

WIGHTWASH



THE ISLE OF WIGHT BRANCH

NEWSLETTER NO 7, APRIL 1994

Dates for your dairy:

Spring Social

Fri 22nd April

8.30pm. Highdown Inn, Totland. Contact
Jed & Sarah for directions 78759.

Branch Meeting

Wed 11th May

8.30pm. Prince of Wales, Newport. A new
entry to the GBG this year.

Make May a Mild Month Social

Fri 20th May

8.30pm. Castle, Ryde. Make mine a Gales,
please.

Brewery Visit

Sat 25th June

Goddards (with Portsmouth Branch) -
details to be announced

Branch Meeting,

Wed 20th July

8.30pm Countryman, Brighstone. A new
entry to next years GBG.

Summer Social

Fri 19th August

8.30 pm. Volunteer, Ventnor. An authentic
renovation and wonderfully kept beer.

Branch Meeting

Wed 21st September

8.30pm. Row Barge, Bembridge (RBBI).
Well established exhibition house.

Committee:

Chairman	Chris Coleman	521494
Secretary/Branch Contact	Derek Smith	298024
Treasurer	Derek Nicoll	525797
Press Officer/GBG Co-ordinator	Brian Jacobs	527093
Social Secretary	Debbie Lane	616809
Memberships/Branch Diary	Nick Ward	299477
Committee Member	John Nicholson	299436
Committee Member	Ken Matthews	294377
Committee Member	Ray Scarfe	298726
Honorary Auditor	Roger Barlow (CSE Woodwork)	297722

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About this newsletter:

If you have any adverts or material: articles, information, pictures, recipes, please contact Nick Ward (299477) or John Nicholson (299436).

Views expressed in *WIGHTWASH* are not necessarily those held by the Editor, the Isle of Wight Branch of CAMRA or the Campaign for Real Ale nationally.

This will be the last issue of Wightwash to be mailed free to all members. In future it will be available free in a number of pubs, including the Travellers Joy, the Castle, Ryde, Prince of Wales, Newport, Star, Wroxall, Wight Mouse, Chale. Anybody who would still like to receive copies by post can do so on payment of £1.

This decision has been taken for two reasons: to avoid a continuing drain on Branch funds, which are needed for other things, in particular the local guide, and to try to get the message to non-members, rather than just preaching to the converted. The newsletter will continue to be produced at 3 monthly intervals (approx).

If you have any adverts or material: articles, information, pictures, recipes, please contact Nick Ward (299477) or John Nicholson (299436).

BREWERY NEWS

Burts - Brian Jacobs, Burts Brewery Liaison Officer Reports

Branch Chairman, Chris Coleman and myself joined Portsmouth Branch, at the invitation of their Chairman Chris Bleach, on Saturday the 19th February for a tour of the Brewery.

It was clear from the tour that Burts have invested quite heavily in improving the quality of their beers. Several items of plant have been added or improved, such as the amazing, 'nuclear' powered cask washer which members might remember from their last visit (if they were in a condition to remember!). One significant improvement has been in the boiling process, since clarity problems Burts had a while ago were eventually tracked down to the 'hot break', a point during the boil at which the addition of copper finings causes many of the solids to drop to the bottom of the wort. Burts do maintain a strong and enthusiastic commitment to quality cask beer and regard their Brewery as something more than a mere business undertaking. The Brewery was very much Geoffrey Hartridge's brainchild and whilst he might be every inch a businessman, he does look on it with a high degree of parental pride and concern.

Highlight of the visit was undoubtedly the chance to sample the new 4.4% 'Newport Nobbler', a pale, golden ale which will undoubtedly find a place in the summer beer niche sought by Whitbread Summer Ale and Gales Gold. However, unlike these beers, Nobbler is a full-bodied brew with immense flavour and a beautifully clean, hoppy palate. Chris was reminded of Sunday-morning visits to the original Ventnor Brewery and sampling the old LB. Although that was a much weaker beer, Chris thought the two shared a similarity in character. I thought it drank like a good draught IPA. I am not a fan of pale beers, but I loved the big taste of this one. It deserves to do extremely well, although its assertive palate might not appeal to the usual summer beer drinker, whoever that is.

