

# HOP PRESS



**FREE!**



**SPRING 2008 ISSUE 64**

**SOUTHERN HAMPSHIRE BRANCH  
OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**





# HOP PRESS



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Our cover for this issue shows a picture that we had not expected to ever be able to show and now hope not to show again. Which seems a mighty queer thing to say about an inoffensive looking country inn! It is of a pub, the Bugle in Twyford, that has featured in virtually every issue of Hop Press for years and it is there to celebrate the pub's reopening.

The Bugle was an Eldridge Pope house and in the decline of that unfortunate brewery it was sold, with a score of others, to the very inappropriately named Inntown Pub Company. Inntown have little interest in running pubs but great interest in closing them to extract the, often large, property value in 'developing' them, usually for housing. The Bugle was closed immediately, in 2004, and an epic triangular struggle began between these 'developers,' the planners and the pub's campaigning supporters (ourselves included).

After many rebuffs from the Winchester planners — congratulations to them for standing firm against this very persistent company — all that Inntown came away with was permission for a few houses on part of the car park and with the all-important clause that the pub had to reopen *before* they could be sold. Which has now happened.

The pub was bought by Richard Yonwin and Lenny Carr-Roberts and after an extensive refit it opened on March 22nd, just 1330 days on from its closure. The refit has resulted in a large, single bar pub with a modern, light and airy feel, with lots of pale wood furnishings. Although obviously hoping for plenty of food trade (the menu is available daily) it is very definitely a pub rather than just a restaurant — it passes the *Hop Press* ten second three-part test — you can stand at the bar without being ushered away, there are bar stools if

you do not want to stand and, vitally, a pint can be ordered without any subsequent suggestion of viewing menus!

At the time of visiting, three cask beers were on offer, Ringwood Fortyniner and the intriguing chance of comparing, at the same sitting, Bowman's Swift One with Flowerpots Bitter.

The Bugle is open all day from 11.30 and we wish it every success. And, as the first paragraph said, we hope there is no need to write of it again in future editorials!

In the last edition's *Editorial* we bemoaned the seeming hysteria over drinking that was sweeping the corridors of power, with the likelihood of dire consequences to come for a long time into the future. And although it is now some months since this year's startling budget was imposed, the patent unfairness of it and its potential for harm to cask beer in particular, demand that we revisit the subject.

As ever, since before anyone can remember, the Chancellor intoned his ritual mantra of "I will add ... pence to a pint of beer" Knowing, again as always, this was, in un-parliamentary language, a direct lie. Anything added to the ex-brewery, pre-VAT cost of beer will result in at least four times as much onto the customer's pint. This is not from rapacious landlords taking advantage of their public, it is simple business economics, they have to keep their margins constant. In the case of this budget's mythical 4p, after keeping the margins and also allowing for pint/half pint splitting and avoiding small copper change no pint could increase by less than 20p without threatening a landlord's livelihood.

But this is all common knowledge, what is really the scandal of this budget is its perverse

unfairness to cask beer drinkers and thus to Britain's small brewers in particular. Of all alcoholic drinks, cask-conditioned beer — real ale — call it what you will, can only be obtained in pubs or traditional clubs; the very venues where drinking conduct is well regulated. Increasing prices there disproportionately hits the discriminating drinkers who appreciate beers for taste and quality rather than their capacity to produce a quick coma.

With their much lower margins the cheap supermarket offers will go up by a lot less and the binge drinking problems in our streets and parks will actually get worse. Global brewers will be sanguine — any loss of pub sales of their standard lagers will be made up for by increased off-sales. Only our small and micro brewers, who just produce cask beer, will suffer. And, of course, our long-suffering landlords who will see falling incomes whilst being berated by authority for not curing 'the drinking problem.'

The country's economy is slowing, maybe even heading for that dread state, a recession. Traditional wisdom of the stock jobber was that in such stormy times the solid bricks and mortar of breweries and pubs made a suitable shelter for investments until the storm abated, but not this time around seemingly — why? In a word, securitisation, or if we want to personalise it, Lord Young.

In 1987, Lord Young, Mrs Thatcher's trade minister, introduced the 'Beer Orders,' ostensibly to cut monopoly in the brewing industry; in practice it achieved exactly the opposite. By saying that breweries could not own more than 2000 pubs, but then by *not saying* that this should also apply to any other organisations. Almost overnight tens of thousands of pubs were transferred to

cobbled together 'pubcos' set up by billions of pounds borrowed from the banks around the world, on the security of their projected future rental cash-flows.

With precisely the same reckless treatment as happened to American mortgages, financial 'engineers' rolled up these loans and used them to generate a borrowing spiral on a seemingly ever more gilt-edged base. In the real world, meanwhile, the pub trade was becoming ever harder — beer sales continued to decline steadily, overheads rose faster than inflation and legislation such as the licensing changes and the smoking ban added to the burdens. The rock solid foundations of the British securitised pub estate suddenly begins to look distinctly sandy.

Since last midsummer shares of Enterprise Inns have declined almost linearly from 750p to around 400p today, Punch Taverns have more than halved from nearly 1400p to 600p now. But the whiz kids in red braces never give in, their latest wheeze is to try to persuade the Treasury to let them turn these financial instruments into forms of investment trust that can avoid corporation tax — with one bound they will be free! Perhaps...

