

HEREFORD HOPVINE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE BRANCH OF CAMRA

Issue No 87

Summer/Autumn 2025

Free



PERRY FEST HITS HEREFORD



DOUBLE GLOUCESTER



SUMMER PUB OF THE SEASON



HAPPY BIRTHDAY WYE VALLEY



PUBS REOPEN AFTER 30 YEARS

PUB CAMPAIGNS:

PENCOMBE & COLWALL

LAMB INN TO REOPEN

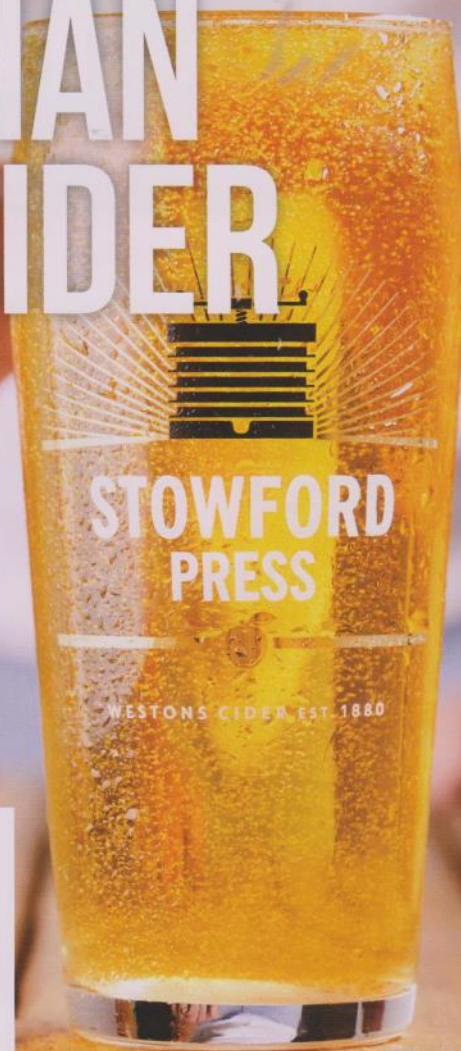
HAY-ON-WYE WALK

ALL THE LOCAL PUB & BREWERY NEWS



HEREFORDSHIRE

MORE THAN JUST A CIDER



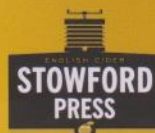
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- ✓ FROM THE WESTONS FAMILY
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WESTONS CIDER EST. 1880



As you open the pages of this autumn edition of the *Hopvine*, you might be wondering to yourself how you managed to miss the summer edition. Well, you didn't, because there wasn't one! This wasn't because we couldn't be bothered or went off on a world cruise... it's been a funny old summer. Let me expand.

The *Hopvine* editorial team consists of myself plus one other. Back in June - as we were reading ourselves for a last push to get the magazine knocked into shape - that 'one other' had a most unfortunate altercation with a rather feisty (and very naughty) pony that gifted him a broken hip - so it was off to Hereford Hospital he went. Then, once that was sorted, it was my turn to leave myself at the tender mercies of the NHS, as I went under the knife and waved goodbye to my gall bladder. It's been quite a summer, and for all the wrong reasons.

However, as you can see from this edition, we've kicked away the bathchairs and things are now very much back up and running. In this summer-cum-autumn hybrid *Hopvine* you will find news of the reopening of some long-closed pubs across the county: two pubs in and around Ross have returned to the fold following amazing refurbishments; we've welcomed back the Live & Let Live at Bringsty Common and, with more still to come, is the imminent re-opening of the Lamb Inn at Stoke Prior. Between them, these four pubs have been closed for a combined period of over thirty years. This gives hope to those communities currently contesting planning applications in Little Hereford, Pencombe and (as this edition went to print) Colwall. They can all see that there is life for a pub after a planning battle. The message to them has to be: never give up!

On the subject of not giving up, occasionally we happen across perplexing comments in the press from individuals who criticise CAMRA for supporting various communities' efforts to save their local pub. These strange folk shout: "Can never be viable!" or "No-one uses it anymore!" It's unclear quite what their motivation is: perhaps they're wannabe asset-strippers who see CAMRA as 'those meddling kids' who might get in the way of a lucrative plan they have in mind for another vulnerable pub elsewhere, or maybe they're no more than old-fashioned 'useful idiots' whose views reflect how little they understand about the machinations of the pub trade. Thankfully, their throwaway comments make no impact on the planning process as - rather unfash-

ionably - that process still relies on good, old-fashioned hard evidence. Thank heavens these doom-mongers weren't about in the summer of 1940 or we might all be speaking German!

The month of September saw Wye Valley Brewery mark its fortieth birthday. It's remarkable to have witnessed first-hand how this operation has gone from a one-man show at the rear of the Barrels in Hereford to the impressive operation it is today. Today Wye Valley Brewery employ 78 staff on their newly-extended 29 acre brewery site out at Stoke Lacy. And in growing, they haven't sacrificed quality, with over 80% of what goes out of the brewery gates still being bone fide real beer. What a stark contrast to how things were when I first moved to Hereford back in the late 1980s; with a choice of either Whitbread, Whitbread or Whitbread, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say the county (and particularly the city) was a beer wilderness due to this monopoly of the bland. It's important to not lose sight of the fact that Wye Valley have been at the vanguard of driving change for the better. Perhaps you might think about that the next time you're enjoying a pint down the pub. We need to be thankful that today in Herefordshire we have so many good pubs and great beers to enjoy; please never let us take them for granted. They all deserve our support.

As you read this, physical works at Hereford Rowing Club will already have got underway in earnest ahead of next year's nineteenth annual *Beer on the Wye* festival, which will be returning to its riverside home over the weekend of the 10 -12th July 2026. However, before then we have 'Perry Fest' to look forward to on Saturday 4th October. Due to be held at Hereford's Museum of Cider, this one-day jamboree will feature a well-stocked perry and apple perry (aka cider) bar; hot food; guest speakers, and live music. Of course, Herefordshire CAMRA volunteers will be doing their bit by staffing the bar. With admission being free, there's even less reason not to be there. However, if you can't make your way



along to Perry Fest, then you'll be pleased to know there are other beer and cider events and festivals listed in this *Hopvine*. So, there are reasons to be cheerful after all!

Mark Haslam

LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

GOLDEN WAKE

With brewer, Paul Kenyon, taking the lease of the nearby Saracens Head, Golden Wake has, in effect, obtained its first tied house. On the opening day of the new venture a new 4.5% ABV premium blonde ale called Brewer's Choice was on offer. This is expected normally to be accompanied by the well-established 4.0% Grog and two guest beers from nearby breweries.



LEDBURY REAL ALES

To further the brewery's existing sustainability credentials, they have planted one and a half acres of meadow with a traditional style Herefordian orchard, including apples, pears and plums to enhance the biodiversity and ecology of the land.

It is the hop picking season and it has been (is) another tough year for the hop farmers. The long and hot periods have stunted the growth of the hops and so quality is OK but yield is very poor. The impact of the hot weather will be felt in next year's harvest as well as the plants when put under stress generally also struggle the following year as they try to recover. The growers are very miserable!

Two green hop brews have been completed using Cobbs Golding from Martin Powell-Tuck and a brand-new hop with just a plot number which is K-9 grown by Simon Parker. Brews with Olicana from Simon Parker and with Harlequin from Jimmy Barrett were to follow.

LUCKY 7

New brewing kit has been installed, which doubles the capacity of the brewery to ten gallons, with the aim of increasing cask production. Golden Ale in casks was supplied to the Hay Festival in late May.

MOTLEY HOG

As the Taphouse in Ross-on-Wye remains closed following flood damage, Motley Hog are brewing on the newly-installed kit at the Crown and Sceptre in the centre of town. However,

output is less than it was previously when brewed at Brampton Abbots, so a greater selection of guest beers appears on the bar at the Crown & Sceptre.

WEOBLEY

Have started to offer a range of canned beers - Recently cans of new Weobley beers were spotted in Hay Wines, Ledbury including 22 Lager, Among the Willows pale ale, and 1807 IPA. Several other new beers feature on their website, and they may be available in pubs in future. Hay Wines have a wide selection of local beers and ciders in bottles and cans and are keen supporters of the local breweries and cider makers.

More recently, the home of Weobley Brewing Co - Joules Restaurant - came on the market and the brewery has moved to Great Parton Farm, Eardisley, which is also the home of Or-gasmic Cider.

WOBBLY

A new canning line, being installed at Rother was reported as nearing completion when the *Hopvine* went to print

Refurbishment of the Brewery Taphouse was progressing slowly. This will consist of a 'Wobbly Lofthouse', a room on the second floor offering capacity up to 150 people, serving food from the refurbished kitchen, a viewing window, TV, and bar. At present the Taproom is open every day Mon to Thurs 4-11 pm, and Fri to Sun 12-11 pm.

Their Secret Garden pub, now in its second year as Wobbly's flagship pub, is selling three of their cask ales plus locally-sourced food.

A new Wobbly beer was brewed in May, but the 4.0% ABV fruity session summer ale did not meet with much approval and has been discontinued. More recently, early reaction to an unfiltered lager at 5.0% has been more favourable.

WYE VALLEY

Back in March, Wye Valley Bitter, was re-branded, lowering the strength from 3.7% to 3.4% ABV in April and changing the name to Pyoneer. This was a well-kept secret until new pump clips appeared on bars, for a while

eluding even the *Hopvine* editorial team. The new name is inspired by the original location of the brewery at Canon Pyon, established 40 years ago.

The rationale behind the change was to provide a more even spread across the ABV range, where Bitter was in competition with HPA and Hopfather. It also enabled Bitter to temporarily resist the upward pressure on selling price driven by ingredient and energy costs.

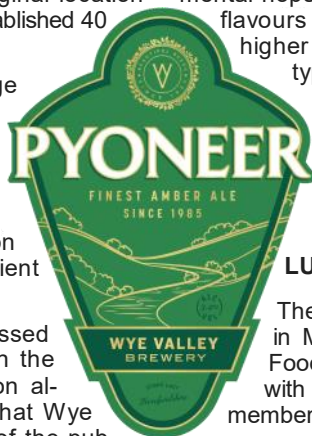
The widespread alarm expressed when the Barrels was placed on the market back in March, was soon allayed when it was announced that Wye Valley had bought the freehold of the pub they had operated for so many years. A celebration of the company's fortieth anniversary is on page 16.

HOP SHED

The latest seasonal beer was Tetra, a four hop, four percent blonde ale. The combina-

tion of Mystic, Harlequin, and two experimental hops produce an array of tropical fruit flavours over a lighter body and slightly higher carbonation than Hop Shed's typical style. This almost sold out to pubs before deliveries commenced.

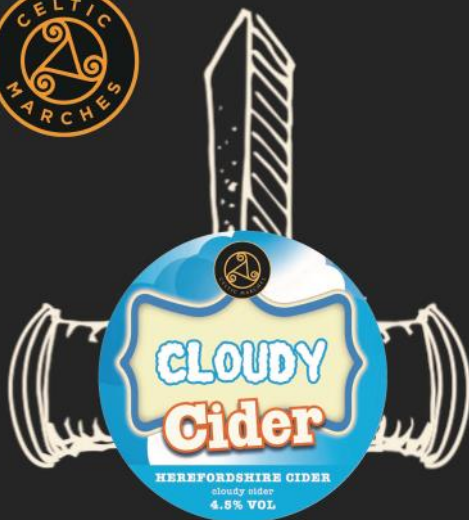
The newest team member, Tommy, started in August as an apprentice brewer



LUDLOW

The brewery organised a beer festival in May as part of the overall Ludlow Food Festival weekend at the castle, with several Herefordshire CAMRA members volunteering.

