

Wightwash

Volume 2. Number 85



Newsletter of the Isle of Wight branch of CAMRA

Winter Issue 2020 Limited Edition

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



See page 3



Campaign
for
Real Ale

In this FREE issue: **BREWERY NEWS**

A trip round old Newport

Pete's (mini) Progress *Beer and Bards*

THE SOLENT RECORDS STORY PRIZE QUIZ

and much, much more...

Dear Reader,

In case you think you missed our Autumn Issue this year, I should explain - there wasn't one.

The Spring Issue was published just before the March lockdown and the majority of copies were committed to the skip (probably a collector's item now).

When the pubs reopened, they were told not to offer magazines or anything else that more than one person would handle for fear of cross contamination. So, not wishing for a similar fate, the Summer Issue was only published online.

The situation was much the same three months later so I decided to temporarily suspend *Wightwash*. Hence, no Autumn Issue. This is the first time since 1999 we have missed an issue.

However, as we are posting voting forms to all members (see page opposite), we decided to investigate the possibility of a "members and guests only" issue. Our printers, Biltmore have kindly given us a special deal for a limited edition with a reduced print run and a reduced number of pages. This lack of space has meant we have had no room for advertisements and we apologise to our loyal and regular advertisers (for a list, see the back page). Fortunately, an offer from a kindly benefactor has enabled us to proceed with the

Winter 2020 Wightwash*

We hope you enjoy it.

Cheers (and stay safe!)

Tim - editor

*PS All back copies of *Wightwash* are now available online on the magazine page of our website(www.wightwash.org.uk)

Covid-19 and Pubs

There is no doubt that pubs have had a tough time of it this year and some will never open again. Let's hope that's not the case on the Isle of Wight.

The "Eat Out to Help Out" scheme showed that **there are** enough people to fill our pubs. I know you can't visit the pub at the moment but when we come out of lockdown, please pop in whenever you can, even if it's just for a cup of coffee or half a pint.

Use them or Lose them!

VOTE VOTE VOTE

It's that time again and we are asking all members to vote for their favourite pub and beer!

Just tell us which Isle of Wight pubs and beers you enjoyed most during 2020.

All members will have received a voting form with this issue containing an anonymous and unique voting code.*

There are two ways to vote:

- 1/ Fill in the form and post it to Mike Hoar.
- 2/ Use your unique code and vote on-line at

www.wightwash.org.uk/voting

Please take the trouble to vote. It's your chance to give your favourite landlord and brewer a well deserved pat on the back.

The results will be announced on Isle of Wight Radio on Sunday 7th February and will be published in the Spring Issue of Wightwash.

*If you haven't, please contact Mike Hoar by email mike.camra@gmail.com or phone 526165.

Only members can vote!

Not a member?

Go to camra.org.uk/join

Sportsman's Rest

(cover photograph)

We are very sorry to report that this lovely village pub ceased trading on 8th October.

The Sportsman's was always a favourite on Beer and Buses and will be missed by many.

We look forward to happier times when hopefully new owners can be found.

Please support your local pub whenever you can - or more will follow!

Who's Who

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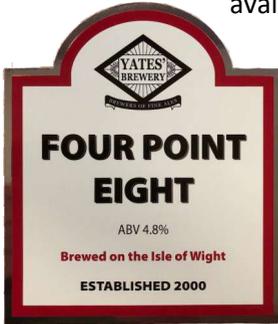
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Yates' Brewery

Dave Snr. has produced another of his "specials". It's called "Four Point Eight". No prizes for guessing its ABV. Yes it's 4.8% and described as a full bodied dark amber ale. It has been available at various outlets across the island.



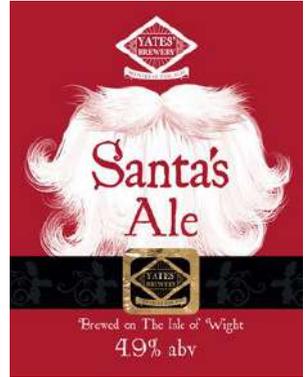
New deals with various mainland brewers have included **Box Steam** and

Exmoor and have proved very popular in the trade.

