, marathon runner and practical joker, he described his pastimes as “soothsaying, shelling peas and embroidery” and argued that Adam and Eve were the first anarchists: “God gave them only one order and they promptly broke it”.

More later. Alex Sorivener
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