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**Giant
Dongle**



Summer 2013

Campaign for Real Ale West Dorset Branch

Weymouth Octoberfest Saved!

West Dorset CAMRA is delighted to announce that agreement has been reached with the new operators of Weymouth pavilion to hold Dorset's essential beer and cider festival in the Pavilion's Ocean Room on Friday 4th & Saturday 5th October.

Further details will be available on www.camrawdorset.org.uk nearer the time. CAMRA intends to make this the best Weymouth Octoberfest yet!

Weymouth and Portland Borough Council refusal to list the Albert Inn as a Community Asset "Illegal" claim

The Council rejected CAMRA's application for the listing of the Albert on the grounds that there is another pub – **The Wyke Smugglers** – 0.7k away. We have been advised that the Council is in contravention of the Localism Act in making this decision by reference to another resource. The Department for Communities & Local Government has agreed to explain the situation to the Council. When CAMRA receives confirmation that this has been done, a new application will be submitted. In the meantime the Albert remains open and continues to serve good beer.

The end of Wykefest

CAMRA did consider reviving Wykefest at an alternative (all weather) venue for 2013, but regrettably concluded that without the participation of Value House this was not a viable project – better to focus our energies on Octoberfest!

London Calling (It's all about the volume not the ABV) By Rich Gabe

On an overcast Saturday, May 18th, while Bonnie Tyler was flying the flag for the United Kingdom in Eurovision, a dirty dozen West Dorset CAMRA members embarked on a pub crawl of London.

This was a crawl devised by our membership secretary Andy Patterson some time ago for a stag do that never happened. Having suggested we as a branch do the crawl, I looked into the logistics and cost and realised that catching a train on group save tickets we could all get to London at a very reasonable price. The idea of the day was to visit 9 pubs – all on foot, starting from the **George** off Borough High St and finishing at the former CAMRA National pub of the year the **Harp** in Covent Garden. Andy supplied us all with basic info on each pub and a map marking its location. The day was a mix of classic pubs and beer pubs so something for all.

At Waterloo station we crossed to Waterloo East and caught a train bound for London Bridge, this was all on our original day return as the ticket stated "London Terminus", so if you're thinking of visiting the Borough Market area you don't need separate underground tickets!

Arriving at the **George** at around 11.20 am we had a choice of various **Greene King** beers or as I opted for a pint of **Hyde's** finest at 4.5%, where a member of the party thought it was too strong to start with, hence the retort of "Its all about the volume" etc.. The George is owned by the National Trust and is an original coaching inn on the Old Kent Road route dating back to the 17th century. There is also a bank of old cash register beer pumps sadly not in use. It is also the first pub of the day to be listed on the CAMRA National Inventory of Pubs. After a quick bite to eat we set off through the Borough Market to the **Rake**, the smallest pub of the day that blends into the market. I partook in a pint of **Oldershaws Caskade** at 4.2% a little hazy but tasted OK. I could have tried one of the many foreign bottles on sale or like some an American craft mild though to me it was more like a fruity brown ale. Next up one of London's finest cask ale pubs the **Market Porter** where a good dozen plus pumps were on tempting offer. I knew this would be a two pint pub so first up was an **American Pale** from the **Longman** brewery at 4% very hoppy indeed followed by a **Blue Monkey Marmoset** at 3.6%, a great beer from a great brewery! I got chatting to a beer ticker who had tried over 35K different brews since 1970 – he looked good for it! The Borough area has some great pubs and is well worth a crawl alone but that's for another day; next across the Thames and into the **Blackfriar**.

The Blackfriar is a listed pub sitting directly opposite Blackfriars bridge it is decorated with various metal etchings, sculptures and stained glass all depicting Dominican monks, though all the internal art was modelled by the pub landlord around 1905, it's certainly unique and worth a visit. Alongside a lovely veggie burger I discovered for me a great new brewery; **Portobello** whose 4% **VPA** slipped down a treat! I could have quite happily stayed sat outside the Blackfriar all day watching the Met speed around but time waits for no-one so it was off to the first of three **Sam Smiths** pubs in a row.

