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# HOP PRESS



Issue No. 13 September 1984

## Contents

- 1 Editorial
- 1 Pub News
- 4 Sporting Pubs
- 6 Pubs in the Island's Ports
- 10 Get Wiser to Bud
- 10 Wodka Ist? Piva Niet!
- 13 Worried Whitbread
- 13 Branch Activities
- 17 New Push to Open Pub Doors
- 19 Barmen...I've Shot 'em!

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# EDITORIAL



Here we go again! Another round of 'Real Ale' rip-offs spreading through some pubs.

I was caught out twice recently, luckily not in this area, but in Exeter. The first time I was nobbled by the false barrel on the bar hiding a fizz tap trick (I should have known better). In the same establishment I was later served, for a mere 95p, a pint of something with a 'house' name, that was an extremely inferior pint of what I'm sure was Courage Directors.

Similar dubious practices are far from unknown in the South Hants area, for example Watneys Stag bitter sold under an

assumed name.

Most people\* are only caught once by these cheap tricks, so I fail to see what useful purpose they serve. Why then do they go to such lengths to pretend that something is not what it seems?

There is an established market for keg, so why pretend it's real ale and likewise why sell a well known and accepted brand of beer under an assumed name?

The answer is that it is yet another con-trick to squeeze a few more pence out of the unwary customer.

## Pub News

By: Aged Swill

### INCORRECT STATEMENT

Last month under "Pub News" by Aged Swill reference was made to the Otter at Otterbourne.

The statement that the Otter was to be refurbished and the landlord leaving was incorrect. We also described the Otter in a way which was most unreasonable.

The Otter is a popular and well appointed one-bar pub serving well kept beers (Real Ales are Pompey Royal and Strong Country) and good food at lunch-times.

We apologise to the landlord for our error and the unfair description of his pub.

Our Lymington correspondent has been working overtime this month, so we'll start in his neck of the woods.

In the town itself the manager has left the Londesborough Hotel amid rumours that its shortly to close; a pity if this were to happen since, although large and rambling, it has plenty of character and it's the only Hall and Woodhouse pub in Lymington.

The Ship has been converted to ye Roast Inn — besides the food, beer is also served — Real Ales are Wethereds bitter and Flowers Original.

Beer changes too, at the Crown and Anchor where Flowers Original has replaced Strong Country Bitter.

Nearby, the Gun in Keyhaven now serves Strong Country, Flowers and Pompey Royal; The East End Arms has added Devenish Bitter and the very pleasant Musketeer at Pennington now has guest beers on offer.

A dearth of news from the Forest and Waterside this month, so next stop is Southampton, where quite a number of changes have occurred.

At last, we've seen the results of a 'hosted' Watney house, The Belle Moor in Hill Lane. It's been a one bar pub for some years so it was a relief to find that it's been quite tastefully done. The theme is 'country style', but its been divided up by (real) wooden alcoves. (But did we detect somewhat higher prices?).

The Maybush and The Masons at Swaythling are currently being 'done' - let's hope the results will be equally as undramatic.

The London Inn in Woolston joins the growing list of revamped pubs where the public bar has been lost, and the Alexandra in Bellevue Road has had £10,000 spent on it to give it a Victorian look - the fate of the public bar is not known here, (but not many Victorian pubs were without one!)

The long closed Commercial in Bitterne has opened its doors again as a 'free' house, named, would you believe 'Charlie Browns - the Humble Plum'. (Ah, but the story goes that Charlie B., the new owner, was previously a humble plumber - get it?) It used to be a classic traditional local, but it's now apparently one bar and 'trendy' - all the beers appear to be Whitbread oriented, but include Waddies 6X at 80p a pint - not bad by today's standards.

A couple of Southampton pubs have Real Ale changes. In the Fox and Hounds at Bitterne, Flowers Original has replaced Strong Country Bitter and Chatties Wine Bar in Portswood has added Youngers Scotch and IPA to its range of Real Ales.

To the south east of Southampton, we are pleased to report another Real Ale gain, this time the Maypole at Hedge End.

