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CAMRA'S NATIONAL PUB OF THE YEAR

**SOUTH HAMPSHIRE BRANCH OF
THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**

ISSUE 86

SPRING 2019



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

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WHAT'S ON AT THE WONSTON



Tuesday is Fish & Chip Night on The Beach
Rob The Fyer in his Van from 645pm
1st Wednesday of Month - 'CAMRA' Photo Club Night
2nd/4th Wednesday Nights each month at 8pm we have
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This issue's cover shows, unusually, a pub from outside of our branch area. **The Wonston Arms**, north of Winchester in the hamlet of Wonston, is perhaps just a mile into the territory of our neighbours, the northern Hampshire branch. But it certainly commands and deserves its front-page status having just been awarded CAMRA's top pub accolade as '**National Pub of the Year**' for 2018.

The Campaign has selected an individual Pub of the Year annually for more than three decades, but this is the first ever to be from the county of Hampshire, so our heartiest congratulations to landlord **Matt Todd** (also featured in our cover picture).

Only four years ago, the Wonston Arms was closed, empty and derelict; all looked bleak for beer drinkers in the village, but Matt took up the gauntlet, bought the premises and reopened, with this success as the result. Matt's small pub, which he runs pretty much as a one-man band, is a hive of local community activity. Jazz and folk groups, a photography club, quizzers, darts players – all have their part. Local charities have already benefited by more than £25,000 from many events centred around the pub and like a beacon it has attracted a loyal following of local food vendors providing fish and chip, pizza and curry nights.

One word of caution for readers intending to visit, as Matt runs the pub very much on his own it presently has shorter hours than some: currently just evenings on weekdays (5-8 Mondays, 5-10 Tuesdays-Fridays) and from noon-10 at weekends.

Runners-up to the Wonston Arms were the Cricketers in St Helens on Merseyside, the

Chequers, at Little Grandson in Cambridgeshire and the Volunteer Arms over the border at Musselburgh in Scotland.

Meanwhile, the cycle continues, and the branch has just selected its champion for 2019; as revealed further on in this edition.

The unexpected announcement, earlier in the year, of Japanese multinational mega-brewer, Asahi, acquiring the production arm of one of our oldest established real ale brewers, Fullers, has naturally raised alarm; but it also seems very puzzling.

Fuller's Griffin Brewery, in Chiswick, is crammed onto a crowded, riverside site in early 19th century buildings, with dreadful road access, which the family brewers themselves claim they only stuck with for 'sentimental reasons.' This seems a curious starting point for Asahi's boss, Hector Gorosabel, to choose to: 'unlock the potential of Fuller's cask brands internationally.'

In a sense Fullers themselves had only just become complete, with their recent acquisition of the Dark Star operation in Sussex. The Fullers core range, together with the Gales beers (taken over in 2005 and in the opinion of many, improved) are very much traditional English style ales and the Dark Star beers have added exactly the modern, hop predominant flavours needed to complete a well-balanced portfolio.

In 2002 Gordon Brown, chancellor in Tony Blair's new government, introduced a little noticed, technical, measure – small brewery relief (SBR). Under SBR, brewers of less than 5000 hectolitres per year only pay 50%

of normal beer duty (5000hl is still some thousand nine-gallon firkins each month).

In the years since 2002, SBR has had a dramatic effect, the number of small brewers increasing nearly five-fold from 400 to almost 2000. Whether the government expected this is not clear – many other EU countries have had similar rules for years but, crucially, do not have our extremes of beer taxation. The trade itself has seen the effects though – many small(ish) producers are claiming that SBR is giving too much price advantage to the very small. The dispute is even producing a rift within, the Society of Independent Brewers, to the extent that a breakaway group, SBDRC – Small Brewers Duty Reform Group, is now actively campaigning to have SBR reformed. Even the Fullers' deal, already mentioned, has been linked to upward price competition from these micro-brewers!

Despite their other troubles, the government has noticed this industry agitation, and with over eight billion pounds coming from beer duty, are, not surprisingly, taking a keen interest. A 'consultation period' with the industry was set up in January and ended in March; but the autumn budget must be awaited to see what changes might result.

Whilst small brewers watch anxiously to interpret the mind of the chancellor, publicans look on, equally concerned with policy changes that may be applied to the rating system. Amounting, by a quirk of the calculation scheme for pubs, to sometimes twice the percentage of turnover that some other high street businesses endure. This is one burden still considered by many as a key factor in the continuing attrition of the

national pub stock.

In 2018 there were 914 pubs lost to closure – admittedly about a quarter less than in 2017 but the total, on January 1st this year, of 41,536, is still on a trajectory, in the next decade, to fall to below a half of the 70,000+ total of on-licences that persisted throughout the 1950s and 1960s. And, of course, is unimaginable in comparison to Victorian times when many terraced streets were practically wall-to-wall beer houses!

Optimists will point out that, for example, in 1956 with a population then of only 44.5 million there was only 620 people for every licensee (and in the male pub ethos of the 1950s, no more than 310 or so men!) but now, with over 66 million inhabitants it is well over 1900 (of all sexual predispositions) per licence. But the optimists do not follow up with reasons why the closures continue...

As the pub decline goes on, by contrast brewery numbers – perhaps as a result of the SBR mentioned above – are still increasing: 2,274 (!) at the start of the year. Such a figure has not been seen for nearly a century, not since the early 1920s. However, this increase is also finally having the brakes applied.

