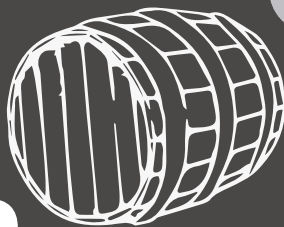


Barrel Organ



Campaign
for
Real Ale

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

December 2024 - February 2025

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IN THIS ISSUE

MYSTERY OF
SPOOF RECIPE

WINTERFEST IS BACK

HOW TO BEER SCORE

Plus much more...



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FROM THE EDITORS

Life for pub landlords today is so difficult that sometimes they arrive and leave in what seems to be little more than the blink of an eye. That makes the achievement of the Bath family at The Horseshoe in the Chalke Valley village of Ebbesbourne Wake even more remarkable. They have been behind the bar and in the kitchen there since 1971, with the current incumbents, Tony, pictured on our front cover, and Pat Bath, clocking up 38 years. They have been joined by their daughter Jayne Sanger and have no intention of retiring. The recipe for this success is not complicated - good real ales, excellent home-cooked food and a friendly welcome. Read more about it in this issue of *Barrel Organ*.

Book now if you want to get into Winterfest, Salisbury's popular winter beer and cider festival, which returns to the Guildhall on 24-25 January. Last year Winterfest sold out in advance so anyone wanting to sample a wide range of real ales and ciders, many of them local, needs to ensure their place soon. At £10 a ticket, it is easy on the wallet and helps ward off the January gloom.

If you have ever wondered why your favourite pub is not in CAMRA's *Good Beer Guide*, this may be because you have never entered scores rating the quality of the beer there. Beer scoring contributes to the process of selecting pubs for the GBG and supports CAMRA's Beer Quality Accreditation scheme. All you have to do is join CAMRA and read Keith Foster's guide to voting in this issue of *Barrel Organ*. It may help the pubs you love get the recognition that they deserve.

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 Horseshoe, Ebbesbourne Wake

In an age when some pub landlords seem to come and go almost before they have had time to take their coats off, the Bath family has an astonishing record of continuity. Tom and Glad Bath took over The Horseshoe in the pretty Chalke Valley village of Ebbesbourne Wake more than half a century ago in 1971 and ran it until he reached his 70th birthday in 1986. Deciding that he had had enough of life behind the bar, Tom asked his son Tony and his wife Pat to take up the reins.



Tony and Pat Bath with Ralph and Butler outside The Horseshoe

Thirty-eight years later Tony, who celebrated his 83rd birthday on the day that *Barrel Organ* went to see them, and Pat have no intention of retiring. They have been joined by their daughter Jayne Sanger, who does much of the work in the kitchen, and her two dogs Ralph, an elderly Jack Russell, and Butler, a gentle black Labrador. The world around them has changed



Butler the Labrador in conversation with the Baths

beyond recognition during their tenure and so too has the pub business. But walk into The Horseshoe and the friendly welcome, the well-kept real ale and the wonderful home-cooked food are all unchanged. The horse brasses, agricultural tools and other memorabilia are still on the walls where they seem to have been for ever. It is all very reassuring.



Tony Bath behind the bar of The Horseshoe

It was not always like this for Tony and Pat. He enlisted in the Royal Air Force as a musician and spent the next 22 years travelling the world playing the euphonium and Pat later joined him – they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary last year. Postings in the Far East included three and a half years in Singapore, a teeming metropolis utterly different from the gentle pace of life in Ebbesbourne Wake, which has a population of just over 200.

But having packed away his euphonium and worked on local farms for a while, taking over The Horseshoe from his parents seemed a logical move for Tony. The Bath family does not own the pub, they lease it from a friend, who leaves them alone to get on with running the business. “I can’t remember the last time I saw the owner of this place,” said Tony. “He never

bothers us. We own everything here except for the bricks and mortar.”



The wonderful collection on the walls of The Horseshoe

Running the business has several key elements, one of which is the quality of The Horseshoe’s real ales. The pub has featured in nearly every edition of the *Good Beer Guide*, published annually by the Campaign for Real Ale, and local CAMRA members have voted it as Country Pub of the Year in the Salisbury and South Wiltshire area three times recently. One of the many charms of The Horseshoe is that real ales are served directly from barrels rather than from hand pumps jostling for space along the bar.