With the flexibility afforded by the recent plant improvements, Burts are also hoping to introduce a series of special brews in the near future, the first of which will be 'Invasion Ale', due to be released to coincide with the forthcoming D-Day celebrations. It is planned to follow this later in the year with a porter and further 'specials' are also in the pipeline.

As a footnote, talking of IPAs, do try the new bottled offering from Ushers. Not bottle-conditioned, nor particularly cheap, but it is an absolute cracker.

Goddards

The last of the Winter Warmer has been brewed (allegedly our Social Secretary had a hand in it - not literally). Originally intended as a one-off, it was so well-received that it has been available throughout the winter. The Special Bitter continues in excellent form and there are hints of other brews on the way.

A joint visit with Portsmouth Branch will take place on June 25th. Numbers may be limited, so come along to the May meeting if you are interested.

The Kingston Arms

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- **Good selection Gales Real Ales**
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- **Large Car Park**

Adrian & Jackie welcome all CAMRA Members

Offshore Breweries

Gales are to brew 6 seasonal beers, which will be available the first two weeks of each month, with a monthly guest beer for the remaining two weeks. Sounds interesting.

Eldridge Pope are abandoning cask breathers (CO₂ demand valves) -that's the good news, the bad news is that they are introducing sparklers and swannecks to all pubs.

Hop Back are expanding, buying pubs in Reading and Wimbledon.

Most brewers seem to be planning a beer for the D-Day commemoration.

PUB OF THE YEAR

Enclosed with this issue you will find a voting form for the 1994 Island Pub of the Year. You are asked to provide up to three nominations in order of preference, full instructions are on the form. The results will be announced at the July meeting.

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WHEN IS A PINT NOT A PINT?

Following the Government's climbdown on outlawing short measures in pubs, we the consumers are left to sort it out for ourselves. The fatuous claims by the big brewers that handpumps would have to go or that it would mean the end of a head on beer, were just a smokescreen. We can assume that the real negotiation went on behind the scenes with contributions to party funds getting the odd mention.

So what is the situation? Trading Standards Officers estimate that customers are short-changed by £400 million pounds each year. The Government has decided that 95% of a pint is near enough, but how do you know when it is 94% rather than 96%? should you carry a dipstick or a ruler around with you? The solution was to gradually introduce lined, over-measure glasses. These have been used for years in many pubs throughout the country (with handpumps) and are universal in some parts, so what's the problem? One can only conclude that the big brewers want to go on short-changing the public and have used their "influence" to achieve that end.

If your local does not use lined glasses, ask why not, you can only get thrown out!

Local Guide

Work on the first Isle of Wight Beer Guide for more than 10 years is going well and it is hoped to launch it early this summer.

AFFORDABLE ALES

Alas in this issue I have to report that beers for £1-40 or less are a rare find. Prices have leapt up 10p a pint in many establishments as the cost of beer to the publican spirals ever upward. I would think that a pint at a reasonable price might entice more punters out and keep the turnover high, but it appears that the policy is to whack the prices up and balance the books by bleeding dry those who can "afford it. Make no mistake, eventually the bubble will burst. At last the £2-00 pint has arrived on the Island, at the Anchor in Cowes. Does this effort, coupled with £1-95 for Goddards Best in the Crown at Ryde and the same for Winter Warmer in the Seaview Hotel prove that the recession is well and truly over? A list of pubs that still provide a decent cask ale at £1-40 a pint or less appears below. If you know of any others please let the editor know in time for the next issue of Wightwash.

STAR INN, Wroxall

ROWBARGE, Bembridge

WOODMAN, Wootton

BLACKSMITHS, Calbourne

Cheers, THE BEER PUNTER

TRAVELLERS JOY

PALLANCE ROAD

NORTHWOOD

Tel: 298024

- 9 Real Ales (always at least 1 mild or porter)
- Beer Garden
- Children always welcome (animals in the garden)
- Good Pub Food

Derek and Ruth Smith are proud to be current holders of Isle of Wight CAMRA Branch "Pub of the Year" award.

BEER FESTIVAL REPORTS

Pompey

The usual boarding party attended the Winterfest, held in Gosport this time. It was a very good event with nearly ninety different beers from about 50 breweries, ten ciders and perries and a stall selling exotic Belgian beers. The emphasis was on winter ales, with some brain stunners like

Christmas Noggin and Old Soporific at 10% ABV, but with a good selection of bitters and milds and some excellent and little-known ciders.

