

WETHERSPOONNEWS

Spotlight on our wonderful staff

UK EDITION

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WETHERSPOON, ITS CUSTOMERS AND EMPLOYEES HAVE PAID £6.1 BILLION OF TAX IN THE LAST 10 YEARS

The government needs taxes, but there should be tax equality between supermarkets and pubs

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WETHERSPOON RATED TOP FOR FOOD HYGIENE

Our pubs are squeaky clean

Pages 36-38

£428 MILLION IN FREE SHARES AND BONUSES PAID TO EMPLOYEES SINCE 2006

83 per cent paid to pub staff

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TIM'S VIEWPOINT – DOES TRUTH MATTER?

Yes, it is the essential foundation for any good outcome

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Written and edited by Eddie Gershon, along with welcome contributions from Wetherspoon staff.

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Neil Ferguson by Thomas Angus, Imperial College London

Does truth matter?

Yes, it is the essential foundation for any good outcome

In a world dominated by political spin doctors and social media, you sometimes wonder whether the truth exists.

Years ago, a famous historian was asked this question. He replied that truth does exist, but it's hidden in a fog by a lack of both information and perspective.

But does the truth matter? Obviously, yes. As ultra-successful investor Ray Dalio explains: "Truth ... is the essential foundation for any good outcome."

If you act on the basis of something untrue in the world of investment, for example, you can lose your shirt.

Hence, the legendary writer Mark Twain lost all of his money by investing in dud mines – and famously defined a mine as "a hole in the ground owned by a liar".

One problem with COVID-19 is that the issue has, in the words of one US politician, been "weaponised and politicised".

Dogma

Once politicised, logic and truth become secondary to the need to prove that your dogma is correct – or to gain favour with your tribe.

A good basis for any discussion on coronavirus was the comment to the BBC last summer by a German professor: "There's a lot we don't understand about the virus."

The professor was perplexed that there appeared to be few cases of virus transmission in hair salons in Germany – this didn't make sense, he said, although it was true, according to the data which he had at the time.

The professor's humility was encouraging – beware a claim of absolute knowledge or someone who can't acknowledge truths which belie their narrative.

Anders Tegnell, State Epidemiologist of the Public Health Agency of Sweden, reflected similar humility when he told the New Statesman magazine: "Maybe in a year or

two, we can sit down together ... and try to figure out what worked well and what did not work well."

It's definitely true that the truth and, therefore, superior outcomes are helped by debate – and by democracy.

Role

That's where the press and programmes like Today and Question Time, for all of their faults, play a vital role.

Unfortunately, in the modern world, at least, there's a strong movement to stifle debate by no-platforming, ad hominem attacks and media vilification.

If you can kick a top opponent out of the game, as happened to the great Pelé in the 1966 World Cup (not by the eventual winners, of course), you gain short-term advantage.

But guess who won the World Cup in 1970?

If you kick an opponent out of a game in which there are many unknowns – a lot of fog – as in the COVID-19 debate, it will reinforce your own side's prejudices and reduce the opportunity to find the truth, worsening outcomes.

Neil O'Brien, Conservative MP for Harborough, is a good example of a politician who has tried to silence critics of the government's COVID-19 policy by kicking them off the field.

Sceptics

In a Guardian article (see page 6), O'Brien uses the inaccurate description 'COVID sceptics' to describe critics of government COVID-19 policy.

Most government critics question hard lockdowns, capricious restrictions and harsh authoritarian measures, yet agree with social distancing, hygiene guidelines, trusting the people and common sense.

They are better described as 'government policy sceptics', rather than 'COVID sceptics'.

O'Brien's language encourages sectarianism. He says: "COVID sceptics ... crawl out of the woodwork ... make stuff up ... and double down on false

claims." Belfast and Glasgow natives, of a certain age, will recognise the rhetoric.

O'Brien argues that non-lockdown Sweden has pursued a "failed strategy" and that "Stockholm's hospitals overflowed".

In fact, Sweden's all-cause mortality rate (see opposite page), probably the best measure, is eight per cent higher in 2020 than its average of the last five years.

For England and Wales, the all-cause mortality rate is worse – 14 per cent higher than its average for the same period.

Debate

Unsurprisingly perhaps, O'Brien turned down an offer to debate COVID-19 with Professor Carl Heneghan, one of those he vilifies, who is a practising doctor and a director of the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine at Oxford University.

According to The Times (see 'Coronavirus world update', opposite), the UK, now in its third lockdown, has the greatest number of fatalities per million of population of any large country.

In contrast, Florida (see New York Post.com, opposite), which, like Sweden, avoided a harsh lockdown, has had a better outcome than that of California, which, like the UK, locked down hard.

Quarantine

Australia and New Zealand locked down early and hard, closing borders and implementing a quarantine.

They have had great success in almost eradicating the virus, albeit at considerable economic and social cost, and they probably have lower immunity than the Swedes.

So, will the Aussie/Kiwi approach or the Sweden/Florida approach turn out to be superior?

No one knows yet.

To some extent, COVID-19 has all countries in its thrall – imprisoning the Aussies within their own border and threatening the Swedes with a third wave.

However, these opposing approaches, so far, have had better outcomes than the UK, in terms of both health and the economy.

Indeed, the main question is why the UK has fared so badly, compared with many countries.

It may be because the government is putting politics and presentation above the truth – an emphasis on spinning to the press, reliance on narrow groups like the 'quad', use of emergency powers to limit debate (see Lord Sumption's article on page 9), excessive reverence for academia-dominated SAGE and so on.

