

It's been some time since Shaun and I ventured to Bristol together and glancing through the GBG I realised that Kingsdown is not so far away from our usual walking route back from the [Bag o' Nails](#). Putting the word out about our trip we were pleased to meet three other beer lovers at Chippenham station, unfortunately Duncan his sister Catherine got caught up in traffic and we didn't catch up until we got back to bath hours later.

Group save ticket meant the return journey to Bristol was just £4 each. The weather was glorious and getting off the bus around the Haymarket area we headed for Christmas steps, Nige must have been somewhat thirsty as he insisted on crossing the road while the lights were against us, not once but twice!!



By the time we caught to the top of Christmas Steps it was necessary to pop into the [Colston Yard](#) for a half of [Butcombe Gold](#). Owned by Butcombe and situated on the site of the old Smiles brewery the Colston Yard opened in December 2007. It is a tasteful but modern pub selling a range of Butcombe beers and a rotating guest ale.

Suitable fortified we set off up St Michael's Hill for the Highbury Vaults. Description in the GBG as dark and dingy is a little harsh but the pub does have dark wood panelled walls and a number of small rooms (one with a Bar Billiards table in it!). The small bar area held six beers on our visit. [Bath Ales Gem](#), [Brains SA](#), [Bristol Beer Factory Exhibition](#), [St Austell Tribute](#), [Young's Bitter](#), [Young's Special](#).





As we set off down Cotham Road towards the Cotham Porter Stores. I was a little apprehensive as I had been unable to contact them by phone and the website is no longer operating, was this another GBG pub to suffer at the hands of developers or the current down turn? I'm glad to say it was well and truly open with cider in abundance. DR10, (Named after the drink driving offence code and brewed specially for the pub by [Rich's Cider Farm](#) in Somerset), [Thatchers Cheddar Valley](#), [Richs Farm House Cider](#), [Wilkins Farm House Cider](#) and Thatchers [Traditional](#). No wanting to mix we stuck to the beer! [Sharps Doombar](#) and [Wickwar Long John Silver](#) both kept very well.

Note: Wickwar Brewing came on board a campaign to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the publication of the children's classic adventure yarn 'Treasure Island' by brewing a special 'Long John Silver' beer and donating five pence from every pint sold to the Bristol-based [Long John Silver Trust charity](#). Long John Silver is based on the real-life, one-legged, Gloucester poet William Henley whom author Robert Louis Stevenson met in Edinburgh.

Despite the friendly locals more beer was called for so we set off for the [Hill Grove Porter Stores](#). Imagine our delight to see nine real ales, Weston's Cider and Weston's Country Perry adorning the bar. Landlady Doreen was very attentive and knowledgeable regarding real ale. After we had sampled at least two of the beers each she was more than happy to pull tasters of those beers we hadn't tried for us to share.



Being a Black Country lad, they all love Milds and Porters don't they?? Darren simply went for the [Hung Drawn and Ported](#) from the North Cotswold brewery. Other beers: [Cheddar- George Best](#), [Mathews Brass Knocker](#) and their monthly special for September [Honey Mine](#), [Goffs Tournament](#), [01 - Otley Brewing Company](#) and [Red Rock Brewing company's Red Rock](#). We also enjoyed excellent cheese and ham rolls to help soak up the ale!



Saying goodbye to Doreen and promising to visit again we set off the short distance to the [Hare on the Hill](#). Being a [Bath Ales](#) pub we were not surprised to see [Barnstormer](#), [Gem](#), [SPA](#) and [Wild Hare](#).

Time was pushing on and we had promised to meet friends in Bath so we quickly set off for the final pub, in this area of Bristol.

Five minutes away from the Hare on the Hill is [The Bell](#) another Butcombe pub with [Bitter](#), [Blond](#), and [Gold](#) on offer. A pleasant enough pub with well kept ale just off St James Barton round-a-bout



So we had achieved our aim, which was to visit GBG pubs in the Kingsdown area. We set off heading towards Temple Meads station but had enough time to do a few more pubs on the way.



I had stumbled across the Bank last year but didn't have time to stay long, earlier this year they had no real ale on!! So again we were a little apprehensive...we needn't have been. Currently on offer [Cotswold Spring](#), [Codrington Codger](#), [Moles Mole in 1](#), brewed to celebrate the Ryder Cup, [Great Western Brewery's](#) Bees Knees and for the cider drinkers [Kingston Press](#) and Thatchers [Traditional](#).

The final pub before getting the train is always a dilemma, Old Fish Market, Cornubia, Seven Stars? We decided it should be the [Seven Stars](#) as Shaun and I visited the first day Steve and Katie opened in May 2007 (well pretty soon after anyway) at the time I seem to remember they had just 3 ales on and currently they have at least six on the go at any one time. I could wax lyrical about this great pub but Pete Brindle from Bristol CAMRA did a wonderful write up in the [summer edition](#) of [Pints West](#) (see page 4).

They rightly deserve to be in the 2009 GBG. We had just enough time to enjoy a half, not sure who had what but they could have chosen from: [Otter Ale](#), [Otley Dark O](#), [Bath Gem](#), [Butcombe Blond](#), [Bath Barnstormer](#), [Sharp's](#) [Cornish Coast](#).



*Note: This pub was an important site in the beginning of the anti-slavery movement in Bristol*



Nige, Ray, Shaun, Darren and Dave finish off the day in the Seven Stars. Another successful day out 😊

Moving swiftly from the Seven Stars we arrive at platform 13 just as our train was gliding in, some of our party stayed on the train for their journey back to Chippenham whilst others got off to meet friends in Bath where we spent sometime in the Salamander and the Raven before finishing off back in Chippenham at the Old Road Tavern but that's a whole new story!

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**Notes:**

- Getting there: For a gentle stroll take the number 15 bus get off at the Haymarket and walk to the Bell first. Otherwise take the number 9 (every 20minutes from temple Meads) and get off at the Cotham rd and St Michaels Hill junction. Walk a little way down St Michaels Hill and start with the Highbury Vaults.
- [Map](#)
- Thanks to Shaun for introducing me to this great [website](#) that helps plan journeys from start to finish.
- Interested in Cider have a quick gander at this [site](#) or this [one](#).

**Acknowledgements.**

Thanks to the [British Pub Guide](#) site for image of the Highbury vaults.