

RISING

THE

TUN

The Old English word 'Tun'...

...means a cask or barrel of beer



The newsletter from the Swindon & North Wiltshire branch of CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale)

FREE!

please take one

PUB DARTS

Hitting The Bullseye
For Local Landlords

Summer 2015
Issue No. 110

What Fate Awaits
The Wheatsheaf?

Pub Of The
Year

Meet The
Brewer



(Pic: The Abbey Mead)

'THE RISING TUN'

The newsletter of Swindon & North Wiltshire branch of CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale)

Editor: Mark Nelson editor@swindoncamra.org.uk

Published Quarterly:

The newsletter is published quarterly in **January, April, July & October** and 2000 copies are distributed free of charge to pubs and other drinking establishments across Swindon, Devizes and the surrounding areas of North Wiltshire. If your pub doesn't currently receive copies, please email the editor and we will include you on the distribution list for future editions.

The editor would like to thank the following for their valuable contributions and help with this issue:

Guest contributor Nic Coome, Alex Harkness, Chris James, Kevin Galton, Paul Arrondelle, Richard James, Vince Chilcott and other members of the Swindon & North Wiltshire branch.

Highlights from some back issues, along with all Swindon & North Wiltshire CAMRA branch Real Ale news, can be found on our website; www.swindon.camra.org.uk

Think of the environment; please share this issue of 'The Rising Tun' before disposing of it carefully.

Helpful Contacts

Swindon & North Wiltshire Branch:

Richard James - Tel: 01793 618921
contact@swindoncamra.org.uk

Trading Standards Swindon:

Tel: 01793 466155
tstandards@swindon.gov.uk

Devizes Branch:

Don Jones
devizescamra@gmail.com

To Advertise:

Neil Richards, Matelot Marketing
Tel: 01536 358670

The Local Diary

All meetings and social events are relaxed and friendly. Please feel free to come along and join in. All CAMRA members and non-members are welcome to attend. Please remember to check the website (see above) before setting off for any of the entries listed below, in case of amendments to timings/venue. All meetings start at 8pm unless specified otherwise.

SWINDON & NORTH WILTSHIRE BRANCH

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|--|
| 13 th July | Branch Meeting | The Crown Inn , Wilcot Road, Pewsey, SN9 5EL |
| 10 th Aug | Branch Meeting | Pig On The Hill , Devizes Road, Swindon SN1 4BH |
| 14 th Sep | Branch Meeting | The Kings , 20 Wood Street, Swindon SN1 4AB |
| 12 th Oct | Branch Meeting | The Merlin , Drove Road, Swindon SN1 3AF |

DEVIZES BRANCH [www.devizescamra.org.uk]

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------|--|
| 14 th Jul | Branch Meeting | Southgate Inn , Potterne Road, Devizes SN10 5BY |
|----------------------|----------------|--|

Find our meetings on Facebook, search: CAMRA Swindon

Welcome to the summer edition of the Rising Tun, the free, quarterly newsletter brought to you by your local CAMRA branch. Beer festival season is well underway and by the time this edition hits the pubs, the Devizes beer festival will already be done and dusted. Earlier this year we've had Reading and Chippenham's festivals close by and in mid-summer, we have CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival to look forward to at Olympia. And before the lacing gets to dry on the inside of your pint mug, it will be time for Swindon's beer festival which will be taking place once again at STEAM in October. More details can be found on page 7, but before then there'll hopefully be plenty of sunshine to enjoy, so make the most of any good weather and go visit some of the great pubs that Swindon and North Wiltshire has to offer. Why not make it your goal to visit at least three pubs this summer that you've not visited before, maybe starting with some of those advertised in the following pages, which enables us to keep this newsletter going. See you at the bar!

Mark Nelson Editor

Welcome

From Swindon & North Wilts. CAMRA

Campaign Column & CAMRA news

Back in the spring edition of 2014 we reported on the process that communities can follow to protect local pubs by listing them with the council as an 'Asset Of Community Value'. The residents of Chilton Foliat, on the outskirts of our branch border, are now in the process of using this piece of legislation to help save their pub - The Wheatsheaf. Nic Coome reports.