August was very busy. Hayley says "It was lovely to have such a busy month after the first lockdown and seeing all

the **Islander** fly out the door".

The brewery now have **Santa's Ale** available in bottles and will be seen in Morrisons. Casks will be available from December.



In the photo I am presenting Dave with a certificate from the London and South East region of CAMRA.

Yule Be Sorry won **gold** in their Champion Beer of Great Britain - barley wine and strong ale category. Well done Yatesy!

Jeff



Goddards Brewery

It's safe to say that 2020 has been a strange year and, as many companies, Goddards Brewery has had to adapt.

When lockdown struck and the hospitality industry was forced to close, Goddards made the move to a home delivery service – a service that has always been offered but not necessarily shouted about. This meant that no one would miss out on enjoying their favourite Goddards brews. Called #DeliverBrew, their service has continued since the hospitality industry reopened.

You may have seen that Goddards chose to acknowledge some of the Key Worker heroes on the island during these unprecedented times with a giveaway of limited edition Goddards Brewery tankards. Just a small gesture but definitely appreciated by the lucky winners.



In

During the summer planning permission was granted for the new site, which will include a visitor centre attraction. Hopefully soon there will be more of an update as to when work will commence!

There has also been some local hop picking... this time at Osborne House... and the hops have been used for a limited edition brew of Fuggle-Dee-Dum. Keep your eyes peeled as there will be some selected establishments on the island who will be serving this especially for you.

Now as Christmas time approaches, you may be wanting to give the gift of beer (or just keep it to yourself). This year, Goddards are bringing back their 5litre mini casks of **Ale of Wight, Fuggle-Dee-Dum** and **Duck's Folly**. The beer matches the same cask quality you get in your local, so this is your opportunity to pour yourself your own cask quality pint in the comfort of your own living room. Be warned... there are only going to be a limited number available!

As we come to the end of 2020, the team at Goddards would like to wish you a merry Christmas and hope that 2021 is a better year for us all!

Hannah

Island Brewery

As 2020 progresses to become a missing year in so many ways, Island Brewery continue to tick along, mainly concentrating on production of their beers for bottling as the cask trade has been so reduced and uncertain. Indeed, beer lovers and landlords that I speak to on the Island are all asking just what it is that makes our Island pubs suddenly so dangerous after the bewitching hour of 10pm.

The truth is that most Isle of Wight pubs (particularly Real Ale pubs) tend to quieten down around that time and the tranquillity is particularly enjoyed by people that have been working late and enjoy a calm pint or two to wind down at the end of a day. This myth that keeping pubs open late breeds careless and drunken revelry certainly does not apply to the Isle of Wight's Real Ale pubs. I can only assume it to be some stereotypical distorted concoctance that has come from people that never use pubs. Are these the same people that think it is all about alcohol and getting drunk and that all drinks are the work of the devil?

Despite everything that has been imposed on us, IW CAMRA still try to function, and Rod at Newport Ale House was presented with a very well deserved Pub of the Year certificate



Mike Hoar - P/BoY organiser, Rod Kellaway - Newport Ale House landlord and John Nicholson - IW CAMRA Chairman

earlier in the summer.

It was also my great pleasure to award



Steve Minshull - Island Ales and John

Steve Minshull, boss of Island Brewery, with their 6th consecutive win for RDA as IW Beer of the Year. Steve and I had to put on masks and gloves to make the customary handover at the Travellers Joy, my local and Steve's as well. Even though you cannot see the brimming smiles beneath the masks, you should be able to detect the obvious pleasure

exuded from the donor and recipient through the gleam in our eyes. The equally happy attending (socially distanced) customers were amazed, but not surprised, to learn that RDA was also the winner of Best Stout in the World on two different occasions! As I write this, another blanket shut down is announced that bears no consideration for the Isle of Wight. Many would argue it does more harm than good to our Island and the risk, maybe because of our Island status, has not manifest here to a degree that justifies such draconian measures. Anyone who uses our Island pubs will know how hard they work to provide a safe environment in which people can relax and enjoy themselves in a responsible way . What is it about pubs that these people abhor so much? Who said Puritanism was dead?

