

# The Tour Journals of the Sunday Afternoon Drinking Club At The Saxon S.A.D.C.A.T.S.

The Historical Documents - Volume 6



## Voyage of the Mak'Tar

It all went by in a Haze - a Stealth Haze!  
*"As long as there's a Pub, whenever a 'Time'  
Bell rings along this Canal, we'll be there.  
This fine Ship, this fine Crew, Never Give  
Up, Never Surrender!"*

**Day 1 - Friday 17 July 2009**

**Once upon a time we traded our Trusty Tour Bus  
for a 150mph Jaguar, now a 3mph Canal Boat!**

With tomorrow's early start The Crew of 6, Tony, Teresa, Kath & I met up at Roger & Gwyneth's late this evening. To get the holiday under way we had a few beers and made a brief visit to the local Rowden Arms (aka Hungry Horse) for Tarkie to throw beer all over us! Full review appears at the end of the log for our end of hols meal.

### **WARNING:**

- ❶ You are now entering Wadworthshire!
- ❷ You don't need to have seen Galaxy Quest to enjoy this Journal, but it helps!

**Day 2 - Saturday 18 July 2009**

At 09:00 we arrived at Devizes Wharf to pick up our boat from White Horse Boats. We have their newest 56ft narrow boat which has been out only once on a shake down trip! So every thing is brand new and really quite nice. Having stowed our gear and been given a short instruction lesson we head east down the canal towards Hungerford. A journey of 25.9 miles which takes in 24 locks (numbers 51 to 74) and according to our directory some 15 pubs. This is our account of how the Canal Adventure progressed, in other word's

## A Captain's Log

Taking the helm I cruised steadily along the Kennet & Avon for about an hour doing about 3 mph until we reached the 1<sup>st</sup> pub at Horton Bridge and had my 1<sup>st</sup> go at parking alongside their own moorings. We had a bite to eat on board as it was only 11:30 and 30 mins until opening time. The Landlord

chatted to us from the garden and knew we were the first to crew the new White Horse Boat. Here we are on the 'Moonshine' – our 1<sup>st</sup> Crew Photo.



### ❶ The Bridge Inn, Horton

A non-GBG, Wadworth canalside pub with moorings and pleasant beer garden. Built in 1800 it pre-dates the Canal.



Nice set of Woods.....



Two hand pulls offering:

Wadworths, Horizon 4.0%

Wadworths, Bishops Tipple 5.5%

Plus 5 wooden barrels for gravity dispense of

Wadworths, 6X 4.3%

Wadworths, Henrys IPA 3.6%

Small bar area, most seating for food and the greeting is 'Are you eating?' Despite earlier chattiness it all went down hill from there. Steak & Ale pie £9-95, a tad expensive and 'Endy' beers.



Sitting outside with our 'endy' beers (both 6X and Horizon) I floated the idea of Special Crew shirts to mark this adventure. And while everyone was mulling that over I got out a present for each of them that I had bought whilst aboard The Royal Yacht Britannia last month. Nautical theme badges along the lines of the old 'Monitor' badges we had in our school days (ie back in the 60's!).

'Crew' for Tony, Roger & Gwyneth

'Drinks Monitor' for Teresa, 'Official Helper' for Kath, who should have been convalescing, A bit of fun, and everyone proudly put them on! Guess who had a Captain's Badge!

Apparently in Britain's Top 10 Waterside Pubs & despite it's potential, not the most inviting! BiTe reviews for 2007/8 say management & staff are miserable and need a sense of humour injection. Nothing's changed then! Upwards and onwards.

A short cruise to swing bridge No.133, our first obstacle on the canal. Mooring briefly before the bridge Roger & Tarkie jump of to unlock and swing the bridge to let the boat through. Finding a place to moor we set off to visit another pub:



## ② The Crown Inn, Bishop's Cannings

Large village non-GBG Wadworth's pub where we found 4 hand pulls offering:

Wadworths, Henrys IPA 3.6%

Wadworths, 6X 4.3%

Wadworths, Bishops Tipple 5.5%



The welcome here was so much different. A friendly barman, attentive and proud of his beers. Another Wadworth managed tie and he apologised for our experience down the road! I'm not a fan of 6X, but this beer was 'Crystal' and worthy of a good **CAMRA 4**. Tarkie gave the Loos a near perfect **DuninyMarque 9**. One of the friendly locals had been a teacher at Roger & Tony's old school. Studying the menu for *The Historical Documents*, we found sensibly priced meals making this a candidate for our 'Last Night' on the return leg. I've always advocated cheap lunchtime snax, to help soak up the beer, and here's just the thing - Cheesy Chips seemed a bit expensive at £2-95 so I went for the Bacon sarni and chips @ £3-95. It was good, but then I saw Teresa's, Now *THAT'S* a plateful!!

*A 16<sup>th</sup> century Landlords daughter fell in love with a Highwayman & disapproving Dad got him caught & hanged. Grief stricken she hung herself in the stables. Folklore says her ghost still wanders the pub in search of her true love & by her scent she is called 'Violet'.....*





Returning to the Boat, there is a warm glow about the crew and having got under way we crack open our polypins of Moles bitter. As 'Captain' it was my duty to ensure relief Helm Officers were duly trained and so Roger & Tarkie were promoted to the Rank of 'Number 1' and 'Number 2' respectively



*"Steady as she goes, Number One!"*

With No.1 & No.2 taking care of the boat, the Captain went below to rest his legs and promptly fell asleep. The crew say I was out for some while but in fact it was only 10 mins or so.



Then I was rudely awakened by the boat colliding with the wharf at Honeystreet in full 'Navy Lark' tradition as I called out, "Full a'stern No.2!" Too late! Anyway, the lads have got us to the next pub safely (?) and are tying up right outside the front door. I persuade them to move along to a more secluded spot as we will probably spend the night here and feed up!



### ③ The Barge Inn, Honeystreet



Built in 1810 when the canal opened, this former Brewhouse burnt down on 12 Dec 1858 and was completely rebuilt in 6 months. Bought by Ushers in 1897, moved to Courage in 1980's and now a Punch Tavern. **GBG** listed with 5 hand pulls:-

*Butcombe, Bitter 4.0%.*

*Black Sheep, Bitter 3.8%*

*Wychwood, Hobgoblin 5.0%*



Arriving around 5:30 the two girls on duty were friendly and welcoming and the 1<sup>st</sup> pint was OK. Some youngish lads took over at 6pm and a while later the Butcombe was cloudy and the Black Sheep dead & flat, and on a busy Sat night no one took it upon themselves to go to the cellar and sort it out. Glasses were getting dirty, *DunnyMarques* 6 & below and by now I am the only one prepared to eat here! Surprisingly my Bangers & Mash was quite good, a tad expensive at £8, should be £6-95





By now the others felt maybe they should've eaten, but we are committed to moving on. The BUT here is that the next pub is 2.5 canal miles away which may take an hour or so and time is getting on. A spirit of determination is about us as we scurry back to the boat and prepare to get under way.

