

BeerPoint

BeerPoint is a system whereby members of the Isle of Wight branch of the Campaign for Real Ale can recommend pubs that they have recently visited and found the beer to be of a good standard.

The system is providing a useful tool in highlighting good (or bad) practice.

BeerPoint is administered by our chairman John Nicholson who can be contacted on jnl@johnnicholson.co.uk

Here is a list of our current **Recommended BeerPoint** pubs by area:

North:

Traveller's Joy, Northwood; Anchor, Cowes; Union, Cowes; Fountain, Cowes; Portland, Gurnard; Lifeboat, East Cowes; White Hart, East Cowes; Kingston, Cowes., Sportsman's Rest, Porchfield.

East & North East:

Vine, St Helens; The Old Village Inn, Bembridge; Propeller, Bembridge; Simeon Arms, Ryde; Swan's Nest, Ryde; Castle, Ryde; Fowler & Co, Ryde; Lake Huron, Ryde; Solent, Ryde; Dark Horse, Brading; King Lud, Ryde; Yarbridge Inn, Brading; Railway, Ryde.

Central:

White Lion, Arreton; Crown, Shorwell; Three Bishops, Brighstone; Chequers, Rookley; Griffin, Godshill; Taverners, Godshill; Four Seasons, Wroxall; Pointer Inn, Newchurch; Prince of Wales, Newport; Old Stag, Newport; Newport Ale House; William Coppin, Newport; Castle, Newport; Wren's Nest, Newport.

South and South East:

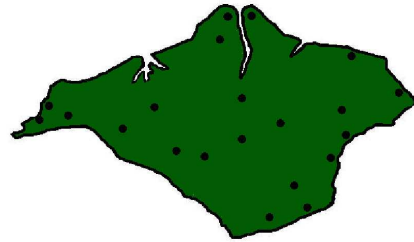
Buddle, Niton; Village Inn, Shanklin; Chine Inn, Shanklin; King Harry's, Shanklin; Waterfront, Shanklin; Crab and Lobster Tap, Ventnor; Volunteer, Ventnor; White Lion, Niton; Castle Inn, Sandown; Tap, Sandown; White Horse, Whitwell.

West:

Prince of Wales, Freshwater; King's Head, Yarmouth; Sun, Calbourne; Sun, Hulverstone; Broadway, Totland; Horse and Groom, Ningwood; Vine, Freshwater.

Please check the website for an up-to-date list

www.wightwash.org.uk
and click on "BEER POINT"



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The views expressed in Wightwash are not necessarily those of the editor or CAMRA (the Campaign for Real Ale) either nationally or locally.

Wightwash can be contacted by phone 721557 or email editor@wightwash.org.uk

Wightwash

Volume 2, Number 55

Newsletter of the Isle of Wight branch of CAMRA

Spring Issue 2013



The Campaign for Real Ale exists to preserve and promote good beer and pubs.

In this **FREE** issue:- **New Faces** **A TRIP TO HOOK NORTON** **PRIZE QUIZ**

A letter to our MP **A BALKAN BEER BASH** **ISLAND LANDMARKS** **News**
and much more...

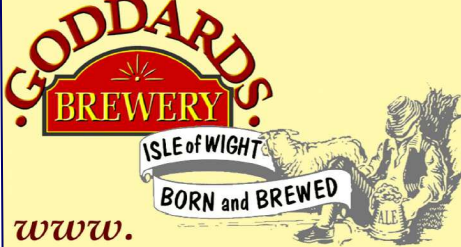
Cowes Gets a New Pub

After the amazing success of the Newport Ale House, Mark and Debbie Ridett have opened the **Cowes Ale House** in Shooters Hill, Cowes.



Cowes Ale House

It will be run along similar lines as the Newport pub with up to 5 real ales on stillage including one from a wooden cask. Look out also for quality foreign beers and tasty filled rolls from the local baker.



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Another year has flown by and the pub and beer of the Year results are in:- David Yates keeps his crown with his superb **Yule be Sorry**, **Goddards** return second with their **Fuggle-Dee-Dum** and **Island Brewery** make the top three with **Earls RDA**. What an excellent result - a top beer from each of the Island Brewers.

The Traveller's Joy, Northwood are yet again the voters' favourite pub with the **Anchor**, **Cowes** climbing to second and the **Ale House** slipping to third. However it has to be said the competition was so close. To all the breweries - keep up the good work and quality and to all the pubs who received votes - well done.

Thank you to all the 70+ members who took the trouble to vote. If you didn't, please make a special effort next year.

2013 will be a difficult year for everyone, each and every pub needs your support.