The garden at The Horseshoe

Tony always has two real ales available, occasionally adding a third guest beer. He greatly regrets the recent closure of Gritchie, the brewery started by Hollywood film director Guy Ritchie at nearby Ashcombe, which was a regular offering at The Horseshoe. He has replaced it with ales from Hattie Brown’s Brewery, based in Swanage, Dorset. “Their beer is exceptional,” said Tony, who serves either Moonlight, a light session IPA or HBA, a traditional amber bitter,

both of which are 3.8% ABV. His other main supplier is the Otter Brewery in Devon, which similarly supplies bitter and amber cask ales.

“We have a big demand for real ales but I think the drinking trade in pubs is nothing like it was 10 years ago,” said Tony. Food is increasingly important, now accounting for some two-thirds of takings, and that is Pat and Jayne’s department. “Our food is home-made with nothing frozen except for peas and scampi. Being in the middle of nowhere, as we are in Ebbesbourne Wake, you have got to do something a little bit different. We try to keep it as a traditional old pub with a twist to it, the twist being food. We have no television, no fruit machines and no music.”



The Horseshoe sign on the end of the pub

Customers come from far and wide with many regulars who have returned down the years. It is a sign of how villages are changing that even somewhere as small and out of the way as Ebbesbourne Wake now has three Airbnb properties and one holiday cottage and so inevitably people staying in these find their way to The Horseshoe.

The history of the building, parts of which go back to the 13th century, is shrouded in mystery. It may well have been a staging post for horses as travellers made their way along the valley between Salisbury and Shaftesbury and was certainly a cottage. It probably became a pub about 150 years ago, which means that the Bath family has been behind the bar for more than one-third of that time.

Will Bennett

BREWERY NEWS

Sixpenny Brewery



Congratulations to the Sixpenny Tap, attached to the Brewery, for its seventh consecutive entry into the CAMRA *Good Beer Guide*.

The regular beers (Best, Gold, IPA) and the winter special (Sixpenny Black) are currently available. Also the imported Budvar Lager from the Czech Republic is still going well and will possibly become permanent in the Tap.

The brewery hosted the 'The Big Curry Lunch' on Remembrance Sunday in aid of the Army Benevolent Fund with a full complement of 100 diners who paid £14 each. Earlier in the autumn an audit of the brewery's water treatment and brewing processes was carried out by Derek Orford, a professional chemist and expert on brewing. The result was a grade A.

Current opening hours at the Tap have recently changed and are now Monday to Friday 2pm - 8pm, Saturday 1pm - 8pm and Sunday 1pm - 7pm. On the last Saturday before Christmas (21 December), the Tap will be holding an open day with a brass band and other entertainments. Merry Christmas.

Stonehenge Ales



By the time you read this Rudolph, Stonehenge Ales's much loved Christmas beer, will have been rolled out ready to appear in pubs far and wide. This deep amber premium bitter weighing in at a winter warming 5% ABV is a perennial favourite and said by some to be Santa's favourite tippel! While Rudolph is in pubs, the next seasonal favourite will be Old Smokey, a dark porter style ale brewed from right back in 1984 when brewing first started at Netheravon Mill in the days of Bunces Brewery. Look out for it

in January onwards. Danish Dynamite is also featuring in a JD Wetherspoons promotion at the moment so the brewery is keeping everyone busy.

Home deliveries and brewery collections will continue right up to the Christmas period so if you can't get to your local pub perhaps buy beers for home consumption? Looking further forward to March, both Great Bustard and Old Smokey are through to the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) national awards and will be judged at the SIBA national festival in Liverpool on 19-20 March.

Dark Revolution



The brewery has settled into its new brew house and has now released 60 new beers this year alone. It has taken on a Sales and Logistics Manager who will be in charge of beer

distribution nationally and locally as well as opening up new and lapsed sales streams. The Taproom has a new Assistant Manager, Sam Allen, who comes with a wealth of knowledge and experience in the bar trade. During the past year the Taproom has hosted various events from food and beer pairings, quiz nights, bingo nights and comedy nights to name just a few. It is a community hub for the locals. The Taproom ran its very first Oktoberfest weekend which featured five imported Munich German lagers and an Oompah band. It was a huge success.