Sadly Sam Smiths only brew one cask ale – **Old Brewery Bitter** and its pretty average. They do have a good bottled beer selection that some of the party opted for. First up **the Cittie of Yorke**, enter through a long hallway, pass the front room and step into the equivalent of a cathedral high curved ceiling, stained glass windows – gothic to say the least; and amazingly all done around 1924. Second up a spot of time travel off Fleet St and down an alley and you're in the **Olde Cheshire Cheese** a step back into Dickensian days a real gem. The pub dates from a re-build just after the Great Fire of London in the 17th century. Sadly the Chop room was locked –with the fire lit - strange! I did venture downstairs into the cavernous cellars and made it out for our third Sam Smiths- the **Princess Louise** on High Holborn. A large horse-shoe shaped bar all recently divided up into snugs making it feel quite cosy. The Victorian toilets in the gents are worth checking out, though the ladies were not so impressed with

So all but two of these eight premises have experienced big changes.

There is no sign of it letting up - even the Chancellor cancelling the Beer duty escalator this year will not help much - it has not changed the duty on other drinks and no control over supermarket sales has yet been attempted. Many of us in CAMRA believe that it would be much better to support pubs and other premises where drinking is supervised by some form of pricing controls so that we get more leverage against pre-loading and binge drinking.

Even if these things do come about it will still mean - guess what? - more changes - which is more or less where we started....So lets just get used to change and pop down the local for a couple of well deserved pints to help us all cope!!

Swift Halves By Tony Egerton & Kevin Launder

Congratulations to the **Boot**, Weymouth for being awarded runner-up in the **Marston's** Cask Pub of the Year (Southern) for the second year running. One better next year Kev?

The **White Hart** at Bishops Caundle has been sold by **Hall and Woodhouse** and is now a Free House. The new owner's web site declares 'We are a Free House and can buy our beer from wherever we want!' I hope they become more imaginative in their beer choice than the **Doombar** they stock at present!

Looks like the promised micro brewery in the **Dolphin** is a dead duck. The pub has reverted to selling three **Hopback** ales plus a guest. All our best to new landlord Colin.

The new name for the **Rum Shack** in Weymouth is **The Gap** - still no real ale though. **Banus** has reopened as **The Weymouth Bars**. The **George**, which shut under a cloud, is planned to reopen in July refurbished with what looks like a heavy cafe bar theme under the same management as the **Lazy Lizard**. The **Dorothy** has reopened also under new management as a family friendly pub (run by the good people from the **Kings Head?**). The former **Excise House** in Hope Square is now **Il Porto** Italian Restaurant serving **Purbeck Fossil Fuel** on tap.

Congratulations to **Art Brew - Monkey IPA** won Gold in its category (Premium Strong Beer) at SIBA's National Championship, Sheffield Beerx in March

Congratulations also to **Palmers** who claimed a silver award for **Palmers 200** in the Bottled Bitters over 5% class at SIBA's SW regional competition at Newton Abbot in April.

And yet more congratulations to Nick and Dawn Poole of **West Milton cider**, who won 3rd prize in the cider and perry championship at Reading - great news for Dorset cider

In Portland's Victoria Square the **Victoria Lodge** (once Masons & Mariners) is again boarded up and offered to let "Free of Tie" – another opportunity to lose your savings and/or incur debt?

Michel Hooper-Immins, CAMRA West Dorset PR guru and regional Pub of the Year judge, was again invited by Sainsburys to help with their 2013 Great British Beer Hunt, looking for a range of beers to go into Sainsburys stores on a regional or national basis.

The Giant Dongle has topped last year's second place to win CAMRA Wessex Region Newsletter of the year. We'll drink to that!



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The Cock Up Column - Beer Duty Accelerator

In the Spring issue of the Giant dongle I forecast that the Chancellor would not drop the hated Beer duty accelerator – WRONG!

Not only did he abandon the accelerator but he also cut duty by 1p – a massive victory not only for CAMRA, breweries, pubs and the drinking public but for democracy in action.