This article is written to tell the first part of the story about the efforts of a few local people to preserve the only pub in the village of Chilton Foliat.

Chilton Foliat is a small village at the east end of Wiltshire, on the road between Swindon and Hungerford. It has a population of around 290, a primary school, a service station, a church and, crucially, one pub, The Wheatsheaf. As with many rural pubs, business is not exactly booming but circumstances have made things much worse. The history of its ownership over the past twenty-five years gives some clues as to its decline. Up until the early 1990s it was a Courage pub. Then, as part of an exchange of parts of their estates, it was transferred to Morlands, the Abingdon brewer.

Morlands was subsequently bought by Greene King and following a succession of beer price rises and reductions in the availability of guest ales, allied to regular rent rises, Greene King realised that their policy was not working and around 7 years ago, The Wheatsheaf was bundled up with 154 others and sold to Admiral Taverns for around £57m (according to contemporary news reports).

At the time of their take-over the pub was run by the most successful tenant we've had for many years – trade was good, the pub was popular and the service excellent.

Unfortunately this didn't appear sufficient for Admiral who refused to entertain that tenant's plan for the renewal of



of the lease. Since then, it has been run (with one exception) by a succession of totally unsuitable tenants and management companies. The recent past has been blighted by failures to pay bills, leading to the non-supply of some basic commodities such as beer, the cutting off of the telephone line and visits from utility companies seeking to cut off gas, electricity etc.

Some people would cite the above as evidence that Admiral's intention was/is to render the business non-viable, so as to smooth the way for a quick change of use. Admiral deny this; I leave it up to the reader to decide for him- or herself.

It is clear that the price paid for the pub (even if somewhat masked by its inclusion with all the others) by Admiral was way out of line with its actual value as a pub. Of course, a substantial, thatched building in a small rural community, close to all amenities and with good transport links (as an estate agent might describe it!) is worth a lot of money other than as a pub. The above recent history has been accompanied by the backdrop of the pub having been put on the market by Admiral shortly after they acquired it for the colossal price of £600,000. They had no takers at that price, or at the reduced price of £500,000.

Continued on page 4...

So we now come close to the present. In 2011 the government of the day passed the Localism Act. This piece of legislation included within it, the ability for local communities to have assets considered vital to the local community put on a register to be maintained by the Planning Authority (in our case, Wiltshire Council). (Note: it's Part 5 Chapter 3 of the Act for fans of this sort of thing.) One of the subsequent pieces of secondary legislation (The Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012) has a list of all those who are entitled to seek registration. Whilst in theory anyone can try this for themselves, individuals have to find at least 20 other like-minded individuals. Fortunately the Regulations make specific reference to Parish Councils and so, on June 28th 2013, the application was made from Chilton Foliat Parish Council to register The Wheatsheaf as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). It remains on the register for 5 years, after which it may be renewed if appropriate. The process, at least for Parish Councils in Wiltshire, is very simple – it requires one form to be filled in and Wiltshire do all the rest.

The next thing to happen was on February 17th this year when Admiral formally notified Wiltshire Council of its intention to sell. This immediately triggered the first moratorium which gave the community 6 weeks to decide whether or not it wanted to mount a community bid to buy the pub. The Parish Council decided that a community bid was the right thing to do, which triggered a second moratorium. This prevents Admiral from selling the pub to anyone (other than to the community bidder) for a full 6 months from the original notification, i.e. August 17th 2015. In the meantime, the asking price has dropped to £425,000 and the holding company (the second one we've had) is considering dropping out.



There is one other piece of legislation which is good news for pubs like ours. Until very recently, planning law has allowed changes of use between various properties grouped together as retail outlets without planning consent. This has enabled pubs to be converted to such diverse alternative uses as Chinese restaurants or estate agents overnight. A recent piece of legislation (The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (England) Order 2015) has now prevented this for pubs registered as ACVs.

The Wheatsheaf is not in good shape at the moment. Uncertainty has taken its toll and it can best be described as 'ticking over'. It has been physically neglected for too long and is in great need of refurbishment, something which Admiral refuse to contemplate and the various short-term occupants cannot afford to do. The community bid is being put together as you read this article. With a bit of good fortune, I will be able to submit 'Part 2 – The Wheatsheaf: How we did it!' later in the year.

