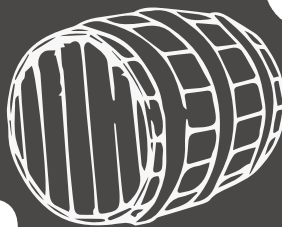


Barrel Organ



*The magazine of the Salisbury & South Wiltshire
branch of the Campaign for Real Ale*

March 2024 - May 2024

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CAMRA - CAMPAIGNING WITH A SMILE

IN THIS ISSUE

THE FORESTER,
DONHEAD ST ANDREW

PUB VISITS BY BUSES
AND TRAINS

LOCAL BREWERY AND
PUB NEWS

Plus much more...



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FROM THE EDITORS

The latest survey of 13,000 members by the British Institute of Innkeeping reveals that 75% of pubs operated unprofitably in 2023 with revenue flat or down for 62%. The poll shows that many pubs are struggling to pay gas and electricity bills that have risen by two or three times since their previous energy contracts and that food and drink costs have risen by 40% over the past two years. Wages have had to be increased to attract staff at all levels. Do please remember this next time you feel like complaining about the price of a pint.

Rural south-west Wiltshire has some wonderful pubs and since we incorporated this patch into our branch area a couple of years ago, we have been urged to promote it. In this issue of *Barrel Organ* we feature Jonathan and Ronnie Mason, who run The Forester at Donhead St Andrew in the Meet The Governors column, while CAMRA member Allan Glide brings news of other pubs in his Out West column. Go and visit this lightly populated, utterly beautiful area. It will be worth your while.

By the time you read this, Salisbury's much-loved Winterfest beer and cider festival will have taken place in its new venue, the Guildhall in the Market Square. If all goes well, its summer sister festival will relocate from Salisbury Arts Centre to the Guildhall on 21-22 June, returning to its traditional dates. It will be smaller than in previous years so put the dates in your diary and keep an eye out for when tickets go on sale. The ales and ciders will be as wonderful as ever.

Kathy, Will & Neil

Editors, Barrel Organ magazine



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Branch area: The Salisbury & South Wiltshire branch covers the whole of the south of the county having incorporated the area around Mere, Hindon, Zeals and Semley. While Salisbury is by far the largest population centre in the branch's territory, there are several smaller towns such as Amesbury and Wilton and large villages like Downton and Tisbury. The branch has nearly 140 open pubs selling real ale, about 70% of which are in rural areas.

Barrel Organ is distributed to these plus other distribution points.

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MEET THE GOVERNORS

The Forester, Donhead St Andrew



Jonathan and Ronnie Mason outside The Forester

If you are looking for a pub with a history then The Forester in the village of Donhead St Andrew in picturesque, rural south-west Wiltshire ticks all the boxes. Built as an inn in 1652, some of the stone reputedly came from the ruins of nearby Wardour Castle, which had been destroyed during an English Civil War siege a few years previously. So far the Arundell family, who owned the castle and whose descendants still live in the area, have not demanded the return of the building materials. Like all proper, historic pubs it has a ghost. Landlord Jonathan Mason, who took over The Forester with his wife Ronnie in 2022, has glimpsed a monk with



*The Masons by
The Forester's pub sign*

a group of regulars used to meet there every week

in a cassock and pointed hood several times but happily the spectre appears to be friendly.

The pub only assumed its current name in 1965. Until then it was called the New Inn, which was a little ironic given that it was by then more than 300 years old. But in the early 1960s

and pool part of their pay packet in a fund to help one another out in times of financial difficulty. Known as 'The Foresters', the pub's name was eventually changed in their honour. "I like a pub with history," said Jonathan. "It gets people interested and means that they have a story to tell when they leave." The Forester has not disappointed the Masons.



*The Forester
"quintessentially English"*

The couple arrived after a decade running pubs, mostly in the New Forest area for the entrepreneurs Duane and Debbie Lewis. The latter bought The Forester in 2022 to add to their Country Inns group, which now comprises eight pubs. But the deal in Donhead is different from all the others, which will remain as managed pubs. The Lewises have given the Masons the task of turning The Forester from a loss-maker into a profitable business. When that happens they will be granted the licence and so far they are on track to achieve that.

