

SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF BEERS FROM THE WOOD



NATIONAL WEEKEND IN BRISTOL FROM 10 TO 12 OCTOBER 2025

Introduction

Bristol is the largest city in the west of England, with a population of around 480,000, although as it merges seamlessly into the urban areas of South Gloucestershire and Kingswood to the north and east, the population of Greater Bristol is actually much greater.

The city centre lies about 17 kilometres (10 miles) up the River Avon from the Severn estuary. During the fifteenth century, Bristol was the second most important port in the country but, as ships became larger, the port fell into decline as new ports further down the river took over. The old port area of the city is the Floating Harbour, so called because an entrance lock maintains the water level allowing ships in it to float at all times.

It is a fascinating area to explore, with historic ships, most notably the SS Great Britain, and museums. Then there are the many interesting pubs. On the north side these include the Bag of Nails (colloquially known as the Bag of Cats due to its many feline inhabitants), Bristol Beer Factory's Grain Barge and the ultra-traditional Merchants Arms. On the south side, just behind SS Great Britain, is the Orchard Inn, noted for its range of traditional ciders. Our Group Two pub crawl on Friday evening will skirt around the city centre end of the dockland area.

On the high ground north of here lies the stylish, up-market suburb of Clifton, famous for its suspension bridge, designed by Brunel, that crosses the Avon Gorge. Clifton, plus the neighbouring suburbs of Cotham and Kingsdown, which lie up the hill to the north of the city centre, contain some excellent back-street pubs some of which we plan to visit on Saturday.

The western part of the city centre, adjoining the Floating Harbour, contains much of historical interest, including some fine pubs. In contrast, east of here, the post-war shopping area contains little of interest for the discerning beer drinker. However, further east again, on the city centre's fringes, there are many good, traditional pubs, and this is the area we plan to explore on Sunday.

South of the centre, a visit to Bedminster would repay the drinker. Further away, in locations more conveniently reached by bus, are further pubs worth visiting. There is a particular concentration on and around the Gloucester Road, to the north of the centre, and it is one pub in this area, the Drapers Arms, that we plan to visit on Saturday.

So, although the weekend's activities officially begin on Friday evening, if you haven't been here before, it would be worth spending a few days in Bristol. For more information about the city's tourist attractions, visit <https://visitbristol.co.uk/>. Note that many tourist attractions are closed on Mondays.

Another alternative, is a visit to the city of Bath, which is only about a quarter of an hour's train ride from Bristol's Temple Meads Station. Bath is rich in eighteenth century buildings, plus its Roman baths, and a fine selection of traditional pubs concentrated within a relatively small area.

SPBW doesn't have a branch in Bristol and this weekend has been organised by the Glamorgan and Gwent Branch, whose members frequently visit the city. In particular, John Lamb (telephone 079 7965 7091) and Rick Zapple (telephone

077 7938 6642) have been involved with arrangements, so please feel free to contact one or other of us if you need assistance.

We will now go on to look at arrangements for each of the three days.

Friday

We will gather at Wetherspoon's **Knights Templar** pub from 1530 onwards and will aim to leave around 1730. This pub is about three minutes walk from Temple Meads Station. After passing through the ticket barrier, walk straight ahead, ignoring the main station exit on your left. Continue straight ahead until you arrive at a square, part of a modern office development, where you will see the pub behind you on the left.

Given our likely numbers, and the fact that many of the pubs in the area are small and likely to be quite busy, we will split into two groups, one led by John and the other by Rick. We will end up at the Cornubia (listed in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide), again quite small but it has a covered outdoor area, which should be able to accommodate us if the interior is full.

Most of the pubs we will be visiting will not be serving meals, so you may want to have something to eat before leaving the Knights Templar.

Group One

Contact John on 079 7965 7091.

From the Knights Templar, we walk a short distance back towards the station before turning left to use the "cheese grater" footbridge across the Floating Harbour. At the far end, we turn right then left to walk parallel to the railway. In a short distance, under one of the railway arches, we come to **Little Martha Brewing**. This should be serving one real ale plus a selection of kegs, brewed onsite and stored in tanks.

On leaving, we turn right and continue walking parallel to the railway. After about 300 metres, we come to the main Kingsland Road and will see, diagonally across the junction to the right, **Moor Beer**. This brewery bar should be serving one handpumped real ale and a wide selection of kegs, some of which might have been aged in wooden casks.

Leaving the brewery, we continue along Kingsland Road, heading away from the railway, and after about 300 metres, turn left into Barton Road. A short distance down, on the left is the **Barley Mow** (listed in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide). This serves around five, mainly local, real ales plus traditional cider. It also serves meals until 2100.