Closure of pubs

The evidence on which the government relied for the latest closure of pubs is paper thin and contained in an 'EMG/NERVTAG' paper of 22 October 2020.

The New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group, reporting to Public Health England, (NERVTAG) is a group of academics, including Professor Neil Ferguson of Imperial College, formerly of SAGE.

The NERVTAG report completely ignored the evidence of extremely low transmission rates in UK pubs since they reopened after the first lockdown last summer – as demonstrated by the test-and-trace system and by trade organisations such as UK Hospitality.

Wetherspoon, for example, has had over 50 million customer visits recorded through the test-and-trace system, with not a single reported example of an 'outbreak' among customers, as defined by the health authorities.

Yet NERVTAG, bizarrely, did not consider evidence from the UK after July 2020, when pubs started to reopen, relying, instead, on earlier evidence from abroad: "Japan, China, South Korea and Indonesia noted that large super-spreading

events originated from pubs, clubs, restaurants, gyms and wedding events."

Clearly, the overseas examples, from early 2020, relied on by NERVTAG, related to different rules and protocols from those successfully utilised by the UK hospitality industry after July.

NERVTAG and the government concluded that "hospitality venues are a significant risk for transmission" since "the disinhibitory effects of alcohol are likely to exacerbate difficulties with social distancing".

Yet alcohol is regularly consumed in households, especially when pubs are closed.

Regulated

NERVTAG and the government have therefore swapped supervised and regulated consumption of alcohol in pubs, with screens, hand-sanitisers and trained staff, for unsupervised consumption in households.

Whereas a plethora of evidence demonstrates low transmission in UK pubs, a similar plethora indicates a vast transmission level in households (see 'Transmission in households', opposite).

The irrational NERVTAG report is another example of the erratic government dodgem car, lurching from lockdown to lockdown and from Eat Out to Help Out to tiers and curfews.

Government

In the end, the government, lacking perspective, has ignored the real evidence and has taken the momentous decision to close the hospitality industry repeatedly, based on the tribal beliefs of academics – who, contrary to received opinion, are often steeped in dogma.

As Boris Johnson recently said: "There is obviously an extra risk from hospitality."

Except that it's not true, Boris – if we proceed on the basis of information which is untrue, outcomes are worse, and we will end up, like Mark Twain, running out of money.

Tim Martin
Chairman

FLORIDA, CALIFORNIA SEE COVID-19 DECLINES DESPITE DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Florida and California have taken dramatically different approaches to tackle the spread of coronavirus – but both states have seen key metrics improve in recent weeks.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom has imposed more stringent rules, most recently mandating a statewide stay-at-home order Dec. 3 that lasted through the holiday season.

The order, which was lifted Jan. 25, went as far as to ban outdoor dining, beauty services and religious services.

In the Sunshine State, on the other hand, steps were taken to ensure that businesses were kept open.

Gov. Ron DeSantis in September prevented local municipalities from implementing restrictions that would force restaurants and bars to operate at less than half-capacity.

He also signed an executive order that prevented businesses from facing fines for defying COVID-19-related orders.

DeSantis on Sunday argued that the state was "focused on lifting people up" while "lockdown states" are "putting people out of business."

"There's a whole bunch of things we've been doing for COVID, but at the same time, we've lifted our state up, we've saved our economy and I think we're going to be first out of the gate once we are able to put COVID behind the country," he told Maria Bartiromo on "Sunday Morning Futures."

But despite the two states' varying approaches this winter, they have yielded similar results.

Both states grappled with a surge in cases around Jan. 1, with the number of infections trending downwards a few weeks later.

They're now both seeing an average of between 200 and 400 cases per million people, and have each reported declines over the last several days, according to the COVID Tracking Project.

Similarly, the two states have also seen improvement with hospitalizations.

About a month ago, California was reporting a rate of 56 hospitalizations per 100,000 residents, while Florida saw a rate of 35, the data shows.

Now, the Golden State is recording 24 hospitalizations per 100,000 people, while Florida is reporting about 22, data shows.

California is currently leading the nation in the total number of cases, but it has nearly twice the number of residents of Florida.

When the cases are adjusted for population, their tally is about the same.

California has recorded about 8,822 cases per 100,000 people, while Florida has about 8,508 for the same population, data shows.

By Jackie Salo

New York Post.com / 15 February 2021

All-cause mortality: England and Wales vs Sweden

	Sweden	England and Wales
2020 (mortalities)	98,125	608,016
2019 (")	88,766	530,841
2018 (")	92,185	541,589
2017 (")	91,972	533,253
2016 (")	90,982	525,048
2015 (")	90,907	529,655
2015-19 (5yr average)	90,962	532,077
2020 vs 5yr average	7,163	75,939
% increase (2020 vs 5yr average)	8%	14%

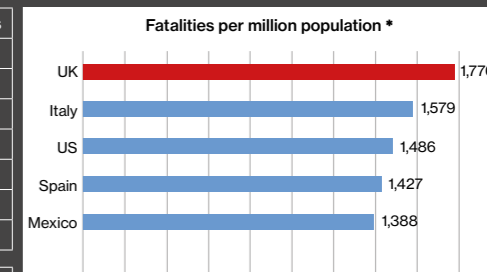
Sweden source: Statista
England and Wales source: ONS

Transmission in households

- i. Science and Technology parliamentary committee (January 2021):** "The bulk of transmission has always been in people's homes" (Greg Fell, Director of Public Health, Sheffield and Dr Richard Harling, Director of Health and Care).
- ii. Councillor Ian Ward, leader of Birmingham City Council (September 2020):** "The data we have shows that the infection rate has risen, mainly due to social interactions, particularly private household gatherings. In shops and hospitality venues there are strict measures in place to ensure they are Covid-free, whereas it is much easier to inadvertently pass on the

Coronavirus world update

(The Times, 22 February 2021)



*Countries with populations greater than 20m
Figures as of 7pm 21 February 2021
Source: WHO
US figures source: CDC

virus in someone's house, where people are more relaxed and less vigilant."

iii. UK Hospitality, British Institute of Innkeepers and British Beer and Pub Association (October 2020): "Of 22,500 pubs, restaurants and hospitality venues surveyed, just 1% said they were linked by NHS Test and Trace to an incidence".

iv. Imperial College study (27 November 2020): "...households showed the highest transmission rates..."