John Nicholson

Boojum and Snark

Thanks to everyone who supported The Craft and Cask Beer Festival held in October over what would have been Beer and Buses weekend and our 1st Birthday! We joined forces with The Castle Inn for the event. We showcased a variety of craft and cask beers. Standout beer of the weekend was our very own **South Island Pale Ale** - now brewed with Rakau, Vic Secret and Nelson Sauvin hops (It scored highly on Untappd) and **Cabaret** from *St Mars Of*

The Desert, an old Belgian style beer we managed to obtain from this highly esteemed Sheffield brewery.

The weather was beautiful and Sandown Bay was a picture.

Between the 2 venues we raised £165 for the Classic Bus Museum and we were lucky enough to have a visit from a vintage bus too!

We are hoping our beer festival for the weekend before Christmas can still go ahead - the darkest days and the darkest beers - "**Stoutmas**"!

Talking of stout, very soon we will have a Cherry Stout that is made with Godshill cherries, it's conditioning at the moment and tasting promising.

Our new canning machine has come in very handy, allowing us to can our draught beer for takeouts during the current restrictions. We'll be canning our own beer for Christmas Gift Boxes.

Expect **South Island Pale Ale**, **Private Idaho IPA**, **American Stout** and **Christmas Pudding Stout**. We've also got T- Shirts and glasses to make perfect gifts.

Our new beer fridge is looking great full of carefully selected beers from the country, including imperial stouts, sours, barrel aged ales, wheat beer and many different styles of pale ale. We are always looking for great beers to stock and welcome suggestions from customers.

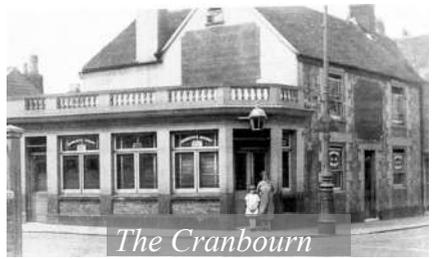
Stay safe everyone and see you soon.

Julie

During an online chat with CAMRA friends I got to reminiscing about the Newport pubs of my early years. I lived in St. Johns Place, opposite the former Seely Library. On the way into town I could have visited a number of drinking establishments.,

The first was the Cranbourn, a two-room pub on the corner of Trafalgar Road with public bar on one side and a 'lounge' bar on the other.

The next pub was an old school 'beer pub' The John Lamb. A converted house with the front room serving as the bar. I actually shared a hospital ward in Ryde with the last landlord. On the Easter of my 13th year he had a retired Inspector from the Kenyan Colonial Police staying there with his daughter, also 13. I got invited to join them for a day trip to the Beaulieu Motor Museum – we drove there in a very large, pre-war Morris 10-4, which smelt of leather.



Moving on down the street the next stop on the left was The George, the only remaining establishment, The George was smaller in those days with a public bar at the front and a lounge at the back. The toilets were across the yard. The lounge bar was hosted by the landlady 'Bunny', so it was appropriately named Bunny's Bar.

Finally on the walk down the left side of the road came the now derelict Lamb on the corner of the square and the High Street. I can



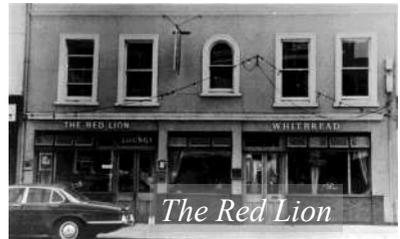
remember this being full of a rather rowdy bunch - not very welcoming for a young lad still at school.

On the other side of the High Street stood Newport's top hotel, The Bugle. The lounge

bar was open to the public and I can remember several New Year's Eve nights spent fighting to get to the bar to order a pint. It

was an elegant place in a rather Art Deco style.