Nic Coome
Chairman, Chilton Foliat Parish Council

The Carters Rest - Branch Pub Of The Year 2015

No stranger to the award in the past, the Carters Rest has once again been voted Branch Pub Of The Year for 2015. There are probably few real ale drinkers that have yet to sample the delights on offer at this Wroughton watering hole, with up to eleven real ales and two ciders on offer.

A traditional public house, with a separate bar and lounge, the 'Carters' name originates from the stables that used to be there, providing extra horses for the onward journey to Devizes market. The present, large, two bar pub dates from 1904 where hosts Kevin and Caroline serve up five regular and an ever-changing line-up of six guest ales. In addition to the real ciders, there's also keg cider, lager and Guinness.

An annual beer festival is held in December, live sport is shown, there's some occasional live music and a quiz night every Thursday. Several CAMRA members made the journey out of town for the recent presentation.



PUB NEWS



Swindon & North Wiltshire Branch

The Bell at Purton Stoke has changed licencees recently.

The Rolleston Arms in Curtis Street, Swindon has new Licencees.

The Wheatsheaf in Ermin Street in Lower Stratton, Swindon has also had a change of landlord.

The Beefeater in Lydiard Fields, West Swindon, has been refurbished recently.

The Woodlands Edge at Peatmoor in West Swindon has also been refurbished.

The Royal Oak in Old Town, Swindon has closed once again.

The Prince of Wales in Old Town, Swindon has been converted into Flats.

It is hoped that the **Cross Keys** in Royal Wootton Bassett will re-open shortly having been renovated following a fire.

Chris James, pub correspondent

Swindon and North Wiltshire Branch

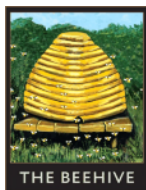
Can you see what it is yet?

The beer drinkers' of Pewsey may already be familiar with the metamorphosis that's underway at a former shop in North Street. Thanks to Gord and Sam Edwards of Shed Ales, a new watering hole is due to open, just as this edition of the Tun goes to press. We'll have more details of the **Shed Alehouse**, plus pictures and the obligatory sampling of their wares, in the next edition. And possibly, an update on the toilet facilities...



Meet The Brewer: Stig Andersen

Stonehenge Ales is one of the longest established micros in the country, with brewing commencing at the Old Mill back in 1984. Danish brewer Stig Andersen took over in 1993 and recently joined the patrons at the Beehive pub in Old Town to discuss his beer, the brewery and water...



The Beehive pub is tucked away on Prospect Hill in the Old Town area of Swindon. If you've not visited before, you're missing out on a real gem of a pub. Serving up to six real ales and a simple pie and mash menu, they also put on a good dose of live music and events, including 'Meet the Brewer' sessions.

Just as the spring edition of the Rising Tun was hitting the pubs, a few CAMRA members went along to the latest 'MTB' which featured Stig Andersen, Master Brewer from Stonehenge Ales.

Stonehenge Ales are based at Bunces Brewery at the Old Mill in Salisbury. Tony Bunce started the brewery way back in 1984, a year when I was fresh out of School and not old enough to purchase a pint. Well, not legally, anyway. Stig took over the brewery in 1993 and has been happily crafting quality beers at the Mill for the last 22 years.

After an introduction to the brewery (their bottled beers are bottled for them by Arkells) and a 'virtual' tour courtesy of a miniature model (you might just make this out in the photo), it was on to the beers.

First up was **Spire Ale (abv 3.8%)** one of their core ales. This was a light, refreshing beer, golden in colour with a decent addition of hops to nicely balance the brew. As you might expect for the gravity on offer, it was very easy drinking.

Pigswill (abv 4.0%) was next up. With slightly more body than Spire, this amber beer is their best-seller and it's easy to see why. Another easy-drinking number which is a more malt-forward beer, with plenty of appeal for your average ale drinker.

There was nothing average about the next offering; **Sign Of Spring (abv 4.6%)** which is a green beer. Not brewed with green hops, nor green in terms of it being immature,

but green because it's green in colour. Yes, you read that correctly. It's one of the brewery's seasonal ales and is brewed to welcome the coming of spring, something of a tradition in Stig's homeland of Denmark.