Downton Brewery



A successful beer festival was held in September featuring locally brewed German-style beers with a total of 20 on offer, 14 from Downton's own range and six from other breweries (Hop Back, Rude Giant, Hattie Browns, Dark Revolution, Eight Arch and Vibrant Forest).

Sixteen of them were cask and four keg and staff and some customers were in traditional German attire. Monthly specials for the rest of the year are Gingerbread Ale, a 3.7% ABV speciality bitter flavoured with ginger and English hops, and Kangarudolph, an Aussie Session IPA (4.1% ABV).

Hop Back



The new shop that opened during the summer continues to be very popular and has a growing customer base. It sells ales direct from the cask, bottled ales and general merchandising from 0900 – 1600 Monday to Friday. Jamie Ferguson, the head brewer, advises that whilst there is always some ale on cask the best day for the greatest choice is Friday. You can ask what is available and/or order your beer 48 hours in advance by ringing 01725 510986. Take

out beer can now also be ordered in the new 5L Polykegs (Bag in Box).

As well as brewing the regular and seasonal cask ales, Hop Back's Entire Stout (4.5% ABV) is now available on keg and nitro and is doing well, complementing its range of real ales and points of sale. The 2025 winter specials will include: January – Ginger Stout (4.5%ABV) a perfect fireside companion, February – Hooking Good (4.0% ABV) to cheer on your favourite Six Nations squad and then a welcome return in March for Thunderstorm (4.7 % ABV), a clear wheat beer that has not been brewed since 2022.

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

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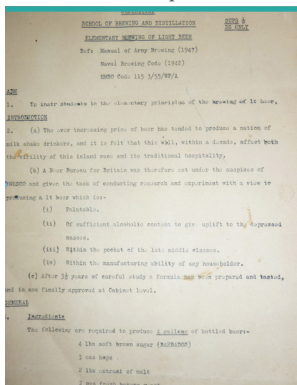
SO BAD THAT IT COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE TRUE MYSTERY BREWING RECIPE DISCOVERED



Amanda Murray with the 4th Rifles beer served at the wedding



Steve Stringer at work brewing the recipe



The spoof document from 'So Bad'

Amanda Murray was intrigued when she came across what appeared to be an official armed forces home brewing recipe as she sorted out family papers after a flood at her Wiltshire home. With her daughter Sophie's wedding approaching and her prospective son-in-law Tom planning to invite some of his rugby-playing friends, she initially thought this might be used to make a very special brew to celebrate their marriage.

Headed 'RESTRICTED, SCHOOL OF BREWING AND DISTILLATION, ELEMENTARY BREWING OF LIGHT BEER', the typed three-page document had been written in the late 1940s by somebody clearly familiar with official jargon. But then Amanda and her family realised that the first letters of School of Brewing and Distillation spell 'So Bad'.

It was time to call in the Campaign for Real Ale and by chance one of Amanda's neighbours in Enford, near Pewsey, is Steve Stringer, secretary of CAMRA's Salisbury & South Wiltshire branch and an enthusiastic home brewer. Steve stuck as closely to the recipe as possible and his verdict on the resulting brew was unequivocal. "It fermented well but it just tasted horrendous," he said. "It was absolutely disgusting."

The idea to produce the beer for the wedding was abandoned and, with the help of Steve, the Murray family moved onto Plan B. Amanda's father had commanded the Gurkha Transport Regiment in the British Army and in his memory they tracked down '4th Rifles', a Gurkha-themed 4.5% ABV Pale Ale brewed by Thornbridge's Riverside Brewery in Bakewell, Derbyshire. This successfully quenched the rugby players' thirst at Tom and Sophie's wedding.