A few key principles underlie the way that the Masons work. One is community involvement. Jonathan takes an active part in the village fete, has been elected to the parish council, donates prizes to the church raffle and encourages elderly, single people to come and have a chat and a coffee or a drink. A friendly face and some conversation can make all the difference on a cold, wet winter day.

Another is good food and beer. The former is home cooked and, wherever possible, locally sourced. The quality of the latter has led to members of the Salisbury & South Wiltshire branch of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) voting The Forester into the annually published *Good Beer*

Guide for the first time. At any given time, the pub has three real ales on. One of these is always Double Drop, the 3.7% ABV draught bitter from Romsey-based Flack Manor Brewery which is on sale at all the Country Inns group pubs. Another is invariably one of the beers from Guy Ritchie's Gritchie Brewery Company, which is just down the road at Ashmore, while regular candidates for the third slot are Exmoor Ales from Somerset and Salcombe Brewery from Devon.

"We were delighted to get into the *Good Beer Guide*," said Jonathan. "You have got to have quality beers. We do a line cleaning after every barrel in quieter times and even when it gets busy in the summer it is after every other barrel."



*The Forester has been voted into
the Good Beer Guide*



A truly historic inn

"But you can't just depend on food and drink for a pub to survive. You have to have other strings to your bow, which in our case means the two guest bedrooms that we had installed last year, which have 80% occupancy, and events." As well as more

traditional events such as a cider and sausages festival, Jonathan and Ronnie have brought in a theatre group from London whose shows include 'Faulty Towers, the Dining Experience.' Next up in mid-March is a murder mystery dinner show entitled 'Sheer Luck Holmes – the Case of the Floating Fiancée'. The shows have proved a great hit, not just with locals but with customers from as far away as London, Bath and Bournemouth.



The dining area at The Forester

Not all Jonathan's marketing schemes have proved quite so successful. A plan to recreate the 1970s Hovis bread advertisement for social media where the original was filmed in nearby Shaftesbury ended painfully. Having pushed his bicycle up the famously steep and cobbled Gold Hill in the Dorset town, Jonathan turned for what seemed to be an easy trip back down. He fell off his bike and crashed into a wall, suffering a leg injury which still bothers him. Climbing up and down steep stairs in a 17th century pub every day is not helping his recovery.

But the theatre group shows and the Gold Hill crash both illustrate Jonathan's philosophy that publicans have to try different things to survive in a post-Covid era when many people are struggling financially. "I am not one for setting up the pub, opening the door and praying that people come in," he said. "That's not going to work." So the good folk along the border of south-west Wiltshire and north Dorset can probably look forward to some more unusual events. One can only hope that the ghostly monk continues to look on benignly.

Will Bennett

BREWERY NEWS

Hop Back

Since the end of last year, all of Hop Back's bottled beers are brewed, bottled and conditioned on site and they are sold as 'Real Ales' in a bottle. Congratulations are due as bottled Crop Circle (4.2% ABV) won gold at CAMRA's 2023 London & South East Regional Champion Beer of Britain competition in the Real Ale in a Bottle – Session category. The final blind judging took place at Windsor & Eton Brewery after the selection of entrants by CAMRA members and panels of trained tasters. They will be invited to the national finals of the Champion Bottled Beer of Britain competition later in 2024. We wish them good luck.

Brewed for March, we shall see Ginger Stout (4.5% ABV) and for those that remember drinking it back in 2010 it will be a welcome return. It is a rich dark stout infused with ginger that warms you from the inside out. In April there will be the ever-popular Spring Zings (4.2% ABV) made with an array of European hops, maize, wheat and barley to give us a really pale ale with an aromatic punch. In May we can look forward to drinking Dragon Fly (4.8%) an evolution of last year's Mayfly, a pale gold ale with English hops and Maris Otter malt.

The Waterloo Arms, a Hop Back pub in Freemantle, Southampton reopened in January 2024 after a temporary closure for refurbishment. They are happy to report that they are once again serving fantastic beers and offering space for meetings and functions.

Downton Brewery

Downton Brewery became the second prizewinner from the south Wiltshire village when its Chimera won the bronze award in the IPA (English and New World) category at CAMRA's 2023 London & South East Regional Champion Beer of Britain competition. The

award certificate was presented to brewers Martin Strawbridge and Chaz Penny by Nigel Allison, Brewery Liaison Officer for the Salisbury & South Wiltshire Branch of CAMRA.