The evening rounded off with **Danish Dynamite (abv 5.0%)** the strongest of the Stonehenge core ales. This writer didn't wait until the samples came around as it was on tap at the bar and was definitely the highlight of those beers tasted during the evening. And if you like this one, be jealous of drinkers in Denmark. Stig helped some friends set up a brewery on one of the Danish islands and gave them the recipe for Danish Dynamite, which has been scaled up to an impressive 6.5% abv.



In view of the quantity of water the brewery get through, Stig decided to see if it was feasible to draw water from their own well. A good water source was found just 16 metres down and the brewery have now been brewing with their own water for the last couple of years. In what are challenging economic times for everyone, Stig has diversified and has now also started bottling the water from their spring. For more information about the Stonehenge Spring Water, take a look at their website; www.stonehenge-spring-water.co.uk



Swindon BEER Festival

Thursday 22nd - Saturday 24th October

Swindon's 29th Annual beer festival will take place at the STEAM museum on 22nd - 24th October, the same venue which has played host to the festival since 2006.

There was good feedback to last year's introduction of a covered area for food snacks, courtesy of the marquee situated outside of the main hall. This covered seating area for those purchasing food will be in place again for 2015.

Please note that admission to the Friday evening session is by ticket only and these need to be purchased in advance from the participating outlets shown below.

Swindon CAMRA would ask you to note that the pubs selling advance tickets do not receive any commission for doing so. They are simply lending their support for the CAMRA beer festival, so when purchasing tickets, please show your support by staying

for a drink or two. Details of the various sessions are shown below and tickets for the Friday evening session will be on sale from 25th September. Last year also saw the tunnel under the railway line between Emlyn Square and the STEAM museum site remaining open for the duration of the evening sessions. To help those travelling by foot/train, CAMRA will be looking to make similar arrangements for 2015.

SESSIONS

| | |
|---|--------|
| THURSDAY: 6.00pm - 11.00pm admission | £5.00 |
| FRIDAY LUNCH: 11.00am - 3.30pm admission | £5.00 |
| FRIDAY EVENING: 6.00pm - 11.00pm admission* | £10.00 |
| * by advance ticket only / includes £4.00 beer tokens | |
| SATURDAY: 11.00am - 7.00pm | £4.00 |

ADVANCED TICKET SALES

**For Friday evening
(Available from September 25th)**

The Beehive: 55 Prospect Hill Swindon SN1 3JS

The Carters Rest: 57 High Street, Wroughton SN4 9JU

The Glue Pot: 5 Emlyn Square, Swindon SN1 5BP

The Hop Inn: 7 Devizes Road, Swindon SN1 4BJ

Bitesize Beer News...

THE PIG'S 5th

The Pig On The Hill in Swindon's Old Town celebrated it's 5th Birthday in June, with a Beer & Cider festival, hog roast, live music, kids entertainment and the like. Even though the weather wasn't as good as earlier in the week, the event was so well supported, there's a chance this will become an annual summer event.

SWISS CHARITY

The Swiss Chalet held it's biggest ever fund raising event at the end of May with a mammoth music and family fun day. Landlord John Honeyman was looking to raise thousands of pounds for Prospect Hospice. The event included eight live bands over two stages, hog roast, children's entertainment, stalls and an auction.

ON THE BEER RUN

Despite concerns that a crackdown on binge drinking may put a spanner in the works, the Wanborough Beer Race went ahead as planned with nearly 50 runners taking part. The competitors chased each around a two-mile stretch of the village, taking in half a pint of beer at five pubs along the route. This annual event started in the 50's and will celebrate it's 60th anniversary next year.

TOBY ON TOP

According to recent research, consumers rate Toby Carvery highest among pub brands for food quality, value for money and low prices. The online survey from 18,000 respondents found that Toby's classic pub offering continues to appeal to a

diverse demographic. You can find the Toby in Swindon at Blunsdon St Andrew, a stones-throw from the Big Asda Walmart.