Turning to head home, there were 2 pubs on the east side of the square, first the Red Lion, had a large banqueting room upstairs in which I can



remember going to an end of season dinner with the Newport Table Football League. Up Node Hill, the first pub was The Grapes, a Brickwoods pub (the vast majority of Island pubs were owned by Mew Langton at this time). My father played in their darts team for a while. My only memory is coming home late on a Saturday night after a performance of The Mikado at Carisbrooke Grammar School. We hadn't had time to remove our make-up so I was in full yellow face with very large black eyebrows. As I approached the pub, two gentlemen came out, took one look at



The Grapes

me and somewhat unsteadily, turned round and went back in.



The Plough

The Plough, on the corner of Orchard Street was a typical Victorian pub with ornate fittings, as I recall from looking through the engraved windows. Further down Orchard Street was the Malt and Hops.



The Malt & Hops

The main pub used by me and my friends, was The Castle Inn at the top of the High Street.

Our group from school used to get together in a room facing the High Street where we were left undisturbed to play cards and talk. It also shielded us from teachers who would occasionally visit for a lunchtime drink.

Further out, we would use the Barley Mow in Shide as meeting place. Now transformed into the Bengal Palace, it was a very friendly, busy place and had the feel of a sawdust-on-the-floor establishment although it had none!

Here are pictures of some of these pubs now. Can you match them?



Mike Hoar

On what should have been Beer & Buses weekend the IoW Steam Railway gave us all something to enjoy when they went ahead with their beer festival. Given the need for social distancing, along with other measures such as table service only, it was just as well that the railway's splendid new events barn had recently been completed and had already hosted the Cider and Cheese Festival a few weeks earlier. This was supplemented by suitably spaced tables outside in the fresh air and their marquee, which was the former home to the festival, so now offering much greater accommodation.

Event manager Jeff Ledicott, well known to branch members as a quiz master and former Island landlord, had laid on a splendid range of beers to enjoy with representatives from our local breweries and around the country and encompassing the widest spread of styles.

The Saturday turned out to be a sell out, at least in the sense that even though it was free entry to the event, Covid restrictions meant that the numbers had to be capped. The Sunday was very comfortable number wise, with enough people to generate a nice buzz without any overcrowding or causing long waits for service. The bar was set up in the new barn, which meant that the beer could be kept at the correct temperature without struggling with the vagaries of the British weather. A team of 'waiters' took table orders from the revellers and then went to the dedicated bar team where one person dealt with the till whilst others pulled the pints. These were then delivered back to the table.

As we have observed in the past in these illustrious pages, it is well known



The Isle of Wight Steam Railway's new events barn and marquee hosting imbibers. Our own branch secretary, Alex Lawson, seems more interested in his phone than the steam roller passing by, but perhaps he was simply filming it.

that 'dark beers don't sell' so, true to form, the first beer to sell out was Timothy Taylor Dark Mild. This was on the Saturday so there was none left for Sunday's visitors, however they did their best to make up for it by consuming large quantities of Elland Brewery's stunning 1872 Porter – a 6.5% re-creation of an 1872 recipe which has been the National Winter Ales Champion on three occasions – a competition which saw our own Yates' Brewery 'Yule be Sorry' featuring as a finalist last year, and also the Supreme Champion Beer of Britain. Titanic's Plum Porter also seemed very popular, but it wasn't all dark beers. Many and varied bitters were also quaffed during a superb weekend.

What could be better than sitting in the early autumn sunshine with a cracking pint, whilst watching vintage steam trains chug by?

The event has already been scheduled for next year when it will hopefully once again be a part of a full 'Beer & Buses' programme.

Hop Harvesting at Ventnor Botanic Gardens

September saw another visit to the hop yard at Ventnor Botanic Gardens. Established in



2009, the Boadicea and Sovereign hops are hand picked by staff and volunteers ready to be whisked off on the lunchtime ferry and on to Herefordshire to be dried and packaged whilst still fresh. They are then returned home to be used by Goddard's to brew one of a range of VBG beers.

This year most of the staff were furloughed meaning that there was an even greater need for volunteers and a number of local CAMRA members were able to join the fun and help out.

Once the work was done and the trailer loaded with this year's crop we were able to enjoy the fruits of last year's labours, quaffing some excellent 4.3% Botanic Ale.