The appearance of so many tasty new brewers, often with specialised beer styles, is attracting buyers from the bigger (often *much* bigger) fish in this ocean. In London alone, Asahi have acquired **Meantime** at Greenwich (and now **Dark Star**), Kirin has **Fourpore** at Bermondsey, Heineken have **Brixton** and Tottenham's **Beavertown** while ABInBev (Budweiser) has **Camden**.

Older members of the local CAMRA branch and perhaps even some general *Hop Press* readers may recognise this photograph of Mike Porter.



From Eastleigh, a CAMRA member since the '70s, he would always be active around our beer festivals and events. Mike moved to west Wales in 2013 and soon became very active in, and eventually chairman of, the Pembroke branch of CAMRA.

Now we are shocked and saddened to report Mike's death. at 77, on February 4th, after a very short and sudden illness. He will be very greatly missed.

And finally: The prestigious scientific journal *Nature* recently carried an intriguing report of research in California that could give a whole new meaning to the phrase: "I'll just have my usual pint pot, please."

By genetic modification researchers have altered brewers' yeast so that instead of consuming sugar and then producing a waste product of alcohol their new yeast can produce two related chemicals – THC and CBD. The first, **tetrahydrocannabinol**, may be familiar to some readers as the psychoactive 'high' in cannabis, eagerly sought by pot smokers. The second however is **cannabidiol** a non-psychoactive substance that many researchers believe has huge medicinal potential – as a pain reliever and particularly as a seizure suppressant amongst other things. Could big pharma someday soon be in the market for our breweries!

Want to contact us?

The Southern Hampshire Branch of CAMRA has some seventeen hundred members and is run by an elected committee. Some of their specific responsibilities are listed here (This year's AGM is in mid-May so some posts may change/be filled but messages will be forwarded appropriately). Please feel free to contact anyone with queries or information.

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There is also now a **Facebook Group** for the branch, open to both members and non-members. To join look on Facebook at: **shantscamra**

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Woodgreen

An attempt by locals to purchase the **Horse and Groom** at Woodgreen from owners Hall and Woodhouse was not successful. But, the good news is that it will continue as a pub after it was taken over by Jason Schinkel, who also runs the Bat and Ball in Breamore and the Radnor Arms in Salisbury. He also ran Greene King's Cricketers in Stoneham Lane, Eastleigh for eight years. At the time of writing, some minor works were taking place in preparation for the reopening.

The pub was not open over Christmas so, to enable residents to continue enjoying a sociable seasonal beverage, a 'pop-up' pub was set up at the village's St Boniface Church. The '**Room at the Inn**' bar proved so popular that the Reverend Nicky Davies decided it should continue, on Friday evenings and Saturday lunchtimes. The church is just opposite the Horse and Groom.

Fordingbridge

Staying in the north-west of the Forest, the licensee of the **George** in Fordingbridge made headlines when she remarked upon the varying levels of control that parents exercise over their children while visiting the pub. Perhaps in the future family groups will stay outside and make use of the two jumbrellas for which retrospective planning permission has been granted.

Also, in Fordingbridge, the **Crown** in the High Street suffered from a chimney fire in January, which took 90 minutes to contain.

Ibsley

Further south, on the A338, the **Old Beams** at Ibsley closed at the beginning of the year. The pub is owned by Greene King and had recently been refurbished.

North Gorley

Nearby in North Gorley, a 250-year-old oak tree outside the **Royal Oak** had to be felled as it was suffering from fungus and rot. Some sections of the trunk could, in the future, be used for table tops in the pub. About 10 years ago one of the acorns from the tree was planted near to the pub and is doing well.

East Tytherley

The **Star** is currently closed for some refurbishment, we are not sure of the schedule so it may be open again by publication day.

Ringwood

An application to extend the licensed area of the listed **Crown Tap** in Ringwood was granted, as was planning permission for a reduction in the size of the rear extension, a smoking shelter and fenestration alterations.

Avon

Continuing south, the **New Queen** at Avon closed just before Christmas. The restaurant area has 140 covers. The lease of the freehouse was made available by owners, the Avon Tyrrell Estate.

Hinton

We noted in the last edition that the **East Close Hotel** and **Conqueror Inn** were due to close in October. Since the closure we see that the Conqueror is now offered to let.

New Milton

In New Milton we see that the name of the **Rydal Arms** has changed to the **Walker Arms**, in recognition of a previous landlady, Gladys Walker, who ran the pub for a half-century from 1951 to 2001! The pub has been taken over by Patrick Riley and will be run by Dave Kesterton and Jason Walters. By the time you are reading this, the pub should be open again following a three-week refurbishment.

Milford-on-Sea

On the coast, an application to build one pair of semi-detached houses and two detached houses with associated access, parking and landscaping on land to the rear of the **White Horse** at Milford was still to be decided at the time of writing. Owners Ei Group put the pub up for sale, but it was registered as an Asset of Community Value. The Grade II listed pub has been closed for some time and no community groups expressed an interest in running the pub before the 17 December deadline.

Barton on Sea

The **Cliff House** in Barton has undergone a substantial refurbishment which has quadrupled the size of the bar area.

Lymington

We mentioned in the last edition that there were various changes planned by the licensees of the **Borough Arms** in Lymington, Debbie and Carl Millward. The pub has now reopened following a £300,000 refurbishment. Both the interior and exterior of the pub have been given a revamp and a new kitchen has been installed.

Moving towards the town centre, large adverts were placed in the *Lymington Times* pointing out that a licensee was required for the **Black Cat**. This would involve reverting to a previous name for the pub that most recently traded as the **Fusion Inn**. The advert also stated that a 'transformational refurbishment' is planned. The pub remains shut at the time of writing. Nearby, an application to paint the exterior of the **Thomas Tripp** was granted.