NEW CAMRA GUIDE

Book and beer lovers take note; The CAMRA guide to 'London's Best Beer, Pubs and Bars' is due to be published on July 2nd. This fully revised edition of Des de Moor's London beer guide embraces the huge expansion of brewing and beer in our capital.

Including over 300 pubs, bars and breweries, with helpful listings, full colour photography and travel tips, this is your passport to a vibrant new city of beer!

Priced at £12.99 or £10.99 for CAMRA members', you can order online from www.camra.org.uk/shop



It's no secret that the popularity of Real Ale is in the ascendance, but what you may not know is that darts, one of the countries most popular pub pastimes, has become one of the sporting success story of the 21st century.

Crowds of 10,000 and above now flock to watch a game of darts, with the current crop of players a massive box-office draw, thanks in part to the coverage given to the sport on Sky. Dutch master Michael van Gerwin is the current world number one, 16-time world champion Phil Taylor hasn't thrown in the towel just yet, the naturally gifted Adrian Lewis can beat any player on his day and throw into the mix current world champion Gary Anderson, James Wade, (the best left-hander in the business) plus the colourful Peter Wright and the high scoring Dave Chisnall and it's easy to see why the sport is in such great shape. In fact,

the Premier League which runs from February to May is now the UK's biggest indoor sporting event.

There's much speculation as to the origins of the sport, although it's generally agreed that the game has its roots in archery. What probably started as a means of fun, throwing arrows at the concentric rings of a sawn-off log, would have developed into a more skilful pursuit, with soldiers displaying their skills in the drinking establishments of the time, thus starting the pub rivalry that continues among teams to this day.

Swindon has a pretty decent darting heritage too, with some big names hailing from the Wiltshire town, not least World Champion Bob Anderson who gave up his job at Swindon DHSS to take up darts professionally. Other big

names include Dennis Smith who beat Cliff Lazarenko, John Part and John Lowe en-route to the World Championship Semi-finals, only to succumb to Phil Taylor who was in mood to be beaten in the semi's with a 105 average.

Dennis continues to mix it with the best of the PDC players and can often be found on the practise board at the Fox & Hounds in Haydon Wick. 2008 world finalist Kirk Shepherd is another professional that can also be found punishing the treble 20 on local boards around the town.

Tungston Taverns

There's insufficient space to list all the local hostelries that serve up a decent game of 'arrers' but with 28 teams, four boards and former PDC player Mark Thomson at the helm, the **Duke of Edinburgh** is as good a place to start as any.

There's darts every night bar Saturday and a women's league on Wednesday's. Mark was ranked number 27 in the world before arthritis curtailed his professional career. In addition to running the 'Duke', Mark also managed the Wiltshire Youth darts teams and continues to support the club via sponsorship of their matchday programmes.

The **Swiss Chalet** may be home to the Swindon Chelsea Supporters Club and have a rich heritage as a live music venue, but it's darts that have been pulling the punters in, in recent years. The Arkells pub in Gorse Hill boasts five boards and 30 teams and much like the

Duke, there'll be darts action most nights. In addition to various league games and an in-house league on a Wednesday, they also host the Steve Brown Darts Academy, which supports and progresses the youth game.

170
the biggest
three-dart
checkout

9
the
minimum
number of
darts needed
to check out
501



Duke Of Edinburgh

And what a difference a few years make... back in 2007 the **Abbey Mead** pub was given a makeover and owners Marston's declared that darts would be no more. Today, it's the venue for Wiltshire's biggest independent darts tournament and is another venue that has a big presence in all the local darts leagues.

159
the lowest score that cannot be checked out in three darts

Further along in Haydon Wick, you might find a famous face or two on the oche in the **Fox & Hounds**, while over in Upper Stratton, the **Bakers Arms** is another venue that's heavily involved in the local darts leagues.

By now, you might have noticed that these may not be your typical real-ale drinkers' haunts. The majority of those mentioned are owned by Arkells (who sponsor the Tuesday night league) with most serving just the popular 3B. But pubs are different things to different people and these darting venues should be viewed no less important because they only accommodate the one ale. They serve a huge purpose in the community by bringing people together, the sort of values that underpin the very 'Britishness' of the traditional pub and is why CAMRA campaigns tirelessly to prevent all pub closures.