We look forward to sampling the results of our efforts in the fullness of time, socially distanced no doubt.



Jeff Sechiari

As, due to Covid restrictions, we were unable to go on a mainland trip this year, we decided on an Isle of Wight holiday.

First stop, Grange Farm at Brighstone, where we went on plenty of walks along the coastal path, catching the bus back to Brighstone and calling in



In the evening, the sunset was fabulous.

at The Three Bishops. Chris the previous tenant landlord had left and a very nice lady from Liverpool was the temporary manageress. The beer was excellent. The pipes had been cleaned and a new barrel of craft beer was very good. They were unable to

offer any food as, at the time, there was no chef but they were advertising for one.

The next stop was Newchurch and the Southlands campsite.

We went to The Pointer Inn, which is under new management. Dale, the landlord, told me he had come from running a pub in Spain and how he had been in the trade since the age of eighteen and loved getting back to



cellarmanship.

His beer is spot on. There were three ales - Fuller's London Pride, Gales H.S.B. and Dark Star Hophead. The menu is very varied and excellent. We had a veggie curry and a fish pie. The curry washed down by Hophead and the fish pie by H.S.B. An excellent pub and well worth a visit (booking advisable if you want to eat) and, of course, all socially distanced and sanitised!



Whilst in Newchurch we walked along the the old railway line to Sandown and I called in at the Boojum and Snark brewery at the bottom of the High Street. We met Julie, the proprietor, and had a sample of their Amber unfiltered beer - very nice too.

Winter's coming so the vans cosied up, hopefully next year we will be able to travel further afield again
Cheers!

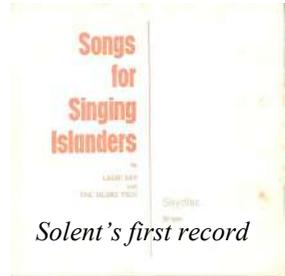
Heather and Pete Cobb

P.S. While we were in Freshwater Bay we spotted the Beerbulance.



Solent Records, 40 + years of an Isle of Wight Record label.

For over 40 years John Waterman of Solent Records was the most prolific recorder and publisher of Island music across all genres. Starting off in 1968 with the iconic “Songs for Singing Islanders” containing “UDI for the Isle of Wight” from Lauri Say of the Sloop Folk Club and finishing appropriately in 2011 with a compilation CD album, which included the same track, along with other IW themed songs released along the way, in aid of the Hospice.



Solent's first record

**Lauri Say's sleeve notes from the "Singing Islanders" EP are worth reading. Excerpts are produced opposite.*

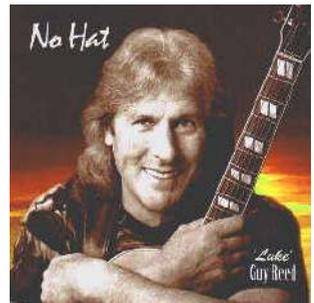
At the outset and for many of the first years, recordings were made on the most basic, often home-made equipment, as in those days recording equipment was only made for the big companies, not for home based musicians as now. Recording venues ranged from front rooms to pubs, hotels and churches, and all recorded live straight to the finished recording as there were only mono or stereo recorders available to start with.



Over the years technology improved by giant leaps for recording (mono, stereo, multitrack, digital), printing (letterpress, litho, digital), distribution formats (vinyl, cassette, CD, digital downloads) and

publicity (Press, Radio, Internet) .

Through all this, Solent Records evolved, producing records for the likes of *Shide & Acorn (Prog Rock), The Unity Stompers (Trad Jazz), IW Youth Concert Band (Brass Band), Robin Holbrook, Toni Malo and Graham McCullough (singer/songwriters), Kite (Pop), “Luke” Guy Reed (Country), Jet Harris (of the Shadows!) and many more; over 100 releases all together.



Although most releases were only distributed around the Island several found national distribution through the major channels and many gained radio plays, not only locally but also nationwide, and also in

America, in the case of Luke's country songs. The label also operated on the mainland producing many discs for bands and artists in Bournemouth, Southampton and Portsmouth.