An extension to the new tap room at Downton Brewery is in progress. An upstairs area is being prepared as a function room to operate primarily on Saturdays but also as an overspill area during normal tap room hours. Monthly quizzes in the tap room on the first Thursday of every month were scheduled to begin in February.



Nigel Allison, Brewery Liaison Officer for Salisbury & S. Wilts CAMRA (left), presents the award certificate to Chaz Penny (centre) and Martin Strawbridge at Downton Brewery

New monthly specials at Downton are Apple Scumble, a 4.2% ABV best bitter flavoured with apple, which was available from February to coincide with the Six Nations Rugby Championship, and, in March, an Extra Pale Blonde beer (XPB) brewed and on sale in both cask and keg at 4.6% ABV.

Dark Revolution

In 2024, Dark Revolution Brewery is moving from strength to strength - literally. The brewery is on target to relocate from its present site to a larger building across the road. With the addition of two 5,000 litre tanks, production will be increased by 60% and the move will allow space in the current building to house Dark Revolution's long awaited barrel-ageing project.

Over the last year the brewery has launched an impressive and diverse variety of 52 new beers. Take up of these small batch brews has been very popular, with pubs and bars both locally and nationally ordering kegs, casks and cans.

The team at Dark Revolution is looking forward to showcasing its beers nationally at various beer festivals this coming year, travelling to Bristol, London and as far as the beer mecca of the UK, Manchester.

Dark Revolution has always been passionate about cask beer and has offered this to trade customers since it started. It is installing a hand pump in the tap room so it will be able to serve cask beer and is excited to be able to compare cask and keg products side by side for the first time.

Sixpenny Brewery

The Brewery Tap had a successful Christmas and New Year with lots of visitors, entertainments and beer sales. However, unfortunately, beer sales usually fall off in January so the brewery is planning to change the tap's weekday opening times from midday to 3pm for a couple of months. If you are planning to visit the tap on a weekday afternoon, check its website. However, the usual Saturday afternoon and evening entertainments (open mic, music groups) are very popular and will go on as normal.

Sixpenny's regular beers, Best (3.8% ABV), Gold (4.0% ABV) and IPA (5.2% ABV) are all available at the tap along with the winter special, Sixpenny Black, which is 4.4% ABV. The 6D Black was exhibited at the 25th Salisbury Winterfest on the 16 and 17 February which was held at the Guildhall for the first time.

The brewery is planning to brew a spring special, possibly Cranborne Chaser, and perhaps a summer special which was not possible last year due to Scott Wayland, the owner, having a motorbike accident from which he has now fully recovered.

Stonehenge Ales

That annual favourite Sign of Spring, yes that's the green one, has now rolled out from the brewery and as usual can be found locally and around the country as pubs and drinkers enjoy a St Patrick's day pint or herald the arrival of lighter spring evenings.

2024 is the 40th anniversary of the start of brewing in Netheravon when Bunces Brewery was established in the Old Mill building, a Grade Two listed former electricity generating station built for the nearby Netheravon airfield, then a Royal Flying Corps base, in 1914. With the brewery now in the enthusiastic hands of James and Nicola Robinson the anniversary will be celebrated with an open day at the brewery in early summer. Plans are currently being put together so that it can be a memorable day for the whole of Netheravon village. One thing is definite, a new beer brewed specially for the anniversary will appear. As more information becomes available details will be found on the brewery website and the Salisbury & South Wilts CAMRA Facebook group.

Contributors in order: John Hinton, Nigel Allison, Sarah Hughes, Derek Ellis and Gerald Gibson

Is your local pub under threat?

CAMRA has the tools to help you save it



RED LION, EAST CHISENBURY RAISES £3,360 FOR SALISBURY HOMELESS CHARITY



Gordon Pardy of STFH (left) receives a giant cheque from (left to right) Martin Edwards, Guy Manning and Barry Chamberlain

The Red Lion at East Chisenbury, near Pewsey has raised £3,360 for Salisbury Trust for the Homeless (STFH) by asking customers if they were happy to have a £1 donation added to their bill at the picturesque thatched pub's highly-regarded restaurant. Not a single customer refused throughout 2023 producing a substantial windfall for the locally-based charity which helps homeless people rebuild their lives.