Unfortunately the 1p cut is largely symbolic. Nobody prices beer in pubs in odd pence. Some pub co.s have promised to donate the saving to charity. Others have said they will offset it against coming price increases. Do not expect to see the price you pay fall!

Score Nil for No Ale

A recent change to CAMRA's beer scoring system distinguishes between pubs with no ale (0) and pubs with crap ale (1). This seems sensible, although at least you can usually identify a pub with no ale before you part with your cash, whereas you have to pay to find out how bad the beer is. Interestingly "average" beer still scores only 2 (out of 5). If the average is only just above awful, what has CAMRA been doing all these years?

Mutterings in my Pint **By Kevin Launder**

Minimum Pricing for Alcohol - Both the Government and CAMRA have made U-turns on minimum pricing. CAMRA being a "broad church" (150,000 members inevitably means 150,000 shades of opinion) I feel OK deviating from the party line on this issue. My concerns are more with health and social issues than supporting pubs (heresy I know). I was delighted to see the end of the beer duty accelerator and buy bottles in Tesco's, but to me alcohol widely available at pocket money prices just does not make sense – you can see the results on the streets, in the courts and in A&E wards. It will be interesting to see how events unfold in Scotland. There could well be another twist in this public policy issue before long.

No Beer Please? - June's "What's Brewing" included a letter from a CAMRA member claiming that Real Ale and Beer are different things. – "Beer (like lager and craft) is the 'other stuff' they drink on the continent" he claimed. This puzzled me. If Real Ale is not beer, why do CAMRA branches expend so much time and energy running beer festivals and compiling a "Good Beer Guide"? Why do we put so much effort into the "Good Beer Guide" period?

I don't like cider - I wish I did. I love the concept - a natural product brewed (if that's the right word) seasonally, based on locally grown fresh fruit, and made in a traditional way mainly by small producers. It looks and smells fabulous, and was the first form of alcohol I drank as a teenager, but after a lifetime drinking beer I just can not stand the taste of cider.

I found another reason to regret not being a cider drinker at the **John Gregory** last week, when I saw a superb "Scrumpy and Western" band called the **Skimmitty Hitchers**. Don't think the **Wurzels** or the **Yetties**, although they paid homage to both, these were young talented musicians who write their own lyrics to hit songs – "Viva Lyme Regis" (Elvis Presley), a tribute to Weymouth "Bad Town on the Coast" (Creedance Clearwater?), "West Country Holiday" (10cc?) and plenty more. I just wish I could genuinely chorus "Lift Up Your Cider Jar!"

The Somerset - Word on the street is that the closed pub opposite Weymouth station has been acquired by Tony Bourton, the man who (with a little help from his family) turned the next door derelict Giant Pot into the West Dorset Pub of the Year Nominee Handmade Pie & Ale House. We don't know what Tony's plans are for the Somerset, but, judging by the transformation of the Giant Pot, Weymouth will benefit. The town has a number of empty shops as well as pubs, and needs the entrepreneurial skills Tony has already shown (more heresy) whatever he does with the Somerset.

The Acorn, Evershot – Complaints about Gastro pubs where drinkers are unwelcome are all too frequent. The Acorn is not one such. Yes, it has a posh restaurant with "Cheffy" food and an extensive wine list, and yes, it has expensive rooms with four poster beds, but it remains very much a village pub where the local lads can play skittles while drinking lager and brightly coloured shots on a sunny Sunday afternoon. The 4 Real Ales are pretty good too.

The Kings Arms, Weymouth – The Kings had 4 ales on tap the other night - **Wey Ale** (re-badged something or other?), **Directors**, **Caledonian Sunseeker** and the reliable **Tribute**, a rather uninspired selection, no **Doombar** at least. The food looked very good, and "**North & South**" were belting out blues influenced rock to a clientele of a certain age. The quayside pub was jumping. No, not a celebrated Real Ale Mecca, but these guys are doing something right!

Changes, Changes, Changes

By Dave Harris

It is often said that we humans don't like change. The pub sector is going through a massive set of changes right now both in terms of who uses them, what they expect and what they are prepared to pay.