Gary Daish

This year's presentations will be made at the Traveller's Joy on Friday 12th April 2013

Pub of the Year

- 1/ Traveller's Joy, Northwood
- 2/ Anchor, Cowes
- 3/ The Newport Ale House
- 4/ Old Village Inn, Bembridge
- 4/ Fowler & Co, Ryde
- 6/ Buddle, Niton
- 7/ Solent Inn, Ryde
- 7/ Pointer Inn, Newchurch
- 9/ Bonchurch Inn
- 10/ Bargeman's Rest, Newport

Beer of the Year

- 1/ Yule be Sorry, Yates
- 2/ Fuggle-Dee-Dum, Goddards
- 3/ Earls RDA, Island Brewery
- 4/ Yachtsman's Ale, Island Brewery
- 5/ Wight Winter, Yates
- 6/ Wight Gold, Island Brewery
- 7/ Holy Joe, Yates
- 7/ Undercliff Experience, Yates
- 9/ Ale of Wight, Goddards
- 10/ Ducks Folly, Goddards
- 10/Winter Warmer, Goddards

More results and details can be found at www.wightwash.org.uk

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8
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Just answer these easy questions. The first two correct answers out of the hat on 1st May win the prizes.

Send answers to - The Editor, Wightwash, Oakdene, Rookley, Ventnor, PO38 3NH or email - editor@wightwash.org.uk

- 1/ Heather Bell has just returned to play which famous radio soap character?
- 2/ With which musical instrument was Eddie Calvert associated?
- 3/ What "ology" is the study of animals?
- 4/ Which brewery brews Bishops Finger?
- 5/ Who is the new MP for Eastleigh?
- 6/ What is a female deer called?
- 7/ What do Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddows and Mary Jane Kelly have in common?
- 8/ Which river runs through Belfast?
- 9/ and 10/ Identify these two North African countries.



Answers to the Winter Quiz

- 1/ Venezuela 2/ John Milne
- 3/ The Kinks 4/ Four 5/ Leg
- 6/ José Maria Olazábel
- 7/ The Windmill Theatre
- 8/ The River Taff
- 9/ Princess Cruises
- 10/ Royal Caribbean


Roger Corbett of Blackheath wins a £20 meal voucher and Tracy Asher of Newport wins a case of Yates' beers.


Thank you to all the others that took part.

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Bembridge Windmill

At one time there were at least a dozen windmills on the Island and the sites of several are still marked by local names. Water power was more commonly used for mills here. The machinery for grinding can still be seen working at Calbourne, and numerous watermill buildings can be discovered on our waterways



With windmills it is a different story and Bembridge Mill is the only one to survive intact. It was built around 1700 and was originally used to grind local flour. At least some of the produce was used to provision ships bound on the long voyage to penal colonies in Australia.

In later years it was used to grind animal feed but it ceased work entirely in 1913. Some restoration work was carried out in 1934 and it was used as a look out tower by the Home Guard in World War II. In 1962 it was given to the National Trust and more restoration work was undertaken. It is now a popular attraction for visitors who can see the original wooden machinery still in place but not in use.

Rob Marshall

Several CAMRA members have been working very hard behind the scenes to compile a bang up-to-date Isle of Wight Pub Guide. Now it needs checking and they need YOUR HELP.

This Pub Guide will be On-Line and only accessible via the Wightwash website. We came to the conclusion that for several reasons it was best to concentrate our efforts on a web based guide (rather than a book) as we can update it constantly.

The team have been surveying as many pubs as they can but realise that circumstances change very quickly especially when it comes to Isle of Wight pubs.

What we would like **you** to do is to look at our new look "Find-A-Pub" page on the Wightwash website, pick a pub and see if we've got it all right.

We really don't mind you telling us if we've got it wrong. (Just break it to us gently!)



Seriously, please look at www.wightwash.org.uk/pubs and do a spot of proof reading.

Cheers!


Tim Marshall - editor@wightwash.org.uk

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Brewery News

Goddards

Pie-Eyed sold out two days before Christmas and the brewery is part-way through sales of the 3rd brew of **Winter Warmer**, which will be available over the next two months.

Some project work has commenced in the brewery to increase capacity still further for the third year running. This year they are increasing the size of some of the fermenters, following last year's increase in grist case and Mash Tun capacity and the previous year's increase in racking tank and liquor tank capacity.

Bottled beer sales continue to grow in volume, and MD and brewer Richard Harvey is looking forward to a summer to keep the cask ale volumes buoyant.

They are also looking forward to celebrating their 20th anniversary of brewing in June this year, possibly with a special beer to commemorate the occasion.