Gordon Pardy, Head of Fundraising for STFH, was presented with a giant cheque for this amount by Guy Manning, who has owned the Red Lion with his wife Brittany for the past 15 years, manager Martin Edwards, and local resident Barry Chamberlain, whose own fundraising initiative began the link between the pub and the homeless charity.

Barry first heard about STFH through former work colleague Barbara Wood, a volunteer and fundraiser for the charity. Barbara, who died last year, told him about its good work, and he decided to help by selling bundles of kindling

wood. Stacked in the Red Lion's front porch, these have raised £50 this winter. Barry's links with the Red Lion go back a long way – his wife Carol grew up in the pub when her father was the landlord.

So he was well-placed to persuade Guy Manning that STFH would be the ideal beneficiary for a fundraising initiative at the Red Lion. "I had been wanting to help the less fortunate and it is appropriate to give something back to people who are struggling with housing and food bills," said Guy, who had already established his charitable credentials by driving a truckload of blankets and clothes to Ukraine after the Russian invasion.

"We are incredibly grateful to Guy, Martin, Barry and everybody at the Red Lion for their help," said Gordon Pardy. "STFH is a local charity which receives no funding from either central or local government and so we are very much dependant on the support of organizations and individuals in Wiltshire."

STFH has helped hundreds of people turn their lives around in recent years. Founded in 1987, the charity helps clients regain confidence and self-esteem, learn life skills, find education, training and employment opportunities, and access permanent accommodation, so returning to independent living. Support needs include mental health issues, learning disability, emotional support, drug and alcohol misuse, anti-social behaviour, budgeting, benefits claims and tenancy support.

Will Bennett

PUB NEWS

Here is a round-up of local pub news since the last issue of *Barrel Organ*.

Sadly there have been some recent closures of pubs in the city and beyond. **Caboose**, in South Western Road, near the railway station, has closed its cocktail parlour to non-residents while it looks for bigger premises in the city centre. Its rooms are still available and the parlour will continue to be on offer for the hotel's guests and for private hires. Also in South Western Road, **The Railway Tavern** is closed with a note on the door advertising for a new pub landlord and, on the Market Place, **The Market Inn** is closed briefly before reopening with new owners Chickpea Group.

The landlords at **The Swan**, Enford have moved on so the pub will remain closed while its future is decided and **The Ship Inn** at Burcombe is closed awaiting new management. **The Boot** at Berwick St James is closed and **The Talbot Inn** at Berwick St John is up for sale.

Some good news is that the new owners of **The Plume of Feathers** at Shrewton are settling into the community well and are a hit with the locals. A new management team took over **The Pelican**, Stapleford in December, launching a new menu within a couple of weeks and **The Greater Good** at Fovant has re-opened, although at the moment only on Fridays and Saturdays. There are new tenants at **The White Horse**, Quidhampton who are keen for the pub to become a child-friendly hub of the community. Peter and Steph Kershaw and their sister-in-law Sharon Sawyer opened the pub at the end of November with an exciting new menu already attracting good reviews.

The Grove Arms at Ludwell closes on Mondays and the team at **The Penruddocke Arms** at Dinton are pleased to get their five-star hygiene rating back. **The Lamb Inn** at Nomansland is under the new management of Dan and

Alicia who took over at the end of January. The previous team of Lee, Zara, Freya and Libby have moved on after an amazing 27 years. Back in the city, **The King's Head** – Wetherspoons – had a successful January sale offering beers and meals for £1.99, **The Anchor** and Hope has applied for permission for a new exterior and **The Horse and Groom** on Wilton Road no longer serves real ale.



The Ox Row Inn, Salisbury, is Fuller's Pub of the Year

Congratulations to **The Ox Row Inn**, Salisbury for being awarded the accolade of Fuller's Pub of the Year. Last year it was a category winner but this year the team there were thrilled to win overall. At the end of January they closed for a three week refurbishment. And finally **The Bell Inn** at Wylde has been shortlisted for the *Wiltshire Life* Pub of the Year 2024 award. We wish them good luck.