Previously, an all-keg pub, it now sells Flowers Original bitter. In Botley, the story of the Dolphin, has changed again since last Pub News; it's now understood that Watney's are putting a manager in.

Further north, the excellent Barleycorn at Bishops Waltham has added Marstons Mild and BB as predicted. Nearby at Shedfield, The Black Horse is another pub closed for a face-lift. Still in the equestrian vein, we see that the asking price for the White Horse at Droxford is a cool £255,000 - don't all rush!

Eastleigh and Chandler's Ford are keeping a low profile, but we must correct a piece of mis-information we received and published last month.

The Mount, it seems is not having any alterations or decoration done; our apologies for the error. The landlord assures me that his Real Ales are worth visiting the pub for - why not give it a try?

In Hursley, The King's Head, a Bass pub is reported to be serving Waddies 6X. And in the far reaches of our area, The Vine at Stockbridge has been converted to a Beef Inn or Roast Goat-eater, or something with meat in it anyway...

Several other pubs have undergone treatment; some major surgery, others a smarten-up job. The Old Thatch, Romsey Road has had a five-figure face-lift and we note that this included bringing the lone hand-pump (serving draught Bass) out from its hiding place behind a pillar.

Moving across the county, a few items again from Winchester. Firstly, a warm welcome (somewhat belatedly) to new hosts at The Wykeham Arms, Graeme and Anne Jameson. Real Ale believer, Graeme has been a regular at The Wykeham for 11 years, but this is his first venture to the other side of the bar. CAMRA members are most welcome!

The Mash Tun's new pint-pullers Chris

Joan & Bill Welcome you

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and Debbie are introducing regular guest beers — the first is Fullers London Pride to be followed by Theakstons BB. Be prepared to pay the price for beers bought through an agency though. (But don't forget the house bitter MTB is still only 68p.)

The old City Tavern, up for sale for a couple of years has finally been sold — but the sign now indicates it's to let as shops and offices — the demise of a potentially excellent city centre pub.

Better news though, is that the Crown and Cushion Hotel, also in Jewry Street, which has been left to rot for a few years, may be made a listed building. Although the exterior has Victorian charm and character, let's hope the owners don't destroy the interior, which in this city, must be unique in its eccentricity.

Lastly, in Winchester, The Green Man has opened a skittle alley at the rear of the pub.

Our round-up takes us finally to Bishops Sutton, near Alresford, where The Ship is up for sale for a mere £169,000. It's still a comfy two bar pub, so there's great potential here.

I'm tempted, at this point, to include a quote from a letter to the Echo a few weeks ago, in view of the number of pub conversions and revamps. Well, why not?

The correspondent was responding to an article about the amount of money being poured into pubs for 'modernisation' etc. His letter referred to the number of pubs having their insides torn without reference to the people who use them. It was the final sentence which caught my attention "Atmosphere is created by human beings, not money". Just about sums up our sentiment nicely.

#### OBITUARY

We have learnt of the death at the beginning of August of Mr George Richards, landlord of The Green Dragon at Brook for 17 years. Our sympathies go to his wife Pam and family.

## Sporting Pubs

Our correspondent in Padwell Road recently sent me an account of the cricket match between The New Inn, Southampton and The Ship at Redbridge. Unfortunately a little late for the last Hop Press.

If your pub has a sports team playing football, cricket or any other game let me know about it and I will publish a list of prospective opposition in a later edition of Hop Press.

Dear Editor,

The New Inn (Southampton) defeated The Ship (Redbridge) in an enjoyable cricket match played during this marvellous summer.

The Ship batted first, and were restricted to a meagre 84 runs, thanks to the bowling of Pat Kelly who took 4 wickets for 6 runs in 18 balls, and Andy Whale who captured 3 wickets.

A magnificent slip catch taken at ankle height by Jim Mackins off the bowling of John Summerton was a feature of the New Inn's fielding. Jim commented afterwards "I have been waiting thirty years to make such a catch".