Tim says: "Neil was a big opponent of the euro, 20 or so years ago. He later appeared, in the referendum, as an acolyte of pro-remain Chancellor George Osborne.

Now, he's on a mission from Emperor Boris, keen to loosen the shackles of his own party by winning over Guardian readers. Fair enough, that's politics. Where you're wrong, here, Neil, is that Sweden, a slightly more urbanised country than the UK (a higher percentage living in towns), has had better results than the UK – albeit worse than smaller neighbours.

The Times says that the UK's COVID stats are the world's worst (see page 5).

You're right that some 'hard lockdown' sceptics have made mistakes (welcome to the real world), yet nothing like the dire forecasting errors of Imperial College and SAGE, relied on by the government – see opposite page."

I'D LOVE TO IGNORE 'COVID SCEPTICS' AND THEIR TALL TALES. BUT THEY MAKE A SPLASH AND HAVE NO SHAME

The Tory MP on the fantasies of those in the media, and beyond, who oppose lockdown

If you had opened certain newspapers over the past year, you would have read the following. In spring, you'd have been told the virus was fizzling out. You might have been treated to the views of epidemiologist Sunetra Gupta, who claimed: "The epidemic has largely come and is on its way out in this country." This wasn't due to the lockdown, she argued, but "the build-up of immunity", which government advisers were apparently underestimating.

By the summer, you would have read that it was all over. In June, Toby Young, editor of the Lockdown Sceptics website predicted: "There will be no 'second spike' – not now, and not in the autumn either. The virus has melted into thin air. It's time to get back to normal." Telegraph columnist Allison Pearson wrote: "The terrible Coronabeast will be gone from these isles by September." By July, the sceptical narrative had changed. According to Ross Clark in the Daily Mail, there was nothing to fear. Boris Johnson's warning of a possible "second wave" was an unjustified "emotive" use of language. Rising cases in countries such as Spain were "little more than a statistical illusion" due to increased testing.

Globally, countries taking the toughest measures were getting great results. Australia, New Zealand, Korea, Japan and Taiwan all saw case rates at about a 20th of the EU average. The Covid sceptics trashed their approach as "sheer panic". Instead, libertarian Sweden was all the rage. Never mind that its death rate was 10 times that of its neighbours. They would have no second wave because they had wisely built up "herd immunity". In fact, there was a brutal second wave; Finland and Norway offered emergency medical assistance as Stockholm's hospitals overflowed. Even the king slammed the failed strategy.

As infections built up again in the autumn, the story changed once more. Though it looked like cases were rising, it was a "casedemic" brought on by faulty tests. "At least 91% of 'Covid cases' are FALSE

POSITIVES," thundered Talk Radio host Julia Hartley-Brewer in September. "There is no evidence of a second wave."

By autumn, there were more people in hospital with Covid but several papers ran pieces saying our hospitals weren't unusually busy in November. Some continued the pretence for an absurdly long time. On 29 December, Pearson wrote: "ICU occupancy is 78% today. Remarkably low for this time of year" and that "winter 2020 is the lowest hospital bed occupancy for 10 years. Yes, really."

However, as the new variant exploded and television news showed ambulances queuing outside hospitals that were full of people gasping for breath, the story had to change again. Yes, people were now dying but not in unusual numbers. On 4 January, Hartley-Brewer reassured us: "The virus kills. It just isn't causing excess deaths anymore." This was rather difficult to square with the Office for National Statistics saying 2020 saw the largest increase in deaths in England and Wales since 1940. So, others resorted to a different argument. Yes, 89,000 extra people had died but they would have died anyway. They were old or had "prior conditions", so were already on the way out. They didn't mention that 8,300 of them were of working age or that many "prior conditions" were non-fatal, such as asthma, diabetes, mental health or learning difficulties.

Powerful Covid-sceptics in the media have got it wrong at every stage. They fought to stop or delay every measure necessary to control the virus. They opposed masks, resisted travel restrictions, fought local lockdown tiers as well as national measures, often with conflicting arguments. Clark wrote again in October that local tiers were unfair and the PM wanted to "trash the northern economy", but when national measures proved necessary, he complained "we are going to close down restaurants in Cornwall to try to fight an epidemic in Manchester". In December, he said we should prioritise vaccinations in "the parts of the country which add most to the economy, London especially".

They rubbished those who knew what they were talking about. Professors Chris Whitty and Patrick Vallance were "Messrs Doom and Gloom", "fear-mongering" and "self-serving". That Whitty and Jonathan Van-Tam used their tiny amount of spare time to volunteer in hospitals suggests that's not true. Now, as the death toll still rises, the same people crawl from the woodwork to demand we lift all restrictions as soon as the most vulnerable are vaccinated.

It's great that we are leading Europe in vaccinations and lockdown has meant cases are starting to fall back. But if we drop our guard, we could still risk many lives agonisingly close to the finish line.