Yates

Yet again **Yule be Sorry** triumphs (5th year running) as I.W. beer of the year 2012. Congratulations to David Snr. and Ollie for

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producing such a superb ale, and also to the members who voted for it. A new beer is in the process of being developed for the summer, all I know is it will be 4.5% ABV so more details to follow.

As reported in the winter issue **Dark Side of the Wight** 5% ABV will be available throughout the year both in barrels and bottles. Two large batches both barrels and bottles have been supplied to a wholesaler in the Midlands. It's pleasing to see the beers being recognised further afield. Also, I had a very enjoyable visit to the Gosport Winter Festival in February and was pleased to see Yates **YSD** and **Wight Winter** being sampled from the bar.

Wightwash Letter to our MP Page Twenty One



In the last issue of Wightwash we printed a letter from Andrew Turner MP explaining his position on the Beer Escalator Tax. Here is a letter that Alex Lawson (IW CAMRA Secretary) has sent in response.

Dear Mr Turner,

BEER DUTY ESCALATOR

Thank you for your considered response to my letter on this subject and for your invitation to suggest alternative to the escalator.

I disagree that the Treasury would have to find more tax income or spending cuts if the Beer Duty Escalator was terminated. In fact there are diminishing returns at play, as pointed out by Richard Harvey of Goddards in Wightwash, and by many MPs during the parliamentary debate.

I agree with your view that there should be a distinction between those who drink in pubs and those who buy from supermarkets. The obvious way is via VAT rates but we are told this is not possible.

In Germany the duty on spirits is 7 times more than the beer duty. In the UK the ratio is less than 1.5. This is one of the smallest gaps of any country in the world, which seems remarkable in a country with our beer heritage.

As draught beer is what some of us go to pubs for (apart from the social benefit) it would directly help pubs to reduce the beer duty relative to the duty on spirits. This would thus discriminate in favour of pubs and is very much in the control of the government.

Those who drink to excess are often consuming spirits rather than draught beer, and doing so outside the pub ("pre-loading"), while pub landlords have a duty to observe and manage their customers which does not apply to the supermarket managers selling high strength alcoholic drinks.

It has been calculated that 1 job in brewing generates 1 job in agriculture, 1 job in the supply chain, 1 job in retail and 18 jobs in pubs. Many of these jobs are for young people.

Given these facts it is difficult for me to see how the Treasury Beer Duty Escalator can be defended.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Lawson (Isle of Wight Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale)



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some while. We alight at the bottom of the hill, and cross the road to a small bistro, the Gatto, which appears to be favoured by locals and ill-mannered Italians from the cruise ships which dock at the terminal opposite. The menu is reasonably priced and promising, and yes they do sell Tomislav! The blackboard lists oysters and ‘ostriche’, which we take to be ostrich, and we order a portion of each, as well as a round of Tomislav, of course. We are puzzled when presented with two portions of oysters; subsequently, we discover that ‘ostriche’ has nothing to do with sand-oriented large birds, but is, in fact, Croatian for oysters. It doesn’t matter; these are very fine examples of oysterhood. They are a perfect complement to the dark, porterish Tomislav, which is not only delicious but a welcome relief from Eurofizz.



After another two rounds of Tomislav, the supply runs out, but as we are now feeling quite mellow, the news is greeted with deferential grace. However, it transpires they do have further supplies, but they aren’t chilled, and it appears to be a cultural *faux pas* to serve warm beer in Croatia. We return in the evening and ensure that they will need to re-stock the following day. Moreover, more oysters are available, and the shrimp soup, a local delicacy, is a delight. We continue until we feel it best to return to our hotel while we can still walk, and drink Montenegrin cooking brandy in one of our rooms because it’s after 10pm and the bar has, of course, closed. Also, a certain member of our party refuses to open the bottle of Stock he purchased earlier (“it’s for Christmas”) and the rest of the party retire in disgust.

Thus ends our trip to Dubrovnik. If I have painted too cynical a picture of the resort, I apologise. It is actually one of the most beautiful cities I have ever visited, and the surrounding area is equally delightful; Montenegro is particularly stunning. However, it isn’t the place for a rewarding beer experience; the Croatians simply don’t have the beer culture enjoyed by many other nations. Beer is endured, not savoured, and the whole alcohol experience is regarded as an adjunct to eating out. However, Croatians are a very pleasant, polite people, which makes me wonder if the bus drivers and tourist staff are imported from Serbia. Yes, Dubrovnik is expensive, but I guess we must temper our aggravation at being fleeced with the knowledge that Croatia is a democratic country yet to celebrate its twentieth anniversary, and Dubrovnik is a nice little earner.