Some sound stroke play by Pat Kelly and Andy Whale who both hit 37 runs saw New Inn to a convincing 3 wicket victory.

Yours sincerely,  
Roy Healy

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## Pubs In The Island Ports

By Brian Jacobs

This is the first of three articles about Isle of Wight pubs in which the day tripper can imbibe without sacrificing too much valuable drinking time in travelling from one hostelry to another. Not that drinking time is as much at a premium on the Island as elsewhere — our official lunchtime hours are 10.30 until 3, and time is called at 11 p.m. on every night of the year except Sundays. No self-respecting drinker needs me to remind him that every pint drunk after 10.30 p.m. tastes infinitely better than any consumed before that time; the difficulty is, seeing the clock when it gets to 11 p.m..

I make no apologies for beginning the series with Yarmouth. As well as being the most charming of the Island ports, with its delightful harbour, Tudor castle and rickety pier, it also affords the discerning proletarian endless opportunities to admire the Hooray Henrys in their yellow wellies and Mr Baines caps. The approach to Yarmouth from the lovely old town of Lymington (actually, I often go across there for a lunchtime's pub crawl) down the Lym estuary is the best of the three passages to the Island.

The good news is that all four of Yarmouth's excellent pubs offer real draught ale; the bad news is that every drop is produced by Whitbread's. Not that Whitbread's beer is bad — it's just that there's so much of it on the Island!

As you emerge from the ferry terminal dragging your tongue along the ground (assuming you haven't ruined it by drinking the fizzy ferry juice), the first pub to beckon is the Kings Head in Quay Street.

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This is a lovely old drinking house, with an impressive stone fireplace and an unusual choice of beer — the excellent Flowers Original and Pompey Royal. There's a children's room and a garden, and you can get a snack lunchtimes and evenings.

Around the corner is the Wheatsheaf, sometimes referred to as the 'King's Legs' owing to its position in relation to the former pub. Another very old inn, this offers a more 'towny' atmosphere along with its handpumped Pompey Royal, together with a very pleasant conservatory/children's room and a delightful little garden. Once again, the landlord offers snacks to satisfy your ale-induced hunger.

Turn the corner on leaving the Wheatsheaf, walk along the road and into the Square and keep walking into the Bugle on the opposite side with its impressive stone and half-timbered frontage. 'Bugle', incidentally, is an old Island term for 'bull'. I don't know if this features in Hampshire dialect or, indeed, whether this particular pub derives its name from that source — but this is the sort of profound argument you can engage in over a pint or two of Strong Country Bitter in the superb wood-panelled bar with its unique collection of Toby jugs. This is a popular haunt of 'yachties' and the other bar is much given over to nauticana (and that doesn't mean the stuff that comes in plain brown paper wrappers). There is an excellent restaurant for those who want something more than sausage and chips, and a pleasant garden.

Opposite the Bugle is the George Hotel, a recent convert to real ale. The lovely, wood-pannelled bar in this splendid Georgian building provides mellow surroundings in which to sup the handpumped Flowers Original. If the weather permits, sit in the large garden and ponder the meaning of life while gazing across the Solent. It must be

one of the only pub gardens with a Tudor castle as its garden wall!

Unless you're a fast drinker, the Yarmouth pubs will ensure you pass a very pleasant lunch hour or evening. After being thrown out at 3 p.m., look around the lovely old town and harbour or stroll up by the Yar towards Freshwater past the tide mill (an early example of a tide house) and the old railway station. The path eventually brings you out at a spot used to be known as Freshwater Gate, a marshy area where the Yar at one time nearly formed an additional Isle of Wight. By this time they should be open, so cross the old stone bridge and walk up the road to the Red Lion, a splendid back-street local with three bars where you can enjoy a pint of Strong Country and admire the pot plants on the bar tables (obviously an attempt to create a penthouse 'theme' design a la Host Group). A little more leg work will enable you to enjoy a pint of Burts mild or VPA (hooray, hooray!) at the Royal Standard Hotel in School Green Road, served from a pair of very elegant wooden handpumps. This excellent hotel pub has a delightfully basic public bar and a homely lounge. For more discerning eaters wanting something more than the usual pubasket meal, this western-most outpost of the Burts Empire also offers more unusual delicacies like venison and fondue, served in a very tasteful dining area.