Beers of the festival were: Gales Mild; Hop Back Summer Lightning; West Coast Old Soporific; Snowdonia Merion and Choir Porter. The winning cider was Biddenden Special Reserve at a mere 13%.

Pompey Beer Festivals are highly recommended, the next one is in August.

Plymouth

Three intrepid Island CAMRA members ventured to far-off Plymouth recently, ostensibly to deliver a piece of furniture, but the Plymouth Beer Festival just happened to coincide with the above safari. How convenient!

An almost uneventful journey was marred by a puncture just to the West of Dorchester. Not much trouble I thought, but when all five wheelnuts chose that moment to round off, I spent several moments inventing new expletives, whilst thrashing the ground with my wheelbrace.

The other half walked off in disgust, but shortly returned beaming, having picked up two quid!

Enough of this. Shortly after arrival in Plymouth, aforementioned other half having forgotten the address and phone number, the recipient of said furniture was luckily spotted leering out of his window. The works party was fortified with excellent fish & chips, then set off at a brisk walk to the Guildhall and said festival.

Entrance was free to members, with £1 buying a rather nice commemorative pint glass depicting Sir Francis Drake and his bowls.

The selection of ales about 40) was superb, ranging from wonderful St Austell 4X Mild at 3.6% and £1-20 a pint to Orkney Skullsplitter at 8.5% and £1-60. Too many ales to list here of course, but in the Friday night and Saturday lunchtime sessions we sampled (between us) 25 previously untasted ales.

One mystery remains - why does Derek White always get a nearly full glass when he only asked for a half?

Anyone got any furniture they want delivered to Plymouth next February?

Jed

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INVASION OF THE SWANNECKS!

Have you noticed the insidious sprouting of these alien life-forms. Take a look behind the bar next time you are in pub. If you see a long curling pipe emerging from behind the handpump, avoid it! Unless you like drinking shaving foam that is.

Swannecks are a marketing creation, they force air into the beer which results in a creamy thick head, like Draught Guinness which uses compressed Nitrogen for the same purpose. This process destroys the natural condition, resulting from the secondary fermentation in the cask, leaving it lifeless and you with a white moustache.

The fashion seems to have started up North, with beers like Tetleys served with a tight sparkler (nozzle), to produce a thick head, which apparently they insist on in those parts. Fair enough, its a matter of taste, although it probably began as a method of livening up stale beer. Then Boddingtons (Whitbread) started using it as the theme of an advertising campaign, associating images of beer with cream and yes, even a shaving brush. Now the stupid marketing people think that everyone wants their beer served up like an ice-cream cornet. Not only is this method of serving inappropriate to southern beers, which should form their own head from the natural condition, it masks the subtler flavours of the beer. It is also unhygienic, since the spout is put right into the glass, under the surface of the beer, to make it work. This might be alright if clean glasses were used each time, but unfortunately they are not. The residue of beer then remains on the spout until the next used glass comes along. In these days of hygiene hysteria, it is surprising they are allowed. So resist this creeping menace, you have nothing to lose, but your (thick) head!

Reinstated, by popular demand (and public outcry against controversial and futile attempts to cleverly 'soap' the publication, thus increasing its distribution and readers' dependence on it for their very life's breath) Prof Ullage, triumphantly returns with a new, strict campaigning brief, ousting the now disgraced Ms Eliza A Bout

ULLAGE TALK

A column of investigative reports and stories of everyday CAMRA folk, by Prof I.P.A. Ullage.

Bankers Draught

Watching BBC2's Money Programme the other night I was amazed to see the Rowbarge Inn at Bembridge featured in a report about maladministration at Barclay's Bank. Apparently Barclays had been bouncing landlord Chris Wallace's cheques, saying he was overdrawn when he wasn't and then, to rub salt in the wound, charged him a few thousand pounds in bank charges.

As I occasionally frequent this admirable establishment, I can but lament the lack of knowledge shown by Barclays, for as the BBC camera crew could have shown, if they had filmed the gents loo, Mr Wallace is literally flushed with money as a result of the strange local habit of flinging loose change into the trough. On seeing this any self-respecting banker would, however desperate, have to grant himself and emergency overdraft.