***"Stand clear all vents and up-takes!  
Main Engine Start!"***

An announcement which everyone would become familiar with for the next week! Every bloody time The Captain started the engine!

#### ④ The Golden Swan, Wilcot

A non-GBG thatched village pub just ¼ mile south of Wilcot Bridge No.117. Originally built in 1700 this was another '1859 Insurance Job', hence it is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary next week and Waddies have done them a special brew!



Today there are 4 hand pulls offering:

*Wadworths, Henrys IPA 3.6%*

*Wadworths, 6X 4.3%*

*Wadworths, Golden Swan 150 4.2%*

*York, Centurions Ghost 5.4%*

We are greeted by a friendly Landlord and locals but sadly at 9:03pm we have just missed food. I'm sure the others would have liked the Steak+Ale pie at £8-95. Between us we try the Anniversary beer, 6X, and the surprising Guest ale, all of which are in 'good' condition. (**CAMRA 3½**)

Right in the middle of nowhere, so it isn't at all unusual that Gwyneth bumps into a friend in the bar. Good pub, shame we didn't come straight here to eat. They also do B&B plus camping and caravans in field at the rear with toilet block.

The middle of nowhere is also very dark when we leave the pub around 11 ish, and we didn't think to bring a torch. Struggling along the towpath in the moonlight: "Who parked the bloody boat all down there?" I guess that'll be me then!!

Trying to help as Tarkie volunteers to be the first to walk the plank in the dark, I fire the flash on my camera to light the way and blind everyone. Lucky no one fell in !

**Tarkie helps us aboard**



### Day 3 - Sunday 19 July 2009

1<sup>st</sup> stop today will be Pewsey which is now only 1½ miles away, so about 35mins on the boat. Time for a hearty 'Captain's Breakfast' before we do the engine checks and cast off. Next stop :-



A very busy place where boats are tied 2 deep and we are the next to last boat in the distance! In the picture below you can just make out Kath & Gwyneth struggling along the towpath with the shopping!



We set off to walk the mile into Pewsey for provisions and then the pubs should be open! We have 5 on our 'to do' list, but there may be others!





First up we find that we don't have *The Waterfront* on our list AND they are having a Beer Festival. So, get into town, shop, do a few pubs and get back for a relaxing afternoon at the festival. Perfect!

We used the local Co-Op and as we wandered towards The Moonrakers it started to rain. We forgot it was Sunday so we are waiting outside the pub in the rain for it to open! A friendly Landlord comes out to offer shelter from the rain until he can open, and SHOCK! HORROR! We discover he has no Real Ales! However, he was a decent sort and pointed us in the direction of Pub No.5

### 5 The Royal Oak, Pewsey

A non-GBG pub on the main road through village. Wadwoths tie with 3 hand pulls offering:

*Wadworths, Henrys IPA 3.6%*

*Wadworths, 6X 4.3%*



A friendly boozer where the Landlady made us very welcome and as though waking up in a dream, I suddenly realise that I remember her and that I have been here before! *How queer!* She has been at The Oak since Sept'06 and so it can't be from my Andover days. *How queer!*

A good menu with Lamb Shank £9-50 seems to attract retired folks, like us! Ornate fireplace, separate bar on right of pub has pool & darts + upstairs function room. 6X well kept so we shelter here from rain for 2 pints.

### 6 The Crown Inn, Pewsey



This GBG listed pub has 5 Hand pumps in main bar  
*Wadworths, 6X 4.3%*  
*Three Castles, Vale Ale 4.3%*  
*Three Castles, Barbury Castle 3.9%*  
*Old Rosie Cider*  
*Vintage Organic still cider*

And 3 more in the side bar giving 6X plus 2 more  
*Blindman's, Icarus 4.5%*

*Keystone, Cornerstone 4.8%*

The new Landlord has been here just 1 year and to celebrate they have 6X from wooden barrels @£1 a pint – AND, it's my round!!!! Oi-vey!!

My previous trip to Pewsey is all coming back, in a haze – I came here with Paul & Pad on 4 Nov 2006 when The SD&WDS did a '**Whisky Shirt Tour**'. This continues to be the best pub in town, and has lost its gaudy bright blue front walls! We decide to enjoy the Sunday Roast at £9 for 2 courses. Good value as was the Lasagne & chips at £5. Newspapers to read, pool & darts in side bar and small rear garden. Everyone was friendly, beers rated **CAMRA 3½/4**. But sadly not many in on this session. Possibly because they had all done a coach trip (piss-up) to Weymouth yesterday!! Regular Beer Festivals too. We issue a Calling Card and it goes in our famous Pub Directory, *The Book* – No. 185



The rain has stopped but time is getting on so we only stay for 2 pints, even though it's Tarkie's round and 6X is still £1 a pint!! At this point we also decide it is too far to walk back to the Coopers Arms which is a shame. I didn't recall it at the time but of course Paul, Pad & I went there and it was a real step back in time. Oh well back to the canal....

### 7 The French Horn, Pewsey

The pub sign is simply a French horn. This part of the canal was cut by French Prisoners of the Napoleonic Wars rather than the usual Irish Navvies and at the end of each day they were summoned back to prison by a horn. Probably built about 1810. Almost canal-side, it's another non-GBG Wadworth's managed house. 3 hand pulls:

*Wadworths, Henrys IPA 3.6%*

*Wadworths, 6X 4.3%*

*Wadworths, Horizon 4.0%*





Pub has that “Managed” feel, & incumbents seem to be Aussies. Nevertheless, staff were friendly and obliging as we procured our second pint while they were trying to close! Thanks guys! Steak&Ale £10-95. Great pint of 6X which was served at the right temperature, rather than that over cold Cask Marque nonsense. Well Done! **CAMRA 4**



Like everyone else we gravitate across the road & canal to the Music & Beer Festival at....

### ⑧ The Waterfront Bar & Bistro, Pewsey Wharf



This building was part of the original warehouse & office complex erected as traffic started on the canal. By 1920 there was little trade left on the canal and after years of decay closing it in the early 1950s for repairs which were not satisfactory, heralded full closure in 1955. The K&A Trust came into being only a few years later and toiled for 35 years until finally re-opening the canal to navigation in 1990. Graham Lee (aka Shag) restored these buildings to re-open them as a downstairs bistro, & upstairs bar (Shag's Bar) in early 2005. Today is their 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Beer Festival.