Swiss Chalet

The Perfect Pairing

And as John Honeyman, landlord of the Swiss Chalet, points out, while some pubs turnover is dependant on the weekend trade, the huge amount of darts leagues and competitions mean that the 'Swiss', like many of the darts pubs around Swindon, are doing good business throughout the week, so it's a great partnership, helping to keep the local pubs afloat. And if the current interest in darts is anything to go by, it's a partnership that looks likely to continue rewarding the pubs for a good while to come.

And the great thing about darts is that it's within the reach of anyone that wants to have a go. A sport that's easy to pick up, but difficult to perfect, while beer is the simple liquid that's capable of transforming social occasions, friendships and perspectives on reality - pub darts and a pint. A partnership that's been married together for longer than most can remember and with the number of people stepping up to the oche seemingly on the increase, the future of pub darts in Swindon looks very rosy indeed.

Mark Nelson

Do You Have A Son Or Daughter That Enjoys Playing Darts?

Wiltshire Youth Darts Organisation

Swindon is home to the Wiltshire Youth Darts Organisation and they are keen to welcome new players of all abilities. Based at the Rodbourne Cheney WMC on Moredon Road (Real Ale available for parents!) the WYDO are currently on a summer break but will be resuming again in September, for the new season. The darting youngsters get together for Super League matches each month and players of all abilities are welcomed. The WYDO put out an Under 18's team, an U21 Ladies and an U21 Men's team, so everyone is welcome. If you know of anyone that would be interested, please encourage them to get in touch. To find out further details of the venue and meeting times, please contact either Stef Venn on 07903 408308, Neil McCarthy on 07753 286988 or team manager Craig Ludlow on 07825 303149





BEER FESTIVALS

The following is a selection of beer festivals over the coming months and the local(ish) festivals are shown in bold. This is not intended to be a comprehensive guide. For a more complete list of festivals, please visit the main CAMRA website; <http://www.camra.org.uk/events>

July

| | |
|---|---|
| Wed 8th - Sun 12th | Derby Summer Beer Fest - Market Place, Derby |
| Fr 10th - Sun 12th | Beer On The Wye X1 - Hereford Rowing Club, Greyfriars Avenue, Hereford HR4 0BE |
| Thu 11th - Sat 12th | Woodcote Festival Of Ale - Woodcote Rally, Woodcote, Oxfordshire see woodcoterally.org.uk for further info |
| Fri 17th - Sun 19th | 39th Cotswold Beer Fest - Postlip Hall, Tithe Barn, Nr Winchcombe, Gloucester GL54 5AQ |
| Fri 24th - Sun 26th | Maidenhead Beer & Cider Fest (New Location) - Desborough College, Shoppenhangers Road, Maidenhead SL6 2QB |

August

| | |
|---|--|
| Wed 5th - Sat 8th | Grantham CAMRA Beer Fest - Grantham Railway Club, Huntingtower Road, Grantham, Lincs NG317BA |
| Thu 6th - Sat 8th | 16 th Worcester Berr, Cider + Perry Fest - Worcester Racecourse WR1 3EJ |
| Tue 11th - Sat 15th | Great British Beer Fest - Olympia, Hammersmith Road, Kensington, London W14 8UX |
| Fri 14th - Sat 15th | Cheltenham Real Ale Fest - Cheltenham Town Hall, Imperial Sq. Cheltenham Glos. GL50 1QA |
| Tue 25th - Sat 29th | 38 th Peterborough Beer Fest - The Embankment, Bishops Rd. PE1 1EF |
| Thu 27th - Sat 29th | Swansea Bay Beer + Cider Fest - Brangwyn Hall, Guildhall, Swansea SA1 4PE |

September

| | |
|---|--|
| Thu 3rd - Sat 5th | 22 nd Tamworth Beer Fest - Assembly Rooms, Corporation Street, Tamworth B79 7DN |
| Wed 16th - Sat 19th | 7 th Knavesmire York Beer + Cider Festival - Knavesmire, Tadcaster Rd, York |
| Fri 18th - Sat 19th | Rugby CAMRA 32 nd Beer and Cider Fest - Thornfield Bowling Club, Bruce Williams Way, Rugby, Warwickshire CV22 5LJ |
| Thu 24th - Sun 27th | 18 th Scunthorpe Beer Fest - Royal Hotel, Doncaster Rd, Scunthorpe DN15 7DE |