Like all Island pubs, the Royal Standard won't shut its doors until 11 p.m. but do be sure you leave in time to catch the last boat home at 8.40 p.m., occasionally later during the summer (the timetable owes much to the temperance movement), as we don't want any of you drunken overners cluttering up our benches for the night; there's only enough room on them for us Islanders!

Opinions differ, of course, but I love the

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West Wight; it offers fine scenery, good bathing, lovely towns and villages — and, of course, some of the best pubs on the Island.

Catch the 10 a.m. boat from Lymington and you're in Yarmouth for opening time; you might have to leave before evening closing, but you'll have had a great day's drinking — providing you can remember it the next morning...

## Get Wiser To Bud

By Mike Etheridge

The world's biggest brewing company Anheuser-Busch of St. Louis, Missouri, USA is famous mainly for one beer — Budweiser. This beer is now available in the UK — not imported but brewed under license by Watney at Halifax, Yorkshire.

British Budweiser could be classed as a third generation beer, as its style originates from Czechoslovakia (or part of Germany as it was then). The name comes from the town, Budweis in Bohemia, then a German state and now part of Czechoslovakia. The brew from Budweis inspired the great brewer August Busch to copy the style and produce the American Budweiser. The Czech "Bud" (Budvar) is vastly superior to the American Budweiser, mainly due to high quality of its ingredients and the length of time it is stored (larger) to mature.

Budweiser is, in the states, a standard "cooking" beer better known for its quantity than quality. Sadly, the Watney brew will only mimic the inferior American version with little or no resemblance to one of the world's great beers.

## WODKA IST? PIVA NIET!

A recent package tour to the Soviet Union provided an insight into the drinking habits of the average citizen.

Beer (piva) is brewed on a city-by-city basis and the taste certainly rings the regional changes. The beer was 'Real' in that it all seemed to be bottled conditioned.

In Riga (capital of Latvia) the beer was as near to cider (green scrumpy variety) as makes no difference. Bottle-conditioned, in short supply, the basic beer is 45 Kopecs (42p) a bottle including 15K on the bottle! In Russia everything is returnable (if it means 28p/pint who cares!).

In Leningrad the 'piva' was lighter and stronger (11%) but exactly the same price. Supplies were limited, except in hotels, and somehow the street people sensed the arrival of new supplies, for queues would form 10 minutes before the wagon arrived!

A universal alternative to 'piva' throughout the western Soviet Union is QVAS. Qvas is a fermented brew made from black bread (rye based) and officially 'alcohol-free' (probably about 1-2% by volume). Immensely refreshing in the 90° + temperatures Qvas is sought after and sells out within minutes — in spite of the fact that it arrives in 100 gallon tankers complete with PINT glasses (still used in spite of widespread metrication) and obligatory 'Babushka' (the Russian word for Grandmother, applied universally to all 'old dears').

The dear old Babushka, stoically serves the waiting queue, washes glasses, serves the queue, washes glasses .... and so on until gone. And not a public toilet for miles, and miles, and ..... too late!

Back to beer. In Moscow the piva was sweeter, stronger (12½%) and again in short supply. Czechoslovakian lager was the alternative and although good — somehow didn't have the unique 'homebrew' quality of the yeastly, tasty and difficult-to-find Soviet brew.

### A Worker's Bar

"VINO" said the sign, so in I went. Wow! Tiled floor, walls, and ceiling. A hatch to the servery and unlimited quantities of vodka (clear, yellow, brown, pepper or grass), sweet Georgian wines and occasionally, the real stuff, PIVA, available some time and different everytime.

An interesting cultural difference means that with every drink served you will receive a snack of some kind — bread, pickle, onion or even caviar (probably lumpfish roe but still nice!). Eventually you will get sick of smoked fish and look for the mens' room sign (universal!).