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## Pub News by Rob Whatley

### Twyford/Otterbourne

As our *Editorial* lead describes, after almost four years of waiting residents of Twyford can again have a drink at the **Bugle**. Congratulations are due to the 'Save the Bugle Action Group' who have shown that it is possible to save pubs that are threatened and that closure is not inevitable.

In the last edition of *Pubs News* we noted that pub chain Mitchells and Butlers had decided to dispose of the **Captain Barnard** at Compton and its continuation as a pub was under threat. When we started to write this edition of *Hop Press* we were cautiously optimistic about the future of the pub. Soon after the story became public the owners said that the pub would continue to trade and there were rumours that a proposed sale had fallen through. In March M and B submitted an application under the Licensing Act to alter the internal layout yet, in April, the pub stopped trading, having been abruptly sold by M and B. New owners are Highwood Residential, a Chandlers Ford company who want to create a fifty bed care home.

### Winchester

There is better news from the **Stanmore**. For the second time councillors voted (9-1) against a care home being built on this site, despite advice to approve the plan from planning officers. There was a big local campaign against the closure, including a 750 strong petition and more than 300 letters of objection. Following the success, pub regulars celebrated by raising money for the Special Care Baby Unit at the nearby Royal Hampshire County Hospital with a week of events including a race night and a pool competition. In passing we note that supermarket chain Aldi have submitted their *fourth* application to build a store on the site of the long demolished Chimneys pub in Weeke!

East of the City centre, another pub faces an uncertain future. Two years ago the **Heart in Hand** was handed a reprieve after police objections to a change of licence holder were overcome. Now a plan has been submitted for a change of use to a hair salon or physiotherapy unit (!) along with the inevitable 12 flats.

In the City centre there may be better news; the **Mash Tun**, which had been due to reopen in March, is currently clothed in scaffolding so could be due for renaissance. Broadcaster Peter White and his family gave up running the pub in 2007.

A forecast in the last Pub News that was right: the **Guildhall Tavern** in the High Street reopened at the end of 2007 as part of the Pitcher and Piano chain.

### King's Worthy/Bramdean

A major revamp, set to last seven weeks, has also been taking place at the **Cart and Horses** at King's Worthy. The pub continues to be owned by Greene King but will be run by a company called Innventure as part of their absurdly named "d'Arry's" brand. Local residents were horrified when decorators started to cover the exterior in a startling shade of purple. No permission had been granted for the painting of such a bright colour onto a listed building within a conservation area and Winchester City Council ensured that it stopped and was replaced by a more acceptable pale coffee hue. The owners claimed that the purple paint was delivered as the result of the wrong code being entered on an order sheet (although the purple was the specified colour in the planning application).

A little further to the east, staff at the **Fox Inn** at Bramdean had reason for celebration after they received a 'Hampshire Hospitality

*Continued overleaf >*

Award' after an anonymous visit by judges who assessed hospitality, service and food quality.

## Horsebridge/Dunbridge

Moving from the north east extremity of our area to the north west, worrying news reaches us from Horsebridge. With a guide price of £700,000, the **John of Gaunt** Inn is up for sale with the advert that appeared in the local press stating: *"The price includes a detached residence with substantial first floor private accommodation, a ground floor area currently operating as bar and restaurant with detached cottage, parking and private gardens ideally suited as home and income, dual family occupation or the entrepreneurial restaurateur wishing to exploit great business scope."*

A little to the south, there have been new attractions at the **Mill Arms** in Dunbridge where live theatre with dinner is becoming a regular event. A performance of Harold Pinter's *"The Lover"* was a complete sell out and more events are being planned. While expanding the attraction of the Mill Arms, owners Andrea and Ian Bentall have also taken over the **Abbots Mitre** at Chilbolton, following refurbishments.

## Romsey

We mentioned in the last edition of *Pub News* that the **White Horse** in Romsey was due to reopen before the end of the year. However, there have been a number of delays to the project and permission has been sought to build an annexe that would create 16 additional guest rooms. It is now likely to open again in June — rumours still abound, two suggest that (good) there will be local beers and (probably bad) that the bar will be relocated to another part of the building.

In 1996 the Horse and Jockey in Mainstone reopened as a pub having been last used as a

veterinary surgery. Then in 2000 it became Casa Bodega. Now, while remaining part of the Dalmeny Leisure group that includes Banana Wharf and Dockgate Four in Southampton, it has reopened again as the **Cromwell Arms**, a gastro-pub.

## Eastleigh

The awful behaviour of drinkers in Eastleigh has been under the spotlight in past months. We noted in the last *Pub News* that Earth Bar in the town centre had been closed after numerous serious disturbances linked to the premises. Permission has now been granted to Inntown Properties (familiar name...) to erect an eight storey block facing the bus station that will feature restaurants and cafés on the ground floor. The rest of the 63 flats will be in a six storey block overlooking Southampton Road which will also include other retail and office space.

Drinkers who were expecting to celebrate Christmas at the nearby **Home Tavern** were disappointed as it was also closed over the festive season as a result of an application by police following a major disturbance on the premises in the middle of December. There was then another mass brawl outside the still open High Street pub, **Stones**, on Boxing Day evening.

In an attempt to improve the situation, Eastleigh's licensing committee have now revoked the Home Tavern's late licence so alcohol cannot be served after 11pm. The change was backed by both the police and the owners, Laurel Pub Company. The company is now looking to 're-market' the premises, which in the past used to be sparsely occupied before 11pm. Perhaps it can be marketed as a proper pub! But we are not hopeful as enquiries from ourselves to Laurel's bosses have gone unanswered.