During the summer, the brewery has marked the fifth anniversary of *Derailed*, the pilot brewery project producing limited runs of experimental beers using a compact 2.5-barrel system. This has enabled rapid development of innovative beer styles, which are normally available in the taproom, in keg, cask and cans.



Cloudy Cider
4.5%

30 ltr kegs and 20 ltr boxes

Blended from a variety of traditional cider apples, all grown on our family's Herefordshire farm, our Cloudy cider is gentle on the palate with a delicate haze. This delicious drop has a good depth of flavour with a crisp, slightly sweet apple finish.

Available from LWC Hereford

LOCAL PUB NEWS

At Goodrich, the **Hostelrie**, resumed operations in April following refurbishment. It opens Wednesday to Sunday from noon until 'close', serving food for lunch and dinner on Wednesday and Thursday plus all day on Friday and Saturday. Sunday lunch runs from noon until 'close'. Cask ales are Wye Valley Pyoneer and Butty Bach.

In **Ross-on-Wye**, work started during the summer on the roof at the **Tap House**, but subsequently seems to have stalled.

The **Riverside Inn** at Ross and the **Crown Inn**, at Lea re-opened after extensive and lengthy rebuilding, fully described on pages 18/19.

The **Penny Farthing**, Aston Crews closed on 16th May. The premises are up for sale at £450,000 with *Sidney Phillips*. It is a beautifully-located pub with great views from the garden.

The **Yew Tree**, **Peterstow** was voted Herefordshire CAMRA's *Cider Pub of the Year* as reported on page 10.

There has been much frustration and concern expressed by the lack of progress towards seeing the **Broadleys** on Hereford's Ross Road re-open. Sold earlier in the year to a new owner, it has remained closed and there has been no sign of activity. Previously, it was the subject of two planning applications by the Co-op to first convert it into a convenience store and latterly to demolish the community pub. As one of only two pubs serving a population of 17,600 south of the river in Hereford, and with set to become the seventh such store within a one-mile radius, it came as little surprise when the Co-op's shameful plans crashed and burned.

However, the message received from a reliable source is "don't panic!" as it is understood that the legal niceties of transferring the pub's land title is taking a while as the previous owner's company was registered in the Channel Islands. [*didn't ever see any Jersey beers in there* - Ed]. It is hoped that we might finally see some progress over the coming months.

The erstwhile **Bowling Green**, hidden away in the centre of the city just inside the old city wall, has reopened as a pub, having been trading for several years as a wine bar under the name **Lupo**. This change of direction has been marked by another change of name to **Behind**

the **Wall**, based on the literal meaning of its street name, Bewell Street.

Run by Pippa (previously manager at the Barrels) & Matt Preece, it is open from noon to 10pm daily, and sells Ludlow Best and Gold, plus a guest - initially Ludlow Red Dawn, but subsequently likely to be from any brewery. Ludlow Best has been particularly welcomed by some customers as it is gluten-free. **[NB the printed edition incorrectly referred to Gold as being Gluten-Free]**

Also in the centre of Hereford, the **Spread Eagle** reopened in early May with a new tenant in the shape of Dean Tortalino, previously of the Plough Inn on Whitecross Road. Currently the beer offer is one from Salopian, plus Brew York Milk Stout.

Right by the old bridge over the River Wye in the centre of the city stands the **Saracen's Head**. Having closed last year, it has been taken over by Paul Kenyon of Golden Wake Brewery, and rebranded as an ale and cider house. Reopened on September 18th, it is now offering two regular Golden Wake beers - Brewer's Choice and Grog - plus two guest beers from local breweries. These are accompanied by Herefordshire ciders, which on opening day were from Olivers, Orgasmic, Gwatkins, and Westons.

Until recently operating a pub with the same name in St Johns, Worcester, Mark & Debbie Daniels took over the **Brewery Inn**, Ledbury at the beginning of January this year. Tucked away on Bye Street, just off the main road in the town centre, the Brewery is a 16th-century oak beamed inn of considerable character with open fires; a snug, and a large garden to the rear. There is also a games room upstairs with a pool table, dartboard and TV, together with a well-stocked book swap area.

A weekly cask ale deal on Tuesdays sees three ales from the Marston portfolio on at £2.80 a pint, with Banks's Amber only £3 Monday to Thursday. Fresh cobs are available made daily. Mark & Debs encourage customers to also bring in take-aways or get them delivered to the Brewery Inn.

A visit to the town's **Talbot Hotel** found Folly Road *Crowd Surfer* on the bar. This is a 4.5% pale cask ale from Wadworth, brewed at their new brewhouse on Folly Road at the north of Devezes, the replacement for the company's grand Northgate tower brewery which has dominated that town centre since 1885.

Just up from the Talbot, planning permission has

been granted to change the use of No. 10 New Street, from a shop to a taproom. The application was in the name of Mr D Cartwright, who is associated with *The Pig Iron Brewery Co.* so presumably is similar to their Weavers ale houses in Malvern and Kidderminster.

On the other hand, a revised planning application to convert the closed **Royal Hall** (the old

Masonic Hall) to housing has been refused.

The **Full Pitcher** on the edge of the town has been closed since late 2024, despite the adjacent area seeing dramatic growth of new housing in recent times - which might have been expected to improve the prospects of reopening.

Landlord Rob Spiers has moved from Warwickshire to take over the Wye Valley-owned **Rose & Lion** in Bromyard, reopening on August 7th. Pop-up meals from Alfie's Kitchen are now available on Friday evenings towards the end of each month. Wye Valley's monthly beers are being introduced.

Both the **Kings Arms** and the **Queens Arms** in Bromyard sadly closed in September. The former is reported to have structural issues, whilst the latter is reported to have been sold to a pub operator and may be expected to reopen "soon".

A planning application is due to be determined in October that would see the upper floors of the town's near-derelict **Hop Pole Hotel** converted to flats whilst the ground floor would continue in commercial use.

Just north of the town, the **Royal Oak** on Bromyard Downs was bought at auction last October for £319,000 after the previous owners found alternative employment during the pandemic. Now a metal container has been installed in the garden and is operating as an open-air café offering pizzas; ice-cream, sandwiches and cakes.

Further north, the **Temeside** Inn in Little Hereford remains closed (page 26) but, just a short hop up the road, there's good news to report from Brimfield, where the village's **Roebuck Inn** has finally been sold to an independent pub operator. The closed Roebuck had been on the market for a number of years, and at a (very) reasonable asking price too. It was perplexing as to why the well-appointed pub has taken so long to find a new owner, particularly with it having a previously successful trading history and its proximity to the A49 trunk road. Locals and visitors can now look forward to better times ahead.

The **Lamb Inn**, at Stoke Prior is expected to open before the end of October as reported on page 25.

The **Castle Inn**, Wigmore, reopened on August 1st, to the relief of most of the village, after only a fairly short closure following the departure of the previous tenants. The village's other hostelry, the **Oak at Wigmore**, is an excellent gastro-

MALVERN HILLS UNDER SIEGE

Road closures seem to be popping up all over the place these days, as councils (at last!) seem hell bent on sorting out the generally unsatisfactory state of our public roads. However, in the case of the **Malvern Hills Hotel** at British Camp, they have got a shut road on their hands that is going to cripple their business, according to proprietor, Matthew Cooke.

Worcestershire Council have closed the main A449 Malvern-Ledbury road between Malvern and the Malvern Hills Hotel. The closure isn't for seven days; it's not even for seven weeks, but is planned to take place over seven MONTHS between the 8th September and the 24th March. That's an awfully long time to deny normal vehicular access to a business that relies so heavily on a car-borne clientele. And, suffice it to say, it's unlikely anyone at the council is going to be offering financial compensation.

Fortunately, it's not all doom and gloom, one can still get to the Malvern Hills hotel from Ledbury, Colwall and via West Malvern (the A449 is still very much open on the Herefordshire side) which means you can enjoy a walk on the hills then retire to the bar and enjoy a meal along with a choice of five beers (including those from Ledbury, Butcombe and Wye Valley breweries) in the well-appointed Good Beer Guide-listed hotel bar. Despite the heinous roadblock, Matthew is determined that it will be business as normal.



pub with an outstanding food offering, but has only limited opening times and is not the traditional pub that locals need for a working village like Wigmore. The new landlord at the Castle, Andrew Adams, has significant experience as a licensee, relatively locally in Leominster, and is owner of a business supplying pub games and equipment.

There was a brief refurbishment to enable more screens in the public bar to enhance the opportunities of watching sports TV. The pool table and darts board remain, and the pub is now continuing its role as host for the local pool and darts teams. Initially, food is not being offered regularly on the premises, but the car park has hosted various food vans for special evenings (pizza, Thai, etc.). Two cask ales are now on the bar, generally Wye Valley Butty Bach and Ludlow Gold. Lunchtime and evening meals are in the long-term plans.

When the **Bateman Arms** in Shobdon closed in January this year we were fearful that it could be permanent. It was very good news then that a local family, brother and sister Simon Jones and Vanessa Lewis, had acquired the pub (with rooms) and were planning a reopening in the summer, after some refurbishment. This duly happened on 11th July. The upper (lounge) bar has been set out with comfortable chairs and a pleasant contemporary low-key feel, whilst the lower bar still retains a public bar feel, with tables for dining, but offering darts and pool.

Opening hours are Wednesday to Sunday, with food midday and evenings. Two cask ales, Wye Valley Butty Bach and HPA are offered, with plans for a third (probably Ludlow Gold) if the

trade supports it. A chef has been hired and the plan is 16 covers. The menu looks interesting with mainly locally-sourced food. The six ensuite bedrooms in the stable block in the courtyard have also been refreshed.

The **Python's Arms**, Penrhos Court, near Ly-onshall has closed. The management team have cited trading difficulties in with increasing overheads, which also affected the cafe and holiday accommodation at the location. The pub was named in a nod to the late Terry Jones, one of the stars of the Monty Python team who once co-owned a brewery on the premises.

Meanwhile, the conversion of the building to the Python's has attracted a pub design award from CAMRA (see box opposite).

The **Bridge Inn**, delightfully situated across a stream at Michaelchurch Escley, reopened in late July under new ownership. Mark Bentham and Laura Lane have transferred, together with their chefs, from the Python Arms (q.v.). The Bridge now opens daily, except Mondays and Tuesdays, offering lunch and evening meals, with interesting but reasonably-priced menus. Beers are Wye Valley HPA and Butty Bach on handpump with the keg version of Hopfather. Hawkstone lager and local bottled cider are available.

The **Radnor Arms Hotel**, New Radnor, which had been closed since 2016, has re-opened. This is thanks to the efforts of the *Radnor Arms Hotel Limited Community Benefit Society* which purchased the semi-derelict pub from the interim owner in 2022 to restore and reopen the pub in April. Hobson's beers are served.

HOPVINE PUZZLES

HOPVINE QUIZ - Summer 2025

Test your knowledge of beer, breweries and pubs with our quiz.

1. Which brewery produces beers named Anthem, Tribute and Proper Job?
2. In which town is Timothy Taylor brewery sited?
3. Maris Otter is a popular hop used in brewing. Why is it so called?
4. Isinglass, derived from fish swim bladders, is used in brewing. Why?
5. There are two breweries in the North Yorkshire town of Tadcaster. Name both.
6. Which of these is not a US hop variety? Is it a. Columbus, b. Conclave, c. Centennial?
7. In which Herefordshire village is a pub named the Temple Bar?
8. What are the two pubs in the Herefordshire village of Eardisland?
9. Wye Valley Bitter has been re-branded as Pyoneer? Where does the name come from?
10. What was CAMRA's original name?

Answers on page 23

PYTHON WINS DESIGN AWARD...THEN CLOSES

The Pythons Arms at Lyonshall has been voted joint winner in the *Conversion to Pub Use* category of CAMRA's pub design awards. The building at Penrhos Court, which once housed the Penrhos brewery owned by Terry Jones of Monty Python fame.