Would I go back there? Oh yes. But I’ll take my own beer.

Brian Jacobs

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Island Brewery

Christmas and the cold weather now becoming a distant memory as the buds of spring begin to arise and that glorious smell of the green growth permeates the evening; it must be time for a beer! And Island Brewery are ready and poised as ever. Now brewing to full capacity, in their state of the art expanded brewery, with expanded brewing team and expanded range of traditional and innovative beers, all of which received significant votes in this year’s Beer of the Year competition, including the uniquely styled **Wight Diamond** and **Wight Christmas**.

But, leading the field, and coming 3rd in the competition, is the masterful **Earls RDA**, a true connoisseur’s stout, if ever there was one, recognised by Island voters and visiting beer seekers, alike, as a stout of exceptional quality and character, not least for its understated drinking and pronounced roast espresso aftertaste.

Island Brewery not only produce excellent, consistent and characteristic beers, but they are also instrumental in supporting and helping island pubs to be the same, the

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latest of which is the **Sportsmans Rest** in Porchfield, which, having decided to keep their business with Island Ales and Island Brewery, the new owners, Paul and Jenny, have transformed the pub, putting the beers

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in proper cellarge and through hand pumps, and have found such demand that they have had to put on a third pump to feed the re-found customers who have swarmed back to enjoy their hospitality and quality of beers supplied by the brewery.

Other News

Manageress Georgi Newman is clearly delighted with the refurbishment of the **Hare and Hounds** and understandable so. Gone are all the dark wood tables and chairs, the lofty ceilings and the 1983 carpet; in comes comfy furniture, a bright but cosy interior, new signage and - new loos.



Greene King have spent over £250,000 on the project. The Hare and Hounds is part of their Old English Inns group together with The Ryde Castle (which after the devastating fire should reopen by the summer), The Crab, The Folly and the newly refurbished Fountain in Cowes.

Many years ago, the Isle of Wight Highways Department removed the grass patch in front of the **Chequers Inn** and covered it in tarmac. Last month they put it back; but this time with nice curb stones and some big wooden posts to stop us parking on it.



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see on a visit to Dubrovnik; in fact they consist of concrete poured on to rocks where a limited range of overpriced drinks is served by tracksuit-clad youths. The word 'Buza', incidentally, has nothing to do with alcohol – it translates to 'hole', and one can only admire such refreshing honesty. A pleasant young Austrian barmaid at Buza 2 tells us that we must try Tomislav, which is a superfluous recommendation as we've been trying to since we arrived, and that it's 'available everywhere'. So we order it, but clearly her accuracy is questionable as they don't stock it. We subsequently discover that neither does any bar or restaurant we visit in the old city. We leave Buza 2, the richer for experience and the poorer for currency. After wandering aimlessly down several alleys, we settle on eating at a Eurofizz restaurant, which isn't too hard to find since it's impossible to go more than five paces without tripping over one. We are served by a very personable waiter with whom we enjoy some repartee, but he still doesn't have Tomislav. We avoid maiming him out of spite, and instead enjoy an overpriced fish platter, where I find myself the subject of censure for consuming more than my fair share of clams. I have no guilt about this because I had no Pringles at Buza 1, and, moreover, the clams are cheaper.

Next day, we attempt to negotiate the Dubrovnik bus system. This is a popular institution, which owes nothing to the drivers, who are remarkably accomplished in the art of surliness, and have little patience with imbecile tourists. We suspect they might be trainee border officials. Using the service is almost straightforward once we discover that not all buses at the Pile Gate use the same bus stop for boarding, but do for alighting. There is also no route map available, which makes travel a bit of a lottery. The local tourist office seems to be unaware of the existence of the bus service, and give the impression that they probably wouldn't tell you even if they were. Some time later, we find a bus which takes us to a viewpoint in the suburb of Gruz which affords wonderful views of the harbour by standing on top of a half-constructed building whose roof is level with the pavement. Sadly, in spite of its impressive location, there are no catering establishments in the area, and we have to wait for half an hour while the driver of the waiting bus finishes his lunch and the bus departs, in fairness, exactly on time. We could have caught the previous bus had I not disappeared to take photographs, and I am unpopular for

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over, the one in Dubrovnik is only served by a handful of catering establishments, and there is no night life or Tomislav. We settle for a bistro which serves risotto made from cardboard and wood shavings, washed down, of course, by ... well, you can guess. By this time, we conclude that a beery weekend in Dubrovnik is like a trip to France to sample tea. Back to the hotel for a few coffees and brandies; the first two, from Italian producer Stock, slip down well, but then the bar shuts at 10pm. 10pm? Oh yes; welcome to suburban Croatia.