## Shirrell Heath/Curbridge

Similarly, such a change was required at the **Prince of Wales** in Shirrell Heath. Winchester environmental health officers applied for a review of the pub's licence after complaint of noise and nuisance. The license was retained after the owners, Osprey Pubs, a sub-group of Admiral Taverns, agreed to install new licensees who would ensure that the pub reverted to a more family friendly establishment with more of an emphasis on food.

With the food trade in pubs becoming ever more competitive, landlady Helen Hill and her head chef, and son, Daniel, offer a menu that is completely gluten free at the **Horse and Jockey** in Curbridge. Both are coeliac sufferers and turned their frustration at being unable to find suitable dishes on menus when eating out into an opportunity to produce a unique menu so that all their customers can enjoy their food without worries.

## New Forest

Good news reaches us from the Waterside, where an application has been made to build an hotel, a pub, a restaurant and function rooms on the site of the former **Flying Boat Inn** at Calshot, which closed in the late 1990s. Outline planning permission was granted for a similar scheme on the site three years ago but it has remained vacant since the original buildings were demolished after being severely damaged by fire in 2001.

Fire has also hit two currently trading Forest pubs, but with ultimately happier outcomes. At the end of March more than 60 firefighters were needed to fight a blaze at the **Woolpack** in Sopley, which was first spotted by a passer by at 4pm in the afternoon. The main damage was to the thatched roof and the flat below and so it was hoped that the pub was due to reopen quickly by the end of April. A more minor blaze took place at the

**Musketeer** in Pennington at the end of February but was quickly extinguished by firefighters and trade here was not affected.

Also in Pennington, the **Wheel Inn** is under the new management of Pete Walters and Marie Richards. In addition to live music and an interesting selection of real ales, beauty treatments are also being offered at the premises.

In the centre of Lymington congratulations are in order for **Borough Arms** landlord Glenn Miller who has recently won a British Beer and Pub Association gold award for the quality of his beer, one of only ten such awards that are presented in the UK each month.

North, in Pillely, there was good news for local residents when the Pillely Stores and Post Office was saved from closure after it was bought by Hadie Bradley, landlady of the village's **Fleur de Lys** pub, and it will be run by her brother Havior Hughes.

In New Milton the **Wheatsheaf** has reopened after being shut for more than a month for a substantial refurbishment. The popular food trade does not diminish the pub's appeal to drinkers with Ringwood Best, Fortyniner, Jennings Sneck Lifter and Mule from Outlaw Brewery available when we visited. The first three of these beers are of course brewed within the Martsons group and readers may have noted Jennings beers appearing in an increasing number of local pubs recently.

The Wheatsheaf came to Marstons as part of a package of former Eldridge Pope outlets. Although the pub has now reopened, some of the original alterations were rejected by New Forest planners and had to be resubmitted. Marstons/Ringwood also had a setback in the refusal of a side extension and other

*Continued overleaf >*



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minor alterations to their flagship **Inn on the Furlong** in Ringwood A substantial refurbishment that has gone ahead is at the **Red Lion**, Totton, with alterations throughout the premises.

## Southampton

Another major refurbishment, this time in Woolston, led to the temporary closure of the **Swan**. Happily it is now open again, with a new entrance and access ramp. The pub continues to be a major venue for live music.

Sadly though, most news is of closure. Closed and unlikely to reopen is the **Merry Oak**. It was put up for sale for more than £½m and recently a new application was submitted for its demolition and replacement by two retail units with 10 flats above. Also boarded up is the **Bridge Tavern** in Coxford. Continuing with the bad news, the **Star and Garter** in Freemantle has been replaced by a block of flats, while nearby the former **Victory**, opposite the Central Station, has been closed and partially replaced by a Costa Coffee outlet.

It's not all closures though. Work has started on a new bar to replace what was a Christian book shop in Carlton Place. Just round the corner in Bedford Place, following a £500,000 refit, the Lizard Lounge is now trading as **Revolution Vodka Bar**, part of a 50 strong national chain. A substantial amount has also been spent on the **White Star** in Oxford Street. The bar and restaurant have been refurbished and 13 en-suite bedrooms have been added. Changes to the outside drinking area of the **Gate** in Bassett are in store for the summer. The new manager is Jan Wisniewski, who has previously transformed **Kolebka** in Bevois Valley. There has also been a change of licensee at the **King George** in Millbrook, where Wayne and Rose Johnston are pulling the pints. Substantial

changes may be in store for the **Coopers Arms** in Northam where an application has been made to host entertainment including plays, films and music under the banner of the **Joshua Tree**.