Shag regards himself only as a caretaker of the canal and we are grateful that he takes this view and provided a convivial atmosphere for us to enjoy Sunday afternoon with good entertainment and good beers.



Bob, Paul, Pad on Tour Nov 2006

So good it all went by in something of a haze! There are 2 hand pulls in the upstairs bar but I haven't got a clue what they were! 12 beers on in marquee of which I sampled:

*Box Steam, Best Bitter 4.0%*

*Box Steam, Tunnel Vision 4.2%*

*Bath Ales, SPA 3.7%*



A great version of the Stones 'Get Off My Cloud'  
“Hey, You, get offa moi LAAAAND!”



So, 3 pints in the marquee, plus one in the bar is about 10 pints by now and for some time we sit upstairs admiring the very pleasant views from the windows facing the canal, watching the world go by





**Day 4 - Monday 20 July 2009**



You tend to wake early on a boat. It's comfortable enough, but it's not home! So after quick checks of the oil & water (new engine) it's time for the Captain's Morning Announcement.....

***"Stand clear all vents and up-takes!  
Main Engine Start!"***

It's about 3 miles to our 1<sup>st</sup> Lock at the start of the Wootton Rivers Flight and we aim to have lunch at Crofton, so the lads get the boat under way while the girls are busy in the kitchen. Cruising steadily past Milkhouse Water and New Mill, breakfast in the form of Bacon Sarni's and mugs of tea have been served on the Bridge and we arrive at our 1<sup>st</sup> Lock just after 9am.



**Bridge 114  
A354 Marlborough Road**



**51. Wootton Rivers bottom lock**

It's a good job, but we become more honed as the week goes by and we have to share locks!



By now the lads were feeling a bit peckish so we walked back to Pewsey for a curry while the girls enjoyed a *lock-in* at Shags before joining the boat!

**8a Khyber Pass Indian Restaurant, Pewsey**  
Good restaurant, excellent curry and a ½ of Lager!



Bridge 108 is behind me as I wait for the water to rise. Navigable but maintenance is still needed!





Waiting for the forward gate to open



Ready to leave Cadley Lock 54



1<sup>st</sup> Lock a success, we're under way!!!



Every lock has a different twist and the instructions here are to leave No. 54 empty? It's about 2½ miles to the next lock No. 55 Crofton Top Lock and its all downhill after that! But first we have to negotiate Bruce Tunnel.

Passing Burbage Wharf we note the replica wooden crane which replaced the original that stood on the site until 1972. The wharf does not actually seem to be *public* and as we have a way to go and its only 10:30 we miss out the ¾ mile walk to Burbage village for the Three Horseshoes.

As we approach the 502yd Bruce Tunnel, we put on our spot light and as the portal looms I sound the horn in accordance with Star Fleet Regulation number..... and as they all **jump** I nearly loose the crew overboard! More tooting and in we go!

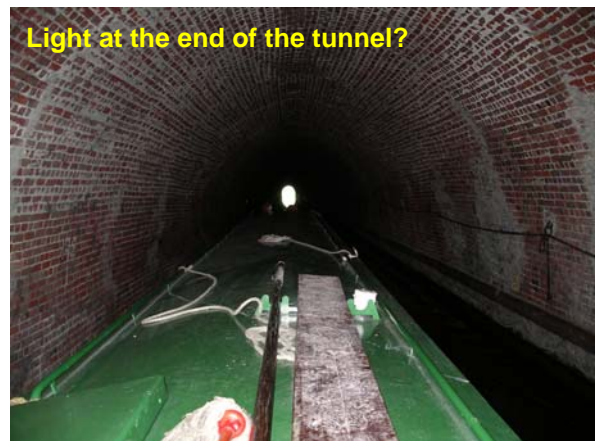


Looking back to Heathy Close Lock 52 where Gwyn had a couple of problems with her windlass!

Definitely getting into a rhythm now and its all on video! Team of 4 on the lock, Gwyn on bow line and I'm at the helm.



Lock 54 Highest lock (444ft) at head of the western descent to Devizes, so the top of our climb!



The Book says the tunnel can take two way traffic for normal narrow boats of up to 7ft beam. That's us OK, but I was really hoping we didn't meet anyone coming the other way!





*Made it!*



Emerging again into the sunshine we are relieved to have made it through the tunnel without incident. In fact it only took about 5 minutes, but the reality seemed much longer. Tarkie & Roger take over the helm to give me a break. I need a beer!



Tied alongside the wharf at Crofton Top Lock, this is the view a'stern showing the remains of the Midland & South Western Jct Rly (M&SWJR) at Wolfhall Jct where is crossed the canal and joined with the GWR main line. Here it is in May 1986 four years before the canal re-opened



The crew fill the lock in readiness for our descent of the Crofton Flight.



55. Crofton Top Lock &  
102. Wolfhall Fields Bridge



56. Crofton flight

Captain's view from helm commencing 2<sup>nd</sup> drop. It was a view that sharpened the concentration. 56ft from the bow gives you a strange perspective and the drop is worrying. The crew filled the lock and I gently eased the *Moonshine* into position. My practice in the locks so far had been to toggle my position close to the rear gate. Simply because I couldn't really see where the bow was and didn't want to damage the forward gate. Worked OK on the climb, but going down is a different story!!!!

**This is The Captain...PANIC STATIONS, I repeat  
*PANIC STATIONS***

In case you never noticed there is a warning at each end of the lock to keep boats forward of cills.



I always thought the idea was to edge her gently in reverse against the stern gates. Well guess what? I suddenly realise there is no response from Helm as the rudder is aground on the rear cill. Oh F\*\*K!!

### ***I Repeat..... PANIC STATIONS .....!!!!!!***

The crew were quick to respond, closing the forward paddles and filling the lock again from the stern gate. Phew! Close call and no damage done. At least we don't think any was done.



A quick recovery!