A controversial licensing application was submitted by the owner a café attached to a hair salon. Despite a number of objections permission was granted to sell alcohol until 9pm every day. The applicant, Stuart Knowles, said that the **Yard Café**, within Guy Kremer

Lymington, would sell healthy food, coffee and 'expensive wine.'

We are used to pubs hosting music, pub quizzes or meetings of local pressure groups but the **Boson's Chair** is hosting a more unusual gathering, a singles group. It usually meets on the last Wednesday of the month

Walhampton

On the outskirts of Lymington, the **Walhampton Arms** now offers accommodation in five converted stable rooms. In January there was a fire that started in the chimney and spread to the roof. Fortunately, it occurred in daytime and was brought under control within the hour.

Bowling Green

An application has been submitted to extend the boundary of the licenced area at the **Mill** at Gordleton. The application also asks to increase the number of private functions and outdoor live music events each year. The application was made by Upham Pub Company Limited, who are now concentrating on their pub estate following the recent closure of the Upham Brewery.

It is now more than a year since the **Wheel Inn** at Bowling Green reopened after being taken over by the local community. During the last 12 month the pub has undergone a complete refurbishment, both internal and external much of it by local volunteers.

Meanwhile, in mid-April, there was a small fire in electrical wiring at the community run **Wheel Inn**. Quickly dealt with, it was found that the cabling at fault was for the pub's fire alarm system...

Setley

A little to the north, the **Filly Inn** at Setley came under new management in the autumn.

An application for a large variety of external signage and lighting was refused in November. A new application was submitted in February. Also submitted was a request for a first-floor rear extension, fencing and associated landscaping.

Brockenhurst

On the outskirts of Brockenhurst, permission was granted for an extension to the car parking area of the **Forest Park Hotel**. Permission has also been granted for extensions to the property, the conversion of (hopefully large!) store rooms into staff accommodation and the demolition of an existing conservatory.

Burley

In Burley, the **Queens Head** underwent a significant, six figure, refurbishment at the end of last year. The revamp was sympathetic to the many unusual features of the 17th century building which means that it does not have the same corporate feel of some of the other pubs in Greene King's Chef and Brewer chain.

Emery Down

In December the **Swan** at Swan Green suffered from an early morning flood. Despite parts of the pub being under several inches of water, it was able to reopen in the evening.

Lyndhurst

In the centre of nearby Lyndhurst, the management of the **Fox and Hounds** were awarded first prize in the Best County/Village Pub category at the annual award ceremony of the owners, Fullers.

On the eastern edge of the village centre, the saga of the future of the **Lyndhurst Park Hotel** continues. An appeal against the most recent refusal, which was due to be heard in January, was withdrawn by owners PegasusLife shortly before the hearing was due to take place. The latest news is that

PegasusLife intend to submit a revised application to New Forest National Park planners. The hotel closed in 2014.

A licensing application has been submitted for 23 High Street by **Renoufs Wine Bars**. At the time of writing the premises is trading as Tea Total. There are currently Renoufs wine bars operating in Bournemouth, Wimborne and Southbourne.

Minstead

It's not only pubs that are closing across the county, many village shops also face an uncertain future. The village shop in Minstead closed last summer after 250 years of trading. Now a group of villagers are hoping to open a shop in a storeroom at the **Trusty Servant** pub. It is hoped that this shop, which will be staffed by volunteers, will start trading in the summer.

Beaulieu

There is a new head chef at the **Montagu Arms**. Matthew Whitfield, who is originally from Southampton, returns to the Montagu Arms after spending time abroad working in Michelin starred restaurants. There was a chimney fire in January but fortunately the local fire station is only 50 yards away. A request for various internal alterations connected to the accommodation was granted in March.

Calshot

Some readers will remember the **Flying Boat** pub that was in the former officers' mess of RAF Calshot. The pub is long closed and recent attempts to get permission to construct seven new homes on the site were refused. Some five years previously permission had been granted for a hotel but work on this project had not been started. The reasons for the refusal included the absence of affordable or social housing.

Holbury

The **Bridge Tavern** at Ipers Bridge, Holbury has been partially demolished. It closed in 2014 and two years ago National Park planners gave permission for the demolition of the 20th century additions to the building and their replacement with a matching two storey addition as part of a private house.

Marchwood

A little off the A326, the **Bold Forester** in Beaulieu Road, Marchwood underwent a significant six-week refurbishment last autumn. The carvery has been removed and the dining area now consists of a number of separate areas of various sizes. The real ales on offer at the bar usually include at least one Ringwood beer and a guest ale.

Totton

The **Players** in Water Lane, remains closed, it has been shut now for two years. Owners, Wellington Pub Company, said that they were trying to sell it as a pub but had not had any realistic offers although they had refused offers to buy the land for 'alternative uses.'

Cadnam

The three brothers who at one time ran the **Sir John Barleycorn** at Cadnam, have been jailed after being found guilty of a £3.2m VAT scam. Shahab Haashtroudi and his brothers Shahin and Hedayat ran various companies including the Alcatraz Pub Company. They had also previously been involved with the **Hobler**, Battramsley and the aforementioned **Old Beams** at Ibsley.

Nursling

We reported in the last edition that permission had been granted to build three three-bedroom houses and two two-bedroom houses on land belonging to the **Four Horseshoes** at Nursling. The resulting funds are to be used to reopen the pub. It was hoped that the pub would start

trading again in April. Planning applications associated with the pub reopening include the provision of a children's play area and a marquee for use during the summer.

Chilworth

The **Chilworth Arms** welcomed a new manager, James Miller, last autumn. The focus is still on food, though music and fundraising events are also on the menu.