## Winsor

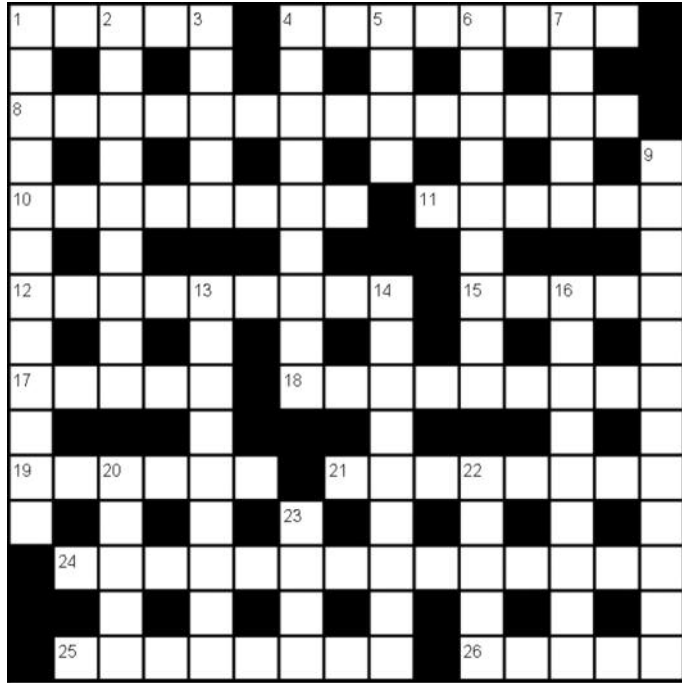
Finally we feature a local pub that has recently received worldwide publicity. Jack Hammond moved to Cadnam at the end of last year to be nearer his family and had the good sense to make the *Good Beer Guide* listed **Compass** in Winsor his local. However, his son Michael finds it difficult to accompany 88 year old Jack on his twice weekly visits. As a result he put an advert in the local post office asking for people to escort Jack, two evenings a week, for £7 an hour plus expenses. So many people responded to the advert that Michael and Jack had to sift a mountain of applications. Many stated that they did not want payment, while the Compass's landlady, Mop Draper, offered to drive Jack to and from the pub. Two people, Henry Roseninge from Emery Down and Trevor Pugh from Southampton have now been chosen to accompany Jack on his visits to the Compass Inn.

## New Ringwood Beer

A rare new beer was brewed by Ringwood in the spring. The new ale is called Seventy Eight, and is commemoration of the founding of the brewery in 1978, thirty years ago.

The draft version of the beer, a nice hoppy, 4.2% abv bitter, and which is brewed with Sovereign hops, should be finished by the time you read this but it will still be available in bottles and we will have some at the Southampton Beer Festival (in the Guildhall, June 5th to 7th).

# Crossword Competition



QUETZALCOATL

4s and 5s are all 7s, so only partially clued.

### Across

1. Firstly, test if blood entered river (5)
4. Do nameless parents make acceptable parents? (8)
8. Coward's patriotic flag-waver, or a Grace Brothers' mission statement? (2,5,2,5)
10. Dental student's fear — or joy? (4,4)
11. A mistake at the junction horrifies (6)
12. To cut, a corset is relaxed (9)
15. Took horse to Scotland? — more the bus from Shrewsbury! (5)
17. Several Heavens (5)
18. MD, no hoper, may look overweight (9)
19. People mounted additions to contract (6)
21. Ribs that broke are obnoxious (8)
24. Tempestuous spirit's 9.144 metre sounding (4,6,4)
25. Soft shoe shuffle is no scam (8)
26. Managed church (5)

### Down

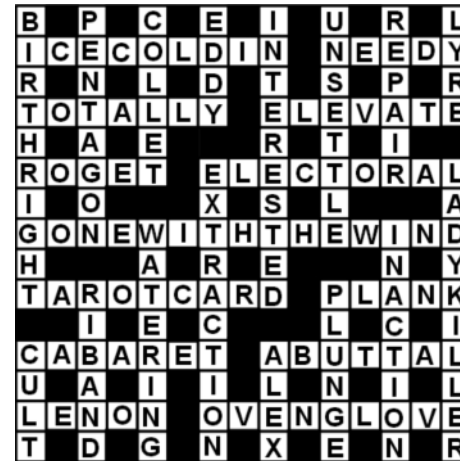
1. It may be no more gritty, considering all the angles (12)
2. Leading medieval naval weapons platform, east London fortress (9)
3. Inheriting half the proceeds (5)
4. It is a rash time to be in retreat (9)
5. Is monarchy overdrawn? (4)
6. As a result of using mere froth (9)
7. Flower, a French bank flower (5)
9. Screen chef — he used diced bric! (6,6)
13. Get golden salt air treatment here? (9)
14. An 18 fashion, with MO in a swap, gets nature's well-being drug (9)
16. Antipodean Scot (!)? No, a true believer in the effects of breeding (9)
20. Grim cipher (5)
22. Troops cause damage (5)
23. 40% of '92 treaty? (4)

Prizes for the first two correct entries drawn.

Closing date:  
25th August

To: The Editor  
Hop Press  
1 Surbiton Rd.  
Eastleigh, Hants.  
SO50 4HY

## Hop Press Issue 63 Solution



*Mea culpa!* Although the last issue was intended to be a bit easier than number 62, It was not meant to contain a glaring error!

24 across should, of course, have been LENNON. I think the second 'N' fell by The wayside because I had been toying with a more Bolshevik based clue for that light...

### Winners:

Nigel Cook, St Denys  
John Green, St Albans

Other correct solutions from:

|             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
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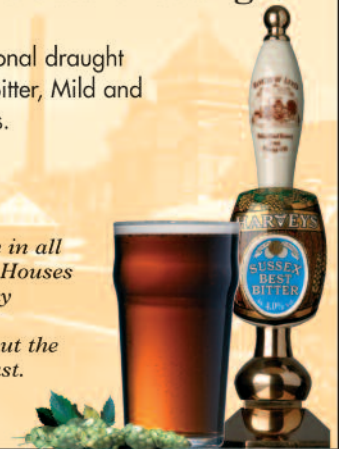
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**I**s your favourite beer a slightly different flavour than it used to be? Don't be surprised — last year's harvests were poor and brewers are making subtle changes to recipes to compensate. We talked to Martin Roberts of Bowman Ales to find out what's going on.