Sue Turner
Pubs Officer



OUT WEST

Hello from the West again. It has been nearly a year since I put fingers to keyboard to bring you news of the pubs in the western part of our area. Needless to say there have been some changes.

Semley

Starting in the east, the Benett Arms at Semley is still going strong, open seven days a week, with Exmoor and Wriggle Valley ales, plus, usually, two guest beers on tap.

Mere

Heading west to Mere, it is a more mixed story. The Butt of Sherry, previously an oasis for real ale in Mere, has dropped to an all-time low, open only three days a week from 3pm on Thursdays and Saturdays and from 12 noon on Fridays with no food available.

By contrast the Walnut Tree in Mere is open seven days a week serving St Austell Tribute and Bath Gem. Their Walnut Best has now gone because Wessex Brewery, from near Warminster, which supplied it, is no longer trading due to Chas's poor health. The George in Mere, owned by Hall & Woodhouse, has had new tenants since April 2023 who have made some changes for the good. Their Best Bitter and Firsty Ferret are quite drinkable and good food is served every day except Sunday evening when they are currently closing. But this may be different in the summer. The best pint in Mere, in my opinion, is available from the Prince of Wales Club in White Road. Non-members are welcome and it is open every evening, except Sunday from 7.00 until 11.30. Wriggle Valley Nomad and London Pride are always on tap at less than £4.00 a pint.

Zeals

Moving out westward, the Bell and Crown in Zeals has Rude Giant ales on tap and is open seven days a week from 11.00 am to 11.00pm.

Stourhead

I failed to mention The Spread Eagle at Stourhead last time, as I believed that it was out of action. Well, I was wrong. It is very active and serving St Austell ales, which is just what you need after trekking around Stourhead Gardens. It is open from 11.00am to 4.00pm only but seven days a week.

Kilminster

The Red Lion at Kilminster, as I mentioned last time, is still closed and looking very sad. The National Trust shows no sign of taking any action over it.

All the best from the West.

Allan Glide

THE CUCKOO INN



: 01794 338461



: nik@cuckooinn.com



The Cuckoo Inn Hamptworth

*The Cuckoo Inn, Hamptworth road,
Hamptworth, Salisbury, SP5 2DU*

SMILES AND RAISED GLASSES THE BUSY SOCIAL LIFE OF SALISBURY CAMRA

The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) was founded over half a century ago for a serious purpose – to fight for thriving pubs and clubs and promote real ale, cider and perry. In the process, it has become one of Europe's most successful consumer organisations. But that doesn't mean that you can't have fun while doing this as these photographs of the Salisbury & South Wiltshire Branch show.

Our diary has never been fuller. This year's New Year Social, where some of the photos were taken, took place at The Ox Row Inn in Salisbury's Market Square. CAMRA members enjoyed an excellent two course meal for £20 and a decent range of beers discounted especially for the occasion.

Every month the branch holds a City Saunter, where members stroll around several pubs either in Salisbury or one of the nearby towns such as Wilton or Amesbury, and a minibus trip which goes out to some of the many wonderful hostleries in the rural areas of South Wiltshire. There is a serious purpose to the latter. Most of the branch's pubs are in the country and we now ensure that roughly two-thirds of our selections for CAMRA's annual *Good Beer Guide* are from outside Salisbury's city boundaries. So our minibus

trippers check them out – and enjoy themselves in the process.

Recently we have added bus and train trips to our diary as part of CAMRA's nationwide initiative to encourage the use of public transport to visit pubs. Some of the photos accompanying this article were taken on these trips, which are described in more detail elsewhere in this issue of *Barrel Organ*. But to those readers who think that South Wiltshire has few buses – well, we are discovering that this is not the case.

Finally there are our two beer festivals. Winterfest will have taken place in its new venue in Salisbury Guildhall by the time that you read this and, all being well, its summer companion festival will go ahead in the Guildhall in June. Both give enthusiasts the chance to sample a great range of real ales and ciders both local and from further afield.

So have a look at the Diary page in this issue of *Barrel Organ* or check out our branch website at <https://salisburycamra.org.uk/> and join the campaign that encourages you to enjoy life.

Will Bennett



ON THE BUSES

CAMRA nationally has re-launched its Public Transport Advisory Group to promote using buses and trains to visit pubs. The Salisbury & South Wiltshire Branch has responded enthusiastically, announcing its scheme in the last issue of *Barrel Organ*. Here is the inaugural report from our local Public Transport Officers.....