Romsey

There is little sign of the **Abbey Hotel** reopening any time soon. Meanwhile, the Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mary and St Ethelflaeda, Romsey has been granted permission to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises every day between the hours of noon and 11pm at the actual Abbey, after which the hotel is named.

The **Sun Inn** in Winchester Road has been refurbished. The American theme has been replaced by a more traditional pub feel.

Yet more planning applications have been submitted for the **Cromwell Arms**. The latest, which was partially retrospective, for an extension to the patio area, external seating plus changes to the external lighting, was granted subject to conditions.

Braishfield

A little to the north, an application for a single storey side extension and a paved patio area at the **Wheatsheaf** at Braishfield has been granted.

Michelmersh

In a heart-warming act, the former manager of the nearby **Bear and Ragged Staff** in Michelmersh, Jo Clark, wrote to the *Romsey Advertiser* to say thank you to all the customers who had visited during her 16 years at the pub.

Timsbury

Just a bit further up the main A3057, the **Malthouse** is closed, undergoing a refurbishment. It is due to reopen in June as the re-named **Goat**.

Kimbridge

Nearby, Hampshire company Ideal Collection, which readers may recognise as the proprietors of other local pubs including the White Horse in Otterbourne and the Bugle in Hamble, added a new outlet to its portfolio in October. It is now running **Kimbridge Barn**, which was previously trading as Annie's Kitchen and Tea Rooms. It reopened in December following a £300,000 refit.

Eastleigh

There are three new outlets in the Borough of Eastleigh. In the town centre, **The Chalet** opened at the beginning of November in the High Street premises that was previously home to JKS Winebar. The décor has a smart skiing chalet theme, with wood panelling (and an illuminated reindeer!). Four handpumps offer a changing range of beers usually sourced from Fullers and local brewers.

What was Chimichanga in the Swan Centre is now **Hancock's American Kitchen and Bar**. It is the latest in a chain of six across Kent, Surrey and Hampshire. There is no real ale. Older readers may recall that after the town's Regal Cinema closed in the 1980's it housed a bar called Hancocks.

Botley

In Eastleigh's southern Parishes, a new venue to enjoy Cracklerock beers has opened in Botley High Street. The **CrackleRock Tap Room** is on the other side of High Street from the brewery's previous outlet. On a November Sunday night, at closing time, customers of the old venue picked up the furniture and took it to

the new bar, which was formerly a bank.

On the eastern side of the village the **Brewery Bar** is, at the time of writing, closed for some refurbishment but the details are not at the moment known to us.

Netley

The micro-pub movement continues to spread like a rash, now reaching Victoria Road in Netley where a licence has just been granted for the **Netley Tap** in premises that were formerly a Co-op convenience store. They are hoping to be open by August.

Hedge End

To continue this theme, there could soon be a new outlet in Hedge End. An application has been submitted to convert what was a card shop at 5 Lower Northam Road into a micro-pub. The applicants include Russel Clarke, the owner of Southampton's Tapit micro-brewery.

Durley

A few miles to the north, an application to build a dwelling on land west of the **Farmers Home** was submitted in October.

Upham

The **Brushmakers Arms** in Upham was nominated in the Countryside Alliance Oscar Awards. It is a regional finalist and after a judge has visited the pub the regional winners will be announced in May. The regional winners will then be invited to Parliament for the national finals.

Colden Common

In Colden Common, permission has been granted for new signage at the ACV listed **Rising Sun**.

Twyford

A little to the north, the **Bugle** in Twyford was offered for sale with a guide price of

£1,495,000 in November, as expected, as the owner moved attention to Crawley's long-closed **Fox and Hounds**.

Crawley

Lenny Carr-Roberts has now reopened his new venture in Crawley. Perhaps reflecting modern times, the **Fox** no longer has any following hounds. However, considerable amounts have clearly been spent on the quality of refurbishment.

Bighton

The ongoing saga of the **English Partridge** at Bighton took a new twist when an application for a B&B was submitted last year. The application stated, 'The existing use of the English Partridge is a public house. The application seeks to confirm that the proposed use of the first and second floors to provide 3 rooms for B&B accommodation is ancillary to the primary use of the building.' The outcome is still awaited.

Cheriton

A major news story for this quiet village. Do you have a spare couple of million in your back pocket? If so, a delight awaits in Cheriton, the whole pub and brewery complex at the **Flowerpots** has been put up for sale (by Christies) as a going concern at 'offers over £1,750,000.' The pub represents roughly a third of this value and the award-winning 10-barrel brewery two thirds.

Winchester

Just outside the city centre, **Alfred's Brewery** celebrated the opening of its new, larger premises in October. The new brewery is located just off Easton Lane in Winnall.

Customers and users of the ring road will be familiar with the **Corner House** (formerly the Foresters), halfway down North Walls, which was put up for sale by owners Greene King in

November at a price of £700,000. The pub was part of the Little Pub Group run by Jayne Gillin, which also includes the nearby **Mucky Duck** (one-time White Swan) in Hyde Street.

Continuing around the ring road, permission has been granted to convert the former Mash Tun, which has traded as **El Sabio Tapas Bar** more recently, into five flats. A planning officer took the decision under delegated powers and accepted that the closure of El Sabio showed the site was 'unviable as a pub or restaurant.'

Visitors taking in the great view from the beer garden of the **Bishop on the Bridge** may now see a pergola, outbuildings and associated works if planning permission is granted. The pub was closed at the time of writing and likely to remain so for some weeks to allow other internal and external refurbishment to take place.