"We live in interesting times with malting barley. The last season (2007) was awful, purely because of the weather. The harvest was difficult because the wet weather continued right into the end of the growing season, when it should have been ripening. It was actually germinating in the fields rather than on the malting floor. So the quality is down and the yield that we get from it is also down. We seem to get variation even in the same batch of malt. We get one analysis per purchase of malt although it does seem to vary throughout the batch and everybody is having the same problem."

"Malt prices have gone through the roof as a result of all this and we've just had to increase our prices. We certainly didn't want to — especially before the budget — but we had to. Our malting barley prices went up from £404 per tonne to £623 per tonne, a more than 50% increase."

"We thought at one stage that hops would be a real problem too. All the growing areas in the northern hemisphere were afflicted by one of more natural disasters, either flooding or hail storms. These shredded the growing hops — so they had to re-grow. The resulting quality was good but the yield was awful. We were using the standard Styrian Goldings hops grown in eastern Europe and we now have to use a Styrian Golding variety called Brobek. Which is slightly different, discernibly different, though it's still a lovely hop. It has been grown in the same part of the world, but it's a stronger plant and survived the hail."

"Our main bittering hop in Swift One is Green Bullet from New Zealand. This was always about the most expensive hop you could buy, mainly because of the distance it has to travel. However, because of all the problems in the northern hemisphere, suddenly, because of the limited supply, New Zealand hops are under great demand. We were advised by our hop merchant that we should order a whole year's worth because there won't be enough to go around!"

These problems are affecting breweries all over the world so as pint prices creep up during the next 6 months we should all pray for a good harvest this year.

As previously reported in the pages of *Hop Press*, Martin and Ray were the brewers from the Cheriton Brewhouse. Readers will recall that this Cheriton partnership was dissolved in 2006. (The brewery at the Flowerpots is again producing great beer, we are pleased to report, under its new brewer, Iain McIntosh.)

"Initially Ray and I thought we would go our separate ways — because we were both fed up. We both thought what we'd probably do is set up two small breweries, but as the dust settled we both realised that it would be a waste of our talents to trade separately, so we decided it would be better for both of us to start again with a single, larger, brewery, which is how Bowman Ales came about."

Martin has brewed beer for a long time and certainly knows what he's doing. What started as a hobby became a profession when Cheriton Brewhouse was formed.

"I'd always been a very keen full mash home brewer. Before the resurgence of small breweries, in the late '70s, it was unusual to find a decent pint. There were only one or two decent pubs around. The only way to get a decent beer was

to brew it yourself. So I got the wonderful book by poor, dead Dave Line — which is still available — "*Brewing Beers Like Those You Buy*." Which must be the worst title ever!"

"I got into conversation with a gentleman from Cheriton. He was thinking about starting a brewery — and I said I'd go off and do a brewing course then come back and be the brewer, with Ray taking on the greater part of the brewing later. It's just the same as full mash homebrewing, just on a larger scale with a bit more knowledge of microbiology, which came from my earlier occupation as a dairyman. So that's how the Cheriton Brewhouse started. And that continued for 13 ½ years until the partnership was dissolved."

Nuts. Bowman have recently released a seasonal ale called Nuts. It is an interesting concoction made with sweet chestnuts.

"It was an idea gleaned from the *Waitrose* magazine. There was an article about a Corsican beer brewed with sweet chestnuts, I thought it sounded interesting, so I got hold of some sweet chestnut flour, fiddled with the percentage of ingredients a little until I was happy that it should work and — luckily it's really nice — it's our winter ale."

You might think that a brewer would make a small batch of an experimental beer like Nuts but Martin explains that it's not as easy as all that.

"It's down to experience really. It's very difficult to do a half brew and then scale it up. So we just do full brews. It hasn't happened yet — touch wood — but we could end up with 720 gallons of unsalable rubbish."

"A lot of pubs are restricted in what they can sell. Customers don't want to try anything too different. A beer made with sweet chestnuts can be a bit of a problem for some

people because they don't want to go outside their norm. We are really lucky and in a delightful position. Places like the Guide Dog in Southampton have supported us and drink our beers at a staggering rate. We originally were selling beer based on our reputation from the other place. I'm pleased to say that now we are standing on our own two feet. The beer we have produced for a year is of good quality and word has got around."

Bowman Ales should be an inspiration to anyone who is contemplating setting up a micro-brewery. In their first summer of trading they managed to collect four 'winners' awards and further bronze or runner up positions.

"It's been an amazing year. Staggering. We're now trading 15-20% up on what we ever did at Cheriton. And that's in the first year. It's gobsmaking to be honest — it really is. When you are caught up in the day to day tasks of running a business, you sometimes don't give yourself enough time to stand back and see what you've achieved. But when you do, it's wonderful, it really is. And it's all thanks to local CAMRA members, who just like drinking a decent pint. And the local landlords of course. Not to mention a small handful of good old fashioned luck! When we were setting up the brewery we didn't have limitless amounts of money, but we did future proof to some extent. We started off with three fermentation vessels and three conditioning vessels — the brewery is a 20 barrel plant, so it's twice the size of the old one. Last summer we purchased another two conditioning vessels — so we're now up to five. We found that we had a bit of a bottleneck in production. We've got space in the fermentation room for at least one more vessel then perhaps we could expand into another unit on the site."