Returning to Kingsland Road, we turn left into what becomes Midland Road. We then take the fourth left into Unity Street and follow this until reaching the inner ring road. We want to carry straight on but will need to use the subway slightly to our right. Resuming our course along Narrow Plain, we soon arrive at, on our right, the **Bridge Inn** (Good Beer Guide), indicated by a huge mural of Jimi Hendrix. This small but rather excellent pub serves around four real ales.

We'll take the scenic route to our next pub, the **LHG (or Left Handed Giant)** Brewpub (Good Beer Guide). Turn right on leaving the Bridge Inn then, before the river bridge, descend the flight of steps to access the riverside footpath. We turn

right onto this then, keeping left, we soon reach the curving Castle Bridge, which we cross to reach the brewpub. The raised grassy area to our right formed the medieval heart of Bristol until destroyed by air raids in November 1940. LHG, located in the former Courage brewery complex, should be offering two handpumped LHG beers and be serving pizzas.

We head away from the river, following the footpath to the Premier Inn, where we turn right into Counterslip at the end of which, we turn left into Victoria Street. About 200 metres along, on the left is the **Kings Head** (Good Beer Guide). This serves Good Chemistry and other beers but is most noted for its architecture including possibly Bristol's second oldest bar back plus a partitioned off "Tramcar Bar".

Turning right on leaving the Kings Head, and proceeding up the side street, we keep our eyes well peeled to find, on the left, our last pub, the **Cornubia** (Good Beer Guide). This serves around half a dozen real ales plus traditional ciders and is our final destination for this evening, and where we will be hoping to meet up with the other group. Note that this pub closes at 2300.

Group Two

Contact Rick on 077 7938 6642.

Leaving the Knights Templar, we turn right, right and right again to walk down to the inner ring road roundabout. We cross this to reach Victoria Street, and about 200 metres along, on the right, come to the **Kings Head** (Good Beer Guide). This serves Good Chemistry and other beers but is most noted for its architecture including possibly Bristol's second oldest bar back plus a partitioned off "Tramcar Bar".

We turn left on leaving the pub then first right into Mitchell Lane, then first left into St Thomas Street and first right into Portwall Lane, where on the right is the **Portwall Tavern** (Good Beer Guide), which serves three changing beers and, until 2100, meals.

On leaving, we head for the roundabout to the right of the magnificent St Mary Redcliffe Church. We cross the roundabout and head uphill. As the road starts to descend again, we will turn right into Guinea Street. You may want to note, on the left, 10 Guinea Street, built in 1713 and featured in the BBC2 programme A House In Time, presented by David Olusoga. Just beyond is the **Golden Guinea** (Good Beer Guide), serving three, usually local, guest beers.

Continuing down Guinea Street, we come to the Bathurst Basin dock. Use the footbridge slightly to the right to cross the basin then turn right towards the Floating Harbour. We turn left upon reaching this and use the swing bridge to cross to the other side. About 100 metres beyond, on our left is the **Shakespeare Tavern** (Good Beer Guide). This is a Greene King pub but serves a good range of guest beers, plus meals until 2030.

We turn left on leaving the pub and, in about 50 metres, right into the pedestrianised Royal Oak Avenue. This brings us out into Queen Square and it is amazing to think that the inner ring road once crossed it. This evening, we will diagonally cross it, not having to worry about traffic, then turn half left into Queen Charlotte Street. The second street we come to is King Street and we will know when we get there due to the hoards of Friday night revellers the street attracts.

Many of the pubs on King Street are worth visiting but probably not on a Friday evening, so we will stick to one. Turn right into King Street and on the right is the **Llandoger Trow** (Good Beer Guide). A “trow” was a kind of sailing barge that used to operate in these parts and “Llandogo” is a village on the River Wye, upstream from Chepstow. This grand, half-timbered pub dates from 1664 and serves five changing beers.

Saturday

We will meet up at the **New Bristol Brewery Tap Room** when it opens at 1300. This is about 15 minutes walk from the centre at 20a Wilson Street, BS2 9HH, near the bottom of the M32 motorway.

There is not much open in the vicinity before 1200, so anyone wanting a drink beforehand is recommended to meet at the **Phoenix** in Champion Square, just east of the Cabot Circus shopping centre and behind the Future Inn. This traditional, locals’ pub usually serves three handpumped real ales. We will aim to leave here around 1245.