At the moment John is working on a book recording the history of the label in much more detail and would welcome input from anyone who can remember having dealings with the label over the years, especially regarding the IW Youth Concert Band releases and the 1993 Island Games CD, which was produced to promote the event.

For more details or to contact John:

www.solentrecords.co.uk

07968 246088



*Footnote 1.

Sleeve notes from **Songs for Singing Islanders:**

The singing ISLAND FOLK, predictably shunned by radio and television producers, now make a futile attempt to burst upon the consciousness of the record-borrowing public in a final bid to ensure their continued anonymity. From the cosy obscurity of the island Folk Song Club which assembles each Friday at the Sloop in Wootton Bridge the Folk's misguided missionary zeal has prompted them to journey overland to the far reaches of the Isle of Wight - to Ryde Youth Club, Gurnard Women's Institute and the Prison Officers Club at Parkhurst.

The Isle of Wight for Me.

The I W Publicity Council's advert emphasised sea, sand and sunshine but failed to mention our healthy social climate. As a progressive community we have stopped burning heretics and no longer prostrate ourselves when the Squire canters by.

UDI for IoW.

A rousing call for independence inspired by the naughty activities of Mr Ian Smith. The first public performance of this song had a devastating effect. The frightened men at County Hall started sandbagging their windows and membership of the I W Nationalist Party shot up to 7.

*Footnote 2.

An original copy of the Shide and Acorn LP "Under the Tree" recently changed hands for over two thousand pounds.

The Beerhead Abroad samples the swan-necks of Avon

*Strafyryde, that noble borough, that seat of joys,
That jewel within the Avon's wandering garden,
Amidst the fair bucolic charms of Arden*

No, that was me, not Shakespeare – verily, I can cut it with the finest!

The mere suggestion of Shakespeare conjures up visions of timber-framed Tudor alehouses, rosy-cheeked quaffers and lyrical prose, the Merrie Englande other nations imagine us to be. There's no doubt that Shakespeare himself would have been well acquainted with ale – he was likely the lessor of a local inn, the Maidenhead – and, at a time when water could damage your health (as I believe it does now if unadulterated) and the delights(?) of tea lay in the future, beer was part of the staple diet for everyone. For me, that hasn't changed. So, do the pubs in Stratford live up to its status as the Tudor heartland of the country? Read on, good reader, read on, and see what merry stratagems await.

Inevitably, our first port of call was the Pen & Parchment because, cunningly tucked away in what otherwise would have been the pub's car park, was our accommodation. And it wasn't bad, though I was disturbed at the view up-river to the local crematorium, until the Good Lady pointed out that it was, in fact, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. When you get abreast of it you form the impression that, just for a joke, someone had bolted a pile of Lego bricks on to a perfectly decent classical building. Sadly, if it was a joke, it wasn't terribly funny, and only serves to underline the paucity of taste among modern architects who, since the 1960s, seem to be under the erroneous impression that you can successfully juxtapose ugly square blocks of glass and concrete and beautiful old buildings whose designers and builders were rather more gifted than their successors. However, for sheer crassness, take a look at the Nat West bank in Stratford, a 1970s horror clearly modelled on a toilet block.

Not so with the Pen & Parchment, a pleasant and venerable pub which sadly labours, like many Stratford pubs, under the yoke of being owned by Greene King. Greene King actually produce an impressive range of beers, but very few of them see the light of day in their pub estate. Thus it was with the P&P, which offered a 4% Greene King seasonal of such unremitting blandness that you wonder why the brewer even bothered to get out of bed to brew it, as well as the ubiquitous Abbot and the puerile IPA (Inspid Plastic Arsejuice), a beer which, to the astonishment of many in the civilised world, won a

CAMRA gold award in 2004. Voices at the time suggested that the beer tasters either took a bung - sorry, a soft spile - or were totally inept, a notion reinforced by the pretentious and preposterous drivel which CAMRA regularly publishes under the guise of 'tasting notes' in an effort to lower beer's status to that of wine. CAMRA recently wrung its collective hands about the acquisition of Greene King by a Chinese property developer, but I find it hard to shed too many tears about a brewery whose flagship beer is regarded with such universal contempt.