2009 has been the year of the 'Credit Crunch' but despite the near collapse of the banking industry, much of the 'Crunch' actually comes from major media shit mongering! CAMRA headlines declare 40 pubs a week closing, but as far as I could tell, there were only 3 missing from the map. One at New Mill, just west of Wootton Rivers, shown on my 1981 OS Map but for which I never discovered a name. The 2<sup>nd</sup> being The Savernake Forest Hotel

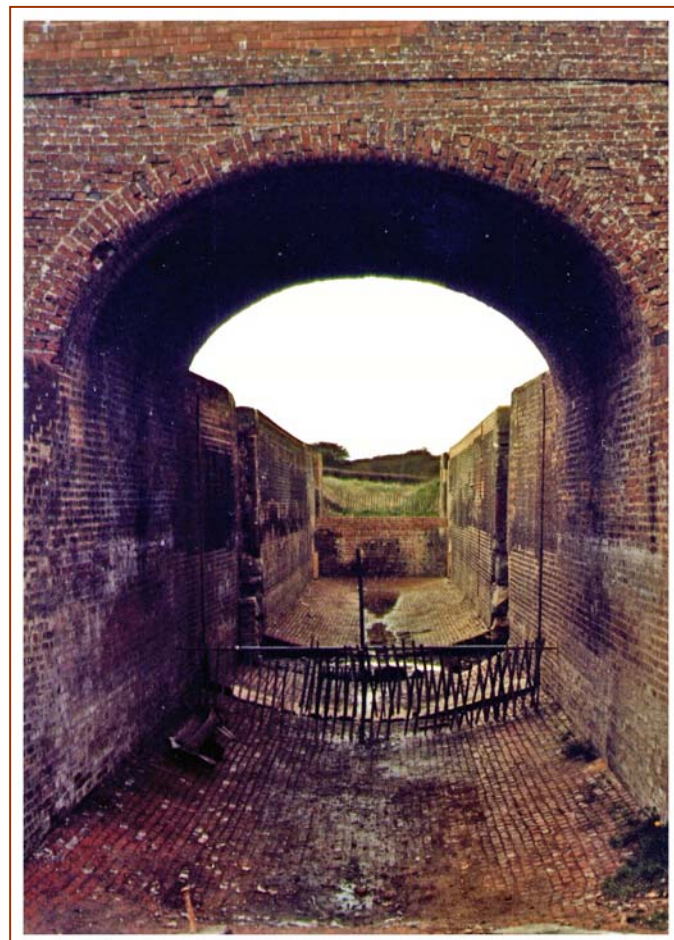


Built by the Marquis of Ailesbury in 1864 to serve the newly built Savernake railway station. Managed by Richard Bain from 1895-1940 when he retired aged 90 and his daughter Mrs Lott took over until 1963. Others ensued but by the 1980's Tony and Isabelle Sykes were in charge of a thriving Hotel with **WHITBREAD** signage, although this had never been a **Strong's** house. Sadly the hotel was sold around 1990 and the new owners failed. The business finally closed its doors in 1999. In April 2008 the site was redeveloped into 6 houses. The 3<sup>rd</sup> was The Harrow Inn at Little Bedwyn sadly turned into a pretentious restaurant in 1998 by a State Banquet executive head chef from the City of London's Guildhall. Damn shame, was a nice pub.

I lived in Andover in the late Eighties and photographed most of the railwayana in the area. Here are some shots I took of the dry canal in 1986



Lock 58. Looking West – 5 May 1986



Looking west under 101. Freewarren Bridge



Lock 58. Looking East – That's the Shot!





Here we are between Locks 60 & 61 having a rest. Roger prepares our portable gas Braai for lunch then we have time for a trip to the local pub and a visit to the historic pumping station behind us.



The Captain takes a rest in his Captains Chair. It was an early start for him today and he obviously hasn't had time to get into uniform! While the Bow Smoking Club start a new hobby – get the train driver to give a wave!



## ⑨ Swan Inn, Wilton



A half mile walk south east across the fields brought us to this non-GBG freehouse built around 1930. A barrel of Black Rate cider on the bar and 3 Hand pulls offering:

*Stonehenge, Spire 3.8%*

*Ramsbury, Gold 4.5%*

*Draught Cider*

A large pub for a quiet village obviously thriving on its food reputation. £10-95 for Steak & Ale just a tad expensive, but for Bangers & Mash well OTT. Nevertheless a friendly pub where the landlord



helped us look for the OS Flush Bracket G3942 supposedly on the NE face of his pub. No luck, but he did point out the Old Swan Inn across the road



and lets us stay in the garden for another after closing



The walk back saw us complete a circle taking in the only working Windmill in Wiltshire. Built in 1821 after the Kennet & Avon Canal took water out of the River Bedwyn and the water mills had to close!



**Wilton Windmill**  
Built 1821  
Closed 1920  
Re-opened 1976.

And as we came over the hill, this was the view!!!!

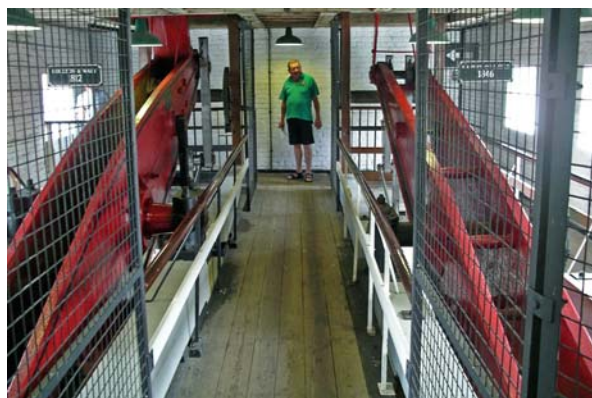


60. Wilton Water Lock, Crofton Pumping Station and a west-bound ~~First~~ Great Western HST

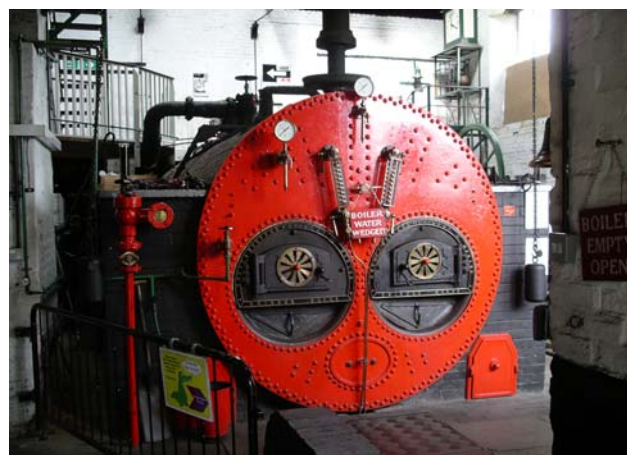
## Crofton to the Rescue

The big electric pump at Crofton, which provides water for the summit pound, failed on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July and the canal had to be closed between Lock 51 Wootton Rivers and Lock 60 Crofton due to very low water levels. British Waterways went 'cap in hand' to ask for the two hundred year old [steam pumping engines at Crofton](#) to be brought into use. Despite such short notice a team of volunteers were assembled the next morning to steam the engine and boats were moving again shortly after.