Our next rendezvous is at 1500 at the **Drapers Arms** (listed in CAMRA’s Good Beer Guide) at 447 Gloucester Road, Horfield. Allow about 30 to 40 minutes to get here from the brewery, and this will involve a bus ride. Turn left on leaving the brewery, along Wilson Street and, at the end deviate to the right to pass along the south side of Portland Square before regaining our original course along Pembroke Street. This becomes Brunswick Square and, at the far end, turn left into York Street. At the end, turn right along the main ring road, but do not cross it. Follow this around to the right to pass underneath a building and, immediately beyond, cross the road to reach Stokes Croft bus stop (N1).

We will want to catch a 17, 73, 74, 75, 76 or 77 bus so, hopefully, with that choice, we will not have too long to wait. With a journey time of around 15 minutes, we will see the Drapers Arms on our right and alight at the Churchways Avenue stop just beyond. Opened in 2015, the Drapers was Bristol’s first micropub and, although not large, serves an enviable selection of real ales. The landlord owns a wooden cask and we have asked that this be in use at the time of our visit.

The plan for the evening will be to visit some of the traditional pubs in the Kingsdown area, just outside and hopefully quieter than the city centre, although this will involve some steep climbs. When we are ready, we’ll catch one of the buses listed above from the stop outside the Drapers back towards the city centre. We will alight at Nine Tree Hill, outside Tesco Express, which is about 14 minutes ride. Walking towards the city centre, we’ll take the first turning on the right, into Nine Tree Hill itself. We take the second left

Leaving this pub, we turn right then left to walk alongside the Floating Harbour. We then turn right across Bristol Bridge to Victoria Street. About 100 metres along, we fork right and, at the Fleece, formerly the Fleece & Firkin, one of the original David Bruce brewpubs, we turn right down an alleyway to reach the **Seven Stars**. This serves up to five real ales and a similar number of traditional ciders and perries.

Returning past the Fleece, and turning left, at the end of the street, we turn a sharp right into Victoria Street but then almost immediately left into Counterslip. We take the first right into Temple Street and will see, set back on the right, the **Cornubia** (Good Beer Guide). This serves around half a dozen real ales plus traditional ciders and is our final destination for this evening, and where we will be hoping to meet up with the other group. Note that this pub closes at 2300.

into Dove Street and, after about 100 metres, come to the **Hare On The Hill** (Good Beer Guide). Four handpumps serve mainly local beers and the keg range should include Belgian and German offerings.

Exiting the Hare On The Hill, we continue along Dove Street and at the next junction find **Hillgrove Porter Stores** (Good Beer Guide). This is run by Dawkins, which used to be a brewery but is now a small chain of free houses. It serves up to 12 handpumped real ales plus two traditional ciders. It also serves food from 1730 to 2100.

Turning left out of the pub we ascend the hill, turn left into Somerset Street then right to resume our ascent to reach Kingsdown Parade, where we turn left. The climbing is now largely over and we should be rewarded with fine views over the city centre as we continue along to the **Kingsdown Vaults**. This traditional and attractive pub serves two real ales.

We turn left upon leaving the Kingsdown Vaults, along Clevedon Terrace at the end of which we turn right into Cotham Road South. We soon come, on our left, to the **Cotham Porter Stores**. This pub is owned by the Wickwar Brewery in South Gloucestershire and should be serving three of their beers along with traditional ciders.

Returning along Cotham Road South, we take the first right into Portland Street. This curves round to the left to become Alfred Place, where we find the **Green Man**. This small, back street Dawkins pub serves four real ales plus traditional cider.

Turning right out the pub, we take the first right into Walker Street. This continues as Myrtle Road to the main road, St Michael’s Hill. We turn right and continue for about 250 metres until we arrive at, on our right, **Highbury Vaults** (Good Beer Guide). This pub normally serves five real ales and is on CAMRA’s list of pubs with historic interiors. Bar snacks may be available here but, in any case, there are several restaurants and take-away food establishments in the area.

This marks the end of this particular pub crawl although there

are further pubs in the vicinity and on the way back to the city centre should you wish for more. The centre can be reached in about 15 minutes on foot. Turn left out of the pub and follow the hill straight down. If you prefer to take a bus back into the centre, return down St Michael's Hill and, just before

Myrtle Road there is a stop from which you can get a 72 that passes through the city centre to Temple Meads Station. Departures from the Myrtle Road stop are scheduled at 1944, 2042, 2141, 2240 and 2339.