Next day, we book a minibus trip to Montenegro. We finally cross the border after we accidentally discover a road which isn't closed for reconstruction, and negotiate the jobsworth at the border post. Why are border security officials always so perfunctory and surly? We can only assume they train at the same charm school as Croatian bus drivers (see below). We stop at a café and have our first Eurofizz of the day.

Yum, yum. However, we like Montenegro. The minibus take us along a fjord with breathtaking views, and we stop at Kotor, another ancient walled town, where we are invited to walk all 1300 steps of the city walls, a prospect we decline, since parts of it are built on the side of the local mountain and appear to have a pitch which matches their elevation. Instead, we wander aimlessly around the squares and alleys until, in the mistaken conviction that this is our lunch stop, we have massive platefuls of local whitebait and, yes, more Eurofizz, before moving on to the resort of Budva, where we discover some local EF which actually has some taste. So much so, we dispense with exploring the old town (yawn, another Balkan old town) and spend the next hour or two ensuring the waiters dispense beer. We pay for our casual disregard of what goes in comes out threefold by having an uncomfortable half hour nursing our distended bladders on the minibus until relief is offered in the form of a loo on the fjord ferry, which consists of a hole in the ferry deck through which we can see the fjord. We have grave doubts about its hygiene (and that of the fjord, now), but, in our present state of discomfort we would dangle by one



hand from the ferry prow to achieve relief. We are bemused by the fact that the EF comes out the same colour as it went in. Can this be coincidence?

We return to Dubrovnik, and pay an ill-starred visit to the two celebrated Buza bars, or should I say pay for a visit, as a modest round of three small drinks served in water dispenser cups, and two micro tubes of Pringles set us back an eye-watering £18 at Buza 2. You may read that these bars are a must-

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Festival News

Prince of Wales Newport Real Ale Festival will run from Friday 19th April to Sunday 21st and features a wide range of real ales and ciders. 2013 marks Ben and Ruth's tenth year. Congratulations from Wightwash!

I.W Steam Railway Real Ale Festival: 4th to 6th May at Havenstreet Station. This festival will feature all fifteen available ales from the three I.W. breweries plus twenty five real ales from the North of England. For more details including full list of ales, go to www.iwsteamrailway.co.uk

The Gurnard Beer Festival will take place in Spencers Field, Tuttons Hill and will be on 5th of May, starting at noon with a minimum of nine real ales. There will be a meet the brewer session with Martin from Downton brewery with free beer tasting during the afternoon. On the Sunday evening there will be a ticket only barn dance and on Monday 6th following the traditional Mayday parade through the village, there will be entertainment and side shows at the village Mayday fete. A real ale bar will be open throughout.

Wolverton Folk and Blues Fair
 Live Music Stage, I.W. real ale beer tent, BBQ, Tea tent, plus children's activities

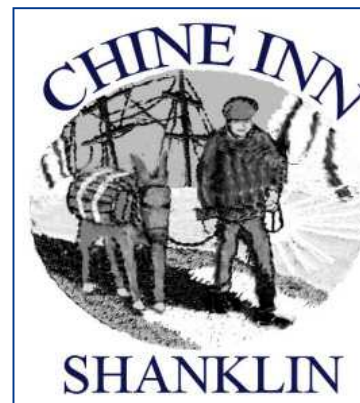
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Other Diary Dates

12th April
 Pub / Beer 2012 Awards
Traveller's Joy, Northwood 7.15
17th April
 Branch Meeting / Shanklin Walkabout start
Chine Inn 8.30
15th May
 Branch Meeting / Niton Walkabout start
White Lion 8.30
19th May
 Branch Meeting / Ryde Walkabout start
Solent Inn 8.30



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The Sportsman's Rest Porchfield

When Paul and Jenny Andrews-Smith looked out of their window and saw that the village pub was up for sale they decided to take it over and run it themselves; and by all accounts, a jolly good job they are making of it too. (check out [Tripadvisor](#)).

Paul, originally from Birmingham, and Jenny first moved to the Island when Paul was still in the Royal Air Force and stationed at Gosport. Recently Paul has been working at Air Frame Assemblies at Sandown Airport reconstructing Spitfires. A fascinating job that involved rebuilding aircraft quite frequently from buried wreckage.



He and Jenny, who Paul met when they were both working in Bahrain, took the pub over on the 4th of December. After a bit of clearing up, the doors opened up just a few days before Christmas. A sign was put up announcing the re-opening "with free mince-pies and mulled cider". That evening the pub was packed.