The experienced Soviet pisser doesn't even go into the 'room'.

Building up sufficient "head" is important. To hit the hole from 5 yards does save the shoes from various unfortunate experiences. Remember there's only one hole. There is also a tremendous labour shortage in the USSR and it is almost impossible to get people to take low-level jobs such as shit-shovelling!

Spraying over, return to the VINO and re-join the throng. The 'troikas' (three workmen who have shared a bottle of pepper-vodka) and the beer drinkers are swapping semi-secret addresses of the next bar to have some "PIVA"....

Beer is not a way of life in the Soviet Union but its clear that the authorities would like it to be. Vodka is cheap to make and easy to ship. Beer is not.

There is a drinking problem in the Soviet Union being actively combatted by price hikes for vodka and rationing hours for its sale.

There is strong evidence that the 'powers that be' would love to increase the number of beerhouses in the S.U. but distribution is still a real problem, and if you can equate the state of their economy with Britain during the 1950's and remember that the country is 5000 miles across (!) then a universal "fizz" is probably not very likely. (Hooray!)

Next time I'll visit the oriental S.U. and try Kumass (fermented mare's milk), or possibly even Russian Tibet and try the Tsampa (tea with salt, butter and barley gruel). Ugh!

I'll never complain about the cloudy bitter again.

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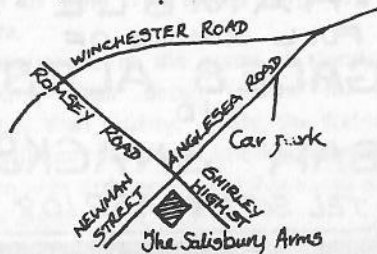


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## WORRIED WHITBREAD

According to our Whitbread managed house sources, the company are genuinely worried about falling beer sales in the area. From a letter to all house managers from the Retail Manager at Romsey, dated 14 August, we quote the following para.. "To enable us to evaluate the effect on volumes, I would ask you to please inform

Area Manager of any customer reaction to these price increases."

Listed are the prices in question-effective from 19th of August.

Why not help out Whitbread in their hour of need and pass on your reaction to the manager next time you're asked for, say, 98p for a pint of 6X?

BAR TYPE	(Public Bars)			(Standard Lounges)			(Posh Bars)	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
6X	85	86	87	88	89	92	96	98
Devenish Wessex	80	82	82	84	86	88	90	92
Stella	95	96	97	98	100	102	102	103
Stong County Bitter	73	75	75	77	79	81	83	85
Whitbread Best Bitter	70	73	73	75	77	79	81	83
Pompey Royal	85	86	87	88	90	92	95	96
Flowers Original	84	85	86	87	89	91	94	95

## Branch Activities

- 22nd September Regional Meeting, Springfield Room, Devenish Brewery, Weymouth. 11 a.m. start - 5ish finish. Quayside walkabout Friday, 21st evening. All members welcomed.
- 25th September Committee Meeting, Bevois Castle, Bevois Valley, Southampton
- 9th October Branch Meeting, Phoenix, Twyford
- 12th October Eastleigh Walkabout to publicise Eastleigh Beer Festival. Home Tavern 8 p.m. - strong turnout needed please.
- 19th - 20th October Eastleigh Beer Festival - Town Hall
- 30th October Committee Meeting, Running Horse, Littleton
- 13th November Branch Meeting, Prince Regent, Southampton.  
Talk by Peter Lerner, Chairman of CAMRA's Pub Preservation Group. Well worth attending!

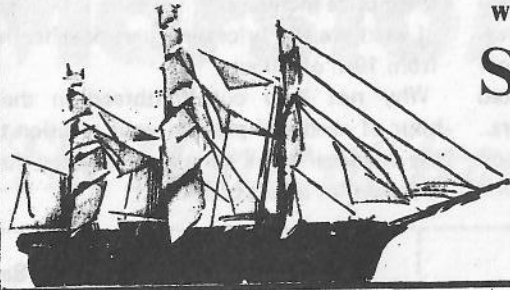
We would like to re-introduce meetings in the Romsey Area, but we're having difficulty finding a suitable pub (Real Ale and Private Room/3rd Bar). If you can help please contact Derick Large, Chandler's Ford 2520.