However, this has not solved the mystery of who wrote what is clearly a spoof document and how it ended up in the Murray family papers. Because of its age, Amanda believes it was probably acquired by her grandfather, Commander Edward Fussell, who was a Royal Navy pilot in both World Wars. Although he was not known to be a home brewer, he may have come across the document during his time in the navy and been sufficiently amused by it to keep a copy. The document mentions UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which was



founded in November 1945, just after the end of the Second World War. It also refers to the Naval Brewing Code of 1942 and the Manual Army of Brewing 1947, which, while neither are thought to have existed, suggest that it was written in the late 1940s. It says that the aim was to produce a beer “of sufficient alcoholic content to give uplift to the depressed masses”, which may be a reference to post-war rationing.

It adds: “After three and a half years of careful study a formula has been prepared and tasted and is now finally approved at Cabinet level.”

If any reader can throw further light on the origins of this document then the team at Barrel Organ would love to hear from them.

Will Bennett

PUB NEWS

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

Some good news to open with. **The Great Bustard Inn** on the Durnford Estate has reopened and their food is receiving great reviews. On the downside they currently have no plans to serve real ale.

Jason, the landlord at **The Bear**, Wilton retired at the end of September and the following pubs have changed management: **The Forester**, Donhead St. Andrew, **The Horse and Groom** on Wilton Road, Salisbury and **The Bell and Crown**, Catherine Street, Salisbury. **The Greater Good** at Fovant closed on 4 October as Freya and Sid are moving to France. The lease has been returned to their parents but no decision has been made on the reopening of the pub. **The Swan** at Stoford has closed following the landlord's retirement and **The Crown** at Cholderton has reopened with a new landlord called Shaun. Rob and his family closed **The Bell** at Winterbourne Stoke on 2 November but plan to find another manager. Also the **Salisbury Cycling & Social Club**, formed in 1885 and situated on the corner of Salt Lane and Rolleston Street, has sadly shut its doors. **The Rose and Crown**, Bulford will be closing next year when the lease runs out. The current landlords have decided to move on.

The Ox Row in the Market Square now has a temporary manager, Dave. **The Swan** at Enford

is now open and the landlady does her own butchery on the premises and plans to retail. **The Bridge Inn**, Upper Woodford has added sports TV and Dave and Aimee Hancock have stepped away from Deacons, in Salisbury handing over to managers Matthew and Ben. **The Cathedral Hotel** on Milford Street has launched plans for a rooftop Spitfire-themed bar.

The Stag at Charlton All Saints has been sold after being closed for almost 10 years. Rumours abound as to the new owners and their intentions. **The Grove Arms**, Ludwell is up for auction as we go to print. The owners of **The Three Crowns**, Whaddon have made another planning application, this time for change of use to a dwelling. The pub has been closed since 2020. Wetherspoons at **The King's Head**, Salisbury held a 10-day beer festival in October offering 20 new ales.

And finally, staff and customers at **The Earl of Normanton** at Winterbourne Dauntsey had a shock when a passing car left the main road and landed in the front of the pub! Fortunately, thanks to help from locals, the pub's closure was a brief inconvenience.

Sue Turner
Pubs Officer

ON THE BUSES

Our first trip down the Chalke Valley was not without incident. All went well at The Horseshoe, Ebbesbourne Wake which provided excellent ales including a glorious pint of Hattie Brown's Amber, where we were met by two further members who had braved the drove road to cycle there. On the journey back to the Queen's Head we were pleased to find smartly-dressed crowds lining the street, waving and cheering our bus as we drove into Broad Chalke. However, it is just possible that they might have been there for the wedding that had just taken place...



Crowds turn out for CAMRA's visitor maybe not

Our second trip of August was also on the 29 bus, but this time all the way to Shaftesbury, a lengthy journey down tiny country lanes, where we first ventured down the famous Gold Hill to the Two Brewers. A walk up through the

park and past the remains of the Abbey took us to the magnificent Mitre Inn, with terraces offering stunning views and truly excellent food – with Park Bottom from Stone Daisy as well as Youngs ales. On the way back we jumped off the bus to take in a pint at the Grove Arms at Ludwell, now sadly up for sale.

Next a train took a group to Eastleigh, where we were joined by a group of South Hants members at the Steam Town brewery. The biggest problem there was the huge choice with dozens of draught, keg, canned and bottled beers, including a glorious stout. We proceeded on by train to Chandlers Ford for the Steel Tank micropub, with a similarly imaginative and eclectic selection of beer in various containers, before our return to Salisbury.