*Continued overleaf* >



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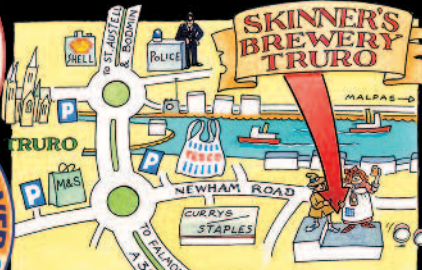


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# A Brewer's View - continued

## The future of Ale in the UK?

"I foresee things becoming more difficult. There is a strong anti-alcohol feeling in > government at the moment. If we want to have the same freedom to drink what we want and when we want to drink it, then people have really got to start writing to their MPs, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and also to the Minister of Justice. This anti-alcohol feeling is shaping policy which will be with us for years to come. It's set to change the way we drink entirely. Particularly with regard to rural pubs — it could be the death of every single rural pub in the country and that would be a very great shame."

"There has to be a differential made between the different forms of drinking alcohol. If they are going to tax alcohol almost out existence — which I can see happening in the not too distant future — It's only right that distinctions are made between beer and ale and the strong lagers, alcopops and the spir-

its. You know — Vodka bars — they should be taxed out of existence! When was the last time you heard of an antisocial incident at a beer festival?"

I've been a CAMRA member for longer than I care to remember and I know that I wouldn't be in business today if it wasn't for it. It's not just about me brewing; CAMRA has been instrumental in ensuring we can all get a decent pint. We wouldn't be sitting here if it wasn't for it!"

"CAMRA has basically reintroduced beer to the great British public. They have kept going, constantly, though various campaigns and of course the beer festivals which take place up and down the land. CAMRA sometimes gets caught up in it's own battles but like I was saying before, we have to step back and see what's been achieved over the years."

We'll drink to that!

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This Summer I would like to suggest a walk around Braishfield, a large village less than three miles northeast of Romsey. Although there are no shops left in the village, it is a great place for real ale drinkers because of the three pubs of differing styles.

The **Newport Inn** in Newport Lane has been run by Janet and Bernard Cook for very many years, and before that by Janet's parents. It is a totally unimproved inn with a fifties feel about it. I have been drinking there since 1965 when I moved to Hampshire, and, apart from a small change to the bar position in the public bar, it seems just the same. Many *Hop Press* readers will know the pub well, and have very fond memories of it. The Newport is now a Fuller's pub, though it still appears to be owned by Gale's, so the beers are BBB, HSB, and Festival Mild or Fuller's Winter Ale or Adnams. The simple, but famed, ploughman's and sarnies are recommended. Visit it now; it cannot last unchanged for ever.

The **Wheatsheaf** has had a new lease of life since Peter & Jenny Jones took over some years ago. The pub is comfortable, homely, and just slightly chaotic. The beers and food on offer are generally adventurous and local. Peter keeps his own pigs which form part of the menu. The beers always include Ringwood Best Bitter, often Taylors' Landlord and from the Isle of Wight, Goddard's, with others mainly coming from local breweries.

The **Dog and Crook** is a neat looking modest pub at the south end of the village, ably run by Alan Arthur (his first pub) and Miriam Bevan. Again Ringwood Best Bitter is a regular, the second beer is often London Pride, with a third beer on, when trade permits (how sensible).

## Start the walk from the village centre.

Start from the T-junction in the middle of the village (by the red telephone box and the sign to the Newport Inn). Walk downhill (northwards) to the War Memorial, turn right into Church Lane, then immediately fork left at the sign to the Church with the additional duck warning sign, and immediately pass the duck pond on your right. When the road bends sharp left towards the church, keep straight on past 'Festina Lente.'

Ignore a footpath on the right, and very soon after the road reduces to a well surfaced track leading to Merrie Meade Farm. Just before the farm, turn left onto a footpath that skirts the clutter of the farmyard, then leads into open countryside. Just after a stile on the right, the path squeezes between a tall fence and hedge and leads straight on to a few steps down onto Braishfield Road. Turn right onto the road which has a wide verge, bends left and goes downhill to a crossroads. (If you want to shorten the walk, turn left at the crossroads into Paynes Hay Road and omit the next two paragraphs!)

At the crossroads go straight on along Kings Somborne Road, then immediately left and uphill on a bridleway leading to Windmill Cottage. Ignore all turnings, and as the gradient eases bend right and left by Windmill Cottage. Stay on the curving and gently climbing main track with private rides on both sides. After a hedge on the left, a sharp bend left, and a hedge of trees on the right, the track suddenly bends right but follow a bridle-way sign going straight ahead along a somewhat muddy path. (Alternatively, cheat slightly and use the parallel, drier, private ride. Further on there is a clear gap in the low hedge that separates the ride from the path, showing that many others have walked this way). After the gap, the muddy path soon

leads onto a small lane (Eldon Road which links Braishfield and Kings Somborne).

Turn left on the lane going slightly downhill. Bend right at the first house on the left, then just before the first house on the right cross a stile on the left into a field. Turn right along the field edge parallel to the lane you have just left and cross into the next field. Immediately turn left to climb along the thicketed edge of the field. Cross a stile in the field corner into a very large field, keep to the left hand side, bending right after 100 yards or so. After two more kinks in the field edge, and a dilapidated footpath sign, you come to the end of the field. Here you pass through a wooden chicane and go downhill on a small path between a hedge and a low fence to a cross lane in the valley.