Where was I? Oh yes, the Abbot at the P&P was in fairly decent condition, so I had an acceptable half before moving on to one of Stratford's finest pubs, the Bear, at the other end of the bridge to



the Pen. I first visited this pub somewhen in the 70s, when it was rather less upmarket than it now is, and certainly didn't offer the magnificent range of beers which it does in these enlightened times. From the selection of 8 cask beers I chose the delicious 5% Church End Fallen Angel, and enjoyed it in the stripped wood bar. In the distant days of yore, I remember the pub as being 1970s chintz and a bit dowdy, rather like your Aunt Ethel, but the 2019 minimalist theme has much more comfort and charm and doesn't smell as bad as an elderly relative.

We headed up into town to the Golden Bee in Sheep Street, Stratford's own Wetherspoon's, which takes its name from the refreshment rooms which occupied this timber-framed building in the early twentieth century. Now, I'm a fan of Wethers, and mostly they do a very decent job in sympathetically refurbishing their establishments to match the character of the building. Thus, the Bee duly presents itself in fine Tudor array, blending in well with its neighbours and looking every inch the fine Tudor pub, but, sadly, the beauty is only skin deep. The interior has more in common with the departure lounge at Gatwick than Ann Hathaway's cottage, with neatly plastered beige walls throughout, and the many lintels give you an impression of what the interior once was, and what it could have been with a more intelligent restoration. Given how sensitively many Wethers have been restored, it seems ironic they've been so careless in a town which is the epitome of Tudor grace. There was nothing wrong with the beer, however, a splendid 5% North Cotswold Hung, Drawn & Portered, sweetish, with such a splendid balance of roast malt and hops that it gained first prize in the nearby Banbury Beer Festival some 5 or 6 years ago.



We finished off the evening at one of Stratford's most historic pubs, the Garrick, and here there was no disputing the authenticity of the exterior and interior. This 16th century pub is named after the renowned actor who organised the first Shakespeare's Birthday celebrations in 1769, and now it's part of the Greene King estate, with the usual limited Greene King range. We chose to enjoy the Abbot in the tiny and atmospheric front bar, thinking how fine it would be if the beer was as interesting as the building in which we were drinking it.

The following day, we ventured to Warwick Castle, and enjoyed a wet and windy experience in climbing around the walls of this magnificent establishment. Subsequently, we adjourned to the GBG-listed Wild Boar in Lakin Road, as it promised the best selection of beers in town, and we were not disappointed. This traditional two roomed community pub is also home to the 2-barrel Slaughterhouse Brewery and offers a choice of 10 handpumped beers and ciders, which you can enjoy in the main bar or the delightful snug. I began with a North Cotswold 4.5% Shagweaver (how good a name is that?) followed by a house beer, the 5.2% Wild Boar Wild Boar (so good they named it twice), and finished, reluctantly, with a magnificent 5.9% North Cotswold Green Hop IPA which was so delightfully fresh and herbal that it ruined the rest of the holiday, because nothing else could compare. I've encountered North Cotswold Brewery on several occasions in the past, as well as this trip, and I can find no fault with them; every one of their beers I've tried has

been a joy.

No exception was their Cotswold Best I sampled on returning to Stratford at Stratford's Micropub, the excellent Alehouse. How I love micropubs – to me, they're so redolent of the tiny backstreet boozers, very few of which made anything more than his own beer money for the landlord, which were the quintessence of beer drinking long, long before the word 'micropub' was ever conceived. Nowadays they're delightfully downmarket bijoux, but none the worse for that, they're eclectic, unpretentious and atmospheric, and long may they live. At Stratford's laudable contribution to the genre, the

aforementioned Cotswold Best was a fine, refreshing beer, and wonderfully flavoursome in spite of its contemptible strength, especially when followed by a beer I have down as Byatt's Beltin Blonde, but here a citation is needed, as my notes are rather vague about its title, but I have it recorded as being 5.2%, refreshing, and smacked of mangos. And, as we all know, you can't do better than a smack from a mango.