A long-closed pub could see a resurrection. Plans for a major development of the Station Approach area are currently being formulated. As part of the plans, it is being suggested that the former registry office, which was previously the **South Western Inn** before it closed in 1992, could be extended to form a bar or restaurant.

Moving into the High Street, the bar and restaurant that was **Piquant** has reopened as the **Roxbury**. It opened in January, three months after the previous venture at the premises, Piquant, closed. On opening, the Facebook page promised 'street food, live music and a wide selection of event nights...'

Back to the city's eastern outskirts, Derek and Brid Phelan of the **Golden Lion** in Alresford Road won a prize in recognition of the floral displays that adorn the pub and grounds at an awards evening by owners, Wadworth. Other winners from our local area were Phill Butler and Freya Loveless of the **Green Dragon** in

Brook for Best Turnaround Pub, Jade and John Whitfield of the **Cleveland Bay** in Chandler's Ford for Best Managed House Marketing Pub, for which Steve Cooper of the **Humble Plumb** in Bitterne received the runners up award.

Kings Worthy

North of the city, applications have been submitted for refurbishment and new signage at the **Cart and Horses**. The changes would result in a new entrance lobby, new windows and doors, a new bar and internal design changes, refurbishment and relocation of a disabled toilet plus the replacement of illuminated and non-illuminated signs.

A more unusual planning application was submitted to city planners by the **King Charles**. The request, which was granted, was to 'reduce the new growth' of trees, fairly routine, maybe, but not the reason given which was: '...to reduce the production of apples.'

Southampton: City Centre

A **Southampton** pub that is a popular venue for live rock music, is set to close. The **Firehouse**, which is hidden behind Above Bar in Vincents Walk, is set to be replaced by a new building containing 39 flats. This is just the latest in a number of schemes that has seen an increase in the amount of accommodation in the city centre, which does have the advantage of providing more potential trade for the venues that survive. More than 3,000 people signed a petition against the plans. Some positive news is that the manager of the Firehouse is actively looking for another venue where they will be able to continue to provide entertainment for lovers of rock music.

Further up Above Bar, **The Neighbourhood** bar restaurant closed late last year. It opened in 2015. Owners, Faucet Inn Group, went into administration last summer.

Two doors down, at 136, **Sharkeys Sports Bar** is due to open in spring 2019 in what was previously Moss Bros. There is a similar venue with the same name already trading in Bournemouth.

We note that **Mettricks**, which is a bar as well as a coffee outlet, has a new majority shareholder in the form of Winchester-based Coffee Lab. The new arrangement also covers the Woolston outlet.

Almost opposite what was at one time another Mettricks outlet in the High Street, the **Crammed Inn** finally opened in October. It is located in what was Oceans gift shop. The man in charge is Matt Lucker, who has previously been at the Dolphin in St Denys and Tramstop in Portswood. A changing range of mostly local ales are available from the three handpumps. As with many of the recently opened smaller pubs and bars, opening hours vary throughout the week so check first to avoid disappointment.

Southampton: Oxford Street

The **Nook Bar & Kitchen** has opened in what was most recently Casa Brazil in Havelock Chambers, Queens Terrace, on the corner with Latimer Street. The owners, Boozy Berry Ltd, say the venue will be open daily from 8am to midnight. There is also the provision for live music.

In Oxford Street itself, an application to enlarge the pavement seating area outside the **White Star** was rejected by city planners. The reason given was that the extension would, '... not leave sufficient 'footway' left (sic), which would result in potential conflict and obstruction to pedestrian flow in this busy street, especially during the evenings and weekends.'

Another Oxford Street venue, **Cargo**, has

closed as part of the fall-out of the financial problems of owners Faucet Inn group.

Southampton: Bedford Place

Just off Bedford Place, the owners of **BrewDog** were offering a free bottle of their alcohol-free beer Subwoofer IPA on Valentine's Day for every customer who ordered a pint of Punk IPA while accompanied by their dog. Subwoofer IPA is an alcohol-free, hop-free, non-carbonated beer (?) with 'additional ingredients' that are claimed to be 'beneficial to dogs'.

The owners of Heartbreakers are behind a new venue, **XOXO**, in Bedford Place. It is hoped to become a popular brunch destination, and, in the evenings, it will have a late-night bar. The premises previously housed Shrimp and Burger.

Southampton: Shirley

At the top of the High Street, the former **Crown** which has more recently been a Paddy Power betting shop, was hit by a fire late last year. At the time the ex-pub was covered in scaffolding. The fire appeared to start on the first floor then spread to the roof.

In Regents Park Road the, **Regents Park Hotel** closed in mid-April for a massive £412,000 refurbishment from owners Heineken (Star Pubs and Bars) and the operators Marion and Don Healy. Re-opening is scheduled for before the end of May when it will assume its modified new name of just the **Regents Park**. The Healys are looking to provide a genuine community pub with increased games and function area and increased garden space; the new manager will be Southamptonian Lee Slaymaker.

Southampton: Bevois Valley

In Bevois Valley, the **Shooting Star** is now able to sell alcohol until 3.00am every day

following a successful licence application.

Southampton: Mount Pleasant

It is not so pleasant to report the sudden closure of the **Old Farmhouse** after an EHO (environmental health officer) inspection resulted in a food hygiene rating of 0! The pub has now appeared on Savills' list as available leasehold at £395,000.