Sunday

Today we will visit the Old Market area, just to the east of the city centre, ending up at the Crown Tavern, where we hope to enjoy Draught Bass from the wood and a Sunday roast. Please email John at john@jlambandco.co.uk if you wish to eat as he will need to know numbers, and an advance payment may be required

Those wanting some early refreshment and/or a J D Wetherspoon breakfast are recommended the **Commercial Rooms** at 43-45 Corn Street in the historic heart of Bristol. This very grand gentlemen's club and meeting place for Bristol's merchants, was built around 1810. You may want to explore the surrounding streets and nearby St Nicholas Market on your way here. We plan to leave at 1100 for the approximately 20 minute walk to Old Market.

To allow members to do their own sightseeing and, if desired, catch up with us later, the approximate timings for each pub are shown below.

Long Bar, 70 Old Market Street. Opens 1100, arrive 1120. A long, narrow pub typical of premises in this historic thoroughfare. It can be expected to be serving Bath Ales Gem and Butcombe Original. Two doors away is:

Stag & Hounds, 74 Old Market Street. Opens 1200, arrive 1200. Historic, Grade-II listed pub that used to house the "Pied Poudre" court, which settled disputes between traders in the Old Market. It is likely to be serving three real ales from Bristol Beer Factory. Just across the street is:

Punch Bowl Alehouse & Kitchen, 23 Old Market Street. Opens 1200, arrive 1240. Another Grade-II listed pub with "Rogers' Prize Medal Ales" prominently displayed on its tiled frontage. It has a long, narrow bar and a patio at the rear, and serves Wickwar Brewery beers.

We now leave Old Market, heading away from the city centre. At the top of the street, we follow the one-way traffic system to the left, into Lawford Street. After about 100 metres, we turn left to cross the small triangular park to enter New Street where, on the left, is:

Volunteer Tavern (Good Beer Guide), 9 New Street. Opens 1300, arrive 1320. This pub, over 300 years old, is likely to be serving four real ales including Volly Pale, which is brewed in an adjacent shipping container. Leaving this pub, we walk along Great George Street, almost opposite, then take the second right into Eyer's Lane and first left into Great Ann Street. This becomes Little Ann Street and soon, on our left, we spot:

Swan With Two Necks, 12 Little Ann Street. Opens 1400, arrive 1410. This traditional beer house is likely to be serving three real ales including some brewed locally. We retrace our steps along Little Ann Street and take the first left into Wade Street. On reaching the main road, we turn left to reach:

Crown Tavern, 17 Lawfords Gate. Opens 1200, arrive 1450. When SPBW visited this pub a couple of years ago an excellent pint of Draught Bass was served from a 1980s electric pump at a price of £1.50. The pub then was being run more or less as a hobby by an elderly gentleman and, admittedly it was falling into disrepair. The landlord has since retired and the pub closed, but the new owners have renovated the pub, without spoiling its character, and increased the beer range. Also, unfortunately but inevitably, they have also increased the prices. Draught Bass is still served here, now by handpump, but today, by special request, from the wood. There is a room upstairs we have booked for Sunday lunch.

If you are travelling home today by train you will probably be thinking about returning to Temple Meads Station. This is about 20 minutes walk away. Turn right out the pub and follow the main road around until you are back at the top of Old Market. Keep straight on into Midland Road. Take the fifth right into Barton Road. If you have time and did not visit it on Friday, you may want to pop into the **Barley Mow** (Good Beer Guide). About 100 metres beyond the pub, turn right into a residential street in an area curiously known as The Dings. Keep straight on past the Ibis Hotel and across the "cheese grater" river footbridge. About 100 metres beyond, you will see the rear entrance of the station on your left.

If staying on in Bristol, and you fancy some more beer, one idea would be to visit the **Wiper and True Old Market Taproom** (Good Beer Guide), located at the Wiper and True brewery about 15 minutes walk away. Turn left when leaving the Crown and follow the one-way system, turning sharp right and then left. This brings us to the two-way Clarence Road, which in about 150 metres, splits again to start another one-way system. Fork left and then turn first left into the City Business Park. The taproom is about 150 metres along on the left and it closes on Sunday at 2200. It should serve at least one real ale as well as several keg beers brewed on site.

By now, we will probably be wanting to head back towards town, so we'll return to Clarence Road and turn right, heading back the way we came. After about 150 metres, where the road splits for the one-way system, we keep straight ahead onto the minor Braggs Lane. About 100 metres along, on the right, is the **Coach and Horses**, which serves up to four real ales. This pub is due to close at 2100 on Sundays.

On leaving this pub, head down Gloucester Lane opposite and, on the left, we find the **Old Castle Green**, selling two locally brewed real ales. On leaving, continue down Gloucester Lane and turn right at the end into West Street. At the junction, about 100 metres ahead, keep straight on into Old Market for the city centre or left into Midland Road for Temple Meads Station (see above).