Our first bus social in November was a hugely successful trip to Upavon and Pewsey, using primarily the X5, with up to 20 participants from our own and other branches, joining and leaving at various points during the afternoon. Lunch was enjoyed at The Ship at Upavon, followed by a bus trip to Pewsey where the Crown Inn is also home to the World's End Brewery. Some brave souls walked to the Coopers Arms, and most of us eventually reconvened at The Shed Alehouse. A number of members joined the trip via the Demand-Responsive Transport service Wiltshire Connect, which provides bespoke journeys (subject to availability) via an app or phone call. Some also used it to carry on to Devizes.



Wilts and Hants members at the King's Head, Whiteparish



*John Hinton
relaxes on the
Whiteparish trip*

Also in that month, our venture to Whiteparish and Alderbury involved four trips on the X7R bus, as we darted north and south to fit in with pub opening hours. An excellent lunch was enjoyed at the Parish Lantern, Whiteparish where we were met by explorers from Hampshire, and also

some local members, making a dozen in total. This was followed by an enjoyable pint at the Green Dragon, Alderbury – once the barrel had been changed – and then we headed south again to the King's Head back at Whiteparish. Rumour has it that once back in Salisbury, some stalwarts even managed another crafty pint or two.

During this excursion it was proved that if you tap on and tap off the buses, you will correctly be capped at the daily rover ticket price of £10.50. This should also work across the Go South Coast group, so if you use local buses in Bournemouth or Southampton, you still only pay a maximum of £10.50 – but we have not tested this yet ourselves.



Intrepid South Wilts explorers at the Park Inn

On Thursday 25 January a group of seven hardy enthusiasts embarked on the X7R to Southampton, where we were met by Norman Clinnick, our acting Regional Director. Norman helpfully shepherded us onto a local bus for a pleasant afternoon at the splendid Park Inn in Shirley, where we met local branch members,



Real ales to die for at
the Park Inn



Branch transport officers Andrew Ward and Pete
Matthews with Eleanor Roberts and secretary Steve
Stringer at the Park Inn

and one of our own who had opted for the train over an 80-minute bus journey. Not only were there seven excellent cask ales laid on for us, but also a complimentary huge pot of chilli.

Upcoming tours will include a trip on the New Forest Tour which this year celebrates its 20-year anniversary. For one price (discounts for groups) you can hop on and off three different routes around the Forest all day. This promises to be an exciting day of both pub and brewery visits. Another trip to look forward to will involve the 44 bus to pubs in Downton, Nunton and Odstock. This was trialled by a couple of bold adventurers, and worked out very nicely with pub opening times and the bus schedule.

Andrew Ward and Pete Matthews



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SHORT STORY

THE PUB WITH NO NAME

"Damn!" said Tom, the coach driver.

"What's happened?" asked Dan.

"The engine's cut out; we could be here for a while," answered Tom.

Dan sighed and so did the other passengers on the coach. They had been hoping to make the last ferry across to the mainland before nightfall. "I'll have to go and have a look," said Tom, standing up to put on his coat.

Outside, the weather was horrendous. Continual heavy rain had hindered their trip and, if anything, it had got worse as the day had drawn on.

Dan subconsciously lifted his hand up and swept it across the fogged-up glass, revealing a glimpse of the road and buildings outside. Just across from where the coach had come to a standstill, Dan could see what looked like a tavern. It was hard to make out in the gloom, but Dan didn't want to miss the opportunity of finding out. He started to get up, and Tom seeing him do so, said, "Don't you come out too, I'll be OK."

"Actually, I was just going to have a quick look at that tavern out there," said Dan, pointing outside the coach.

"Tavern!" exclaimed Tom. "Wish I could go." he said with a sigh.

Tom opened the coach doors and sidled out and around to the engine. On his way he shouted back "When I beep the horn, you're to come straight away, else I'll leave you here!"

Dan shouted his thanks, and, looking out, he saw the small doorway to the tavern tucked in between two very old oak beams. He hurried for the door, gave it a push and entered the drinking establishment.

The room was lit by nothing but a few candles, it was hard to see due to the limited light, but what he did see, impressed him. Small cabinets, which housed all manner of knick-knacks and curiosities, lined the walls.