Southampton: Portswood

Also with extended hours is the **Crafty Fox** in Portswood. It can now open until midnight on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Objections were raised by some local residents but the authorities agreed with the pub owner's claims that many nearby pubs were allowed to trade until midnight and that the extended hours would allow the Crafty Fox to compete on a level playing field and would not significantly add to the volume of pedestrian traffic in the area. However, plans to create an outside seating area were refused because of its impact on the width of the public highway and potential noise issues. The Crafty Fox occupies a former Costa Coffee outlet. (See article *Destruction Goes on...* elsewhere in this issue.)

Southampton: Highfield

We finish with news of a new world record. On Thursday 29th November 21 pubs in the **Brewhouse and Kitchen** chain joined together for an attempt on the world record for the world's largest beer tasting event. The Highfield outlet was one of the participating venues. Guinness World Records confirmed that a new benchmark had been achieved, with 1,264 people undertaking a synchronised beer tasting.

If you have any news about pub openings, change of landlords, closures, or other interesting items, please let us know at: pubinfo@shantscamra.org.uk

‘Pubs of the Year,’

Our cover image for this edition is of the Campaign for Real Ale’s National ‘Pub of the Year’ for 2018, the Wonston Arms, just north of Winchester. Although, perhaps confusingly, not announced until now, early 2019. CAMRA takes a very convoluted and time-consuming path to arrive at this result.

The annual competition to select, what we consider, the best pub in the land was initiated more than 30 years ago, in 1988, and involves three quite independent judging stages. At the start of each year, members of the 200 plus branches in Great Britain can all vote to produce a short list of pubs within their branch area (in Southern Hampshire’s case, four). These are then visited, anonymously, at differing times over several weeks, by branch member volunteers (again we use four). They assess the pubs against a broad set of criteria established by CAMRA nationally – for beer quality, obviously, but also on such aspects as ambiance, service, welcome, décor and involvement in local activities.

The sum of all these judges’ scores establishes the branch’s ‘Pub of the Year,’ around February/March of the year. Branch selections then pass on to CAMRA’s sixteen regional areas where a wholly new set of inspectors, selected from throughout the region also visit (again anonymously) to arrive at a regional winner. Finally, the regional winners all go through to a third, nation-wide contest, judged by yet another group of predominantly CAMRA National Committee or National Executive members to (at last!) produce our deliberation on that year’s Pub of the Year, by which time the year is pretty much over...

As the Editorial mentions, the Wonston Arms is the first Hampshire pub to be selected in the 31 years of the competition; the previous nearest was in 1990, the Bell at Aldworth in north Berkshire, a lovely village inn dating, astonishingly, from 1340.

For the 2019 round, the Southern Hampshire branch completed its selection at the start of March and our winner this year is one of our new breed of micro-pubs, the **Steel Tank Alehouse** in Chandler’s Ford; they were presented with the certificate at an evening of capacity ‘one in, one out’ trading on Wednesday, April 17th.



Adam Beale (left) being presented with his ‘Pub of the Year’ certificate by the competition organiser and long-time branch committee member, Alex Presland.

The Steel Tank is in the Chandler’s Ford Precinct, at number 1, occupying the former HSBC bank site, still famed for an armed shootout in 2007 when metropolitan robbers, attempting a heist, were fatally thwarted by a police stakeout. The rhyming

from Branch to Nation

slang name seemed the only one possible in the circumstances of such a pre-history!

The Steel Tank has bloomed in Chandler's Ford as an outpost of interesting, small brewery real ales, real ciders and some of the more interesting craft keg beers now so much in vogue. An important added plus is the depth of knowledge of the owners and staff of the products they sell. For customers wanting to try a good selection of the (usually six) unusual micro-brewery ales, the pub will serve them in third pints. Adding to the Steel Tank's convenience the Southampton-Winchester bus (Bluestar no 1) service passes outside and Southampton-Romsey train services are only minutes away at the station in Hursley Road!





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ACVs – A Force for Good? Pete Horn

An ACV is an Asset of Community Value. Once a council designates somewhere, a pub for instance, as an ACV then any proposed sale is delayed by up to six months to give the community a chance to raise funds to put in a bid to buy it. It sounds like a force for good, doesn't it? It can prevent a pub from being suddenly and, crucially, *secretly*, sold off to developers, but surprisingly there can be a downside and that can result in a pub then closing; how so?

A bit of background: **The Black Horse** in West Tytherley passed into the tenanted hands of Nick and Elaine Cooper in 2009. They immediately made a success of the pub and in 2011 they bought the freehold from Admiral Taverns. But running a pub is hard work and a few years later they leased the pub out to tenants and moved to Devon for a relaxed semi-retirement. All was fine and Nathaniel and Vanessa had the Black Horse on a 3-year lease with an option to buy the freehold. In the meantime, Nick and Elaine got planning permission for a small house on a part of the pub's unused land, with hopes that their eventual full retirement might be next door to their favourite pub.

Three years later, Nathaniel and Vanessa moved on, at the end of their tenancy, to run a pub in Shropshire, so Nick and Elaine sought again for new tenants. At this stage a rumour started to go around the village that the Black Horse itself was going to be converted to housing, not just have a house built next door, and rather than talking to the owners to see what the plans actually were the Parish Council leapt into action and applied for, and got, an ACV listing on the pub, which also included the land for the proposed house next door.

At this point you might think all well and good as the owners had no intention of selling the pub except to sitting pub tenants but even so the rumours continued along with the owners being shunned in the local shop. But then the ACV became a problem in itself. In the pub trade, the presence of an ACV has come to be seen as a sign of a failing pub, and the sale restriction greatly reduces the attractiveness of a three-year lease with a buy option. So the new tenants that Nick and Elaine had lined up pulled out of the deal, resulting in the pub closing when Nathaniel and Vanessa left. Nick and Elaine did return to run the pub over Christmas but shut the doors on 13th January, long term until new tenants could be found. This is not what an ACV is supposed to do!