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**NEW  
PUSH  
TO  
OPEN  
PUB  
DOORS**



FLAG, the Flexible Hours Action Group made up of a wide variety of organisations pushing for more liberal licensing laws, gets underway this month with a series of meetings.

The group wishes to see a system of extensions to normal permitted hours similar to that which exists in Scotland.

It wants licensees to be able to apply for extensions of an extra hour at the beginning of each day, plus for all or part of the afternoon. Agreed hours would then be displayed outside every pub. All this should be achieved through Government-sponsored legislation.

FLAG's immediate aim is to raise public awareness and support over the next two years, thought to be the earliest time for new Government-sponsored legislation to appear on the Parliamentary timetable.

One possible area for public support is the tourist authorities and the trade who may see flexible hours as a means of

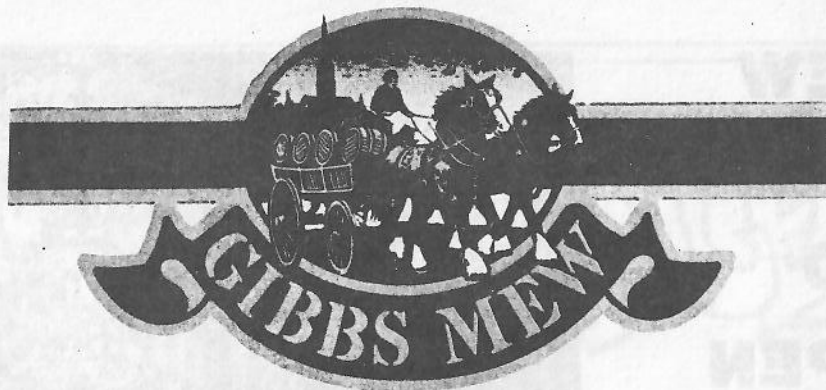
providing extra job opportunities.

CAMRA is pleased to see a new unit which will, hopefully, bring brewers, licensees, managers, restaurateurs, and others from trade and industry, together into a powerful lobby fighting for one objective — the freeing of English and Welsh licensing hours from the outmoded restrictions applied in 1915.

However, it is all too easy for the opponents of change to attach such a lobby on the grounds of the vested interest most of its members have in increasing sales of alcohol.

Meanwhile, the Government is caught in the middle. It has said it will act — but only if there is sufficient evidence of public support for change.

"I believe our role is to provide as much evidence of this public support for reform as possible," said CAMRA Chairman Tony Millns, who is due to attend a FLAG meeting later this month.



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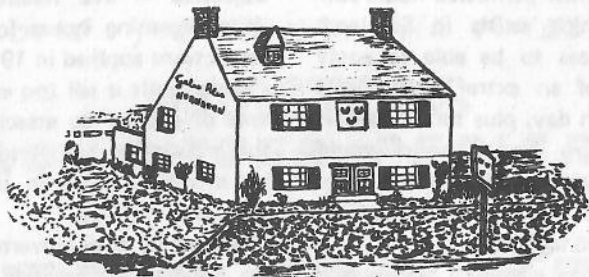
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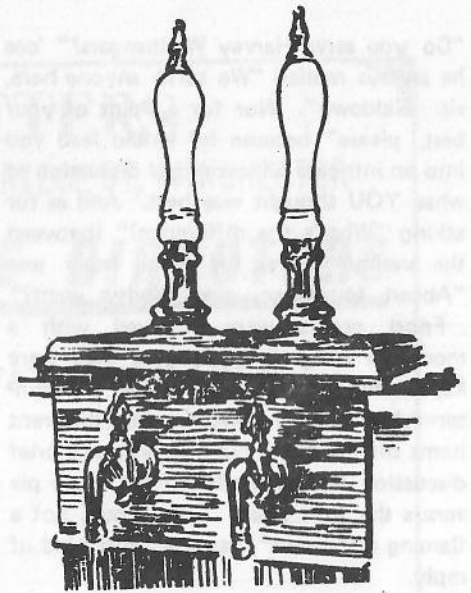
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CAMRA has still got its own flexible hours petition up its sleeve, as proof of public support.