A very relaxed trip to Stockbridge kicked off with coffee due to the early hour, followed by visits to two pubs in fascinating buildings – the White Hart, with parts that possibly date from the 12th century, and the Three Cups – with what must be the lowest ceilings of any pub.

The White Hart offered four ales including Red Fox, and there were three at the Three Cups including the popular Perridge Pale.

Our October Saturday bus trip took us to Marlborough. The High Street boasts seven pubs, one independent, the others either owned or run by Wadworth, Arkells, Ramsbury and Greene King. We chose to visit the Wellington Arms, serving Ramsbury Gold and Butcombe Original, the Green Dragon with Wadworths beers, and the Bear – an Arkells pub.

Last, but definitely not least, we come to Ringwood. Now, your first impressions of Ringwood from the bus stop are not good. You



CAMRA group at the Steel Tank micropub

are confronted by one of those dystopian tarmac hellscapes so beloved of modern planners and architects. Yet, nestled between two ugly modern buildings – in all fairness, you are looking at their rear ends – lies a haven, a veritable oasis – the Inn on the Furlong. Once across its threshold you leave the modern world behind and enter a classic medieval timbered pub interior. When we visited there were five glorious ales on offer – and good food too. After a couple of drinks, our group proceeded to firstly the Original White Hart, and then to the star act of the afternoon – the Railway Hotel, rightly featured in the 2025 GBG. It is a bit of a walk, but well worth it.

Andrew Ward and Pete Matthews

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Did you know?

Research commissioned by CAMRA found that people who have a 'local' felt significantly more connected to their communities



Source: Dunbar, R., "Friends on Tap" (2016)



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BEER SCORING

WHAT, WHY AND HOW

The National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) is an easy-to-use point scale enabling CAMRA members to judge beer quality in pubs. It assists CAMRA branches in selecting pubs for the *Good Beer Guide* (GBG), and monitoring beer quality. Beer scoring uses a simple 0-to-5 point system, with half points if your opinion falls between two categories.

0. No cask ale available; 0.5 is the lowest score a real ale can be given

1. Poor. Beer is anything from barely drinkable to drinkable with resentment.

2. Average. Competently kept, drinkable pint but doesn't inspire in any way.

3. Good. Good beer in good form. You may cancel plans to move to the next pub.

4. Very Good. Excellent beer in excellent condition. You stay put!

5. Perfect. A seasoned drinker will award this score very rarely.

As a CAMRA member, this is an important way for you to promote excellent beer. Beer scores are used to support CAMRA's Beer Quality Accreditation scheme, a 1 – 3 pint rating that highlights pubs serving good to great quality cask beer. Most importantly, beer scoring contributes to the process of selecting pubs for the GBG, CAMRA's flagship publication. If you have ever wondered why your favourite pub is not in it, this may be because you have not entered scores rating the quality of beer there.

In our branch, pubs are nominated for entry into

the GBG by branch members, who must have visited them and submitted a beer score of three or more during the nomination period. So, if you do not submit beer scores you cannot nominate, and if a pub is not nominated it cannot be considered for entry into the GBG.

Ideally a beer should be scored to reflect its condition. However, it can be difficult to distinguish between a beer that is in poor condition or which is not to our tastes but is meant to taste like that or which has been poorly made. In these cases, it is better to score the beer as it tastes to you. You do not have to be an expert. You can score the beer 'live' whilst at the pub using a mobile device or score it when you get home. It does not have to be scored on the day you visit the pub. To submit your scores, you used to have to login to WhatPub but the new CAMRA website (CAMRA Experience) allows you to submit your score there. WhatPub is to be phased out in the coming months and CAMRA Experience will become the main digital portal. If you have not used WhatPub to submit beer scores previously I recommend using CAMRA Experience.

How to submit scores:

1. Login to the CAMRA website using your membership number and CAMRA password. If you do not have a log-in contact membership@camra.org.uk or ring 01727 798440.

2. On the Home page you will see 'Looking for great pubs, clubs and beers?' This is where you select the pub whose beer you want to score. To search for the pub, it is best to search by its name and the town or postcode as there are many pubs in the country sharing the same name.