Because they are still dangerous, I have pointed out the mistakes of some Covid-sceptics on Twitter. They regard this as outrageous. An MP shouldn't be getting involved in this. I "must not have any constituents who're struggling", says Hartley-Brewer. Young deleted all his tweets from last year and, in a joint podcast with alt-right conspiracy theorist James Delingpole, I was accused of being "a wrong un", a "fascist", and compared to Stalin's secret police chief Lavrenti Beria. (I didn't know you could be a Nazi and a Commie.) I've touched a nerve, it seems. Politicians are used to accountability. The guilty people within the media are not.

The truth is, the Covid-sceptics aren't really sceptics at all. They engage in motivated reasoning; they make stuff up and double down on disproved claims. They are powerful figures, not used to being questioned. But the truth is that they have a hell of a lot to answer for.

• Neil O'Brien is Conservative MP for Harborough, a former director of Policy Exchange and a vice-chair of the Conservative party

By Neil O'Brien

The Guardian | 17 January 2021

WETHERSPOON HIGHLIGHTS FLAWS IN IMPERIAL COLLEGE RESEARCH

Tim says: "Neil O'Brien criticises mistakes made by 'lockdown sceptics', yet these are minor compared with the faux pas of Imperial College.

Professor Neil Ferguson and Imperial have been key parts of the government's decision-making process.

Wetherspoon pointed out THE FACT that the Imperial 'model' was deeply flawed, as evidenced by its application to Sweden.

Imperial denied that it had used its model to calculate the outcome for Sweden – and demanded an apology from Wetherspoon.

It was clear that the Imperial College model, in fact, had been used to calculate an outcome for Sweden by several different parties. Wetherspoon did not apologise, since its assertions had been correct.

Instead, it sent out the below press release. Imperial College, having initially asked for an apology, said nothing more.

It is patently obvious that the Imperial College model was used to calculate outcomes for Sweden, and that it was deeply flawed, as Wetherspoon stated."

Press release from Wetherspoon, in response to a dispute with Imperial College (31 December 2020)

Wetherspoon has been asked by Imperial College to correct a press release (Sunday 27 December) in which it said that: "...the Imperial College model forecast around 88,000 fatalities for Sweden if it did not lock down, but the outcome has been less than 10% of that number."

Imperial College deny that their model created these inaccurate predictions.

However, Wetherspoon points out that Viscount Ridley, in the House of Lords, said: "Uppsala University took the Imperial College model... and adapted it to Sweden and forecasted 90,000 deaths by the end of May (in Sweden) if there was no lockdown and 40,000 if a full lockdown was imposed."

Uppsala University itself said: "We employed an individual agent-based model based on work by (Neil) Ferguson et al of Imperial College.

Paul Franks, an academic from Lund University in Sweden, told Swedish Radio that "the Imperial College simulation" would give rise to about 85,000 deaths in Sweden and "if you intervene very aggressively", by introducing a lockdown, about 40,000 deaths.

Philip Magness, senior research fellow at the American Institute of Economic Research, said that the "Imperial College model, applied to Sweden, yields preposterous results".

Professor Johan Giesecke, adviser to the World Health Organisation, has said that the Imperial College research is deeply flawed since it wasn't published "which is normal scientific behaviour", it wasn't peer-reviewed, "which is also normal" and that it greatly underestimated "the proportion of very mild cases".

Tim Martin, chairman of Wetherspoon, said: "Rarely can any advice to governments have been as inaccurate as that of Neil Ferguson, Imperial College and SAGE.

"The flawed Imperial College model has been dismissed by scientists, academics and doctors throughout the world.

"The fact that Imperial has contacted Wetherspoon to ask for a correction illustrates the unreal world in which they operate.

"The great tragedy is that the UK government, which lacks anyone with experience of running a business, is in thrall to these inaccurate predictions.

"No country is immune to the virus, but Sweden is achieving better health outcomes than the UK by adhering to scientifically proven social distancing and hygiene policies, while avoiding the lockdowns which have already resulted in 800,000 job losses in the UK, with many more to come this winter.

"Many studies have shown that lockdowns are counterproductive.

"As David Nabarro of the World Health Organization has recently said: "We appeal to all world leaders to stop using lockdowns as your primary method of control."

"As someone running a business, I, and others doing similar jobs, am used to the offer of expert advice from very highly qualified people.

"Some of the advice is very good, but it's often terrible. Unfortunately, the government appears unable to tell the difference – and it has chosen to follow the advice of those who have the least credible record.

"As the Sage of Omaha, Warren Buffett, has said, forecasts tell you a lot about the forecaster, but nothing about the future."

Tim says: “Professors Baker and McKee make the case for a zero-COVID strategy. They don’t discuss in detail the consequences of closed borders worldwide and Aussie-style quarantines. The practicality of this solution depends on the exact severity of the virus – an issue on which academics are divided.”

“ ALL COUNTRIES SHOULD PURSUE A COVID-19 ELIMINATION STRATEGY: HERE ARE 16 REASONS WHY

Countries trying to eliminate the virus have been far more successful and economically better off than those that have tried to suppress it

The past year of Covid-19 has taught us that it is the behaviour of governments, more than the behaviour of the virus or individuals, that shapes countries’ experience of the crisis. Talking about pandemic waves has given the virus far too much agency: until quite recently the apparent waves of infection were driven by government action and inaction. It is only now with the emergence of more infectious variants that it might be appropriate to talk about a true second wave.

As governments draw up their battle plans for year two, we might expect them to base their strategies on the wealth of data about what works best. And the evidence to date suggests that countries pursuing elimination of Covid-19 are performing much better than those trying to suppress the virus. Aiming for zero-Covid is producing more positive results than trying to “live with the virus”.