Judges described this conversion of a 13th century rural farm as a thorough renovation of this characterful building. They praised the rustic décor, noting design touches such as the lobby doorhandle shaped in the form of a gryphon.

The award was shared with the Borough Beer House, at Farnham in Surrey.

Owners Mark Bentham and Laura Lane travelled to Lichfield, where the awards were presented at the premises of the New Build category winner. A café-bar named bod [*yes - all lower case - Ed*], serving a large housing development, this is one of a chain operated by Titanic Brewery.

Tragically, the Pythons Arms has been forced to close due to escalating costs and the owners have taken over the Bridge at Michaelchurch Escley (q.v.).

NEWS FROM THE NORTH WEST FRONTIER

On Good Friday a small group of us decided to explore the pubs of the Radnor Valley just west of Kington. Starting in Kington the 11.10 no 461 bus took us the short distance over the Welsh border to alight at the Gore Quarry near Stanner Rock. Tarmac have excavated most of the top of what was Old Radnor Hill, but have recently provided a new footpath around the perimeter to replace those rights of way that had been lost. As it was a Bank Holiday, all was quiet as we made our way through the quarry entrance, though there are well-defined walkways in case you come on a working day. We chose the southern route which starts and finishes along quiet lanes, but has great views over Hergest Ridge and the Black Mountains, arriving at the **Harp Inn** just after its 12 noon opening time. Two ales from Wye Valley were on the bar and I found the Hopfather to be in excellent condition. On leaving, one of our group asked if I thought this was the perfect pub and I must say it is hard to find fault with its characterful historic interior and superb views over Radnor Forest from the outside seating area at the front.

A half-mile walk down the hill took us to Walton to catch the 13.17 Llandrindod Wells bus to the remote **Fforest Inn**. After a warm welcome from Nicky and Colin, a decent pint and a hearty lunch, we had to leave and cross the road to catch the 14.25 return bus. I asked the driver to drop us off at Haines Mill so as not to arrive in New Radnor before the pub opened. We then had a pleasant walk of about a mile to arrive just after 3pm for the official opening day of the **Radnor Arms**. The pub has been closed for nine years and has been brought back to life having been bought and refurbished by the local community. Four Hobson's ales were a welcome sight, and it was good to see the award-winning mild.



The new bar at the Radnor Arms

On leaving, we mistakenly jumped on the 16.29 Llandrindod bus but soon realized our error when the 16.30 Hereford bus turned up! We were soon back in Kington, where we had several more pubs to choose from to round off this excellent day out. Currently this trip can only be done on a Friday or Saturday due to the opening hours of the Radnor Arms.

It is with much sadness that we have to report that The Python's Arms at Penrhos closed on the 1st of June. Mark and Laura bought the site in 2016 and opened the Python's Arms a couple of years ago. It was named in memory of Terry Jones of Monty Python fame who set up a brewery there in the late 70s.

Geoff Cooper

YEW TREE ON TOP AGAIN

The Yew Tree at Peterstow wins Cider pub of the Year

Herefordshire CAMRA's *Cider Pub of the Year 2025* was, the Yew Tree at Peterstow, the home of Ross-on-Wye Cider Company. Clearly, this is a pub for cider enthusiasts, with two unpasteurised ciders plus draught and bottled. But beer-drinkers are not ignored, with two handpumps offering Hobsons Best plus guest beers from far and wide. There is a separate shop to the rear offering a wide range of bottled ciders and perries. The shop doubles as a meeting room for a monthly *Cider Club* meeting, typically held on the last Saturday of the month, offering talks and tastings and the opportunity to meet both cider makers and enthusiasts as well as chat with those who share your passion.

Following CAMRA's restructuring of the regions, Herefordshire now competes with pubs of the West Central Regional Cider Pub of the Year competition concluded with the Yew Tree Inn in Peterstow being awarded *Runner Up*.



Albert Johnson, Ruby Byrne, Martin Johnson, of Ross Cider with CAMRA's Russell Sutcliffe

TOP OF THE PECKING ORDER

Wye Valley pub named CAMRA Regional Pub of the Year.

The Pelican Inn in Gloucester is not your bog standard city pub. Run by Micheal Hall (whose licensed alma mater includes Ross's Crown & Sceptre and Riverside Inns; the Bell Inn at Leominster, and even the Barrels in Hereford), this Wye Valley house has just been named Pub of the Year for CAMRA's newly-formed West Central Region. This means it's top of the pecking order for all of the thousand or so pubs across Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Oxfordshire. Furthermore, it now goes into the hat with fifteen other pubs to be judged in the National Pub of the Year competition. Greeting any visitor to the Pelican is an impressive array of ten handpumps on the bar, that not only champion the Wye Valley range, but also feature guest beers from across



L-R Jemma Rice; Peter Bennets; Mike Hall; Brett Laniosh and Joseph Stanley

the UK. Added to this, is a range of typically 12-16 locally-made real ciders and perries, plus many an interesting foreign brew. However, what the Pelican doesn't do are the fake keg lagers pushed so hard by the large and greedy brewing conglomerates - you're going to be bitterly disappointed at the Pelican if your drink of choice is an ersatz Spanish or Italian lager. The philosophy of the Pelican is to sell local rather than multi-national; provide flavour and choice rather than marketing bullshine, and offer value for money above over-priced hype. Unsurprisingly, the pub is one of the busiest and most successful in the city. It manages to attract a broad spectrum of clientele and also has a real community buzz to the place - often rare things for city venue these days. It's a definitely big 'well done' to Mike and his team of enthusiastic and friendly staff.

SUN SHINES IN LEINTWARDINE

Sun Inn chosen as Herefordshire CAMRA's Summer Pub of the Season



Malcolm Rochefort (right) presents to Sally Cook at the Sun

The Sun is a remarkable pub with a remarkable history: as one of Britain's last 'parlour' pubs, it survived following a successful CAMRA-led "Save the Sun" campaign back in 2009. At the front we have the two rooms where ex-landlady of 74 years, Flossie, as I recall from the 1990s, used to serve you as she disappeared into the old pantry/kitchen to fill your glass directly from a cask. Later on, as she became less mobile, she would sit in the parlour whilst volunteers (local and from far away) or even the customer did the serving. A blue plaque on the pub's facade today commemorates her stewardship.

Sally Cook has done a great job for the last 11 years – I'm sure she doesn't wish to completely emulate Flossie, except for the longevity part, but it's a good start. Luckily with the well-designed (and insulated!) rear extension, we've got a room with pumps and a decent bar, and a space enabling all sorts of events year-round – often music based, and a decent sized crowd to keep the business viable. This room overlooks the superb garden area, which doubles as venue for the beer festival held every August Bank Holiday weekend, with the extension and front rooms an adequate rain shelter. Sunny days in summer attract crowds to the banks of the river, and the Sun is an ideal place to relax and enjoy the less stressful aspects of life on a hot (or rainy!) day. Time it right and you can enjoy fish and chips from one of the country's best chippies in the garden, or the fresh rolls and pies always available – great after a local walk in the superb walking country we have in North Herefordshire.

Always hospitable and friendly, Sally and the staff make the pub a very fitting Summer pub of the Season and, on behalf of CAMRA, I'm delighted to be able to make this presentation to her and the team.

Sun Inn, Rosemary Lane, Leintwardine, SY7 0LP. Telephone (01547) 540705 Opening times: Monday 4-9pm; Tue-Thu 11am-9pm; Fri 11am-10pm; Sat/Sun 11am-9pm Facebook: thesuninnleintwardine



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Russell Sutcliffe presents to Susan Vaughan of Celtic Marches the bronze award for Abrahalls 6.0% Medium Cider, judged at *Beer on the Wye* in July 2024

us to “bad” products by declaring low prices are the consumers’ real goal. This is particularly noticeable for cider where the wholesalers and supermarkets provide drinks typically produced with the minimum level of apple juice content (i.e. 35%). So the ingredients of some, effectively describe ‘cider’ as apple flavoured sugary water.

Celtic Marches, like many cidemakers in the region, harvest their own apples, ferment their cider seasonally from full apple juice which produces drinks with a high juice content. It is a more time consuming approach, but leads to a “good” drink.

Each cidemaker has a range of ciders based on their own taste and style, but also on the duty regime and marketplace fashions. This means there is a choice for different palates and matching with food. The opportunity for discovery is vast.

A VIEW FROM THE ORCHARD

A certificate presentation was a lovely opportunity to visit the Cidery of Celtic Marches and see their own orchards which produce the apples for them to make real Herefordshire cider that allows them to register for PGI -Protected Geographic Indication. They described the challenges of getting their ciders into Herefordshire pubs with a passion and frustration of an enterprise which wants to market a range of high quality drinks.

Gresham's Law, a core concept in economics, states that "bad money drives out good money". This means that, if two forms of money with the same face value but different real values, the less valuable one reigns in the market. Historically this suggested that when people have a choice between using "good" money (e.g., coins with high metal content) and "bad" money (e.g., coins with low metal content), they will tend to use the "bad" money for everyday transactions and hoard or spend the "good" money on items of value.

Nowadays the marketplace has driven



...and to Darren Morris of Celtic Marches on behalf of another CAMRA branch

Given the marketplace is flooded with sugary sweet ciders, try finding a medium cider. If you already enjoy medium ciders, try investigating dry ciders. Visit a cidery on an open day where a producer can describe what you are tasting.

There will be no *AppleFest* this Autumn, but Perry Day will be held at The Museum of Cider on Saturday 4th October which is a great opportunity for a tutored introduction to perries. The traditional Harvestime celebration follows later in October.

Waes Hael

Russell Sutcliffe



James Forbes of Little Pomona was presented with a silver award from the *CAMRA West Midlands Cider Competition 2024*, as judged at *Beer on the Wye*. The successful cider was Wild Kindness at 7.5% ABV. James was photographed on 24th June at the Little Pomona Cidery in Avenbury.

INTRODUCING HEREFORD'S NEW MUSEUM OF PERRY!

Readers will be familiar with Hereford's Museum of Cider, but did you know – for one day only – it's set to become Hereford's Museum of Perry for the purpose of PERRY FEST 2025?

Many of you may have previously enjoyed the pleasures of the excellent *AppleFest*, which up until this year had been successfully staged in Hereford's High Town. With a CAMRA-run bar selling all manner of ciders and perries; plus food, and live music on an impressive festival stage, there's no denying it was a big hit with the public. It was always going to be a big 'miss' for 2025, but that was before it's offspring – *Perry Fest* – was born.

Due to be held at the city's Museum of Cider (which is being renamed the Museum of Perry for the day) on Saturday 4th October, *Perry Fest* promises to fill the gap. Again, CAMRA volunteers will be staffing a festival bar, which will offer a wonderfully fruitastic range of perries and ciders (the latter being re-branded as pear ciders for the day). Further, there will be food; non-alcoholic drinks, as well as family entertainment and live music. And the best part of all – entry is completely FREE! Why not come along and try the many varieties of perry and cider? Organised by the Museum of Perry (nee Cider) and the Three Counties Cider Producers, with help from a few others (including Herefordshire CAMRA) it will also be an opportunity to learn something (via a number of guest speakers) about the history and myth surrounding this underrated drink, for which the county of Herefordshire is world famous. What's more, there'll be tutored tasting sessions if you really fancy pushing the fruit-flavoured boat out! Otherwise, it's just a chance for one last chill-out session before the dark and wet days are upon us.

Perry Fest runs from 11am to 6pm at the Museum of Cider, Pomona Place, Hereford HR4 0EF on Saturday 4th October.