The Sportsman's is open 12 - 3 and 6 - 11 during the week (12 - 6 Sundays). Food is served at lunchtimes and during the evening up until 8.30pm. These times will be extended during the summer.

It is worth noting that the pub's chef, Lee Jeffery, who some will remember from the **St Lawrence Inn**, has brought with him the recipe for the very popular **St Lawrence Steak and Ale Pie!**

There are two regular beers, usually **Old Hooky** and either **Wight Gold** or **Wight Knight**, and one guest, which at the time of writing was **Death or Glory** from the Tring Brewery; 7.2% abv and much appreciated by some of the locals (in moderation, of course).

Paul asked me to acknowledge all the help and encouragement he has received, specifically from Steve Minshull from Island Ales.

Wightwash wish Paul and Jenny well and thank them for rescuing this lovely Isle of Wight village pub.

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)

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many of the dozens of picturesque alleys, shoehorned in so tight, it's hard to see where one ends and the next one begins, an impression reinforced by every menu being nearly identical. Should you pause to look at one, or sometimes if you simply walk by, a predatory waiter will attempt to intimidate you into dining; we suspect they may have had experience in the timeshare industry. Occasionally, these establishments are broken up by tiny shops, mostly tourist tack, with the odd clothes shop or art gallery. They are all expensive. Some are very odd.



Our first experience of the beery delights of Croatia isn't uplifting; Karlovacko is presented, and we guess the name must translate to 'bland, tasteless waste product', but, disappointingly, it derives from Karlovac, where it's brewed. However, after entering the old city, we shortly discover that Karlovacko is actually quite good compared to another other local beer, Ožujsko, from a brewery owned by Anheuser Busch, in that it contains the vague suggestion of some sort of flavour among the bubbles. We also discover a price differential between drinking outside the old city, and drinking within, where 33cl of bog standard (and I really do mean bog standard) Eurofizz can set you back as much as 30 kunos, or the best part of four quid. The Croatians don't just brew p**s, they take it as well.



We explore the main street and a few of the many side alleys (the old city is 90% alleys). We decide to walk the walls until we find it costs a cool tenner to do so, and we return to the streets, and yet another round of the golden stuff – no, I don't mean urine, though there is a passing resemblance, as well as a hint as to its source. Some time later, we take the cable car to the viewpoint, and admire the sunset on the old city and surrounding coast; we like this. After returning to a more negotiable level we board a bus and head for the new harbour, which we think will afford numerous places to eat and drink. In particular, we're searching for a beer brewed in Zagreb, the 7.3% Tomislav, reputedly the best beer produced in Croatia, though we realise by now that this is not a significant accolade in a country where Heineken is considered an exotic tippie. However, unlike most harbours the world

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It's 4 o'clock on a sunny Saturday afternoon in Dubrovnik, and the three of us are sitting in a pavement café just outside the Pile Gate, the main entrance to the old city. Ten hours ago we left a cool, misty Birmingham Airport, having spent the previous day, or what we can remember of it, absorbing the cultural experience of Oxford via certain academic institutions which were recommended by the Good Beer Guide; by the end of the day, it wasn't just the spires which were dreaming. So, from the sublime to the ridiculous; we aim to compare the best of what English pubs can offer with the cream of Croatia.



The Pile Gate

Dubrovnik consists of a modern town and harbour bolted on to a well-preserved medieval city with walls, set in a wondrous tableau of islands and rocky coasts. Everything centres around the old city; all the tourists - and there are many, many tourists - pour off the cruise ships and head straight there in coaches or jolly boats. Just outside the Pile Gate it is mayhem, as twenty coaches at any one time attempt to park in an area designed for three. Beyond the old city and its immediate environs, all is quiet. Tourists rarely venture there, and, while there are a lot of people who live in Dubrovnik - around 43,000 of them - they appear to be self-effacing. The modern town doesn't bustle. There seems to be only 20 shops in the entire area, and a scattering of bistros and restaurants, yet the buses are always packed with locals, travelling to and from the old city. We suspect they're condemned, like the Ancient Mariner, to perpetually travel that route.

In a country dominated by tourism, the old city is Croatia's cashcow, and full advantage is taken of its pre-eminence in the tourist industry. Beautiful as it is (and it really is very beautiful), it's one gigantic pavement café. There are restaurants, bistros and bars down

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The Wren's Nest Newport

Many months have passed since the closure of the World's End in Holyrood Street, Newport, who had a rather patchy commitment to real ale, though, in fairness, they did try. However, it was never on the ale trail, but its successor, the Wren's Nest, might well be.