The Pumping Station was built in 1807 and houses 2 steam beam engines used to lift water 40ft from source at Wilton Water Reservoir to the high point of the canal.



On the left the Boulton & Watt 1812 machine which replaced the original 1807 smaller version and is now the oldest working beam engine in the world, still in its original engine house and capable of doing the job for which it was designed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> engine on the right was built by Harvey of Hayle and installed in 1846.



Single Lancashire boiler provides steam at 20psi using 1½tons of coal & 25,000 gallons of water per day



View from top of Pumping Station with our green 'Moonshine' moored opposite

Time to get underway and find moorings at Great Bedwyn for the evenings' frivolities!



Bridge 100 ahead





Looking back to Crofton through Lock 61



Bruce Trust moorings Gt. Bedwyn wharf

Almost the last space on the canal bank and the guys at the Bruce Trust in the boat behind were generous enough to let us tie up here.

## 10 The Cross Keys, Gt Bedwyn



17<sup>th</sup> century oak beamed country inn, formerly a **Strong's** house but a Freehouse by 1988.

3 Hand pulls offering:

*Greene King, IPA 3.6%*

*Fullers, London Pride 4.1%*

*Wadworths, 6X 4.3%*

Bright airy pub & friendly with cat at the bar. We were well looked after with full 'waitress service' by our host, food orders taken at table, and 2<sup>nd</sup> round of drinks too! Bangers+Mash £8-95 is really good! Sadly very poor DunnyMarques 2, but **CAMRA 3½**

## 11 The Three Tuns, Gt Bedwyn



400 year old Building, part of which was once a bakery and an early 19<sup>th</sup> century brick oven is a feature of the dining room. Formerly a **Strong's** house, and later **WHITBREAD**, it now says it is Free. So this is a very strange choice of beers! 4 pumps:

*Wadworths, 6X 4.3%*

*Courage, Best 4.0%*

*Courage, Directors 4.8%*

*Ramsbury, Gold 4.5%*

A more homely, cosy feel than the Xkeys, a more traditional village country pub, but full of clutter! Food portions looked good, Bangers+Mash £9-95 and we are joined by the young lady who served us at the previous pub – barmaid, not host!

I must be getting slack. No group photos! Back to the boat and crack open the Moles, Tarkie!



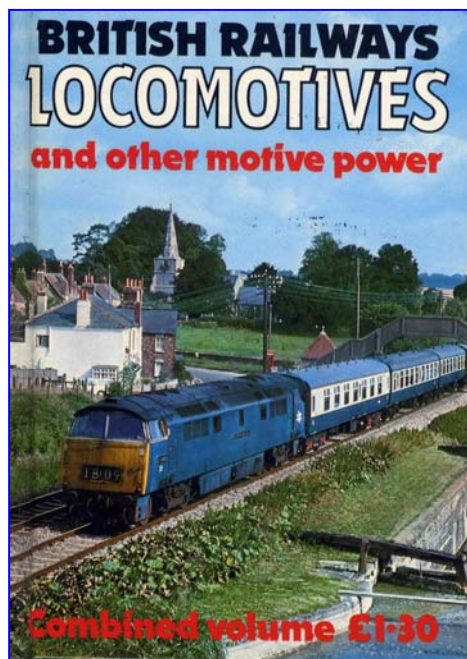
## Day 5 - Tuesday 21 July 2009

5.9 miles & 10 locks today to Hungerford !





We park up under Bridge 94 at Little Bedwyn to wait our turn of passage through the lock which is quite busy today. This has been a favourite spot of mine for many years without even knowing its name. The reason? That goes back to my train spotting days and the hallowed *Jan Allen* Combined Volume. Bible to the spotter! I now beg your indulgence. Here is a reproduction of the 1976 Combine' (the last one that I used) with the photo that started it all. Credited only as taken by legendary Ivo Peters the location was never stated.



D1046 Western Marquis - 1976

Years later I frequented The Harrow Inn at Little Bedwyn without realising this location was simply around the corner. And now that it is time to return I find the pub has been given a complete Rogering. TWKC!!! See p10 for my notes on closed pubs!



Broken Lock 67 & D1066 Western Prefect – July 1974  
and the Western has only 4 months left in traffic!

Sorry, this is such a moment for me, I can hardly see to steer the boat. I am afraid there must be a tad more Historical Indulgence .....

Seven years later and the canal is open again, but the Deltic is on a farewell special and only 30 days from withdrawal.(1981)



'Deltic' 55 016 Gordon Highlander



50 033 Glorious with 13.40 Ex-Paddington  
'Torbay Express' 10<sup>th</sup> May 1986 (8yrs to withdrawal)



Lock 67  
Little Bedwyn

The canal may be working, but uncontrolled growth of vegetation has spoilt this picturesque photo location. "Nick, can I borrow your big chainsaw?"



A stream of boats wait  
as we descend Lock 67





69. Froxfield Middle Lock

Looks like the crew need rest and sustenance. After Lock 70 Froxfield Bottom Lock we are roughly half way along today's journey to Hungerford so it's a good time to stop for a pub lunch.



Taken from 90. Froxfield Bridge – The Wilts/Berks Border

## ① ② The Pelican Inn, Froxfield



God only knows why we bothered to trudge up the lane from the canal in the rain and walk along the very busy A4 to this place. Had we but known!!!

Ideal place to stop, canal-wise, and seemingly appearing in all the blurb we examined. BiTe comments did indicate we might not be happy here but there was really nowhere else to go..... The description 'transformed into a hotel lobby' summed it all up nicely and goes well with the grand piano – Jazz Club – NICE!! There was no staff interaction at all – he looked at us until we ordered. 'Bit of a Roadhouse', 'Bit precious', 'No atmosphere, locals don't go there', 'rude, un-welcoming, pretentious landlord', 'Poor service, very slow'. All of these fit!