Ignore the footpath straight ahead (though it will take you back to Braishfield directly). Instead, turn right along the lane (Paynes Hay Road again), past dilapidated farm buildings with a fine weathercock, past the fine farmhouse, and turn left over a stile into a grassy field. Keep to the left hand side of the field to a second stile onto a sometimes muddy path going uphill inside the edge of a wood. Soon the path crosses a trivial, single-plank footbridge and opens out into a field of young trees. Continue along the left hand side of this field to a very large open field by a double footpath post. Climb gently along the left hand side of this field with views all around suddenly improving, until the summit is reached near a couple of fine isolated oak trees.

The view here is impressive considering the modest elevation — you are about to drop back into Braishfield village. Continue along the left hand side to a final stile which surprisingly takes you through the back garden of a house into the drive of a second house and



then back onto Braishfield Road opposite Forge Cottage. A footpath sign confirms the route you have just used, so no trespass was committed. Isn't it a typically English thing that footpaths do sometimes take you across private gardens with complete immunity.

Back to the walk, which is nearly complete: turn right onto the road which takes you directly to the War memorial again, with the red telephone box just beyond. Now the choice of pub is yours: The Newport is on the right down Newport Lane, The Wheatsheaf is about 300 yards straight on, with the Dog & Crook about 600 yards beyond that.

**NOTE ON MAPS:** The OS 1:25,000 is the map for walkers. Most good stationers carry a limited supply, **Sussex Stationers** seem a

*Continued overleaf >*



## Walking and Drinking (6) continued

pound or so cheaper than others. Gorman's Map Centre in Freemantle near the Shirley Road / Payne's Road junction is an OS agent that carries a very good supply. The number of the Romsey, Andover & Test Valley Sheet for this walk is Explorer 131.

**Note on parking:** All the pubs have their own car parks and parking in Braishfield Road is unrestricted. There is also parking at the village hall, though this seems to be discouraged.

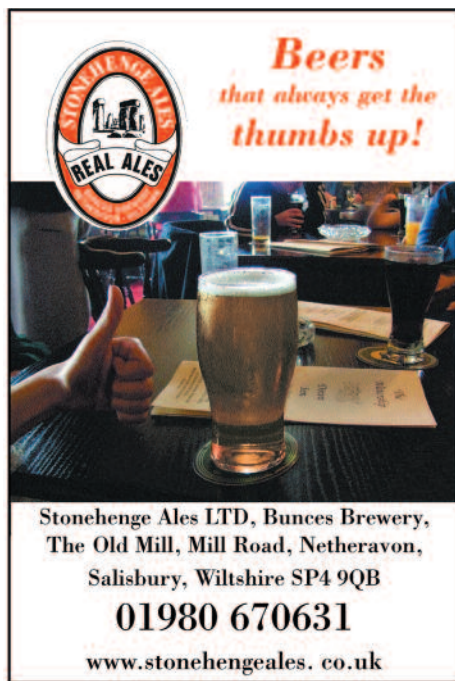
**Note on buses:** The only bus to Braishfield is the 35 from Romsey. Its very limited times seem designed to thwart would-be drinkers.

**Note on seasons:** A walk for all seasons, because it avoids the muddiest paths. The surprisingly good views from such modest elevations are all the better on a clear day.

**Note on times:** The complete walk is about 3¼ miles, so allowing for the moderate climb involved and stopping to admire the views, 1½ hours should suffice.

### Up in smoke

While the smoking ban is being blamed for the demise of many pubs, one Hampshire company is reaping the benefits. Sales at Swanmore based Trident Blinds have increased by 15% as a result of the installation of awnings that enable pub customers to smoke outside. Seventy two Hampshire pubs, including the Happy Cheese in Ashurst and the Red Lion at Totton have been supplied with the company's awnings, which cost between £1,200 and £7,000. One licensee reckoned that he made his money back in six weeks as smokers were attracted to the new facilities.



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**ALL BEERS COOLED TO CELLAR TEMPERATURE**

It is not usual for this small newsletter to take on the mainstream Press but we are driven to it by a wave of misinformed hysteria in recent issues of the *Southern Evening Echo*. We are perplexed and to a degree concerned at their current campaign to remove beer glasses from pubs, replacing them with plastic.

We have consistently reported on Britain's serious drinking problems, one (but only one) aspect of which is a perceived increase in outbreaks of gratuitous violence. But it would not occur to us that a cure for the problems would be to punish the entire pub-going population with a step-change in their life style. Given the extraordinarily tough times that licensees are experiencing after the smoking ban was followed by the budget's mugging, to then suggest that they deliberately make their pubs and bars not only less (very much, less) welcoming but also specifically marked out as somewhere that it is unsafe to visit would seem to be economic insanity.

Our answers to the distortions that have come into the drink culture of the country have always been sensible, measured and workable and centred around one thing: a return to the mixed clientele, community pub. This is a bottom-up approach that recognises that structural changes are needed in the licensed trade, the *Echo's* recipe on the other hand would actually entrench the problems and then just try to mitigate the results..

Should the *Echo* wish to support a serious campaign to improve the drink culture, rather than this cheap headline grabbing stunt, then here are some suggestions they might follow:

- Campaign for changes in the 'licensing objectives' that are built into the new Licensing Act, to make it possible for licens-

ing authorities to discourage the spread of 'vertical drinking halls' and High Street booze circuits. The present wording makes it almost impossible for authorities to control either the geographical distribution of licensed premises or their internal style.