3. Once you have found the pub you will see a

button saying 'Beer Score' on the righthand side of the pub name on a computer or beneath the contact details on the new website.

4. Enter the date of your visit, the name of the brewery followed by the beer in the box labelled 'What did you drink?' As you enter this a dropdown list of breweries and beers appears. If

the beer you are drinking is new or a one-off by the brewery it may not appear, and you can type in the name. Once the information is entered click 'submit score'. It's as simple as that.

Keith Foster

WINTERFEST BACK WITH A LOCAL THEME

Local ales will be at the heart of Winterfest, Salisbury's much-loved winter beer and cider festival, which is returning to The Guildhall in the city's Market Square. Local artist Fred Fieber has again designed a new logo which matches that which he produced for this year's Summerfest. Winterfest will be held on 24 to 25 January 2025 and tickets went on sale on 1 December.

"We are bringing back a music session on the Friday evening featuring the lovely Eve N Song, who gave us such a wonderful performance at Summerfest" said Andrew Hesketh, festivals co-ordinator for the Salisbury & South Wiltshire branch of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). Beers on sale will feature the traditional winter stouts, porters and milds as well as a variety of other ales. These are being selected both locally and from further afield in the country.

The festival will begin on Friday 24 January at 6:30pm through to 11pm and continue on Saturday 25 January from 11am through to 8pm. Tickets cost £10 and include a free glass and souvenir programme. Drinks will be sold in half pint and one-third of a pint measures and card-carrying CAMRA members get half

a pint free. The 2024 event sold out in advance so anyone wishing to attend the 2025 festival is advised to book now at salisburycamra.org.uk/winterfest



Singer Eve N Song will be making a welcome return to Winterfest

DULL CHRISTMAS, BRIGHT NEW YEAR

A short story by Michael Hambling

Life was just the pits. Hilary Bright glanced again at the destination board on the concourse at Waterloo Station and frowned in frustration. The Salisbury train had already departed, starting its journey west just as she had hurried clear of the escalator, her complex journey from York scuppered by her idiot of a brother. Now she had a 90-minute wait for the next train on the skeleton service that was operating during this supposedly slack period between Christmas and New Year.

She had had an awful Christmas. Squabbling nephews and nieces, a tense and argumentative brother and sister-in-law, an overcooked turkey on Christmas Day and an almost inedible curry with half-charred rice on Boxing Day. Two supposedly expensive wines that had tasted worse than her regulars from Sainsbury's, some poorly chosen gifts to her, for which she had felt the need to express gratitude, but that would have been ideal for an 80-year-old nun rather than a 50-year-old career professional. Is that really how they viewed her, a wearer of shapeless, beige-coloured cardigans?

Hilary pulled the belt on her crimson coat a little tighter and sat down on a nearby bench, emitting a rather loud sigh. A similar sigh came from a man beside her, so she turned and glanced at him. Dark-skinned, short curly hair, well-dressed. 'Did you miss it too?' she asked.

He smiled wryly. 'The Salisbury train? Yes. A meeting with my agent that overran, completely unnecessarily. Now I'm hungry, thirsty and likely

to get cold sitting here until the next one. What a life. You?'

'Similar. I should have been on an earlier train down from York, but my brother was late driving me to the station and managed to take a wrong turn, despite living there for more than 10 years. Now this.' She rolled her eyes.

'Not a good end to the year, is it?'

'What an understatement,' she said. 'It was all so unnecessary. A crappy end to a rubbish Christmas. I ask myself, will things be any better at New Year? I'm not optimistic about it.'

'Are you visiting Salisbury?'

She shook her head, her dark hair swaying slightly about her shoulders. 'I live there. You?'

'Visiting friends. I live in Cambridge.' She felt his eyes on her. Assessing her maybe? There was something familiar about him but, whatever it was, it stayed infuriatingly out of reach inside her stressed brain.

'Listen, I've been told of a good pub nearby, just opposite the entrance. Nice snacks, apparently. What do you say?' He spoke quietly, his words formed with care.