Here are 16 reasons why we think all countries should at least consider an elimination approach:

1. It saves lives. Not surprisingly, eliminating transmission of the virus minimises Covid-19 deaths. Countries pursuing elimination have Covid-19 mortality rates that are typically below 10 per million, which is 100 times less than many countries “living” with the virus.
2. The elimination of community transmission also spares populations from “long-Covid”, which causes persistent health problems in survivors. These problems are reported by the majority of people hospitalised because of Covid-19 and can also affect those with even mild infection.
3. Elimination is pro-equity. Pandemics almost invariably cause disproportionate harm to the most disadvantaged groups based on ethnicity, income and long-term illness. Eliminating Covid-19 can minimise these inequalities particularly if a suitable social “safety-net” is also provided.
4. Countries that have eliminated Covid-19 are experiencing less economic contraction than countries trying to live with the virus. Mainland China and Taiwan are possibly the only places with neutral or net positive economic growth in 2020.
5. Elimination is achievable and works in a variety of settings. Globally, multiple countries and jurisdictions are successfully pursuing elimination approaches, notably mainland China, Taiwan, Vietnam,

Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. They are diverse in geography, population size, resources and styles of government.

6. The virus can be eliminated even after intense local transmission has occurred. Mainland China demonstrated this in Wuhan. The state of Victoria in Australia was also able to eliminate Covid-19 even after a period of intense local transmission with higher rates than were being reported in the UK at the time.

7. It’s easier if more countries adopt this approach. Border controls can be relaxed, creating “green zones” and allowing quarantine-free travel with associated social and economic benefits. This opening-up is already happening among Australian states and between Pacific islands and New Zealand.

8. The rollout of effective vaccines will make Covid-19 elimination easier to achieve. Effective vaccines working in combination with other public health measures have been crucial to the successful elimination of diseases such as polio and measles in many countries.

9. Having an explicit “zero-Covid” goal provides a strong motivating and coordinating focus. Suppression does not offer a clear end point, leaving countries vulnerable to rapid resurgences, as seen recently in countries like Ireland. The resulting uncertainty makes it impossible to plan, with enormous consequences for schools, businesses, family life, and much else.

10. It is sustainable. Countries pursuing elimination have had setbacks in the form of border failures and outbreaks, but have mostly been able to contain them and regain their elimination status.

11. If the virus mutates, elimination still works. The major methods used for Covid-19 elimination (border management, physical distancing, mask wearing, testing and contact tracing) are relatively unaffected by virus mutations (though testing could theoretically be less effective if the virus changed markedly, and outbreak control would become more difficult with more infectious variants).

12. It also still works if vaccines provide only limited long-term protection. For example, if vaccines are poorly effective at preventing onward transmission then elimination methods could supplement that limitation.

13. It may reduce emergence of more dangerous virus variants. Elimination approaches result in far fewer circulating viruses. Consequently, there will be fewer opportunities

for emergence of new variants that are more infectious, and that might escape the protective effects of vaccines, or even be more lethal.

14. The use of lockdowns should be less necessary. A relatively short, intense lockdown to eliminate Covid-19 transmission in an area should allow control measures to be relaxed in the absence of circulating virus. Countries such as New Zealand have had far less time under lockdown than most countries pursuing suppression which have needed to go in and out of lockdown for long periods to avoid their health services becoming overwhelmed.

15. Vigorous control of Covid-19 infection has substantial co-benefits. Elimination approaches have reduced transmission of other respiratory viruses, notably influenza, resulting in fewer hospitalisations and deaths from these respiratory pathogens.

16. It provides a good interim strategy while we identify an optimal long-term approach, which is currently uncertain. One scenario could be regional elimination or even global eradication as we saw with Sars. Another plausible option is endemic infection with the health burden being managed with vaccines, as we see with influenza.

These benefits of pursuing a Covid-19 elimination strategy need to be balanced against the costs and potential negative effects. However, these costs are also experienced by countries trying to suppress the virus, except in their case they come repeatedly, after each resurgence.

On balance, elimination looks like the “least bad choice” for many jurisdictions. We hope that all governments, and the World Health Organization, will consider the elimination strategy as they plan year two of our global response to the pandemic.

Michael Baker is a professor of public health at the University of Otago.

Martin McKee is a professor of European public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

By Michael Baker and Martin McKee

The Guardian / 28 January 2021

Print credit: www.theguardian.com

Tim says: “Former Supreme Court Judge Jonathan Sumption shines a spotlight on the dangers to democracy, emanating from the methodology which the government has used to implement its COVID-19 policy. It is undeniable that a small group of ministers and academics, from similar and narrow backgrounds, is running the country, largely through emergency powers.”

“ LIBERAL DEMOCRACY WILL BE THE BIGGEST CASUALTY OF THIS PANDEMIC

The state’s unprecedented overreach has fundamentally altered the unwritten conventions that underpin our political system

The biggest casualty of the lockdown will not be the closed pubs, restaurants and shops and the crippled airlines. It will not be our once-thriving musical, theatrical and sporting culture. It will not even be the wreckage of our economy. These are terrible things to behold. But the biggest casualty of all will be liberal democracy.

Liberal democracy is a remarkable but fragile achievement. It is an attempt to meet the challenge of making governments answerable to the people, while protecting personal freedom. This is hard to do. People crave security and look to the state to provide it. To do this, the state needs extensive powers over its citizens. This is why, in democracies across the world, the power of the state has continually increased. It is also why liberal democracy is the exception rather than the rule. Democracies are easily subverted and often fail.