So, what next? Nick & Elaine lodged a notice to dispose of their 'asset' and this triggered the six month period in which the community can put together a bid. Once that period is up, assuming that the community don't actually raise enough to buy the pub, the tenancy could again be offered under the old lease terms with option to buy terms and the freehold could then actually be split to make the land for the house next door a separate entity.

However, fortune has smiled on the pub and new tenants have now been found despite the still un-expired ACV. Ken and Linda reopened the Black Horse on 22nd March and your author can vouch for the quality of the beer again.

ACVs, a great idea for pubs at risk, but maybe 'be careful about what you wish for' should be the advice for 'safe' pubs. A list of Pubs with ACVs can be found on the branch's website at:

www.shantscamra.org.uk/campaigns/acv

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Destruction Goes on... Rob Whatley

What links an industrial wasteland in the centre of Romsey, a chain of coffee shops and two new, central Southampton hotels, opened within the last few years?

In the 1970s and 1980s Whitbread were the dominant brewer and pub owner in our part of Hampshire (as in many other areas of England and Wales). This came about through the company's avaricious takeovers of regional breweries. Locally, purchases included Strongs of Romsey and Brickwoods of Portsmouth.

At first, the beers sold, at least the real ales, continued to be those brewed in the breweries that previously supplied the pub estate. Gradually though, Whitbread began to cease brewing at many of its acquisitions including Strongs in 1981 and Brickwoods in 1983. The nationwide spate of closures led CAMRA to produce one of its most popular ever campaigning t-shirts - The Whitbread Tour of Destruction, shown here.

While the Romsey site continued as a depot for a while, distribution eventually moved to Hedge End in 1989 and Whitbread finally left the site in October 1989. The managed house division was due to retain a presence in the town, but this plan was abandoned following the publication of the Monopoly and Mergers Committee's notorious report into the brewing industry, in 1990.

Early suggestions for the use of the Strongs Brewery site included housing and a retail outlet. Plans for the retail outlet were quickly refused by Test Valley planners in 1988, leaving housing as the preferred option. Years passed and after numerous incidents of vandalism, most remaining brewery buildings were demolished in early 1996; but stagnation continued.



In 2005 provisional planning permission was granted for 211 new homes on the site but according to Test Valley Borough Council just 13 houses have been built to date! Planners were in talks earlier this year to try to get building re-started but we are still awaiting an announcement of a date.

Over time Whitbread withdrew completely from brewing and largely from the pub business. Deciding, in 2001, to sell all its breweries and brewing interests (Whitbread Beer Company) to Interbrew, (later InBev, now Budweiser Brewing Group). In 2002, they sold the pubs, known as the Laurel Pub Co., to Enterprise Inns (now Ei Group).

Destruction Goes on... continued

Whitbread put their capital into many other ventures including David Lloyd Leisure, Pizza Hut UK and TGI Friday's, though all of these they have since disposed of. They even had a 20% stake in TVS, the predecessor of Meridian TV. Whitbread did continue to run large, food-based pub/restaurants. The current line-up includes: Brewers Fayre (160 outlets) Beefeater (165) Cookhouse and Pub (10) Bar and Block (6) and Table Table (80).

You may have noticed that Beefeaters or Brewers Fayres are next to Premier Inns. No surprise then, that Premier Inns are also part of the current Whitbread group with a total of 4,385 rooms in UK. Breakfast for those staying at the Inn is served in the adjoining Beefeater or Brewers Fayre.

As the number of pubs has decreased in recent years so the number of coffee shops has increased. Whitbread picked up on this and purchased Costa Coffee in 1995. Prime locations are important in both the pub and coffee shop trades. So, it is no surprise to find Costa in premises that were once pubs. One example is opposite Southampton's Central station in what used to be the Victory pub. The building is now home to not one but two coffee shops, Costa *and* Starbucks. But, for how long is in doubt as permission has been sought to demolish the building, and anyway, in January this year, Whitbread sold Costa Coffee to the Coca-Cola Company in a deal worth £3.9bn!

In the 1970s, when CAMRA began, Whitbread were seen as 'public enemy number one' for lack of real ales, lack of choice and for brewery closures. Today their interest in alcoholic beverages is minimal and many younger readers would not recognise the name unless it is on some fading signage. One might be more likely to come across old Strongs or Brickwoods windows in pubs than the Whitbread name.

What can I do for WhatPub?



WhatPub is CAMRA's on-line pub guide. We aim to list every pub and club in the United Kingdom with up-to-date, independently researched details making it the nation's 'go to' online pub guide.

The web address is easy to remember – whatpub.com. Go there and you can search for your local pubs, or for pubs anywhere in the UK, and filter the results by over 30 selectable desired features such as 'serving real ale,' 'dog friendly,' 'quiet pub' or 'close to a railway station.'

As with all web-based information systems, the success of this guide depends on the quality of its information being up to date and accurate, and this is where *you* can help. If you are looking at WhatPub and notice some information that is wrong, or you notice some important feature has been left out, please use the 'Submit Updates' tab to send us your update. You don't have to be a CAMRA member to do this but if you are a CAMRA member please sign in to WhatPub – you'll get a better feedback form and won't have to input your email address, and, as an added bonus, there's a settings page to turn off the adverts!

If you would be able to help the Southern Hampshire branch of CAMRA with doing full pub surveys please send an email to: pubsurvey@shantscamra.org.uk or go to our local website at: www.shantscamra.org.uk/beer/pubdata/ to see the pubs that need surveys. Again, CAMRA members can sign in and get better access.