Opened last December by Christina and Colin Wren, it announces itself as a 'wine, cider, and real ale bar', and that's exactly what it is. Not a pub as we know it, Jim, but a pleasantly decorated wine bar serving three real ales from water-cooled casks behind the bar, as well as a handpumped cider. Gone is the chintzy, carpeted bar of before, and in its place are bare pine floorboards and a painted matchboard dado. I called shortly after it had opened, and the décor was pleasing, though had yet to acquire that delightful patina of use!



The house beer, **Old Speckled Wren**, is a rebadged **Yates Best**, and is joined by two regularly rotating guest beers and a guest cider on handpump. The keg side consists of a genuine German lager, as well as Heineken and Amstel, and there's a selection of wines. Food is traditional pub grub. On my visit, I sampled **Otter Ale**, which seemed in good condition in spite of the fact I've often found Otter doesn't travel too well beyond the frontiers of Devon.

It's pleasing to see our county town recovering from its years as a veritable beer desert, served only by gems like the Prince of Wales. Long may it continue!

Brian Jacobs



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The Prince of Wales

East Cowes

Since September 2012, this historic Isle of Wight pub has been in the hands of a consortium consisting of Paul White, Bill Horn, Gerry White and Chris Bland. Paul was keen to point out that strictly speaking they are leaseholders, however as the lease dates back to 1843, and still has another 630 years to run, they can be considered in all intent and purposes of the word "owners".



Paul White and Bill Horn

The Prince of Wales is certainly a free house, a fact reflected in the very reasonable prices.

Originally, the pub, The Prince of Wales Hotel, was part of the Osborne Estate and was run principally for the staff and guests of Osborne House. The coach house did actually house Queen Victoria's coach. A bricked up archway in the cellar would seem to support the story that a tunnel linked the pub with Osborne House.

In 1909, when the pub was owned by Mew Langton, a large fire destroyed much of the dining room and records still exist that record the event in some detail.

Currently there is much activity as the pub is being extensively refurbished inside and out.

Nine en-suite bedrooms are being constructed ready for the summer season with a further extension to the dining room and kitchen planned for next winter.

The consortium are keen that the pub continues to be traditional with an emphasis on good ale and good wholesome fresh food.

Opening hours are 10.30 til late every day with food available 11 - 3 (11- 4 weekends) these times will be extended during the summer. The Sunday Carvery is particularly popular as is the Sunday Meat Raffle.

There is live music once a week, usually on a Friday or Saturday night; occasionally on Sunday afternoon. Recent performers have included Last Orders and Gary DeCourcy.

The pub supports darts and pool teams and soon a petanque team.

There are three real ales; two regulars usually **Yates' Golden** and **Theakston's Black Bull** and a guest beer; frequently **Hancock's HB**.

It is good to see the enthusiasm that is being put in to this pub and we wish the new "owners" the best of luck.

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Last visit of the day was to Floreffé Abbey where we had a magnificent guided tour. It was founded in 1121 and in the former Mill Brewery we had a superb meal accompanied by Floreffé Beer brewed by Brouwerij Lefebvre.



Off again at 10.00hr for the first beer of the day at Val-Dieu Brewery at the thirteen century Cistercian Abbey de Val-Dieunear Aube. Again a tour of the beautiful abbey followed by a taste of the Val-Dieu beers. On again to Herkenrode Abbey a former monastery of Cistercian nuns for a walkabout and history of the site. We then walked to Mill Farm for a lunch followed by a beer tasting of the Herkenrode Triple and Bruin accompanied by the local cheese made with herbs.



Then off to Ter Dolen Castle Brewery for a taste of their range of beers.

The last visit of the day was to sample Keizersberg Beer at Brasserie Improvisio in central Leuven. This was a lovely courtyard bar which was formerly the house of the Augustinian Sisters of Leuven who in former times worked in the hospital. A modern version is next door.

We then travelled to the ancient capital of Flanders, Mechelen to our hotel where we stayed for the next two nights. Of course we tried out some café bars but we will keep that for next time.



Gary & Lorraine

Podge's Belgian Beer Tours - *Driving People to Drink Since 1994*



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Lorraine and Gary's Beer Pilgrimage to Belgium

(Part 1)

In September we joined one of Podge's Belgian Beer Tours which began with a trip through Eurotunnel to Calais. The first stop was at the ruined Cistercian Ten Duinen Abbey in Koksijde where we sampled the Saint Idesbald range of beers brewed by Huyghe.

St. Idesbald Bruin at 8% abv

Blond 6.2%abv

Dubbel 8%abv

Rousse 7%abv and Tripple 9%abv.