Boy Named Sue

The Anchor in Cowes High Street has just had a new bar installed. The opening ceremony was attended by the Whitbread Area Manager and he was photographed behind the new edifice by the County Press, together with the licensees Doug and Sue. At the end of the photographic session the ace reporter was heard to ask "and which one's Sue?"

LOGS

MOODY - tel: 292547 / 293821

- **No Pine or Fir**
- **Hardwood only**
- **Free Island Delivery**
- **Agricultural Contractor, Digger Hire, etc.**

Dear Editor,

A fashion seems to have emerged among certain of your contributors, who, having in the recent past taken advantage of Burt's largesse, now find it expedient to use 'Wightwash' to indulge in a bit of 'Burts-bashing'. Were the comments in question less frequent or vitriolic, and had some factual basis, they could be regarded as merely inane, fatuous or even terribly amusing. However, to people whose livelihood depends on the success of Burts' beers and who devote a tremendous amount of dedication, enthusiasm and resources towards achieving it, these constant allusions are offensive and unnecessary. It might be mere satire, but all satire hurts someone, and if somebody thinks it's funny to kick your dog, you might be excused for failing to share their amusement. It does CAMRA locally or nationally no good at all to be seen as the originators of wanton and inaccurate carping, however 'P.A.Newtonised' it might be.

These articles have aroused considerable bad feeling within Burts, but their representatives have sufficient maturity and good manners not to respond to them. I, as their BLO, am not so constrained and I would like to answer some of the allegations made recently in this newsletter:-

1) Burts do NOT blend or party gyle their standard beers.

2) VPA is brewed by one of its previous brewers as closely as possible to the original recipe, even to the point of treating the water to 'Ventnorise' it. It's an excellent beer; what more do you want?

3) The rights to Burts name were bought, quite legitimately, by Island Brewery. Since they were not instrumental in closing down the original brewery, I can see nothing immoral in using a known market name, even if done in the cause of good business. What I do object to is people like Whitbreads closing down local breweries, attempting to copy the beers elsewhere and marketing them under the same name.

Burts produce quality, tasty beers at a reasonable price, and in doing so, perpetuate a well-known and respected local name which would otherwise be lost. Pardon me, but isn't this what CAMRA is all about? Those who are engaged in this sniping would do well to remember that the subject of their attacks are also

JUAN

local CAMRA members, and share their aims, ideals and newsletters. What are Burts doing wrong? The answer is, of course, nothing, apart from pursuing a sound marketing policy which offends some individuals. Burts and CAMRA Isle of Wight have hitherto enjoyed excellent relations, but we are in danger of alienating them for no good reason. If individuals feel aggrieved at Burts' marketing policies, or think their beers are bland, bad or inconsistent, then they are perfectly entitled to say so, but let it be clear that they are their views and not those of CAMRA Isle of Wight, which is how Burts perceive them. And if those individuals feel pleased that Burts have taken notice of their remarks, I can tell them that clear, constructive criticism, rather than childish innuendo, will have a far more positive impact.

Brian Jacobs, BLO Burts

Exercising the Editor's right to reply (County Press style), I wonder whether we have been reading the same newsletter. The offending items were three obviously spoof letters in the last issue on the subject of the name change. Portsmouth Branch newsletter had a much more direct piece on the same subject. Whether the items were funny or not, they could hardly be called "vitriolic" and certainly did not criticise the quality of the beers. In fact all other recent references to Burts have been complimentary and there was the usual disclaimer about the views expressed not necessarily representing those of CAMRA etc. That said, Brian is right. The local Branch should support its local breweries and if this item did give such offence, then I apologise to Burts, this was neither intended nor expected.

Nick Ward, Editor

The CASTLE

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RYDE

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Membership costs £12 (individual) £6 OAP, £14 (joint). For this you receive the monthly newspaper "What's Brewing" and concessions on many CAMRA products and events. You can also attend the monthly meetings or social events on the Island, details of which are given in this newsletter, mailed to all Branch members.

Joining CAMRA is a commitment to Britain's best-known and most successful consumer organisation. You can help to preserve the distinctive beer styles of this country for future generations.

To join fill in the form below and send it with a cheque for £12/£14, payable to CAMRA Ltd., 34, Alma Road, St Albans, Herts. AL1 3BW.

APPLICATION FORM

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DATE _____ SIGNED _____

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