What makes us a free society is that, although the state has vast powers, there are conventional limits on what it can do with them. The limits are conventional because they do not depend on our laws but on our attitudes. There are islands of human life which are our own, a personal space into which the state should not intrude without some altogether exceptional justification.

Liberal democracy breaks down when frightened majorities demand mass coercion of their fellow citizens, and call for our personal spaces to be invaded. These demands are invariably based on what people conceive to be the public good. They all assert that despotism is in the public interest.

The problem is perfectly encapsulated in a recent interview with Professor Neil Ferguson, whose projections were used to justify the first lockdown last March. Before that, as Prof Ferguson related in that interview, Sage had concluded that the Chinese lockdown had worked but was out of the question in Europe. “It’s a communist, one-party state, we said. We couldn’t get away with it in Europe, we thought. And then Italy did it. And we realised we could ... If China had not done it, the year would have been very different.”

China is not a liberal democracy. It is a totalitarian state. It treats human beings as

so many tools of state policy. There is no personal space which the state cannot invade at will. Liberal democracies have good reasons of political morality for not wishing to be like China. Considering this issue only in terms of whether lockdowns are effective against pandemics, and whether governments can “get away with it”, serves to reduce liberty from a major principle to a mere question of expediency.

We have to assume, since the Government took his advice, that ministers agreed with Prof Ferguson. Certainly that was the position of the senior minister who recently told me that liberal democracy was an unsuitable model for dealing with a pandemic. Something more “Napoleonic” was needed, said he.

Many people believe that it is OK to be like China for a time, because when the crisis ends we can go back to being like Britain again. These people are making a serious mistake. We cannot switch in and out of totalitarianism at will. Because a free society is a question of attitude, it is dead once the attitude changes.

A society in which oppressive control of every detail of our lives is unthinkable except when it is thought to be a good idea, is not free. It is not free while the controls are in place. And it is not free after they are lifted, because the new attitude will allow the same thing to happen again whenever there is enough public support.

Covid-19 is not unique. There will be other epidemics. Some will be worse. Other issues will pose similar dilemmas, from terrorism and climate change at one extreme to obesity and censorship of politically incorrect opinion at the other. A threshold has now been crossed. A big taboo has gone. Other governments will say that the only question that matters is whether it works and whether they can “get away with it”. In a world ruled by the empire of fear, the answer will usually be “yes”.

We already have a striking example. The vaccine, which was supposed to make the lockdown unnecessary, has become a reason for keeping it in force. Because there is now an exit route, we are told that it doesn’t matter how far away it is.

Infections, hospitalisations and deaths are plunging, but millions who are at virtually no risk are being kept in house imprisonment. This is being done mainly because a selective regime of controls would be too difficult for the state to enforce. Coercion quickly becomes an object in itself.

Liberty is not an absolute value but it is a critically important one. Of all freedoms, the freedom to interact with other human beings is perhaps the most valuable. It is a basic human need, the essential condition of human happiness and creativity.

I do not doubt that there are extreme situations in which oppressive controls over our daily lives may be necessary and justified: an imminent threat of invasion, for example, or a violent general insurrection. Some health crises may qualify, such as a major epidemic of smallpox (case mortality about 30 per cent) or Ebola (about 50 per cent).

Covid-19 is serious, but it is not in that category or even close. It is well within the range of perils which we have always had to live with, and always will. According to government figures, more than 99 per cent of people who get Covid survive. The great majority will not even get seriously ill. The average age at which people die of Covid-19 is 82, which is close to the average age at which people die anyway.

The Prime Minister claims to believe in liberty and to find the current measures distasteful. Actions speak louder than words, and I am afraid that I do not believe him. He is too much of a populist to go against public sentiment. He lacks the moral and political stature to lead opinion rather than follow it.

I hope that I am wrong about this. But we shall soon know. In the next week Boris Johnson has an opportunity to show that he has some principles after all.

Jonathan Sumption is a former Supreme Court judge.

By Jonathan Sumption

The Telegraph / 15 February 2021

Print credit: © Jonathan Sumption / Telegraph Media Group Limited 2021

Tim says: "Luke Johnson makes the point that most science is hidden in a fog of jargon and that most politicians study non-science degrees. Also, the government is now the media's biggest client and has used that clout to instil fear in the electorate."

“ WE NEED TO DEMYSTIFY THE PRIESTHOOD OF COVID-19 ”

Every profession has its terminology: law, accountancy, medicine, IT, economics, even management. The intent of such nomenclature is to provide precision yet too often it descends into jargon — technical nouns, verbs and adjectives deployed merely to show off. Instead of delivering illumination, the words help to obscure, which is occasionally the purpose of excessive technical language.

Few government ministers, MPs or mainstream journalists have much in the way of scientific qualifications. Many would have stopped studying scientific or technical subjects when they were 16; while they may have university degrees, these tend to be in the humanities. This means their ability to comprehend much of the science around the coronavirus is limited, and their confidence in interrogating the scientific advisers is likely to be negligible.

The problem is compounded because science and medicine are priesthoods, full of ritual and specialist language. It is easy to get the impression that the reason for much of this rigmarole is to mystify and intimidate non-professors.

Scientists are human and want to do good, but they also want to earn money, status grants and promotion. A recent book, *Calling Bullshit* by Carl Bergstrom and Jevin West, discusses the challenges.

Scientific research works via the publication of papers in specialist journals. These are meant to supply the methods and results of studies, and be peer-reviewed by relevant experts. A scientist's career progress in such fields partly relates to how many of their papers are accepted by prestigious journals, how often they are cited by others and the overall impact they have.