October

| | |
|---|--|
| Fri 2nd - Sat 3rd | 9th Ascot Racecourse Beer Festival - Ascot Racecourse, Ascot SL5 7JX |
| Thu 22nd - Sat 24th | 29th Swindon Beer Festival - STEAM Museum, Swindon SN2 2EY |



ARKELL'S



Germans love lager as much as us Brits love beer. So Arkell's head brewer Alex Arkell didn't take much persuading to brew a tribute German lager beer to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Swindon's twinning with the German town of Saltzgitter, making any German visitors to Swindon feel quite at home.

And because Alex doesn't do anything by halves, he made sure that the beer has an impeccable pedigree. "I love the challenge of brewing a new beer for a particular event," he says. "And as I did much of my brewers training in Munich before coming back here to take over the brewing operation, I not only love German lager, I know a lot about it too."

Bock originated as a German style of lager, along similar lines as pale ale or IPA began their lives as British styles of brewing. Bock originated in Einbeck, near Saltzgitter Northern Germany (south of Hanover), in the thirteenth century as a dark, sweet, malty lager and was quickly taken up by the Munich brewers who couldn't get enough of it. The trouble was, being hundreds of miles from Einbeck in southern Germany, and it being the thirteenth century when their version of the German language was probably as different to their northern neighbours as Swahili is to Scottish, they just couldn't get their mouths around the word Einbeck, so called it Ein Bock and the beer became simply Bock Beer for short.

Arkell's Bock Beer is brewed with lager yeast, fermented for a month with dark caramel toasted flavours coming from the malt, and very little bitterness with a velvety smooth light finish. At 4.2% ABV it's also unusual for being a dark lager, when most modern lagers are light in colour.

And in another play on words, bock means Billy goat in German so it is common for German brewers to depict a Billy Goats head in their Bock beer label designs and Arkell's has incorporated this into theirs. Alex invited George Arkell to The Sun Inn at Coate Water, to taste the beer alongside some proper German food, together with landlord Andy Moss and his wife Julie.

The team sampled bock beer alongside chicken schnitzel, pickled gherkins and sausages. And the unanimous outcome: The sausages won hands down. "The heavy use of caramelised malts in the Bock Beer really brings out the cooked flavours in the sausage," said Alex. "As it happens, Bock beer should be the perfect accompaniment to anything grilled, such as summer barbecues."

Arkell's Bock Beer is available in cask from June 2 at most Arkell's pubs.

WEIGHBRIDGE



The Brewery had a new brew in April christened Citra Craft Ale (abv 4.1%). A lovely amber coloured beer with hints of lime. This was followed by their 'Fine Naturally Good Ale', but as the name was too long to adorn the pump clip, they had no option but to abbreviate it to F'N Good Ale! (abv 4.1%). More recently, an excellent session ale for the summer has hit the casks, Swindon Pale Ale (abv 3.8%). And if you've got a thirst on over the summer, beers at the Weighbridge can now be purchased in a 17 and a half pint pitcher as shown above!

HOP KETTLE

Based at the Red Lion pub in Cricklade, the Hop Kettle picked up another award earlier this year when claiming a bronze in the speciality beers section at the SIBA/Tuckers Maltings Beer Festival for their Heather Beehiving Badly (abv 7.8%). Brewer Tom has also launched a Pale series of beers with the hop profile changing each brew. There's also a new Snake's Head IPA (USA Edition) being brewed and with a trial brew of a new Double IPA also in the offing, it's all go and this popular Cricklade pub.

WORLD'S END

Worlds End Brewery are based at The Crown Inn in Pewsey and have been brewing a new beer, Golden Torc (abv 4.0%) alongside recent stalwarts Dark World (abv 4.0%) and Bitterus Magnus (abv 4.2%). Their Summer Solstice Beer Festival was well attended at the end of June and proved to be another successful weekend.