Gill Constance 1943 - 2025

Gill Constance, landlady of the Black Swan at Much Dewchurch sadly passed away at the age of 82 on the 10th September 2025. Gill and Arwel took on the Black Swan 17th May 1994, 31 years ago! The Black Swan is one of the county's oldest pubs and has a warm and cosy atmosphere with a lot of original old world charm, complete with a flagstone floor, a priest hole and an area still set aside for a pool table, not to mention great local beers and ciders. The Black Swan has been awarded Herefordshire CAMRA *Cider Pub of the Year* in 2019 and *Pub of the Year* in 2021 (having been runner-up twice in previous years). Gill sadly lost Arwel in 2015 but continued to run the Black Swan as she loved to host people. Her smile and warm welcome will be remembered by many who have visited the pub. Unlike a lot of pubs which tend not open at the beginning of the week, the Black Swan was open every day, with Gill remarking "Why have a pub and not open it?" Indeed! Gill will be missed but also very fondly remembered. A fabulous, generous host and a great landlady!



Gill receiving the certificate for *Runner-up Pub of the Year* from CAMRA's Andrew Pearson in 2016

WHAT I MISSED ABOUT THE PUB

Due to unforeseen circumstances I was unable to visit a pub for almost two years

Many people go to the pub for a quiet drink after work, to sample the new real ale or to let loose and have a night out. I missed all of these things too, however, the thing I missed the most about not being able to visit a pub in that time was the social aspect. I missed all of my best friends, of course, but I also missed all the people I only know from the pub environment. I have been going to my local, Beer in Hand, since it opened and over those years I have found many people I would call close friends. Once back in the pub after the time away I could not wait to find out what they had been up to and how their lives have changed. I really did appreciate this social aspect of being able to attend my local once again, the good beer was an added bonus.

I have recently started a new career. Once I had settled in and got to know my colleagues, I was invited to the pub for after work drinks, I feel pubs are amazing in this respect as they are relaxing places, where you can really be yourself, and due to this I feel I know my colleagues now on a more personal level and this has made working together as a team so much easier. I look forward to going to work, and getting to go to the pub with my colleagues is now that added bonus that can bond us more.

I have been a member of CAMRA for a number of years now and I also missed the meetings. Again another social side to the pub environment. I missed catching up with my friends and fellow CAMRA members, I also missed catching up on the latest local and national pub news and what has been going on in the area. I feel very privileged to be able to attend these meetings and enjoy an evening out with people of similar interests. CAMRA also run various days out and although I haven't been able to attend one since I was away, this is another reason I missed pubs. I enjoy the days out, travelling to different locations and exploring new pubs and what they have to offer with some very close friends, they are always a great day out and I am looking forward to the next one I am able to attend.

I missed a lot of things about the pub while I was away, but as you can see, the social point, for me, was the most important and most crucial. And I feel a lot of people would agree with me, where else would you find such a variety of different personalities and characters and have the same thing in common; to be able to have a nice drink and a catch up with people you only see in these places.

Hayley Clarke



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GRUMPY OLD GIT

Keg Beer

As a member of CAMRA, I drink Real Ale because it tastes good. I don't like keg beer because the carbonation and cold temperature dull the taste buds so you get less flavour. OK, here's the science, now pay attention. When CO₂ dissolves in saliva, it forms carbonic acid, a slightly sour substance. This can interfere with the way taste receptors interact with other beer flavours. It might make the beer taste too acidic, or it can simply dilute or mask the flavours of hops, malt, and other compounds. Cold temperatures can dull the taste of beer in two distinct manners. Firstly, they inhibit the release of aromatic compounds from the beer, which are crucial for flavour perception. Secondly, they affect taste receptor function, numbing the palate and reducing the ability to discern subtle flavours. So low temperature and carbonation affect the overall taste, reducing it to make the beer seem thinner or less complex. To most Real Ale drinkers this is self-evident, so why in tarnation do people drink keg beer? In my simple-minded way, I have concluded that it's because they don't actually like strong flavours and prefer a blander taste, and they enjoy the "refreshing bite" or "zing" that comes from the CO₂.



And now I intend to venture over to the Dark Side and make the awful admission that I, the Grumpy Old Git, do sometimes drink, and enjoy certain keg beers. CAMRA was launched to combat the big brewer's move towards mass produced, bland keg beer. It was hugely successful in this endeavour resulting in the explosion of micro-breweries in the UK. This and the introduction of New World and new varieties of British hops has resulted in a profusion of flavoursome beers with some brewers now producing some or all in keg form (or craft as it now seems to be called). These bear no resemblance to the likes of Whitbread Tankard or Worthington 'E'; however, they are still cold and fizzy so need to be de-gassed and warmed up. The former is easy; get a spare glass from the bar and decant the beer from a great height into the spare glass, or get a spoon and stir it! The result is lots of froth and a reduction in fizz but often a mess on the table and the condemnation of your partner – still, you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. The latter is more difficult, put it near a radiator or, like wine, let it "breathe" for half an hour.

So, there we have it. Many hardened CAMRA diehards, including some of my friends, won't drink keg beer purely because it is not Real Ale. However, for me it is all about the flavour. Unfizz it and warm it up. If it tastes good, DRINK IT!

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LIFE (AND BREWING) BEGINS AT FORTY

You'd need to have been drinking on the dark side of the moon not to know Wye Valley Brewery are currently celebrating their 40th birthday

Herefordshire's longest established and largest brewery is today a major commercial undertaking. Housed in an extensive and impressive brewery site out at Stoke Lacy, Wye Valley Brewery employ a full-time staff of 78 and brew in excess of 15 million pints of beer per year (that equates to 1.32 million pints per month). Regularly this magazine has reported on new happenings at the brewery, as Wye Valley have heavily invested in new facilities: back in 2023 it was a new all-singing, all-dancing bottling line, and more recently has gone in new brewing vessels. And they don't just invest in kit, they're rightly proud of their staff-training regime – it's the sort of thing more normally expected from a much larger company. Then there's investing in the planet, with a waste water management plant on site that uses nature itself to do the heavy lifting, plus there are more solar panels about than you could shake a bar towel at. This all represents investment measured in the £millions, but what is to come over the next three years will dwarf all of this. Following the recent acquisition of a further 20 acres of land (bringing the entire brewery site up to 29 acres), there are plans over the next three years to build an entirely new brewhouse, storage facilities and offices - whilst where the brewery is today will eventually become a swish new visitors' centre and tap-

room. However, most impressive of all, is that the new brewery facilities will use two-thirds less energy through investment in solar, heat pump, and energy recycling technology – saving both money and the planet at the same time.



*40th
Anniversary
1985-2025*

Wye Valley have always been about investing in the future, and as 80% of what leaves the brewery is real ale, then that's got to be good for all of us. However, it wasn't always like this. Back in 1985, it was a very different picture when a fledgling Wye Valley Brewery was set-up using second hand brewing kit at the rear of the Nag's Head at Canon Pyon by owner and (then) brewer, Peter Amor. A year later, the opportunity arose for Peter to take on the lease of the Lamb Hotel on Hereford's St.Owen Street. The place was spruced-up; the brewery equipment re-installed into the rear of the premises, and the Lamb renamed to the Barrels. Who'd have thought then that the Barrels would go on to become a city institution and – for that matter – Wye Valley Brewery would go from being a one-man show to become the runaway success it is today?

In those early days when Peter, an ex-Guinness staffer, did the brewing (and even did stints serving behind the bar) beers included Hereford Bitter, Supreme, HPA and Brew 69 (the latter taking its name from the Barrels address at 69 St. Owen Street). With his Guinness brewing heritage, it wasn't too long before a rich stout soon joined the family of brews, and all the time sales started to grow as the word (and flavour) spread. Certainly, it helped massively that the Barrels was a key outlet for the beers at a time when the large brewers (in Herefordshire's case Whitbread) had a suffocating and bland stranglehold on the city's pubs. Latterly, Butty Bach was to replace Supreme and had an immedi-



The courtyard at the Barrels, with the old brewery on the left

ate impact when it was crowned *Champion Beer* two years running at CAMRA's *Cardiff Beer Festival*. Today Butty Bach even outsells the likes of Marstons Pedigree.

Star Trekkers

By the time the millennium was upon us, the brewery had outgrown its home at the rear of the Barrels. Many of you may recall the backyard with the large steel vessels all named after characters from *Star Trek*. Looking back, it was a testament to raw skill and commitment that so much beer came from such a small space; what is today the *Brewery Bar* at the Barrels housed the entire Wye Valley brewery operation. To quote Peter Amor from the time, the brewery's activities were getting in the way of the pub - it was time to move.

Chance and timing can prove to be everything, thus it was that Symond's Cider production site at Stoke Lacy had become available to purchase after it had been taken over by Bulmers and closed down. Notwithstanding the cost of acquiring the vacant nine-acre site itself, it was to prove a mammoth commitment: the site included temperature-controlled warehousing; multiple offices and labs, and even a full scale waste-water treatment plant. It was no mean feat to finance and upsize the brewery's operation to fit, but looking back now it was to prove to be just the first of many ambitious and bold investments. It was to set a trend that has seen the brewery go from strength to strength over the last 40 years.

It was the move to the new brewery site at Stoke Lacy that was to bring Peter's son, Vernon, to the fore, with him taking on the role of MD whilst in the throes of setting up the new operation at Stoke Lacy. Vernon was to subsequently preside over a stellar period of change and growth in the new brewery following its formal opening in 2002 by Peter Amor's mother (so, still managing to keep things in the family).

Freedom for the Barrels

Wye Valley soon started to acquire pubs too, their first being Bromyard's Rose & Lion in 1995. They now have an estate of seven pubs: besides Bromyard, there are three in Hereford city, plus one each in Leominster, Gloucester and Malvern. Furthermore, it seems most appropriate in this 40th birthday year that they've finally purchased the freehold to their flagship

pub in Hereford - the Barrels - for £895,000. With people not appreciating that the pub was only leased by Wye Valley, it created mild panic in some quarters when people learned that it was on the open property market for the first time in over 100 years. Now Wye Valley have bought it, its future is absolutely secure, just as a systematic and sympathetic refurbishment gets gently underway (the toilets have already been done). And if all that wasn't enough, Wye Valley's pub in Gloucester - the Pelican Inn - has just been awarded the accolade of CAMRA West Central Regional Pub of The Year for 2025 (see article on page 10). It appears the stars are all aligning at the same time on the occasion of Wye Valley's big 40th birthday party.

Thus it was that the great and the good, plus a few ne'er-do-wells from the local and not-so-local brewing and pub scene were invited to help Wye Valley celebrate at the brewery back on the 11th September. This very enjoyable beano was not only a great opportunity to see the brewery site and enjoy their beers, but to be able to catch up with Vernon and Peter Amor. Speaking with Vernon, he was able to tell the *Hopvine* about what was in the pipeline, when he explained: "We are about to embark on our biggest ever programme of investment. Over the next three years we are planning a new visitor centre and taproom; improved staff welfare facilities, and new office buildings, more warehouse capacity, a new effluent treatment plant, additional solar PV, and a state-of-the-art energy efficient brewhouse where we are going to eliminate the use of fossil fuels in the brewing of our beers. We remain committed to cask ale, using all-British malted barley and locally-grown hops. When I started at the brewery I was its 6th employee, there are now 78 of us, and I'd like to thank all my colleagues who've played their part in our continued success over the past 40 years. Of course, a huge thank you to my dad, Peter, who started it all off and through our shared values around quality and continual reinvestment, we are about to enter the next exciting phase of Wye Valley Brewery's life."

I think we all ought to raise a glass to that!

Telegraph 500 Best Pubs in England

In Herefordshire: Alma, Linton; Barrels, Hereford; Olde Tavern, Kington; Sun, Leintwardine; Yew Tree, Peterstow.