Further along still, another wall was entirely dedicated to an old cigarette lighter collection, which was so vast that it was hard to take it all in.

As he stood looking, a noise drew his attention away from the collection and suddenly he noticed the barman stood behind the bar. He was a short portly fellow, with small spectacles balanced on the end of his little red nose, he stood polishing something in his hands.

"Admirin' my collection, were you?" asked the barman, in a thick accent from somewhere in the Cotswolds.

"Err, yes," said Dan.

He began walking towards the bar, but then suddenly he stopped. Surely not? Dan thought to himself, noticing the beer engine behind the bar for the first time. But this vintage piece wasn't what had caught his eye, he frowned as he looked down at the first clip on the contraption. The clip was made from brass, and it seemed to soak up the light from the candles across the room.

"Do you really have that on?" asked Dan, pointing at the clip.

"Verdant - even sharks need water. Yes of course, why wouldn't I? Popular ale that'un" said the barman, clearly beaming at the question. "Know your beers do you, young man?"

"Well, I'm a dab hand." said Dan, still looking at the shiny brass clip. It was only then after he managed to draw his attention away from the

first clip, that he noticed the second, third and fourth clips on the ancient engine. They all shone, just like the first, as they soaked up the light from across the room.

"And these too?" Dan asked quizzically.

"Cheriton Best Bitter, Cantillon Gueuze, and Russian River - Pliny the Elder" said the barman, pointing to them in turn. "Like to try some would you?"

"Yes, yes please." Dan said, slowly.

The barman reached up and selected a glass from his collection, spun it around in his hand, placed it under the first tap and began to pour what could only be described as the perfect pint. He placed it on the bar and Dan took it willingly. He took a greedy sip, then another and another after that, before finishing it. The taste was indescribable, such was the beer's richness.

"And the others?" asked the barman tapping the engine.

"Yes please." said Dan, hardly believing his luck.

One by one, Dan drank all of the four ales, each one even more delicious than the last.

"And what about the last'un. Will you be trying that too?" asked the barman.

"What is it?" asked Dan looking down. "The clip's missing."

"Oh yes that's right, I was just polishing it." He fumbled behind the bar, then reached around

the front of the engine and with an audible 'click' clipped the fifth and final clip into place. As the barman moved his hand away, Dan's hand came up to steady himself against the bar. Not from the effects of the alcohol, but from the last beer clip that had just begun to shine like the others, on that ancient beer engine.

"Surely not!" exclaimed Dan, completely gobsmacked.

The barman began to chuckle to himself.

"You knows your ales, don't you! Yes, that's right, Westvleteren 12. You won't find a better ale than that there." he said, his voice cracking.

As Dan neared the end of that fifth last fantastic ale, there came an almighty blast of the horn from the coach outside.

"I've got to go! What do I owe you?" said Dan quickly.

"They're on the house, you'd best hurry, sounds like you're wanted."

"Thanks" said Dan hurrying to the door. He opened it and ran through the rain again to the coach, thanked Tom, and quickly sat in his seat. As the coach began to pull away, Dan frantically scrubbed at the window and tried to make out the name of the tavern he'd just been spellbound by. But the rain hindered his view, and the name of the best drinking establishment he had ever been to, was lost to him.

Alan Griffiths

SUMMER FESTIVAL RETURNS IN JUNE

By the time you read this article our 2024 Winterfest will have come and gone. I am hoping it is going to be a success. Following a less than successful Beerex last year, which had reduced numbers, Salisbury & South Wilts CAMRA is planning to run a smaller renamed summer festival at Salisbury Guildhall.

We have a tentative arrangement with Salisbury City Council for **21-22 June** which returns the festival to its original dates. We hope you will note these dates in your diaries and will be letting you know more via our media apps

Andrew Hesketh
Festivals Co-ordinator

DRINKS WITH THE NEIGHBOURS

Our neighbours in Southern Hampshire branch are a convivial bunch as Salisbury & South Wiltshire CAMRA members discovered on a recent foray to Southampton (see the report on bus trips in this issue of *Barrel Organ*). They hold three get-togethers a month, which are open to everybody, CAMRA members or not. These are:

Thirsty Thursday at the Hour Glass micro pub in New Milton. The pub opens early at 12.00 noon for these. The organiser is Chris Allsopp on oldchippy3@gmail.com and dates are 7 March, 4 April and 2 May.