Covid-19 has led to an explosion of published research — much of it probably rushed and of low quality. PubMed, a free online repository of biomedical literature, suggests about 100,000 studies of Covid-19 have already been published. Has anyone read them all? Which of them are truly

important and which are trivial? How much of the information they contain is duplication and how much is contradictory?

Clinicians and scientists might argue that the public does not need to grasp the meaning of scientific concepts, language or texts. Indeed, most people do not have the temperament to undertake the rigorous training required to interpret scientific knowledge. Yet the lack of transparency and the exclusion of the substantial majority of the population creates confusion, suspicion and mistrust between the experts and the rest. The vast torrents of data often serve to obfuscate.

This really matters when we are all subject to unprecedented and onerous restrictions in every detail of our lives. Unfortunately, many aspects of Covid-19 are unclear, and the effectiveness of treatments is debatable. There are few easy solutions and only hard trade-offs. There have been serious policy mistakes. But our political leaders admit to none of that, and too often present probabilities and educated guesses about this epidemic as definitive truth.

Many people — even clever, highly-qualified people — do not write well. They cannot craft a narrative, their documents lack structure and they use long words when simple ones would do. Some of the best research scientists I have known were brilliant at explaining complex issues in accessible ways. Sadly, all too many academics don't possess such a skill — or perhaps don't care.

In one area, however, the state has communicated very effectively. Since last March, our government has been the UK's biggest advertiser and has spent tens of millions of taxpayers' money on propaganda designed to scare us. These campaigns are superbly crafted and horrifyingly effective. Instilling fear and anxiety into the population has kept us passive and obedient, despite the grotesque impact that restrictions and stress are having on our mental, physical and financial well-being.

Thanks to lockdowns, we are atomised and exist in shrunken echo chambers. Conspiracy

theories about vaccines and other aspects of Covid-19 are flourishing. I suspect that, isolated and unable to have nuanced conversations, millions of people feel discombobulated, unsure whom to trust. Hysterical broadcasters only fuel the dislocation.

Society needs better general science education, and more public scientists who are able to disseminate scientific concepts to average citizens. We need far more politicians in senior positions with medical and scientific backgrounds, especially in areas such as health.

A better-informed populace will come closer to understanding the tough choices facing our country during a crisis like this.

Luke Johnson is chairman of Risk Capital Partners and the Institute of Cancer Research.

By Luke Johnson
The Sunday Times / 31 January 2021
Print credit: Luke Johnson / News Licensing

Tim says: "Taiwan avoided a national lockdown, but had strict border controls and a quarantine system, combined with face-coverings and contact-tracing — now that vaccines exist, will these measures still be necessary?"

“ HOW TAIWAN BEAT COVID-19 ”

The high-tech island nation has had a good pandemic, quickly squashing the virus without a national lockdown. What did Taiwan get right?

On December 30, 2019, Li Wenliang, the Chinese whistleblower who later died of Covid-19, sent a group message, warning colleagues about an outbreak of a SARS-like illness in Wuhan, China. Li's private message ended up being shared online and picked up 1,010 km away, across the sea, in Taiwan.

The next day, it was reposted by a doctor with the username 'nomorepipe' on PTT, the Taiwanese equivalent of Reddit. As Li's revelation spread across Taiwan's social media, it was seen by the country's health officials, who sent an email to the World Health Organization (WHO) to warn the rest of the world. On January 1 2020, Taiwan kicked off a programme of health inspections for all flights from Wuhan. As the country continued to mobilise over the next few days, the WHO stayed silent and the world remained oblivious.

Globally, Covid-19 cases have now surpassed 50 million, with ten million in the US alone. Multiple countries in Europe have entered national lockdowns for the second time as the virus continues to ravage through populations. But despite never having entered a nationwide lockdown, Taiwan is virus-free. To date, it has seen a total of 597 coronavirus cases and seven deaths.

By May, the country had largely returned to normal. In October, it celebrated 200 days without a single case; by the end of the month, thousands marched through the streets of Taipei for the Pride parade.

Many factors have played a part in Taiwan's success, including an ethos of open data and open government, an enthusiastic "open source" movement, and the use of big data analytics in apps and services. Just look at vTaiwan, a platform that sees the country's government working closely with gov, a group of "civic hackers", to include citizens in the democracy process.

And crucially, trust in the government is high following 2014's Sunflower Movement and the appointment of digital minister Audrey Tang, Taiwan's first transgender official and the youngest-ever government minister.

Taiwan was well-prepared for the possibility of a coronavirus-related pandemic. The country was one of the worst hit by SARS in 2003, with 346 cases and 73 deaths. Following SARS, a careful legislative process resulted in the creation of Taiwan's Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) to manage outbreaks.

Since 2004, Taiwan's citizens have been given a smart card under the government-run National Health Insurance system to demonstrate their eligibility for healthcare access. Over the years more health data

has been added to the card, such as a person's prescription history. This card was central to a mask rationing system spearheaded by digital minister Tang early in the pandemic, which ensured that all Taiwan's citizens had access to an allocated quota. When people swiped their card at a pharmacy or convenience store, they were given the masks.

Taiwan understood the importance of face masks from the start — Tang herself calls them "a physical vaccine" — and this initiative meant everyone could easily get their quota. If people already had enough masks at home, the National Health Insurance's own app helped them donate them to countries in need.

To help with the masks' distribution, Tang also released data to the public via an open API and invited Taiwan's civic hackers to create. They built more than 140 apps, including maps showing which pharmacies had supplies, visualisations of how many masks had been distributed and where, and voice assistants for the visually impaired.