...and nearby: Pelican, Gloucester

SOUTHERN STARS SHINE BRIGHTLY

Two pubs in and around Ross, that between them had been closed for over twenty years, have recently re-opened following impressive refurbishments.

Tales from the Riverside

It was always a mystery how the previous owners couldn't make the **Riverside Inn** at Ross-on-Wye a success with its fantastic location on the banks of the Wye. Claims made by them that the pub was commercially unviable simply didn't withstand objective scrutiny, thus repeated efforts to secure planning permission for converting it into a house never stood a chance. CAMRA; informed townsfolk, and even previous landlords (and ultimately the planners too) knew the raw potential the place offered. Frustratingly, with the pub-to-house schemes going nowhere, the building was then left to rot; come the late 2010s it even had vegetation growing out of the roof. It would have been a prime contender for winning *Eyesore of the Year* had Ross Town Council bothered to organise such a competition.

Then along came the Pickups, who also run the successful and charming Hen & Dot Café at Kerne Bridge, and since taking ownership, they have put the Riverside Inn firmly back on the town (and Herefordshire) map. The transformation at the Riverside is nothing short of breath-taking. Virtually overnight, a semi-derelict pub was reshaped into



one of the best hospitality spaces (if not the best) in Ross-on-Wye. All the more remarkable is that prior to re-opening the pub had been closed for over 16 years.

Little expense appears to have been spared in refurbishing the Riverside. Inside the main entrance is a restaurant area, abutting a more informal drinking area, the latter being replete with sofas; bare brickwork, and a fireplace. Throughout one walks on timber floors. Between the two areas sits a well-appointed bar-server, although it would be nice to see a little more ambition with the beer offer - a single Wye Valley Butty Bach handpump does look a little lonely perched on its own on the bar. Occupying the entirety of one wall is a black and white reproduction of a 1920s Ordnance Survey map of Ross, that shows the town's railway still extant – and weren't there a lot of pubs in Ross back then?

Outside is an extensive slabbed (and partly covered) patio area bookended with a café-cum-kiosk at the opposite end to the pub. Populated with a delightfully eclectic collection of furniture – where recycled old timber tables mix with glass-tops and benches - customers can sit outside and enjoy

drink and food from either the pub or café and admire the view across to the gentle waters of the River Wye only 50 metres away. The patio creates a real two-for-one hospitality venue – choose either indoors or outdoors – at the Riverside. Overall, what has been achieved here is nothing short of a masterclass in revitalising a long-neglected favourite of Ross-on-Wye.

The Riverside Inn, Wye Street, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 7BT Telephone: (01989) 313451 Website: <https://www.thecrowninnatlea.co.uk> Email: info@thecrowninnlea.co.uk Facebook: 61563475194505 Opening times: 11am-11pm daily; Meal times: 12-3pm & 6-9pm daily

Crown Inn Glory

Heading east from Ross - just five miles along the A40 towards Gloucester - one comes to the village of Lea. Considering the village already boasts a petrol station (with convenience store); village store with post office; a school, and even a railway locomotive works, it didn't make much sense that it was minus its pub, this following the closure of the **Crown Inn** around four years ago. As tenant licensees came and went, it even operated as a Chinese restaurant and takeaway for a time. It was easy to believe that the 15th Century village inn would probably never re-open.

Owned by a local farming family - the Savages - last year they decided it was time to break out of the cycle of failed tenants and set about putting the Crown Inn back on a firm footing at the heart of the local community. And what a project this has been for them! What they have achieved is nothing short of an exemplar of the traditional English village inn, for which



they can be rightly proud. Those readers who frequented the Crown before it closed would be astonished to see first-hand the external and internal transformation. Like with the Riverside in Ross, one doesn't need to be a chartered accountant to recognise they'll have got little, if any, change from £500,000. But, re-inventing the Crown is as much about passion as it is money; this pub is a product of love as much as it is about finance.

Where does one start in articulating what has happened to the Crown? The quality shines through even before one crosses the pub's threshold: provided in the car park are electric vehicle plug-ins, whilst to the side of the pub is a part-covered patio area built and furnished to the highest specifications. Inside is no different. The pub oozes character across three distinct rooms/areas, with much exposed original timberwork; fireplaces (with wood burners in situ), accompanied by cosy alcoves. A well-appointed restaurant sits off to one side, beyond which is a central bar area, and finally one discovers a room with a dartboard (how many country pubs have one of those these days?). Meanwhile, upstairs are to be discovered five high-quality en-suite letting rooms. This place really does tick all the boxes for a traditional village inn.

Tom Howorth has been given the enviable task of managing the re-invented pub, and seems to be making a good fist of it judging by how busy it's been since opening in April. The ethos across the piece is very much local: with local food featuring heavily on the menu, plus local beers (two from Wye Valley, plus a guest) on offer at the bar. Tom did experiment with stocking unusual beers from the north (he's a northern boy himself), but unfortunately the customers weren't so sure. That said, on all of our visits the beers have been in decent shape and selling well.



PUBS REOPENED

The photos in this article try to give a flavour of the nature and quality of the Crown Inn following its total transformation, but the only way to really appreciate what has been achieved here is to go and visit and see for yourself. Enjoy!

The Crown Inn, Lea, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 7JZ. Telephone: (01989) 554100 Website: <https://www.thecrowninnlea.co.uk> Email: info@thecrowninnlea.co.uk Facebook: The-Crown-Inn-Lea Opening times: Mon&Tue 4.30pm-11pm; Wed&Thu 11.30am-11pm; Fri&Sat 11.30am-midnight; Sun 11.30am-11pm. Meal times: Mon&Tue 5pm-9pm; Wed-Sat noon-4pm, 5pm-9pm; Sun noon-4pm

A COMMON TOUCH RETURNS

Herefordshire's only thatched pub - the Live & Let Live on Bringsty Common - has reopened after an extended period of closure.

It was back in the mid-1990s that the 17th Century **Live & Let Live** stared permanent closure in the face, when it became the subject of a planning application to convert it into a private house. It was the first (of many) pub campaigns that Herefordshire CAMRA was to get involved with. So much so, that in 1998 we worked closely with the local community to successfully raise the £200,000 asking price as part of a proposed community buy-out. The owner at the time declined to sell to the locals, but that was neither here nor there, as the planners subsequently refused multiple planning applications. Ultimately, Sue Dovey and her family bought the pub and undertook what can only be described as an astonishing refurbishment; most notable being the reinstatement of the pub's thatched roof that had been lost back in the 1920s.

Upon its reopening in the 2000s the pub was a runaway success pretty much from the go, no doubt aided by its fabulous location perched high and isolated on the expanse of Bringsty Common that affords the visitor uninterrupted views across to the Malvern Hills - a bucolic vista that has altered little over the centuries.



Sadly, family matters saw the pub close back in 2023. However, after two years of being closed, it can now be happily reported that the Live & Let Live reopened to gentle fanfare in August. Now under the careful stewardship of a new generation of the Dovey family, it's only open Thursday to Sundays at the moment, but we understand that it's already offering its trademark excellent food along with ales from Wye Valley. It is great to see this wonderful old pub come back into the fold. With its long history; fabulous interior; thatched top, and timeless views from its delightful garden, a visit to experience its unique charms can't be too highly recommended. Further, there's now the opportunity for you to run the place, as the lease is currently advertised with Herefordshire-based selling agents *Sidney Phillips*.

The Live and Let Live, Bringsty Common, Worcestershire, WR6 5UW. Telephone: 07950 660003. Website: www.liveandletlive-bringsty.uk Email: the.liveandletlive@outlook.com. Opening times: closed Mon-Wed; Thu 6-10:30pm; Fri/Sat noon-11:30pm; Sun noon-6pm. Food served: Thu 6-9pm; Fri/Sat noon-3pm; 6-9pm; Sun noon-3pm

POWER TO THE PEOPLE (AND BEER ON THE WYE!)

Investments are being made ahead of next year's Beer on the Wye



Back in the third week of September, long-awaited works finally got underway at Hereford Rowing Club - home to the *Beer on the Wye* marquee.

The photo shows where electrical cables, that will carry over 180amps of power straight into the festival marquee, have been buried. This will make things a lot easier to set-up and take down at the festival - at a stroke removing the need to traipse temporary electrical cables about the place in the future. It will provide more time for the festival's organising committee to concentrate on the really important matters, such as the 300 beers, ciders and perries! It was waiting for this work to start that was one of the reasons the decision was taken last autumn not to run the festival in 2025.

With the power cables now laid, and other public realm works now well in hand around and about the Rowing Club premises, we'll soon be ready to start planning in earnest for the nineteenth *Beer on the Wye* festival. It's due to return to its riverside home - now fully energised - over the weekend of the 10th-12th July 2026.

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READ ALL ABOUT IT!

There are two exciting developments to report from just over the Herefordshire border - both courtesy of Black Country Ales

It was only twenty or so years ago that Malvern was a town that punched well below its weight in terms of its beer offer, not helped by the fact it had so few pubs – and many of those were in the unimaginative grip of the national pubcos. How things have changed, and the improvements still keep coming.

Many of you will be familiar with the old Barclays Bank building in the town; its an impressive pile in a landmark location. Fewer of you may know that it was once a library, and this fact explains why it is about to be named the **Old Royal Library**, as it is set to become another member of the expanding and successful Black Country Ales stable (they now boast an estate of over fifty pubs).

Following the lengthy process of obtaining planning permission, by September internal works were well-advanced and there was already a hoarding outside the Worcester Road premises advertising for a manager (or management couple) to run the place. It is unclear if it will be open in time for Christmas, but when it does open its doors it will certainly be another welcome addition to the town's pub scene. Thus it will be, where once standing orders and cheques ruled the roost will soon be beers and ciders instead.

Meanwhile, over another county boundary in historic Ludlow, Black Country Ales took control of the **Unicorn Inn** on the town's Corve Street back in April.

The Unicorn has had a somewhat chequered history in recent years, and very recently it had been closed, so to see it move into the safe hands of Black Country Ales is a very welcome development. Don't forget, their Hereford operation – the Orange Tree on the city's King Street - has been awarded runner-up in Herefordshire CAMRA's *Pub of the Year* competition for two years on the trot.

The pub has already benefitted from Black Country's trademark high quality and traditional refurbishment: in have gone tastefully understated tartan moquette seating bays, plus all the pub's original features have been preserved (including the oak ceiling beams). Meanwhile, to the rear, the pub garden (that backs on to the River Corve) has been re-imagined with new sturdy furniture and railings to avoid river 'incidents' with the little 'uns plus any over-enthusiastic drinkers that might happen by. Shaded by mature willows, it's a lovely place to sit, sup and relax.

Back inside one will find the usual selection of eight or nine real beers (half from Black Country Ales and the other half being guest ales), plus real ciders. The food offer is stunningly simple, in the shape of nourishing and filling giant cobs – and good value they are too. Visits to date indicate that all is well, to quote a visit by one of the *Hopvine* team: "I was particularly impressed by there being two dark milds on. One was from Warrington's 4Ts Brewery and the other from Fixed Wheel. Both were superb to taste and in excellent condition."

Unicorn Inn, 66 Corve Street, Ludlow, SY8 1DU. Telephone: (01584) 700467 Opening times: Mon-Thurs: noon - 11pm; Fri/Sat: noon - mdnt; Sun: noon - 10pm; Website: www.blackcountryales.co.uk search unicorn.



QUIZ ANSWERS

See page 8

1. St Austell.
2. Keighley, West Yorkshire.
3. The barley variety was developed at the Plant Breeding Institute near Cambridge. The PBI is located on Maris Lane. Otter was chosen from a list of wildlife species that the Institute used.
4. It is used for fining, to clarify beer by removing haze-causing particles like yeast and proteins.
5. Sam Smith and John Smith. John Smith was a relative of Sam Smith though the brewery is now owned by Heineken. The real ale version of their bitter is now not brewed in Tadcaster, but elsewhere.
6. b. Conclave.
7. Ewyas Harold.
8. Cross Inn and White Swan.
9. Peter Amor started Wye Valley Brewery behind the Nags Head in Canon Pyon, hence the name. .
10. Campaign for the Revitalisation of Ale.