There were 3 hand pulls offering just 2 beers:

*Three Castles, Uffington Castle 4.2%*

*Loddon, Ferrymans Gold 4.4%*

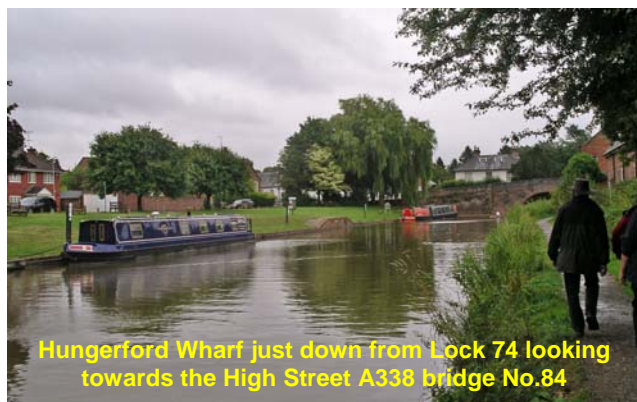
The beer was surprisingly good and we stayed for 2 and tried them both. We sat in the sofa area just inside the door while the Landlord twizzled in & out of his office out by the gents and every time he passed us his look was of disgust & disdain. Honestly we were treated like Lepers. Food was of course over priced: Ham, Egg+Chips £9-95. We will of course pass this on to all our boating friends! Used to be an Ushers house and it really is difficult to go down hill from there, but somehow they have managed it! **DON'T GO THERE!!!!!!!!!!!!**



The last pub was all too much for Roger!



88. Picketfield Swing Bridge



Hungerford Wharf just down from Lock 74 looking towards the High Street A338 bridge No.84

Time is running out for us and we must have a cracking return run tomorrow, so we have turned the boat just beyond bridge 84, climbed back above Lock 74 and moored ready for the off! But tonight Hungerford, here we come!!!



### 1 3 Borough Arms, Hungerford



Town pub at the top of the High Street has 4 hand pulls offering only: *Wadworths*, 6X 4.3%  
2 pool tables, darts, lots of TVs, no food and a superb award winning garden! **CAMRA 3½**



Back down the High St on the same side (east) on the corner of Park St is the

### 1 3a Plume of Feathers, Hungerford



Not open at 17:15, but seem to be people about inside! Move on then. The BiTe reviews don't do much for it, including the last visitor who walked out without having anything! The pub is 4-500 yrs old and Felix Lloyd-Powell was Landlord here after WWI having composed 'Pack up yer troubles'. Guess he would turn in his grave! The road to the side of the pub is Park St and it leads to the only decent pub in town .....

### 1 4 The Downgate, Hungerford



This pub was 1<sup>st</sup> recorded in the 1841 Census as The Spotted Cow but by 1871 the name had changed to The Royal Exchange as seen in this picture taken in 1936.



Not much has changed. This is a classic, unspoilt, traditional pub on the edge of town. Hosts Dave & Jan Yates were most welcoming and we were soon chatting away. They have been here for 5 years. Previously at The White Hart, Andover and over 25 years in the trade. Thank God someone in Hungerford knows what it takes to run a pub – and THEY DO!!! So it goes in *The Book -186*.



The only Hungerford pub in the GBG. **CAMRA 4**  
As you can see, 3 hand pulls offering:

*Arkells*, 2B 3.2%

*Arkells*, 3B 4.0%

*Arkells*, Summer Ale 4.2%

Extensive menu is good and I can vouch for the Mixed Grill being excellent value at £14-95.



As we sit down to our meal I feel the need to say a few words as Captain:

*"As long as there's a Pub, whenever a 'Time' Bell rings along this Canal, we'll be there. This fine Ship, this fine Crew, Never Give Up, Never Surrender!"*



**The Downgate, Hungerford**

Despite finding such a gem, after 3 pints we begrudgingly followed our Tour practice of not staying in one place. We head back into town.

### ①⑤ John O'Gaunt Inn, Hungerford



Couldn't find out much about this place probably GK tie.



3 hand pulls offer:

Greene King, XX Mild 3.0%

Greene King, Abbot 5.0%

GK Hardy&Hansons, Kimberley Bitter 3.9%

Plus 2 beers from the cellar:

Greene King, St Edmunds 4.2%

Batemans, XXXB 4.8% (Guest?)

The barman was quiet and even though we were the only ones in the pub he didn't talk to us. In fact he may as well not have been there. He even looks like he is fading away in the picture! So atmosphere NIL. No food Tuesdays, but Ham Egg & Chips would have been a reasonable £6-45.

We have 2 beers and move on to the pubs on the A4 junction. What a waste of time! 1<sup>st</sup> up is The Bear Hotel. Steeped in history we looked through the windows to see it was pretentiously 'up-market' and only had Greene King. PASS. Next was The Sun. GK IPA only so we PASS. We walked back to No5 The Lamb to find it was a bistro selling 6X so again we didn't bother. I've had enough by now and vote to return to the boat for last drinks. Kath & Gwyn join me, but the others decide to give the town one more try. So while I am enjoying a nice bottle of red they venture back to The Plume of Feathers but simply walk in and walk out! I did tell you, but would you listen? Would you F\*\*K!!!!

### ①⑥ Railway Tavern, Hungerford



The 3 Musketeers continue on around the block until they find this little gem by the railway station. Several hand pumps provide only London Pride. They decide to try and wish they hadn't but meanwhile one of the local yobs has set fire to a car in the car park. Get me out of here!

Probably should have tried The Angel. By the time they get back to the boat I am nicely tucked up in my bunk and am totally oblivious to them playing a quiz Kath has devised based on the TV show Mr&Mrs. We have to take our turn later!

## Day 6 - Wednesday 22 July 2009

We have been travelling East since last Saturday and we must have the boat back at Devizes Wharf by 11am Friday morning. Oooops! Have we miscalculated? I have put forward a plan that we get under way as early as possible and steam all day until we are comfortable with progress. If that means missing the lunchtime pub, then that must be our plan. All agreed. We are turned around and moored above Hungerford Lock 74 so are well positioned for launch. I wake early and do the usual engine checks. Only because it is a new one and we are the 1<sup>st</sup> crew after shakedown. All is well and I make final preparations to cast off.



With a mug of tea in hand and the smell of bacon wafting from the galley I make the usual announcement!

***"Stand clear all vents and up-takes!  
Main Engine Start!"***

I have to admit I am a little worried that I have set too high a target for today's progress and I think we need some good bursts of 'Pedal to the Metal'.



Lock 67. Little Bedwyn

We get off to a flying start and are quite pleased with ourselves when we reach Little Bedwyn again around 10am. What we don't know is that there are ongoing problems with the 'new' electric pump at Crofton and the beam engines have been asked to help out again. Obviously it takes time on weekdays to get a volunteer team together and consequently the level of water in the canal is low!

As we queue to get into the lock we find that because of the low water level we will need to share locks for some distance ahead. This comes as quite a shock as I haven't done this yet, and have you seen how much room those two boats in the lock have to spare!!!!