Don's Spot which is run by Don Graham, who picks a town or area to visit on a Wednesday for a small pub crawl. Don's email address is don.graham@outlook.com and dates are 13 March, 17 April and 15 May.

Shirley Thursday at the Park Inn, Shirley, Southampton, organised by Norman Clinnick. Norman can be contacted on norman.clinnick@yahoo.com and dates are 21 March, 11 April and 23 May.

DIARY DATES *Salisbury & South Wiltshire*



MARCH

6th Open Branch Meeting

7.30pm The Pheasant, Salt Lane, Salisbury.

9th Bus Trip

10.35am Activ8 bus, stop N, Blue Boar Row, Salisbury, to Andover Tap at The Lamb Beer Festival, 21 Winchester Street, Andover

15th Minibus Trip

6.30pm Dark Revolution Brewery Tap; Crown Inn, Cholderton; Malet Arms, Newton Tony; Earl of Normanton, Idmiston.

20th City Saunter.

7.30pm. Deacons, Village Freehouse, Duke of York, all Salisbury.

28th Bus Trip

10.45am, 24 bus, from The New Canal, Salisbury, to Warminster for the Old Bell Inn and Bath Arms and Shearwater for the Bath Arms.

APRIL

3rd Open Branch Meeting

7.30pm The Ox Row Inn, Market Square, Salisbury.

6th Bus Trip

11.55am Bus 2 from stop R, New Canal, Salisbury, for Shrewton (Plume of Feathers) and then Devizes (British Lion). Return bus Market Place, Devizes, 3.45pm, arrives Salisbury 4.55pm.

12th Minibus Trip

6.30pm Ship, Upavon; Dog & Gun, Netheravon; Netheravon Working Men's Club; Bridge Inn, Upper Woodford.

17th City Saunter.

7.30pm. The Ox Row Inn, The Market Inn, The Haunch of Venison, all Salisbury.

24th Bus Trip

10.40am X7 bus from Endless Street, Salisbury to Southampton for the Duke of Wellington and the Dancing Man Brewery.

MAY

1st Open Branch Meeting

7.30pm The Wyndham Arms, Estcourt Road, Salisbury.

11th Bus Trip

11.55am X3 bus from stop M, Blue Boar Row, Salisbury, to Fordingbridge. Choice of three pubs nearby – The George, The Ship and The Crown – plus The Railway Inn, a one kilometre walk away. Buses back 13 and 43 mins past until 6.13pm and then every hour.

15th City Saunter

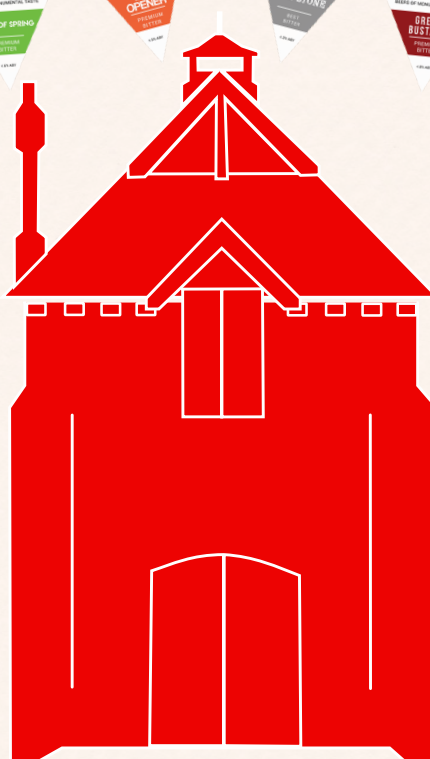
7.30pm The Pembroke Arms, The Greyhound and The Bear, all in Wilton.

17th Minibus Trip

6.30pm The Radnor Arms, Nunton; Downton Brewery Tap; The Horse & Groom, Woodgreen; The Cartwheel, Whitsbury.

25th Bus Trip

10.55am X3 bus from stop M, Blue Boar Row, Salisbury, to Boscombe for Chaplin's, Goat & Tricycle and Brewhouse.



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