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WHEELWRIGHT'S TAKES A BAD TURN

Popular village pub could be lost if the owner is successful with a planning application that seeks to convert it into a private house.

The Wheelwrights Arms in Pencombe is a classic Herefordshire village pub that the local community and visitors alike have enjoyed using over the centuries. However, more recently it has struggled under a quick succession of operators, and following its recent closure it now faces a very uncertain future. The owner of the pub's freehold has now applied for planning permission to convert it into a private dwelling. Suffice to say, this has come as a shock to the local community who depend so much on the place, with it being the last and only pub in the village. Moreover, Herefordshire CAMRA shares their concerns.



It does need to be acknowledged that the pub-owner has previously made efforts to sell the premises as a going concern over the past two years or so, including when - in the summer of 2024 - an auction was held on the pub premises in front of a full house; yet there wasn't a single bid to buy the place. Therefore, on the surface of it, it would seem the Wheelwrights is doomed. But when Herefordshire CAMRA did a little digging into its marketing history, things didn't seem quite as clear cut - not by a wide margin. Very significant in this case is that we were made aware that a community buy-out scheme was worked up, but was then frustrated in its efforts to take the pub into community-ownership by the actions of the pub-owner.

It goes like this... back in 2023, the local community set up a company called the *Wheelwrights Arms Community Benefit Society* (CBS). This was the legal entity intended for the purpose of raising the funds to purchase the pub, with the end objective being to run it as a pub business on behalf of the whole community. This is an increasingly common outcome for threatened pubs, whereby local communities literally put their money where their mouths are - as can be seen from other pubs featured in this edition of the Hopvine (including some in Herefordshire) that now operate successfully under the banner of community-ownership.

The Wheelwrights CBS alleges that an initial verbal offer of £250,000 was accepted by the owner, only for the asking price to later be in-

creased to £350,000. Subsequently, however, an improved offer of £280,000 was made to the owner and was accepted - it now looked like things might start to move in the right direction. Unfortunately, things then started to go awry, when the Wheelwrights CBS team received a professional valuation for the pub of £170,000. Based on this, it looked like the agreed sale price was far in excess of the pub's market value, with the valuer's report highlighting the amount of remedial work that needed doing to make good the pub's fabric and facilities. At a stroke this disparity in valuations (owner v. valuer) ruled out the likelihood of getting any grants that were available to assist with the purchase, and much to their regret the community CBS were forced to withdraw the offer. It was back to square one.

Thankfully, this wasn't the end of their efforts; concerned that the pub might be lost (and notwithstanding the large disparity between the owner's asking price and the professional valuation), the community rallied round to raise extra capital and made an offer of £240,000. Despite this offer being £70,000 in excess of the professional valuation they had received, it was again declined by the owner. Thus it was stalemate ahead of the pub going to auction, where it didn't sell.

The situation that seems to present itself is that a community-funded scheme to buy the pub was ultimately rejected by the pub-owner, despite them making what appears to be a very generous offer. A key issue the planners

will be looking for in determining the pub-owner's planning application is proof that the pub was genuinely offered for sale at a price commensurate with its market value. This assessment is the ultimate test of commercial viability: i.e. is anyone prepared to buy it as a pub business? In light of what has transpired, it would appear that the local community were prepared to buy the pub and run it as a business, but in the final analysis their efforts were

thwarted. It can only be hoped that the planners take this into consideration when making their determination. It is only if they refuse this planning application can any community-funded scheme be revitalised, which would need to be based on offering a purchase price more aligned to the true value of the Wheelwrights Arms as a pub business, as opposed to it as a private dwelling. There will be a full update in the Christmas edition of the *Hopvine*.

RETURN OF THE LAMB

After six years of closure - and following its conversion into a holiday let - Stoke Prior's Lamb Inn is now on the cusp of re-opening as a village pub.

It was a previous owner's failure to get planning permission to convert the Lamb Inn at Stoke Prior into a house that signalled the start of better fortunes for the village pub. It had previously been converted into a holiday let without planning permission. With entreaties to Herefordshire Council planners from CAMRA; the Parish Council, and concerned individuals to see the planning rules enforced falling on deaf ears, it was to prove to be very frustrating to see the pub being used as a holiday let (it even featured on various holiday letting websites, such as *Sykes Cottages*). This irregular use continued uninterrupted for a number of years, despite the fact that there was a fully-funded scheme to purchase the Lamb Inn so as to take it into community ownership. What could the locals do, when the mood music coming from the planners appeared to be a case of *Carry On Holidaying* to the previous owner. It was all most unsatisfactory.

However, the good times are set to return to the Lamb Inn. Purchased by local, Mike Wyles, works were well advanced during August to put right all the damage done to the pub's fabric and facilities dating from when it was converted into a holiday let. The stripped-out beer cellar has already been re-established, plus the pub's catering kitchen (that was ripped-out to make way for a domestic kitchen for the exclusive use of holiday guests) was in the throes of being replaced as this *Hopvine* was heading off to the printers. It must stick in the throat of the new owner that he's had to pick up the tab to make good all the changes made. But there was simply no alternative if the pub was to re-open.

The plan is to put owner Mike's son, Keiran, in charge behind the bar, besides recruiting

two chefs to take charge of the newly re-instated kitchen. Keiran is no newbie to the pub trade, with him having cut his teeth at Leominster's busy and family-orientated White Lion. The plan is to be serving drinks before the end of October and the food will follow shortly after. There'll be a full report on the return of the Lamb Inn to the county's pub fold in the next *Hopvine*.

So, where does this leave the dream of taking the Lamb Inn into community ownership? It can happily be reported that those plans are far from dead. Back on 2nd April there was a public meeting held in Stoke Prior's Village Hall. Herefordshire CAMRA joined the new owner and the nascent buy-out team on the head table. It was explained to a full audience that the expectation is still for the community to buy the pub. To this end, plans are now being worked up, with a share offer likely to be forthcoming at some point in the future. In the meantime, Mike and Keiran recognise they've got their work cut out to get the Lamb Inn back on its feet and trading successfully. Exciting times lie ahead for Stoke Prior.



The top table at the public meeting

TEMESIDE DRAGS ON

Second planning application goes in for Little Hereford pub

In the last *Hopvine* we reported that the owner of the Temeside in at Little Hereford had submitted a planning application which, if approved by Herefordshire Council planners, would see the once-popular riverside pub converted into a dwelling. Hopes were raised that the owner might be placing the pub on the licensed property market, when back in May the planning application was withdrawn. However, such hopes were to prove premature when a broadly similar application was submitted back in July. This new application seeks to address the 'elephant in the room', that being that the owner hasn't recently placed the pub on the market to test to see if any other operator might take it on before seeking to convert it into an alternative use.

Herefordshire CAMRA has objected to this latest proposal. The owner bought the Temeside as a pub, and should at least make an effort to sell it as such. Further, the owner highlights (correctly) that the pub is prone to flooding and this will deter interest from prospective pub operators. But that's by no means a cut and dried case, as is evidenced by what has happened at another county pub with a history of being inundated by river waters - namely the Riverside Inn at Ross-on-Wye. Elsewhere in this *Hopvine* is the story of how new owners bought the Riverside Inn despite its flooding pedigree and semi-derelict state, and after 16 years of closure, refurbished it to a very high standard and opened for business. They haven't looked back since. There will be a further update on the Temeside Inn in the Christmas *Hopvine*.

COLWALL'S CROWN STRIPPED

The Crown Inn in Colwall has had its interior ripped out by its new owners, after which a planning application was submitted in September to convert the village pub into flats.

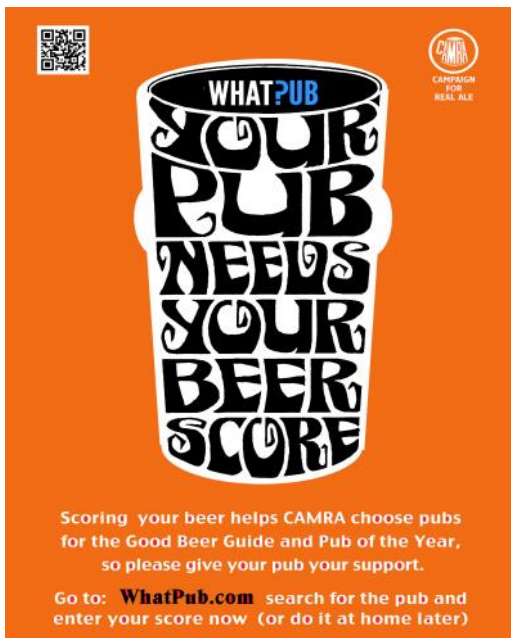
As predicted in the last *Hopvine*, a planning application to convert the **Crown Inn** in Colwall into residential flats was submitted to Herefordshire Council planners just as this edition went to press. The sale of the closed village pub created quite a stir locally, when the sales particulars ahead of it being sold at auction in December 2004 majored on its merits as a residential development opportunity as opposed to a pub business. Therefore, it didn't come as too much

of a surprise when the new owners outbid any offer for it as a pub, when the hammer finally came down at a hefty £355,000. That's an awful lot of money to pay for a closed pub.

Since the owners bought the place, the interior has been stripped-out [*literally asset-stripped then?* Ed]. However, some bad news for the new owners is their scheme isn't going to be quite the walk in the pub garden they are expecting - chances are they won't have counted on the local backlash that is likely to come. Fortunately, the planning rules require a genuine marketing effort to be made to sell a pub premises as a pub business first, before alternative use can be sought. This means advertising it for sale at a price commensurate with its market value. Herefordshire CAMRA is not alone in asserting this has not been done, and we will be providing evidence to demonstrate this when a full report accompanies a CAMRA objection to their plans.

Meanwhile, if you would like to comment on the application to convert Colwall's Crown Inn into flats, then it's easy to do: just go to Herefordshire Council's website and find your way to "comment on a planning application", you can then pull-up the application, either by entering the pub name or reference number P252417/O in the search box. You can then submit any comments on-line.

There'll be a full update in the next *Hopvine*.



Scoring your beer helps CAMRA choose pubs for the Good Beer Guide and Pub of the Year, so please give your pub your support.

Go to: **WhatPub.com** search for the pub and enter your score now (or do it at home later)

ENJOYING A REAL SLICE OF DOUBLE GLOUCESTER

The county of Gloucestershire enjoys a double reputation - both for its fine village pubs and its many breweries. Therefore, it was an obvious target for a day's exploration.

It's a good while since Herefordshire CAMRA last turned up eager and thirsty on the doorstep of a brewery, so it seemed quite timely to append Gloucestershire's Uley Brewery onto the front of a day's itinerary that was to include visiting seven of the county's pubs - it was going to be quite the day! Having swept up our party at various locations across Herefordshire, it wasn't too long before the city of Gloucester was in the minibus's rear-view mirror, and we found ourselves struggling up the Cotswold escarpment. Once at the top, it was a delight to catch tantalising sun-speckled glimpses - in the gaps between the many trees and verdant hedgerows - out across the Severn Estuary towards the distant Forest of Dean. It was all most pleasant, as was the weather on this August Saturday.