The up side of this is that we get to know a very nice couple whose boat 'Marshland Echo' is moored ahead of us and who show us the ropes for sharing locks. Even so it is still a tight manoeuvre getting in alongside without hitting their boat or scraping the quayside too much. But they are very helpful and we share the next 4 locks. By Lock 62 I'm confident enough to share with another boat.



Lock 62. Crofton

Passage through the locks is slowed by the queue and time to manoeuvre 2 boats into the lock. The crew take time out while the lock fills.



Lock. 62



Lock. 60

Crofton Pumping Station is quite busy as it makes a good place to rest and of course the working engine has attracted more visitors. We still have a long way to go, its 1pm and we need to get moving!







By 2pm we are at Crofton Top Lock – 55.



3pm entering the eastern portal of Bruce Tunnel



Cruising down to Wootton



Moored at Wootton with Lock 52 behind us

We just about managed to tie alongside as we ran aground! The boat in front of us is tighter in and listing more heavily. We have been battling with very low water all day and mostly needed to keep to the centre of the canal. By now I don't really care. We're in The Royal Oak for the evening and we can deal with the situation in the morning!



Bridge 108 & Lock 52 Wootton just ahead

We've had news that a steam train will be passing us tonight. Merchant Navy 35028 Clan Line on the return leg Bristol-Victoria VSOE Orient Express. I go off to check my view of the line and then Gwyn suggests Kath & I go back to Lock 52 and let 2 full locks of water through to see if it floats our boat!!! As we listened to the lock filling for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time my usually deaf ears detected the unmistakable sound of a Merchant Navy at full chat. I dived through the hedge and ran for my spot! Just made it!



Rebuilt Merchant Navy 35028 Clan Line

The good news is that the boat is afloat, While we were doing that Gwyn prepared a lovely full roast dinner for us. Then we started to list again!

" 'ere Gwyn d'you know the gravy's running off the back o' moi plate!"

"No but I think the Mangled Wurzels do it!"



## ① ⑦ The Royal Oak, Wootton Rivers



3 hand pulls for show with gravity dispense from 3 barrels behind bar:

*Wadworths, 6X 4.3% (2 of)  
Ramsbury, Sun Splash 4.2%*

Just a short ¼ mile walk to this fine looking pub. Originally 3 premises, this 16<sup>th</sup> century Coaching Inn has been used as a Bakery, Farriers and one time Old Ale House. We didn't meet Rosa & John who have been hosts here since 1976. They've kept the charm of the low beams & log fires, but the old L-shape bar is now entirely for food. Menu was OK, Scampi £7-50, Ham Egg & Chips £8-50, but Lamb Shank was OTT at £15.

There was an area for Darts & Pool which defaulted to being the kiddies bit. We *seemed-to-be* welcome just to drink in the 'Public Bar' although there was no interaction with the girl serving. Fortunately we made our own atmosphere with fellow boaters Pete & Jackie 'The Cockneys'.



Thanks for taking the picture Pete!

## Day 7 - Thursday 23 July 2009

We wake to the sound of a boat passing us in the westerly direction and are pleased to find that we are more or less afloat and a good shove with the barge pole should see us underway. Let's GO!

***"Stand clear all vents and up-takes!  
Main Engine Start!"***

The crew walk down to the lock and call me forward before we get any 'up' traffic. Lock 51 at Wootton is our last, so it will be plain sailing once we are through and the water level should be OK to see us home on time. 8am and I'm moored on the west side of the awaiting my lock crew. Ahead of us the canal narrows and there is a huge Dutch barge 'Laura-Jo' moored down water. Luckily he decides to get under way as he has been stranded there for several days by the low water. We politely let him pass us so he can get in the lock before anyone else comes down.



Thank god we didn't meet him further back!

We have a stop to make at Pewsey to give Shag a glass that he lent us, but it looks like a steady stroll to Honeystreet for lunch.



Feeding the ducks at Pewsey.



### ③ The Barge Inn, Honeystreet



We really should have known better, but to give this high profile establishment a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance we called again on the return leg. Kath & Gwyn stayed on the boat while the rest of went in for **A** beer. That's it, only the one. No improvement at all since last Saturday. Can't see this making another GBG and poor old Morse would turn in his grave!



*"Take me for a decent pint, Lewis!" "Sir."*

All is not lost, as we have made good time. It's only 1 o'clock and we could make a pub we had to miss out on the way up. I decide to give it a go! "Stand clear all....." (Chorus) "WE KNOW!"



Taking a turn on Helm

### ①⑧ Kings Arms, All Cannings



Anchoring just under 'Woodway Bridge' No.128 we take a short walk to the pub with Roger leading the way. How does he know where he is going? He used to live in the village!

The small part of the building to the left (out of shot) was built in 1793 and the rest in 1880 after a fire. Five hand pulls offer a good selection:

*Wadworths, Henrys IPA 3.6% (2 of)*

*Wadworths, 6X 4.3%*

*Wadworths, Horizon 4.0%*

*York, Centurions Ghost 5.4%*

Landlord was a friendly chap and obviously proud of his beers. After being offered samples we try the last 3 of the beers. All a very good **CAMRA 4**.



Landlord Richard was really helpful. Arriving just after 2pm we asked about closing and he said 3pm, but we're OK. At 3pm he came to say he was getting his lunch so did we need another beer while he was in the kitchen? Yes Please. We also enquired about evening menus and his wife Ginny printed off tonight's copy for us. 12oz Gammon £10-25 seems good value. Now that's Service! Great guys! This pub goes in **The Book – No.187**

Cosy feel to pub. Restored beams, eating area, bar, pool room at rear. Great garden.

We wander back to the boat and fix a little snack as it isn't far to get to our last mooring point at Bishop's Cannings.





Mooring at 133. Bishop's Cannings Swing Bridge

First real bit of rain and I remained at my post on the helm. Got absolutely soaked, But *"This fine Crew, never give up, never surrender!"* I did however get my *'Pedal to the metal'*. It really pissed down and although I had the boats oilskins I still wanted to get to the mooring asap. So it was full throttle on this stretch – 2750rpm when normal cruising had been about 1200 or just enough to make the propeller stop singing! We were really motoring. Probably too fast, but by now I had the experience to keep her under control. The boat that is! We had a reverse wave chasing us down the canal. Roger pointed to the mooring spot and we screeched to a halt. What I didn't realise was that the exhaust port was block by the reed bed. Next we had smoke billowing out of the engine room! Have to say I was a bit worried at this point, but as it turned out all was well – simply the blocked port.