The following day was tourist day, and we did Anne Hathaway's Cottage, her son-in-law's house and Shakespeare's birthplace. The first two were well worth the money, and I guess Will's residence was OK; it is authentic but somehow contrives to look like Tourist Tudor. The White Swan was nearby, sporting a pleasantly Tudor exterior, and an atmospheric and venerable insides. Sadly, while this Fuller's establishment provided the opportunity of ESB, it was rancid (the ESB, not the pub), forcing us to a bottled beer, which would have been acceptable had it been London Porter or the magnificent 8.5% Golden Pride, but the most interesting beer on offer was so low-strength and so unremarkable that I didn't even record its name. We then decamped to the nearby Queen's Head, which proved to be as interesting as the bottled beer at the White Swan, and the Taylor Landlord we indulged in did little to raise our spirits. We moved on to the final untried pub on our itinerary, the Lamplighter, a pleasantly old-fashioned local at the end of the Market Place, where I was looking forward to trying the 5.2% Davenport's IPA. This was clearly a Doomed Day for Bar experiences (see what I did there?), because all that was on offer was a very bland Davenports 4.2% Original. I last encountered Davenports some 40+ years ago, I can't remember where, and found it unremarkable then, but how comforting that, in a world of change, some beers and brewers do not, especially many of the old family brewers in the North of England. The drinking day was rescued from complete disaster by a return to the Bear, which at least offered a decent selection of cask beers and a pleasant environment in which to enjoy them.

So, my fine fellows and dames, you will probably have concluded after this discourse that, while Stratford is not a contender for the cask capital of the UK, it does boast some very pleasant, atmospheric and comfortable pubs, many of which do not necessarily bear the sanitised tourist taint which characterises much of Stratford. It's not that Stratford is bad, but, rather like the neighbouring Cotswolds, you get the impression that someone's gone round with a scrubbing brush and a bottle of Jif before you got there; it has a preserved rather than a living patina. You will enjoy Stratford, because it's impossible to do otherwise in so historic a place, and it should be on everyone's bucket list. But, if ale's your aim, you'd be better travelling on a few miles to good old Brum, with a tenth of the charm but ten times the number of good pubs. *[Exit, pursued by a beer]*



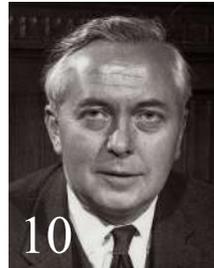
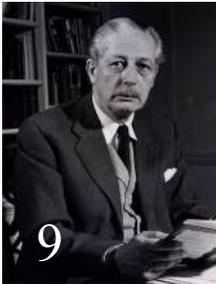
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Just answer these easy questions.

The first two correct answers out of the hat on 1st February win the prizes.

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

- 1/ Where was the 1969 "Bob Dylan" Isle of Wight Festival held?
- 2/ Brian Cox and Anthony Hopkins played which fictional villain?
- 3/ What fruit would you find in Belgian Kriek beer?
- 4/ Brown, Spiny, Norway and Black are all examples of which kind of animal?
- 5/ Which American/Canadian jazz/rock band's name shares a phrase used by Winston Churchill?
- 6/ What is the capital of Chile?
- 7/ Which brewery supplies the beer to "The Rovers Return"?
- 8/ "Start spreading the news, I'm leaving today" is the first line of which Frank Sinatra song?
- 9/ and 10/ Name these Prime Ministers



Answers to the Spring (and Summer) Quiz (thank you for your patience!)

- 1/ Captain James Cook
- 2/ Raymond Burr
- 3/ Helicopters
- 4/ Warwickshire CC
- 5/ Troop
- 6/ Hibernia
- 7/ The Pepper Pot
- 8/ Ten cents
- 9/ Site of a battle
- 10/ Picnic site.

Jennifer Shelvey of Bembridge wins a meal voucher and David Clapper from Shanklin wins a case of Yates' beer.

Thank you to all the others who took part - better luck next time!

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Wight Mouse

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