It was little more than an hour after we had left Hereford, that we dropped into the village of Uley. Arriving at Uley Brewery's charming, stone-built premises we were promptly greeted by their Trade Manager, Belinda Holley, who ushered us into a well-appointed meeting-cum-sampling room. It transpired she'd also roped-in her family to help, so as to ensure our party had the chance to sample no fewer than six of their beers (thankfully, they were small-ish samples!). Once we were all seated enjoying the beers, notice was taken of an oil painting of Chas Wright looking down munificently over us. Sadly, Chas is no longer with us, and it would be a gross understatement to say he once commanded larger-than-life status in beer and pub circles in these parts. It was Chas who started Uley Brewery back in 1985 - so, just like with Herefordshire's own Wye Valley Brewery - they too are currently in the throes of getting all frothed-up over their 40th birthday.

SAS intervention

It was Chas who welcomed Herefordshire CAMRA to Uley brewery on the occasion of an evening visit way back in the mid-1990s. We'd heard tales beforehand about him, in particular that he didn't suffer fools gladly. We were informed that if he took a shine to you then you were in for a great evening, if not, then you'd soon be sent on your way. Thankfully, on that occasion, we fell firmly (probably too firmly, as it transpired) into the former category. Entertained with Chas's trademark accordion-playing, and fed with plenty of beer; anecdotes about brewing, and life in general, it was to be an evening to remember. This all played-out in a cellar that - if the laws of physics had properly applied that evening - should have caved-in us, owing to its impossibly shallow arch. Eventually it was to get to the cusp of midnight before we finally extricated ourselves from Chas's hospitable grip. In fact, we'd even toyed with contacting the SAS to spring us loose at one point. What memories we shared, as we sat sampling the excellent Uley beers - nearly all of which derive their names from a pig theme. [*It's the Gloucester Old Spot that's to blame.* Ed]

Sadly - just like with Chas - the cellar doesn't feature on brewery visits these days [*health & safety, no doubt.* Ed] although it was reassuring to learn that it hasn't collapsed... yet. As we sampled half a dozen of the beers, including Boarbeer of Seville (a 4.0% beer brewed with the zest of real Seville oranges) and the dangerously drinkable Severn Boar (which comes on the radar at a fiendishly



Trade Manager, Belinda Holley (bottom right), indulges Herefordshire CAMRA's ne'er-do-wells in Uley Brewery's sampling emporium

immoderate 6.2%), Belinda provided an informative potted history of the brewery. Long before Chas arrived to set up Uley in 1985, it was back in the 1830s that the Samuel Price Brewery was established as a tower brewery, when the area was at the heart of a thriving woollen industry. By the late 1890s the woollen industry had fallen on hard times and Samuel Price threw in the bar towel, thus the beer stopped flowing for nearly 100 years - that was until Chas turned up and worked his magic. Today the original tower brewery (it's one of only a handful left in the UK) is still there, as is the family link, for it is no less than Chas's son-in-law, Martin Brooks, who is now running the show. With a full-time staff compliment of eight, and the brewery providing beer to around a hundred pubs across Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire, things are clearly in rude good health. And long may that remain the case.

There's no doubt that it's the quality of the brews that help them to sell. Uley takes fierce pride in using locally-sourced ingredients, with only one of their extensive beer portfolio using hops from outside the UK. Moreover, the brewery also benefits from being able to draw water from its very own well. As our party polished off the samples, almost as an afterthought, there was a brief tour of the brewery to neatly conclude proceedings. The consensus view, as we boarded the minibus, was it doesn't get much better than this.

Sight for sore eyes

It was now time to move on to our first of seven pub visits, but there was a problem – a serious problem. The road to our next destination in Dursley was in an advanced state of being dug up. However, we need not have worried. Not being content with making our party both welcome (and already a tad tipsy), Belinda skilfully piloted our minibus via a myriad of narrow back roads to the small and bustling town of Dursley. Here to be found - opposite the town's imposing church and next to its historic woolmarket building - is the quirky **Hoptician** micro-pub. Opened only eighteen months ago by licensees, Kevin and Kirsty (who originally hail from



You'd have to be short-sighted to not see the merits of the Hoptician - as viewed from its unconventional arched 'pub garden'.



Lunch at Dursley's award-winning Old Spot was spot-on

Kent), its interior space is split across two levels with a bar-servey to the far rear. It features timber floors; much bare brickwork, and a seriously eclectic collection of repurposed furniture, including theatre and cinema seats inside and even a row of airline seats outside. It's hard to imagine this place was previously an opticians [*there's a clue in the name*. Ed]. And, unusually for a micropub, it even boasts separate gents and ladies loos. Also of interest is the pub's so-called 'pub garden' that comprises of the space beneath the arches of the adjacent woolmarket. It all makes for a most convivial drinking venue, aided by a stellar choice of five real beers; no less than seventeen real ciders, plus a selection of modern craft beers. Ironically, the beer of choice was to be an Uley beer that we hadn't

encountered earlier at the brewery: Hetty Pegler's Porter at 4.5% was a dark, scrumptious and annoyingly moreish concoction. It was quite obvious that you'd have to be short-sighted not to see the benefits of this place. It was a strong start.

Tucked away in a side street behind Dursley's diminutive bus station, and only a short stroll across town, was to be found the award-winning **Old Spot Inn** (the pig theme was back with us again). Upon crossing the threshold of this traditional 18th Century pub, one is greeted with low ceilings, fire places, and original woodwork in abundance. Noticeable is that nearly every inch of wall space is occupied by various pub awards won over the years. In fact, there was hardly enough room left for the windows and doorways! The best of the awards is for no less than CAMRA's national *Pub of the Year* – won in 2007. With ten real beers (ranging from the very light to the very dark), plus a further eight ciders and perries on offer, it was self-evident that this is a place for the beer and cider connoisseur.

Having got our drinks – a beer from Bristol Beer Factory being a favourite choice - we escaped to a neat and tidy side room for our lunch. The food was well received; the Old Spot prides itself on doing pub classics with imagination and fresh ingredients whenever possible, and included a very tasty onion bhaji burger with slaw. However, should you ever get the opportunity to eat here, then the ploughman's lunch comes highly recommended every time - it was easily enough to feed two!

As the party left, now well-fed and suitably refreshed, our attention was drawn to a blue plaque on the pub's exterior wall. This celebrates the life of another larger-than-life character, Eric "Old Ric" Sainty. He was at the helm when the Old Spot Inn was named the best pub in Britain, and before that he transformed what had previously been an unassuming backstreet hostelry into the 'must visit' venue that it still is today. Thanks for doing that Ric!



The fine façade of the Grade II-listed Beaufort Arms wasn't quite matched by its plain interior



The community-owned Fleece Inn was getting all worked-up over sausages and cider

It was now time to charge off into the wilds of rural Gloucestershire to see what some of the village pubs were up to. A trek along a series of perilously narrow country lanes eventually brought us to the **Fleece Inn** in at Hillesley. This is one of an increasingly common breed of pub, it having been taken into community ownership in 2015. One of the first things that catches the eye when one presents at the bar is a photo celebrating the visit of (then) Prince Charles to the pub back in 2018. By good fortune, we arrived to find a *Sausage & Cider* festival in full swing in the pub's extensive and pleasant lawned garden. Next to a griddle pushing out all manner of artisan sausages, was a bar selling no less than 30 different ciders – including a few of the usual suspects from Herefordshire. It was nice to watch over a large and animated crowd, including many families, who were happily soaking up an amalgam of sausages, cider, and live music - all with a large side order of late summer sunshine. The Fleece's much-altered interior, consisting of three rooms with various contrasting (clashing?) decor, hints to a likely past of here-today, gone-tomorrow pub operators that couldn't quite make



Making pigs of ourselves at the Hog Inn's bank holiday beer festival

ing in atmosphere, but – to be fair – it probably didn't help with us pitching-up mid-afternoon on a Saturday; we were never going to see this pub at its best. One can only hope it might be more inviting on a Friday or Saturday night. Certainly, it was good to see a pub with an extant skittle alley and a garden that had evidence of past community BBQs. The final saving grace was that the beer range was good and the quality top draw. We soon drank up and moved on.

The **Hog Inn** [*It's those pigs again.* Ed] at Horsley was to prove to be everything that the Beaufort Arms wasn't. Not content with happening upon a sausage and cider festival earlier, we had now landed in the midst of a full-on August Bank Holiday beer festival. And the place was absolutely heaving. It soon became apparent that this is a popular pub that was running a very polished and well-organised event. The crowds thronged around a temporary outside beer bar, with the beers wrapped in cask-cooling equipment (thus the brews on offer were in good nick on a sunny afternoon). Finding time to speak to the publican, Luke - whilst enjoying an excellent pint from Mallinsons of Huddersfield - it didn't come as a surprise to learn that he's been involved in organising festivals over quite a number of years. The Hog Inn isn't your conventional village pub, not by a long stretch, with its modern, graffiti-inspired minimalist interior. However, with a few more traditional nooks and corners also featuring, it was nice to see that this thriving village enterprise attracts a very mixed crowd – both young and old. With our ears ringing and our taste buds still dancing it was soon time to press on.

Continuing our passage northwards back towards home, the **Old Lodge** is quirky for very different reasons to the Hoptician back in Dursley. Located high up on Minchinhampton Common above Nailsworth, this place is the polar opposite

the place work. This will likely have been the reason the locals ultimately bought the Fleece Inn to run it themselves. There were seven beers to choose from on the bar, which felt all the more remarkable considering cider was flowing like water out in the garden. It was good to see the pub thriving under community ownership, but perhaps when they have the necessary funds available they'll be able to give the place the makeover it deserves.

No taste

Next up was the 17th Century, Grade II-listed **Beaufort Arms** in Hawkesbury Upton, which was to be the most southerly pub we were to visit on the day. Regrettably, it was also to prove to be the least welcoming. When one of our party requested a taster of one of the five beers perched on the bar, the landlord was having none of it. It's difficult to understand how giving away a single taster to one individual is going to derail his business. Instead, for the sake of 20 or 30 pence lost, he elects to pass up on the opportunity to impress a party of nine pub-goers. Perhaps he didn't want us there amongst the scampi and chips, in what looked to be on first inspection a venue dedicated primarily to affordable family dining. Behind a distinguished Cotswold honey-coloured stone façade is to be found a somewhat plain interior that was sadly lack-



The striking entrance to the grand and isolated Old Lodge on Minchinhampton Common raised expectations of seeing Father Ted appear in the doorway

of your typical shop-to-micropub conversion. This large multi-room inn stands alone and isolated; it is quite clearly a local landmark. The pub is unashamedly food-led, but it still manages to sell four real beers. Decorated to a very high standard throughout, and surrounded by a wonderful large walled garden, this is a classy, but not pretentious venue that clearly caters well for weddings and other special occasions. As the minibus pulled up in the car park, happy guests - who had been attending a 90th birthday party - were in the process of starting to wend their way home. This is without doubt a high-class establishment, with prices to match, but make no mistake it was a delight to sit out in the extensive walled garden and look out over the parched and still common on a fine summer's evening. There was now only one more stop to make on our itinerary.

The **Carpenters Arms** at Westrip, is technically located in a suburb of Stroud. Perched high up above the town centre, the stone-built pub affords panoramic views out over the valley below and far away into the hills beyond. This is first and foremost a cider pub, with no fewer than eleven of them available to buy, plus awards galore that ably demonstrate its fruity credentials. Run with undeniable enthusiasm, it was only back in September this year that it was awarded CAMRA Regional *Cider Pub of the Year* for 2025. However, as almost a side-hustle, it also sells excellent beer - including brews from the newly-established Little Avon Brewery, which is based near Dursley. With the day finally coming to a close and the sun now crossing under the horizon, it was nice to sit out in the garden in deckchairs and soak up the beer and the views. It was a fitting end to a very enjoyable day.