'Well, put like that, how could I turn it down? Lead on, Macduff.' He laughed, his eyes crinkling at the corners. 'Not Macduff, I'm afraid. Matthew Dühl. I did play the part once,



though. In Stratford, back in my younger days.' She stretched her hand out. 'Hilary Bright. I thought I recognised you. You've been on TV a couple of times, haven't you?'

He took her hand gently and bowed as he shook it. 'For my sins. I prefer the stage, to be honest. I think I was the first black Macduff in a major performance, in Britain anyway.' She looked around as they approached the station entrance. 'So where is this place?'

'The Waterloo Tap. Just over there, in the arches, under the viaduct. Apparently, it's quite famous.'

'It is,' she replied. 'I know it well.' They crossed the street and entered the pub. Hilary walked directly to the bar, examining the beer pumps. 'Maybe my luck's turning,' she said, pointing to one of the handles. 'An oyster stout. My absolute favourite.'

'Sounds foul. I'm usually a gin and tonic kind of person.' She laughed. 'Go on. Try it. Live a little!' Matthew smiled back somewhat nervously. He looked as if he was about to turn it down but the young woman behind the bar offered him a small taster. He sniffed it suspiciously, closed his eyes and took a small sip. Hilary watched as his eyes opened wide, as if in surprise.

'That's quite nice,' he admitted. He swallowed the rest of the taster glass. 'Very nice, in fact. I'll have one please, along with one of your hot pasties.'

'Good choice. Same for me,' Hilary said. They took their drinks across to a corner table, slid out of their coats and sat down. Hilary took a large mouthful. For some inexplicable reason, she felt as if she had somehow turned a corner, that things were starting to look up.

'This is more like it,' she said. 'This bar was one of my late husband's favourites. We would often come in here before catching the train. I used to

think he had organised us to set off deliberately early from wherever we were, just so we had half an hour to spend in here. Then he would snooze on the train.'

'You miss him, obviously,' Matthew said. 'Has it been long?'

'Six years. Inoperable brain cancer. I was devastated.'

'Understandably. But here you are, looking as if you're determined to get on with your life. And you look gorgeous, I have to say.' Hilary giggled and nearly choked on her drink. 'Oh, you smoothie, you! But then, you're an actor, aren't you? A purveyor of honeyed words.' He looked seriously at her. 'No, I meant it. I know that sometimes it seems easier just to give up. But I guess you're a battler.' She looked down at her depleted glass. 'What else is there?'

Just then, the waitress arrived with their food. They rapidly finished their stouts and ordered more. 'I could get to like this. It's new to me, this real ale.' He took another sip. 'What do you do, Hilary?'

'I'm a senior psychiatric nurse,' she replied as she finished her pastie. 'That's the other link to real ale. My late boss from years ago became chair of the local branch of CAMRA. He was a close friend and talked me into joining after I lost Richard. It was a survival tactic and I've never looked back. He died a couple of years after Richard. It was a double tragedy for me. But life has to go on, don't you think? Do you have close family?'

'A teenage daughter. She mothers me, when I'm not off somewhere. I always think she's my miracle. Her mother died during childbirth.'

'That can be a tricky one to deal with.'

'Do you mean the child experiencing a guilt complex as they grow up? They've survived but the mother hasn't?' He took another sip of beer and looked at her thoughtfully. Hilary felt his eyes on her. 'Exactly.'

Matthew shook his head. 'I did watch out for it, but there was no sign. She's always been cheerful and positive. I wish I could say the same about me.' He took another bite of his pastie. 'These are good, aren't they?'

'The tastiest food I've had in days. I'm determined to go turkey-free for the rest of my life after the stuff that was dished up to me over Christmas. Ugh.' She shuddered. By now they had both finished their food and drink. Hilary looked at her watch. 'Time to move, I think. We don't want to miss another train, do we?' She slipped her arm through Matthew's as they made their way back to the concourse and onto the train. The journey time seemed to fly by as they chatted amicably.

'I've been invited to a New Year's Eve party with some of the current cast at the Playhouse. Would you like to come with me?' Matthew asked as they reached for their coats and bags on

the approach to Salisbury station. 'I'd like that. I really would. Can we exchange phone numbers?'

'Of course.' They were soon hauling their bags onto the station concourse and making for the taxi rank. Hilary put a hand on his arm as the first car approached. 'Shame we can't share a taxi. Opposite directions.'