- Campaign, with us, for improvements in the planning laws to make it harder to de-licence and demolish pubs (almost always the community pubs that are the backbone of the sane drinking population) or to convert them into other uses.

- Lobby Government to find ways to put restrictions on the abuses being exercised daily by the supermarkets in their efforts to use alcohol as a loss-leader without any thoughts as to the social consequences involved.

- Finally, a simple one, campaign for a one-line Bill outlawing the service of drinks directly in the bottle.

In 2007 the great city of Glasgow came within an ace of introducing byelaws that would have pleased the *Echo* — anti-drink councillors, in league with a proselytising police chief, almost put through measures that would have banned glasses entirely, throughout the city. The plan was only ditched at the eleventh hour; perhaps the thought of drinking the council tax funded wines at their civic functions from glorified yogurt pots finally made them come to their senses.

Perhaps a lot less than one percent of pub users are potentially violent. We would challenge the *Southern Daily Echo* to explain why it is better to make life unpleasant for the other ninety-nine percent rather than do positive things to discourage the tiny number of troublemakers from being there in the first place.




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## With Regret

Since the last edition of *Hop Press* we have heard of the deaths of three well known local licensees.

In November **Steve Sankey**, who ran the Exchange and the Rising Sun in Winchester between 1979 and 2000, died suddenly at home, at the age of 58.

In December we heard that **Steve Beaney**, licensee of the Good Beer Guide listed Park Inn, Shirley had died after a stay in hospital being treated for leukaemia. Steve, 55, was well known in local sporting circles and was manager of many local representative football teams.

Finally, in January **Peter Smith**, licensee of the Prince of Wales in Northam, died at the age of 74 after suffering a stroke. Peter had been in the licensed trade for more than 35 years and previously ran the long closed Engineers Arms nearby. Peter was chair of the Southampton Licensed Victuallers' Association over a period of ten years and was greatly involved in the campaign to get extended opening hours for local pubs before the introduction of all day opening.

We extend our condolences to the families and friends of these great servants of the licensed trade.

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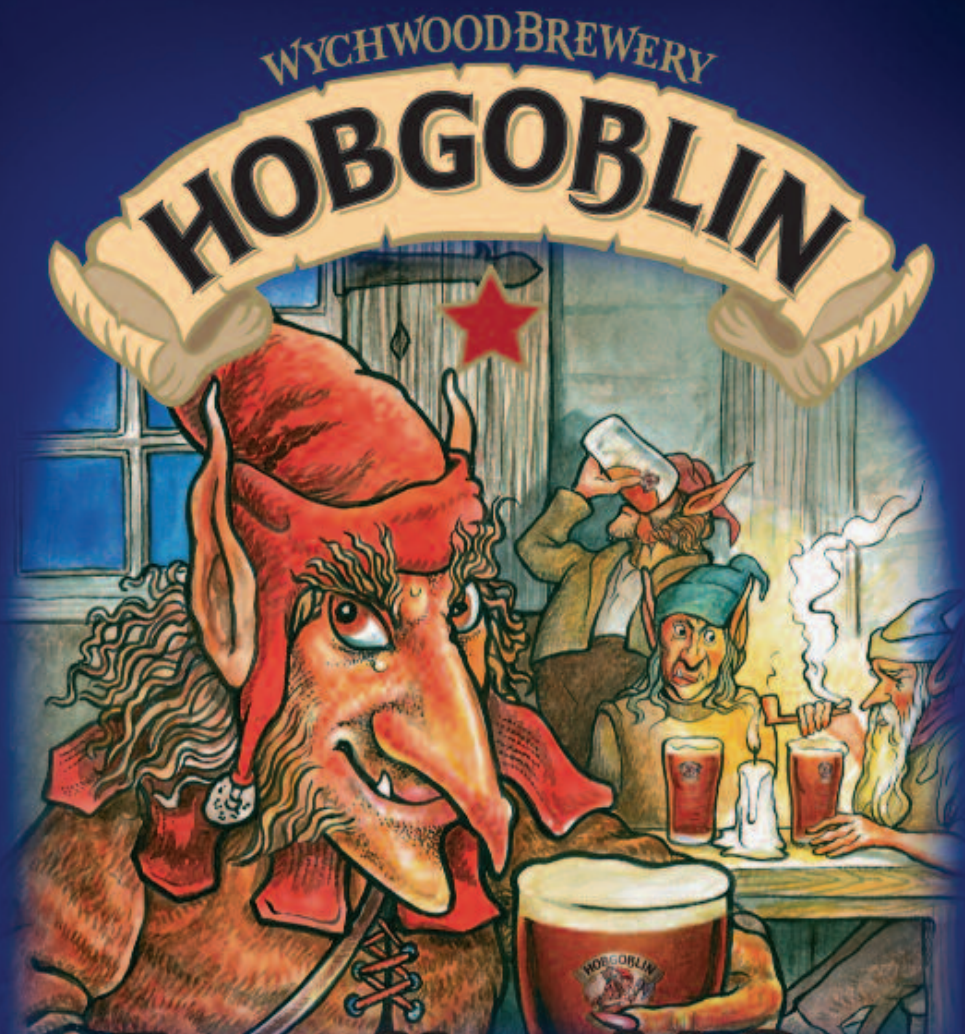


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