## ② The Crown Inn, Bishop's Cannings



Wadworths, Henrys IPA 3.6%

Wadworths, 6X 4.3%

Wadworths, Bishops Tipple 5.5%

We liked this place on the way up and it seemed to be the ideal spot for the final night. Steak & Ale pie was popular @£8-50, but we thought a little soggy! An enjoyable night and we were welcomed, remembered, and well looked after. We even entered the quiz and came a close 3<sup>rd</sup>.

But we had that niggling feeling we should have eaten our last supper at The Kings Arms.





## Day 8 - Friday 24 July 2009

A leisurely start and I am eager to make sure the engine is OK. Having packed my stuff, I thought it best to start up so I could stop worrying and cruise very slowly back to the boat yard. The checks all seem fine, so for the last time here goes.....

***"Stand clear all vents and up-takes!  
Main Engine Start!"***



All on video, she started as bright as a button!

While we left the engine ticking over nicely to warm up there were just 2 other loose ends to tie up. Kath & I played out our questions for the Mr&Mrs quiz and beat leaders Tarkie & Teresa by 2 points. Then there was The Air Gold Cup. I hadn't consciously made any contributions this time as I get too much grief (*remember the time the barmaid came out with an air freshener?*).

It's true to say that Gwyn gave Tarkie a run for his money and probably he should be disqualified for his bowel problem, but I don't want to make a stink about it!!! Ho, Ho, Ho!!

And to the tune of Pinball Wizard I just handed .... The Air Gold Cup to .....him.....Agent X-Two-Zero.



But 10 seconds later and Teresa would have stolen his crown! *Damn it all man, you've farted in front of my wife! Sorry old chap, didn't realise it was her turn!*



133. Bishop's Cannings Swing Bridge



With the last obstacle behind us it was a lovely morning to cruise gently down to Devizes.



By Omega it's 09:52 and we're approaching Horton



134. Horton Bridge





I really thought this was one of those plastic birds...



As we hand the boat over, the heavens suddenly open.....

A suitable finish to our week on the canal seemed to be a visit to the Caen Hill flight of locks to see what we missed.....



Then He took off and guided us under the last 4 bridges of our journey. Some sort of ending, eh! What started the week as *The Voyage of The Mak'Tar* ends as *The Flight of The Heron*.....



Caen Hill -16 Locks, Nos.29 - 44

It takes a whole day to go up these 16 alone, which form the middle section of the Devizes flight of 29 locks rising 237ft over 2¼ miles.



140. Cemetery Road Bridge

#### Tarkie's Bird-spotting list

Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Mallard, Red Kite, Buzzard, Pheasant, Partridge, Moorhen, Coot, Common Tern(rare canal visitor), Wood Pigeon, Swallow, House Martin, Swift, Kingfisher, Pied Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Blue Tit, Great Tit.



144. Upper Foxhangers Bridge



## ①⑨ The Raven, Poulshot



A fine array of wooden casks dispensing:

*Wadworths, Henrys IPA 3.6%*

*Wadworths, 6X 4.3%*

*Wadworths, Horizon 4.0%*

Nice old fashioned village pub, 2 bars served from the central area pictured above. Good menu and obviously popular for their food, but does not affect it being a Pub. I was ready to order but we're going back to Rog & Gwyns for a snack before eating at the Horse later.

## ②⑩ Rowden Arms (Hungry Horse)

A busy member of the Greene King Hungry Horse chain where even a discerning beer drinker would have a job to tell the Abbot from the Hen!

*Greene King, IPA 3.6%*

*Greene King, Abbot 5.0%*

*Greene King, Old Speckled Hen 4.5%*



Nice looking Pint, but what is it?

But they make up for it with some good big-plate specials – All Day Breakfast £5-69. Say no more! It was a difficult decision and I wouldn't normally order a steak in a place like this, but I went for a 10oz Sirloin £8-49, plus £1 to add 4 pieces of Scampi. Not bad at all for the price!

I suppose I ought to take a photo of the place.

A brisk walk to a decent pub to walk it off and wash it down with a decent pint!



## CHIPPENHAM PUB OF THE YEAR

### ②① The Three Crowns, Chippenham



Sitting in the **V** between The Causeway and The Butts, this is a proper old boozer. It's basic, wooden floor boards, a few tables, Dartboard in right hand bar with separate Snug to left. Loos are surprisingly high standard - *DunnyMarque 8*. 3 hand pulls regularly changing, although Landlord has his favourites!

*Sharp's, Doombar 4%,*

*Wye Valley, HPA 4%,*

*Wychwood, Hobgoblin 4.5%*

Beers were in great shape warrant a **CAMRA 4**. Room at back to pull in 2 small cars and that's it. We were made very welcome by the Landlord, barmaid Amanda and the locals. Not sure if they do food on a regular basis (light lunches possibly) but they *do do* a great value Pint & Curry Nite - £5 (every Tuesday). Glad to see they have been rewarded with an entry in the 2009 GBG. Had a great time here. Already in *The Book* - No. 157.

As you can see not much has changed since 1960





## DISCLAIMER



This Group has no connection with the Wadworth Brewery of Devizes and none of our Crew work for that Company! We received no sponsorship to influence any of our comments. On the other hand our journey through Wadworthshire probably contributed over £100 a day to their coffers! Cheers!

## APPENDICIES

*In accordance with our normal practice on these trips here are the black & white statistics and our nominations for those who deserve special mention.*

### **The Statistics:**

Non-GBG Pubs visited –	17
GBG Pubs visited –	4
Total Pubs visited –	21
New Beers for Bob –	2

## AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

### **Chairmen's Award for Best Pub:**

The Downgate, Hungerford

### **Chairmen's Award for Best Beer:**

Wadworths's, Horizon 4.0%  
Kings Arms, All Cannings

### **Explorer's Award for Barperson of the Weekend:**

Richard, Landlord of King's Arms,  
All Cannings

### **Tony's Top Tea-room:**

No Entries this time, but  
We nearly bought a Book !

### **The See it, Shoot it, Eat it Award for Best Eatery:**

Gwyn's Galley – Lovely Roast  
&  
The Crown, Pewsey

### **And finally - Awards for Crapiness**

### **Joint Watney's Red Barrel Award**



The Pelican, Froxfield  
&  
Most of the pubs in Hungerford !



### **The WHITBREAD Tour of Destruction Award**

The Harrow, Little Bedwyn



*Rupert of the Bushveld  
Editor in Chief*

## NEXT STOP !

Falmouth Beer Festival Trip

22-Oct-2009



# MEET THE CREW OF 2009



**Bob, Captain**



**Kath, Official Helper**



**Tony, No.2**  
Aka Tarkie  
Dave Angel, Insp Monkfish



**Teresa, Drinks Monitor**



**Roger, No.1**



**Gwyneth, Chef**