o Recent opinion polls on Scottish licensing laws carried out for the Brewers Society have returned encouraging results. Only 10% of the public expressed dissatisfaction with licensing hours in their area, 79% thought the new hours made pubs more leisurely and 80% thought they encouraged more food in pubs. Amongst licensees, 31% said they had taken on more staff and 84% were happy with the present laws.

o Pubs on the Isle of Wight were allowed to open from 10.30 a.m. through till midnight from August 6-12 for the annual Cowes week sailing events.



## **BARMEN... I've shot 'em!**

by Ken Hill

Outside of the West End watering holes *real* barmen are not so thick on the ground. They are also not as well-trained as the West End variety! One, in fact, springs to mind, who was not only untrained (in the arts of cocktails and mixers) but positively in demand for his "parochial" attitude. That's fact. He was asked by one landlord to work in his pub "... because you've got a way with you as far as the plonkers are concerned"!

I first came across this character in a Winchester pub, of no repute, where he cheerfully dispensed the common-or-garden pints and halves. The first occasion, he informed me, that he impinged upon the cocktail classes was when one of the Sunday lunch-time crowd came in; a gent in the obligatory polo-neck, cavalry twills and suedes asked him for a Tequila Sunrise (for the bright young thing with the afore-said gent). "Is that anything like a light and bitter, chief?" he politely asked. When

told "No, not really", he replied "Then you'll have to tell me what's in it then".

The following Sunday, he was confronted by two young ladies in jodphurs and polo necks, both giggling about 'fawling off". One wanted a lemonade shandy (no sweat-what else do you make shandy from?) but the other wanted a Bloody Mary. "Yes, modom" he replied in exaggerated, plummy tones. "That'll be Vodka and Tomatoe Juice, right?" "Oh, God, no" she drawled. Under the '... well, you tell me...' way of doing things, she began with the Vodka and the tomatoe juice. She went on to add such esoteric touches as Tabasco and Worcestershire Sauce, and finally our barman gave the concoction a triumphant little twirl before placing it before madam. "It should be shaken, not stirred" said the lady in a frosty voice; "then jump up and down a bit when you've had a swig" came the world-weary response.

It was never politic to ask our friend,

"Do you serve Harvey Wallbangers?" 'cos he always replied "We serve anyone here, sir. Siddown". Nor for a "pint of your best, please" because he would lead you into an intricate philosophical discussion of what YOU thought was best. And as for asking "What's the difference?" (between the various beers) his stock reply was "About fourpence, guv. Whdya want?"

Food orders were received with a modicum of grace as long as they were kept simple. But woe betide the punter who not only asked for four different items off the menu but also wanted a brief discussion on the merits of the apple pie versus the fruit salad. "It's a pub, not a flaming restaurant" was the usual kind of reply.

Despite all this, for some reason the guy was popular, not only with the landlords but with the customers too. I say "for some reason" — the real reason was that all this was part of the act. Underneath, and more often than not, to the fore, was an underlying politeness, willingness, and a certain kind of professionalism. So much so that he was asked if he would transfer his allegiance to another pub in one of the outlying villages, because the landlord positively needed his kind of cheek to keep some of the customers in hand (this pub had a lot of 'carriage trade' or passing motorist traffic — need I say more?)

After a couple of weeks quietude, he felt his feet again. The landlord took to having the odd night off, secure in the knowledge that he had the bar staff there to run things. Including our friend. Now there were a few types that frequented this pub who could always be relied upon to stay late. The landlord had often muttered about them — unfortunately, within earshot of the barman. So on one occasion, when the landlord and his good lady

"popped out for a while", it fell to him to get rid of the late stayers. The guv'nor came back at about 10.45 and saw the trio in the corner. "Have you called 'Time' yet?" he anxiously whispered. "Time? I've called 'Piss off' three times" boomed the barman! For a while, the landlord worried about the effect of this on his license.