'Mmm. It's been a pleasure, Hilary. One of the most enjoyable train journeys I've had for a long time. And I'm looking forward to the party rather more now.'

'A Dühl Christmas but a Bright New Year,' she said, smiling conspiratorially. She clambered in and gave him a wave.

© the author. Michael Hambling is the author of the popular Detective Sophie Allen series of Dorset-based crime mystery novels. Michael has also written a series of contemporary mystery/adventure novels for teenagers titled *The Misfits*, also set in Dorset and enjoyed by adults as well as younger people. Full details at www.michaelhambling.co.uk or on Amazon.

JOHN LAMBERT

Local CAMRA members were saddened to learn of the death of branch stalwart John Lambert on 27 October. John worked at Porton Down for many years. He was an active member of Salisbury & South Wiltshire CAMRA, helping at beer festivals, acting as Downton Brewery Liaison Officer, and volunteering as a group leader for the memorable 'Salisbury is Open' pub crawl following the Novichok attack. He had taken a back seat since a serious cancer scare in 2021 but was still attending branch

meetings until a month before his death. He was also a keen cribbage player and was captain of the Village Freehouse team. John was an active member of Salisbury Rugby Club and for years organised their annual spring beer festival. Many tributes were paid by CAMRA branch colleagues, one of whom described him as "an invariably courteous and thoughtful person".

DIARY DATES *Salisbury & South Wiltshire*



DECEMBER

4th Open Branch Meeting.

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

7th Bus Social

To King's Head, Whiteparish. Depart 11.40am Endless Street, stop D, bus X7R; arrive Whiteparish church 12.02. Those wanting lunch must book in advance by phoning 01794 884004. Depart from Whiteparish church at 3.02pm or 4.04pm, arriving 26 minutes later.

13th Good Beer Guide City Saunter

6.30pm start at Duke of York, York Road, Salisbury. Then on to Village Freehouse, Wilton Road; Haunch of Venison, Minster Street; Rai d'Or, Brown Street; Winchester Gate, Rampart Road; finishing at Wyndham Arms, Estcourt Road, all Salisbury. Half an hour in each.

JANUARY 2025

8th Open Branch Meeting

7.30pm The Wyndham Arms, Estcourt Road, Salisbury.

11th New Year Social

12.00 The Ox Row Inn, Market Square, Salisbury.

15th City Saunter

7.30pm Hettie Bells, South Western Road, Salisbury, then Deacons, Bridge Tap and Sips.

18th Bus Social

To Pewsey: World's End (Crown Inn) and The Shed Alehouse. Depart 10.55am Blue Boar Row, stop M, bus X5. Arrive Pewsey 12.00, short walk to Crown Inn. Walk to Royal Oak or elsewhere for lunch. The Shed opens 2.00pm. Return 3.38pm or 5.08pm X5 from Pewsey.

24th Winterfest session 1

6.30pm to 11.00pm at Salisbury Guildhall.

25th Winterfest session 2

11.00am to 8.00pm at Salisbury Guildhall.

FEBRUARY 2025

5th Open Branch Meeting

7.30pm The Wyndham Arms, Estcourt Road, Salisbury.

8th Bus Social

To Romsey. Depart 11.40am, Endless Street, stop D, bus X7R. Arrive Romsey bus station 12.22. Visit pubs in Romsey. Return from Romsey bus station on X7R 4.52pm, arrive 5.33pm

12th City Saunter

7.30pm The Ox Row Inn, Market Square, then The Market Tavern and The Haunch of Venison.

21st Minibus Trip

7.00pm leaves St John Street, Salisbury. The Swan, Stoford; The Pelican, Stapleford; Rainbow on the Lake, Steeple Langford; and The Boot, Berwick St James.

27th Bus Social

To Stockbridge. 10.00am depart Cathedral Hotel, Salisbury on bus 68. Arrive Stockbridge 10.38 for coffee. Stroll to the White Hart, then walk back to The Three Cups. Depart Stockbridge Town Hall 3.10pm, arrive Cathedral Hotel, 3.49pm.

*Please check all bus and train times
due to changing timetables*

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