Soaking in the views in style at Westrip's cider-tastic Carpenters Arms

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HARDWICKE TO HAY-ON-WYE via Artistraw Cider

Les Lumsdon

Hay continues to triumph in pursuit of tourism, after all it is arguably the most diverse of the Welsh border towns. Not only does it host one of the best literary festivals going, but now shows to good effect the amazing history of Hay Castle. Built originally by the Normans, it has changed throughout the centuries from an austere fortification to a handsome mansion house. But what I like most of all about Hay is the gathering of artisans, side by side with slow food providers, and a musician or two playing by the Butter Market. It is the place to be on a Thursday. Needless to say, Hay is still the premier book town and retains a number of cherished watering holes which have stood the test of time.

However, this walk features Clifford where you have an opportunity to call in or book a tour with two top notch cider makers at Artistraw Cider. Lydia and Tom are passionate about their craft, sourcing their fruit from nearby orchards in a traditional way. They process the apples (and perry pears when they can find them) in a time-honoured fashion, allowing wild yeast to do its work, and with minimum intervention during fermentation. Each and every batch is unique so there is a constant change of natural ciders on offer. The colourful artwork seen on the bottles is created by Lydia and features their name *Artistraw* which is old dialect for a shrew. Give them a call to ensure that they'll be there to invite you into what is the smallest bottle cider shop in the county.

This is a linear 4.5-mile walk from Hardwicke Turn to Hay; there's a gentle climb up to Clifford and a few stiles at the beginning, otherwise it is easy going.

1. Alight from the bus at Hardwicke Turn at the stop by the shelter (if from Hay) or across the road (if from Hereford). Walk to the corner on the right and go over a stile by a gate into a field. The farmer has set out a path ahead but within 10 metres keep along the left side of the field; this is the one used by local walkers. On reaching the left hand corner go left over a footbridge (sturdy but be careful-mossy tread boards) and cross the stile onto the B4352. Turn right to walk for about 50



metres then cross the road and a stile to enter a pasture.

2. Head very slightly right to cross a footbridge and stile then head in the same direction to climb a stile in the next field boundary. Once over go right and left to follow the field edge past a pond and when the hedge gives out, keep ahead to a stile by a field gate. Once over proceed ahead through a cereal crop to cross a stile in a hedge, then slightly left through to a line of oaks to cross another stile. Walk ahead to a field gate leading into a lane.
3. Go left along it, ahead at the junction, sign-posted to Clifford. You soon reach the ancient St Mary's church. Go left through the lychgate, down the churchyard to the church. There is a very rare wooden effigy dating from 1280 inside, thought to be a Cluniac monk from Clifford priory. On leaving choose the path rising diagonally left to the top left corner of the churchyard. Go left on the lane to descend until you reach Bryntirion on the right, the home of Artistraw Cider where you can call in to see which ciders are currently available in what has to be the smallest cider shop in the county.
4. Continue down the lane and where you see Priory farm to your left on the site of the old priory. Go right here to enter a field on the Wye Valley Walk which is waymarked back to Hay. The path follows the hedge on the right curving left and ahead through a small gate by a field gate and ahead again to a second gate. Soon cross the Hardwick brook on a footbridge.
5. Proceed ahead to rise up alongside a hedge and as it curves left you ease away slightly right to cross a stile. The path bends right as

waymarked and within about 150 metres left (there's a seat over to the right). Make your way towards a crescent of trees and soon join them. Continue ahead alongside a hedge on the left ignoring a path off to the right at a waymark post. Go through a kissing gate into a recently planted orchard and cross a stile into a pocket of mixed woodland. Go over a footbridge and onwards through three fields on a well-worn path where the haunting edifice of Hay Castle comes into sight. In the fourth field the path curves right to go through a small gate beneath a mighty oak and ahead by a hedge to Potters Lane.

6. Walk ahead on the lane but as it bends right walk ahead, go through a gate and aim slightly right in the field to a small gate. Drop down to tip toe over the stream and head up to a gate into a pasture. Head very slightly right towards a cottage but beforehand the path dips steeply down to a footbridge across the Dulas Brook to enter into Wales. Climb up the track between cottages to Lion Street where the Old Black Lion stands to your right. Go left into Bear Street here and then first left for the bus stops at Oxford Road or right and left for the town centre.

Factfile

Map Explorer 201 Knighton & Presteigne

Travel to Hardwicke Turn

The Sargeants X44 departs from Hereford Railway Station on Mondays to Saturdays at 0922, 1122, 1322

On Sundays and Bank Holidays the Yeomans 39A bus leaves Hereford Railway Station 1015, 1315

Return buses from Hay, Oxford Road

The Sargeants X44 departs from Oxford Road on Mons-Sats at 1125, 1455 and 1725

On Sundays the 39A departs at 1125, 1455, 1725

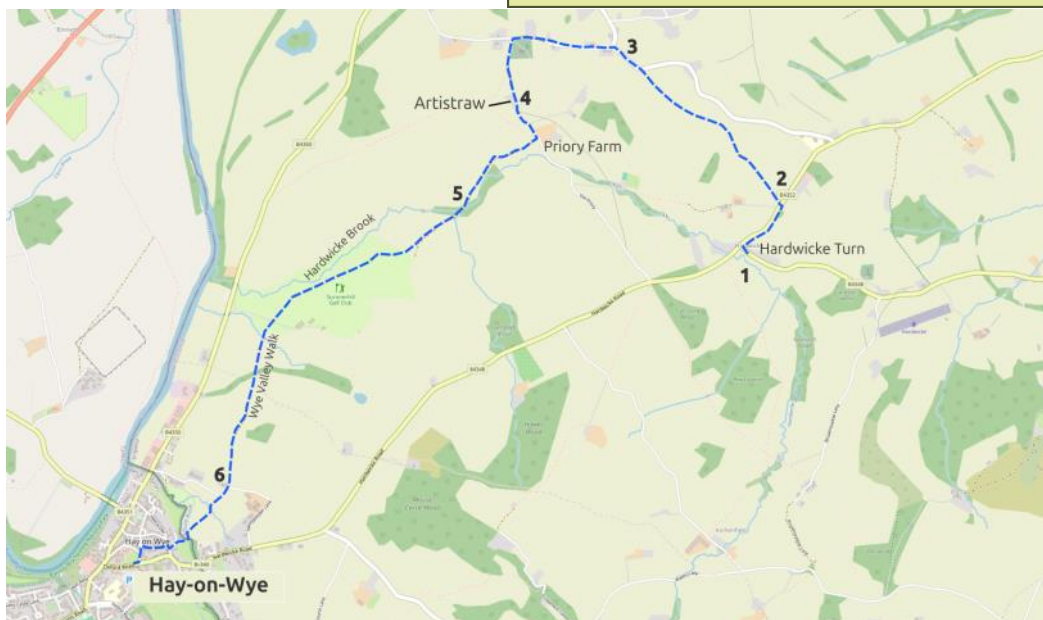
Check <https://www.bustimes.org>

Artistraw Cider

Contact Artistraw before calling: cider@artistraw.co.uk or 01497 831366

Pubs in Hay

Two favourites are the **Three Tuns** on Broad Street, a lovely old pub which for years was known as Lucy's after a long standing landlady. The **Old Black Lion** is an equally attractive hostelry dating mainly from the 17th century. Both are open all day and have regular Wye Valley beers plus a changing cask beer. Check out the details on *WhatPub*.



HEREFORDSHIRE CAMRA BRANCH DIARY

Wednesday 29th October - Maidenhead, Orleton 8.00pm Branch Meeting.

Saturday 8th November - By rail to explore the cask ale pubs of Coventry. Hereford station 0940.

Wednesday 26th December - Barrels, Hereford: AGM, 8.00pm.

Saturday 6th December - By minibus to explore the cask ale pubs of the Black Country.

Sunday 21st December - Barrels, Hereford: Christmas social, noon

CAMRA BEER FESTIVALS

Thursday 27th to Saturday 29th November. Dudley Town Hall. Dudley Winter Ales Fayre.

LOCAL BEER & CIDER FESTIVALS

Wednesday 1st to Sunday 12th October. Wetherspoon Beer Festival. Kings Fee, Hereford; Duke's Head, Leominster; Mail Rooms, Ross-on-Wye plus nearby towns. 30 cask ales spread across branches.

Friday 10th to Sunday 12th October. The Green Hop Beer Festival, Talbot, Knightwick. See ad on page 11

Friday 10th to Sunday 12th October. Orange Tree Beer & Cider Festival See ad on page 23

Organisers - Listing your Festival

For local festivals planned for mid-December to mid-March we need to have details by early November for listing in this column. Local beer festivals frequently come to our notice too late for inclusion in the *Hopvine*. Wherever possible we put these on our *Beer on the Wye* Facebook page: www.facebook.com/BeerOnTheWye

Join CAMRA today

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HEREFORDSHIRE BRANCH CONTACTS

All email addresses xxx@hereford.camra.org.uk

CHAIRMAN

Malcolm Rochefort chairman@hereford.camra.org.uk
Tel (01568) 770282

SECRETARY

Jon Powell secretary@hereford.camra.org.uk
Tel 07905 230341

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Janet Crowther members@hereford.camra.org.uk
Tel (01432) 820048

TREASURER

Paul Grenfell treasurer@hereford.camra.org.uk
Tel (01432) 851011

BRANCH CONTACT

Malcolm Rochefort contact@hereford.camra.org.uk
Tel (01568) 770282

SOCIAL SECRETARY

Simon Crowther social@hereford.camra.org.uk
Tel (01432) 820048

PUBLIC AFFAIRS & CAMPAIGNS

Mark Haslam press@hereford.camra.org.uk
Tel 07771 831048

CIDER REPRESENTATIVE

Post Vacant cider@hereford.camra.org.uk

LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

BROMYARD

Simon Crowther bromyard@hereford.camra.org.uk

LEDBURY

John Lee ledbury@hereford.camra.org.uk

LEOMINSTER

Malcolm Rochefort leo@hereford.camra.org.uk

HEREFORD

Mike Tennant hereford@hereford.camra.org.uk
Tel (01432) 268620

KINGTON

Geoff Cooper kington@hereford.camra.org.uk
Tel (01544) 327758

ROSS-ON-WYE

Jon Powell ross@hereford.camra.org.uk
Tel 07905 230341

MAGAZINE TEAM

hopvine@hereford.camra.org.uk
Hayley Clark
Simon Crowther
Dan Evans
Martyn Evans
Paul Grenfell
Mark Haslam
Jon Powell
Malcolm Rochefort

BRANCH WEBSITE

www.herefordcamra.org.uk

BEER ON THE WYE WEBSITE

www.beeronthewye.org.uk

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September 2025

Landlords! Talk directly to your target market. Herefordshire pub-goers and real ale drinkers. **Advertise in the *Hopvine***

The *Hopvine* is produced four times per year and, of the 3,500 copies of each issue, most are distributed to around 240 pubs in the county, where they may be read many times over by different customers. Others go to real ale pubs further afield, plus beer festivals etc.

Attractive discounts are available for entries in consecutive issues, and even bigger discounts for four issues paid in advance.

Completed ads can be accepted in .pdf .doc, .pub, and .jpg format, or just send us your information, and perhaps a logo, and we can compose the ad for you. It is expected that publication will revert to the quarterly pattern beginning with the next issue, Christmas 2025, for which submissions would be required by early May. hopvine@herefordcamra.org.uk

Current advertising rates (from)

Full page	£125
Half Page	£85
One third page	£55
Quarter page	£44

Rates refer to an inside reverse page, prices subject to VAT

Do you miss issues of the *Hopvine* or live away from Herefordshire? You can get copies by post from David Powell, 18 Chatsworth Road, Hereford, HR4 9HZ. Send any number of stamped, self-addressed envelopes for A5 up to 100g OR 6 x 2nd class postage stamps for 4 copies (11 for 8 copies) OR cheque payable to Herefordshire CAMRA - £4.50 for 4 copies (£7.50 for 8 copies)

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