We left there to visit brewer Marc-Antoine at Brunchaut Brewery south of Tournai. The beers brewed here are the St Martin range and we tried the Dark and the Triple. In 1990 for its 100th anniversary the brewery was relocated to new premises allowing the brewmaster to keep the tradition using modern equipment.

Next was the Val de Sambre Brewery which has been brewing since 2000 within the stable of the Cistercian Abbey at Aulne. They brew six beers (did not sample all of them). A very enjoyable evening meal was had with a few beers.



We then travelled to Namur for our two night stay. A few bars were visited in the evening and it was interesting to experience the different pub culture. You don't buy your beer from the bar. Instead, the barman takes your order. All beers are served in a glass which matches the beer and very often with a small plate of cheese or crisps.



Off again at 10.00hr for a quick beer at Maredsous Abbey and what a magnificent abbey it was. The current Benedictine Community have been living here since the nineteenth century and are famous for their cheese and beer. The monks licence the use of the Abbey name to Brouwerij Duvel Moortgat the makers of Maredsous range of beers of which includes Blonde, Brune and Triple.

Lunch was the Abbaye de Bonne-Esperance near Binche. This Abbey, founded by Saint Norbert has been rebuilt several times. Brouwerij Lefebvre are the brewers of the beer available here.



Next came a visit to the Saint-Feuillien Brewery in Le Roeulx. We toured the old Brewery, built in 1873, where all the original equipment is still being used. This makes brewing hard and laborious. We then had a look at the new brewery where brewing will be much easier. The old brewery will stay as a working museum.



The Hole in the Wall

Stamford

Visiting my daughter and son-in-law in Stamford, Lincolnshire - as I do as often as they can put up with me! - I suggested this excellent little establishment tucked away in Cheyne Lane. It sells good real ales, and offered a superb ale at 4.5% - **Topping Ale**, from The Grainstore in Rutland. It claims to be the Largest Brewery in the smallest county - which I would not dispute!

As usual when I visit Stamford, we endeavour to sample some fine food, and The Hole didn't let us down, offering good, speedy service and very tasty dishes. We will be back again!

...And **Harry's Bar, Shanklin** - again!

I've written about Harry's Bar before, but whilst I mentioned the first class ales served there, I omitted to mention another item - the best cheese and onion rolls in the western world. (Well, I might have exaggerated a little, as I've been told about a million times...)



Ron Bird

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Just before Christmas, Heather and I went to visit our son Russell and family and, unbeknown to me, a surprise visit to Hook Norton Brewery had been arranged for my birthday. We, (Russ and I) set of on Saturday morning, 8th December.

It wasn't bad weather, so he left the top down on his convertible, but, despite electric seat heating, I was frozen by the time we got to Hook Norton village. It is a lovely Cotswold village with four pubs and the brewery. At the beginning of Brewery Lane is the Pear Inn which had just opened at 12 noon and a log fire was being lit. It is also the Brewery Tap and sold five Hook Norton beers. We had lunch and got a bit smoked by the fire,



The Pear Inn

but warmed up before the brewery visit at 1.30 pm. The visit lasted 1.5 hrs round the brewery, followed by the hospitality suite and it was all very interesting.

The brewery was started in 1849 in the farmhouse kitchen but, in 1874, they bought the first pub which was The Pear Inn. The farmers wife said " I'm not having all this brewing in my kitchen any more" and so the brewery was born and is now a very imposing building. They brew 30,000 gallons a week maximum, much of the brewery being steam driven and the Grist Mill is impressive. Their beer has less calories per pint than a jacket potato and, as beer is 95% water and the government says water is good for you, beer should be classed as a health drink and therefore TAX FREE! and



The Grist Mill

so say all of us.

We retired to the hospitality suite and tasted most of their nine beers. Old Hooky 4.6%, Hooky 3.5%, Double Stout 4.8%, Hooky Mild 2.8%, Hooky Gold 4.1%, Cotswold Lion 4.0%, Flagship 5.3%, Haymaker 5% and Twelve Days 5.5%. Of the ones I tasted, Old Hooky and Twelve Days got my vote.



The Steam Engine

Locally their beer is delivered by Shire Horse pulled drays. A light hearted quiz was then conducted by Richard Hughes the Visitor Centre Manager, as three groups had been going round. The losing group's guide did not get paid. Ha ha!! It was brilliant and every one received a Beer Champion lapel pin. Thankfully we drove back with the top up!!

The brewery is well worth a visit and their beers are now available on the Island via Island Ales.

Pete Cobb



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