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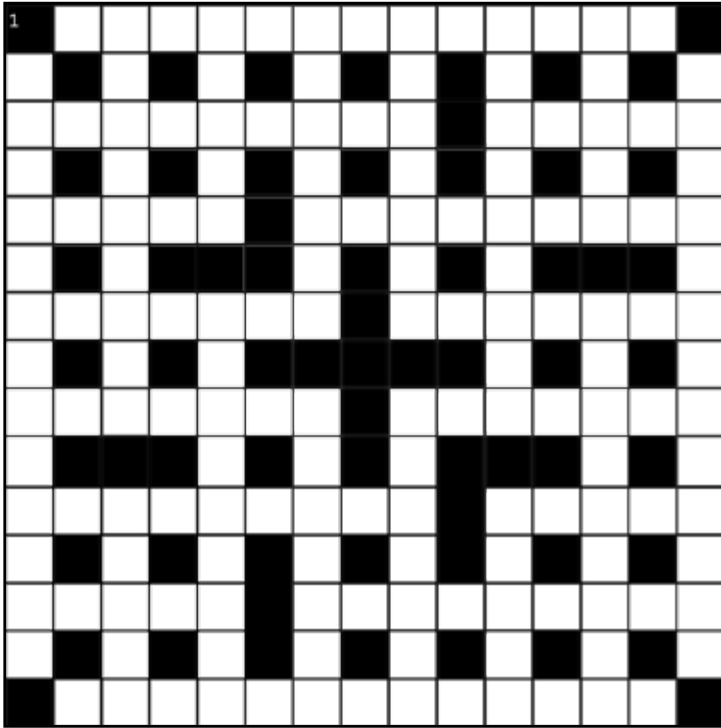
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QUETZALCOATL

Alphabetic puzzle. Solve the clues and fit the solutions as you can (note, two layouts are possible! 'U' gives a clue to mine.).

A These sea-green waves exhibit assent (5)

B Marston, say, are very (heads up one) (7)

C Get it? Amigo (9)

D Dustin Hoffman, thrice disheartened then less loud – my old man! (7)

Poetic couplet announcing no respect for credit! (7)

E Satirical mag slates hairy facial fringes (9)

F Tiny circus star, lame after treatment (4,5)

G Small, soft dumplings said to lack the life force! (7)

H No hero in Bath's fantasy engineer (5,8)

I Creating envy, I saw, like Caesar, in good sense (9)

J Shocks enjoin all gutsy, lusty hearts (5)

Tribal gathering originally just in rebel governed areas (5)

K Far southern village that is, even in UK, creatable (5)

L Long-lived (not a cobbler's work) (7)

M Farah's falcons, real New Yorkers! (7)

N Berlin newspaper of 1933-45 era? (4,5)

O How Marx saw religion – just a toxic smoke! (5)

P Arguable in a case of a deep ball (9)

Q Leaflet seeking facts – queen's a riot in farce! (13)

R Rejects matters of the Royal East Kent Regiment (7)

S Irish goon who 'told us he was ill' (5,8)

T Flow qualifier that I'd allow in here (5)

U Ruin, an alp just gets so flattened (9)

V Cultural worth adherent in old artworks or curios (5)

W We dress in ragged strange ways (9)

X Classical pirates' cartographical instruction? (1,5,3,4)

Y Doughnuts so good they're named twice! (7)

Z Belief in the uniqueness of a life force (5)



A very good entry for this edition, 26, with only one with a couple of letters confused in the three-letter word core. Apologies for the anagram in the clue for ZINFANDEL which somehow acquired an extra letter (corrected in the online version) but this seemed not to throw anyone!

Winners:

Joss Britcher, Portsmouth

J. E. Green, St. Albans

The other twenty-three correct solvers were:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Ron Brading | Nigel Cook |
| Rod Cross | Linda Derrick |
| Philip Doughty | Dave Ellison |
| David Hancock | Belinda Harvey |
| Norman Hurl | P. D. Jordan |
| Guy Lawrenson | R. S. Milligan |
| Gary Morse | Mark Nichols |
| Tim Parkinson | Jeff Phillips |
| Rebecca Pink | Ron Poole |
| Harvey Saunders | Martin Sirl |
| Trevor Smith | Howard Sprenger |
| Dave Walbridge | |



It has been almost five years since **Vibrant Forest Brewery** began brewing near Lymington, in a unit that was then thought ‘massive.’ Two years ago, they had to hire a small unit on a farm just up the road for storage as they had entirely run out of space. So the search for larger premises began.

Finally, new premises have been found, all the planning, licencing and bureaucracy has been waded through and moving is under way; into four brand new units at Hardley Industrial Estate, Hythe.

Unit 3 will be a large taproom, and some cask storage area. Unit 4, including a mezzanine floor, a cask, can and bottle store. Unit 5, another with mezzanine floor, storage and two cold rooms, together with a canning line. Unit 6 the brewery itself.

Outside the taproom will be a large south facing seating area. Longer opening hours are planned for the taproom and there is also a large space inside for seating. Food will be available in the form of snacks, plus there will be ‘street food’ on special days such as Open Days (as at Lymington now) plus beer festivals at the brewery (instead of at the Brockenhurst Village Hall).

The new brewery is also now close to a very regular bus route, Bluestar route 9, every 20 minutes from Southampton station, via Totton. Hythe, of course, is also easy and very pleasant to reach by sea and tram by its ferry plus pier railway!

Launch day for the brewery and its taproom is planned to be the first of June. Check nearer the date at: www.vibrantforest.co.uk

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