For the last two decades or more there have been a range of rapid changes in society, many of which have affected the traditional pub adversely. These are all coming together now in creating a "perfect storm" for the pub and its users. A few examples which come to mind are listed below, but I'm sure the reader will also have others they can think of:

- Changes in beer and other excise duties and taxes
- Growth of discounted alcohol sales in supermarkets
- The smoking ban
- Restructuring of the Pub industry in response to legislative changes
- Pubs increasingly seen as properties which must make a return on some arbitrary investment value, often with little or no correlation to actual trading potential
- Changes in the social "landscape" - computer gaming, social media, smart phones have all changed the way we communicate, socialise and keep in touch

Many of the larger pub-owning companies are now trying to reduce the size of their portfolios which were acquired aggressively during the era of "cheap financing" before the economic downturn. This together with the continuing difficult trading environment is creating a real "churning" in the industry.

A local example is the area within 100 yards or so of Weymouth's railway station. This is a small area once very rich in pubs. The table shows a potted recent history:

Name	Recent History - (last 3 or 4 years)
Railway Tavern	Relatively unchanged
Pie & Ale House	Giant Pot closed, dormant over two years, now extensively refurbished and reopened as the Handmade Pie & Ale House
Somerset Hotel	Closed and boarded up after periods of intermittent trading
Sun Inn	Relatively unchanged
No 6/Kings club	The former Royal British Legion branch & club refurbished as No 6 bar, Closed, reopened as Kings club, Closed again. Open again and thriving (Saturday afternoons at least) as Club Vision
Queens Hotel	Closed, Comedy club, Closed, Refurb reopened, Closed, now offices for a firm of accountants
Dolphin	Run down, closed, Painted up, reopened, Closed, now re-opened with new landlord
Brownlow	Closed and in course of redevelopment as flats

theirs! All three of these pubs are on CAMRA's National Inventory and are well worth a visit for their architecture.

Back to the present day and I found myself drinking a superb pint of **Portobello Pale** outside Covent Garden's **Porterhouse** as things were starting to liven up with the Saturday evening brigade. The Porterhouse is a multi-level built mezzanine style boutique pub that specialises in craft keg beers, some people did try the keg stouts but I kept it real! Finally to finish a 200yard trek up the road and we were at the **Harp** a former CAMRA National Pub of the Year. All day I'd been hoping for a mild and there on the bar was **Windsor & Eton Bostin Mild**- yep it ran out as mine was poured!! So to compensate a smooth pint of **Sam Brookes Wandle** at 3.8%. Once again the pub was rammed so we drank on the street and had a group photo taken by the friendly doorman. Sadly I just squeezed a final half of a limited brew from **Otley** called **OG** at 5.4% it was fantastic but rushed due to delays on South-West Trains. A brisk walk back across the Thames to Waterloo and we just made the first through train since the morning to Weymouth, all very tired but what a day!

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Branch diary

Business meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at locations around the branch area. All members are welcome to any of these meetings.

July	Wed 10h	8pm	Chideock. The Clock + Marshwood, the Bottle
August	Wed 14th	8pm	Upwey. The Royal Standard + the Ship
September	Wed 11th	8pm	Piddlehinton. The Thimble + others along the valley route)
October	Fri & Sat 4 th & 5 th	All Day	Weymouth Octoberfest
October	Wed 9th	8pm	Lyme Regis. The Royal Lion Hotel + others

Branch contacts

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Editor's note: Opinions expressed in the Giant Dongle are those of its contributors and do not purport to be or necessarily conform to official CAMRA policy

Trading Standards

If you have a dispute with a pub, such as it failing to serve full measures or not displaying price lists, beer strengths or business names, and you are unable to resolve this informally on the spot, CAMRA encourages you to contact Trading Standards.

For details of services offered by local Trading Standards Officers in Dorset see www.dorsetforyou.com/tradingstandards. You can email Trading Standards at: tradingstandards@dorsetcc.gov.uk or call 01305 224012 (Fax: 01305 224297).

Alternatively you can call Consumer Direct on 08454 040506.