When the mood took him, however, our barman could be charm personified. Two dear ladies, reminiscent of Hinge and Bracket, once came into the bar on a crowded Sunday. He sprang forward beaming, courteously asked the two "girls" what their pleasure was, and made sure they got priority treatment for the whole session (he reckoned they were a cut above the regular Sunday half-pinters, anyway). Sure enough, they came in Sunday after Sunday from then on, asking for the barman by name, and being quite disconsolate when he wasn't on.

They reaped the rewards of his 'wit' one Sunday in early summer when he dealt with a visiting American couple. Having negotiated the usual 'pint of beer' for the gent (accompanied by a long and courteous inquisition as to what our Transatlantic cousin meant by "beer" and settling for lager in the end) and the 'fresh fruit juice' for the lady (well, it was fresh from the tin!), he then settled his elbows on the bar and asked about food. "What do you recommend?" the American asked, quite unwittingly. Winking at Les Girls, the barman solemnly recommended the Jumbo Spiced Sausages. "Are they fresh?" asked the wife, who seemed to have a fetish about that kind of thing. "Fresh, madam," he replied haughtily, "Why, they were only flown in from Wiltshire this morning". They had two.

But undoubtedly his piece de resistance

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came one quiet evening, just as the pub was about to change hands. The outgoing landlord had got so uncaring by this time that he had lost his food licence and only sandwiches were allowed. Now it so happened that, coincidentally, the garage right next door was also changing hands, and whilst awaiting the new owner was only selling bits and pieces – no petrol.

Into the pub, this quiet evening, came a family foursome. Mum and Dad, plus son and daughter-in-law. The young man came up to our hero and ordered two pints of bitter, a gin and tonic, and a Babycham. He returned a couple of minutes later to add two chicken in a basket and two scampi. "I'm terribly sorry" saith the barman, "But I can only do sandwiches tonight (having some degree of loyalty to the landlord, he didn't want to them them about the ban)" Disconsolate young man returns to the family party and reports – over comes Mum, in her Rent-a-Tent fur coat, and angrily demands aforesaid food. More apologies have no effect. "But you've got a sign outside that says 'Chicken in a Basket'" she shrieks. "Ah," says matey, "They've got petrol pumps next door, but they only sell eggs. Funny village this!"

The only time his charm failed him was when the couple came into the bar on another quiet night, without his actually spotting them (he was in the Public at the time). The young man came to the bar and asked for a pint and a half of bitter. He was duly given this in two, handled jars. A few minutes later, a quite attractive young lady came up to the bar with the half-pint jar in her hand. "Could you please change this for a straight glass?" she enquired. "Certainly, madam," replied our guy. Then he made his mistake. He couldn't leave well alone, and added, "If I'd known it was for a lady, I would have

put it in one of those in the first place". "It has nothing to do with being a lady" put it in one of those in the first place". "It has nothing to do with being a lady" she retorted angrily. "How dare you be such a sexist pig to suggest I need different treatment ... etc. ..." To regain some of his lost prestige, the barman then silently picked up a 12 ounce goblet and poured the pint into it. Naturally, it didn't reach the top. "Aren't you going to fill it up?" the lady asked sarcastically. "Not now, I'm not" he replied, and invoked another barrage.

"Look, missus" he was finally driven to say, "If you want to take this further, just step outside and we'll settle this man to man". "How dare you" she spluttered, and was just about to add "I'm a lady" when she remembered how the argument began. Another quiet night in the old hostelry.

Well, he's gone now. I did hear tell that he gave up the bar work when his Managing Director and a few colleagues came in for a drink one night and asked him how long he'd been there. "About twenty minutes, boss. When did you come in?" he replied, and very soon he was prevailed upon to stop bar work. Ah, well, he couldn't last for ever. But it was quite lively while he was around. So be careful when you come across those rare animals, barmen – it might be my old chum. He still does the occasional night as a favour, and he hasn't changed!



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