Chihhao Yu, a founder of gov's international arm gov-intl, explains how the leaderless organisation's contributors worked together with citizens when people were concerned about where to buy masks. "Faced with a lack of data detailing store locations and supply, a concerned engineer called Howard decided to build a website for people to add convenience stores to the map and report mask supply. It's not perfect, but it works," he says.

Taiwan also leveraged technology to build an effective "digital quarantine" system. Those returning to Taiwan from overseas are sent to a "quarantine hotel" — a hotel that has been repurposed for the pandemic — and not allowed to leave their room for two weeks. People who live in a flat with their own bathroom can quarantine at home.

Those quarantining — whether in a hotel or at home — are monitored by a "digital fence": smartphone signal and nearby cell towers are combined by the country's mobile phone carriers to provide a rough idea of a person's location. The authorities can't see exactly where you are, but they can tell if you've left the general area. The telecom provider will automatically text both the person in quarantine and a health officer, if they venture outside the zone. The phone must stay on: if someone runs out of battery, a health officer will soon appear at their door.

The whole process is carried out with privacy in mind, says Tang. "Because it's not GPS, Bluetooth, or Wi-Fi, the resolution is very



coarse. Even in the most urban areas, it's maybe a 15-meter radius. We don't know which room you are in, but we do know which district." And the telcos process the information entirely within their own data centres. "We can't keep the data, and the telecoms never hand it to a third party anyway, so it can't be sold to advertisers," Tang says.

The country also wisely uses incentives: if citizens stay in quarantine, they are paid £27 a day. If they break it, they are fined up to 1,000 times that.

Taiwan has long been a victim of disinformation, allegedly from China – which regards the country as part of its territory. It has been unable to join WHO meetings following opposition from China. But within its borders, Taiwan's government actively pushes out daily press releases, memes and texts to rebut false information about Covid-19.

Although it was already common to wear a mask in Taiwan, the country's approach to disinformation was a major factor in convincing the population of the efficacy of masks and hand-washing. The message to wear a mask and wash hands was spread by a cartoon "spokesdog", a Shiba Inu named Zongchai, which translates science into funny memes.

"Whenever there's a trending rumour, we make sure there's humour over rumour. Within two hours, we roll out two pictures, each with less than 200 characters and that goes even more viral than the disinformation," Tang says. The idea is that people would see the disinformation and a funny clarification on the same day, she says. That way, after they wake up the following day, the long-term association will likely be "joy and humour", rather than "anger and outrage".

At the same time, people actively identify and flag misinformation. CoFacts, a collaborative fact-checking chatbot spun up through a gov project, allows those using end-to-end encrypted chat apps to send something they suspect is misinformation to be crowd-checked. Professional fact-checkers, such as the Taiwan FactCheck Center and MyGoPen, also play a role.

It's an impressive approach built on a collective effort that could be difficult to replicate in more divided Western democracies. Is Taiwan a particularly altruistic society? Tang says no. "We know wearing a mask alone doesn't work, you have to wash your hands, too. We say, 'You wear a mask to protect yourself from your own unwashed hands'. This links hand sanitation and mask use together.

"It is appealing to one's own self-interest. If we had said, 'You wear a mask to protect the elderly, you wear a mask to respect each other', that's a collectivist argument, and it wouldn't work."

Even so, the Taiwanese's collaborative attitude is undeniable. According to Chunhuei Chi, a public health professor at the Oregon State University, most countries don't do quarantine properly. "In Taiwan, the border has been strongly guarded and the country still practices strict quarantine," he says. He quotes Taiwan's former vice-president Chen Chien-jen, who said success lies half on the government and half on citizens. "That's an important political social culture."

Tang agrees, saying that trust in citizens and businesses is vital. She describes how a hostess bar created its own contact-tracing system after a worker was diagnosed with Covid-19. "They invented code names, single-use emails, prepaid SIM cards and scratch pads, so they didn't need to send any data to the central government."

The most replicable factor in Taiwan's success is the country's high-trust open source culture, says Amy Studdart, a senior advisor at the International Republican Institute, an NGO focusing on digital democracy. "Taiwan has been smart about changing the institutions and structure of government and they have transformed citizens' expectations of what the government does."

But Daniel Faraci, director at consultancy Grassroots Political Consulting points out that parts of Taiwan's approach could be difficult to replicate in the West, where social media are more often weaponised to sow discord than to fight disinformation. "Taiwan has a level of sophistication where the community and government are working together," says Faraci. "Here [in the US] we don't have those types of systems: we have websites."

Despite news that a vaccine is close, Covid-19 is going to be an urgent global issue for some time. In the interim, Taiwan thinks it can help others: Tang's Twitter profile displays the hashtag #TaiwanCanHelp.

"It's a great opportunity for the world to look at this situation and learn that there's no need to go into an authoritarian lockdown, or to succumb to surveillance capitalism to get data," she says. "People don't have to make the false choice between freedom and human rights on one side, and public health on the other."



By **Kate O'Flaherty**
WIRED / 14 November 2020

THE KINGS TUN • KINGSTON UPON THAMES

DANIELLE TAKES CHARGE AT PUB WHERE IT ALL BEGAN



It has been just over a year since Danielle Stephen took over as pub manager at The Kings Tun (Kingston upon Thames).

When she became manager in January 2020, it was like a homecoming, as it was the pub where, as a part-time bar associate, she had very first started.

Danielle (pictured) said: "When the position came up at The Kings Tun, I couldn't say no. It was a big promotion for me, and I already knew the pub very well."

Danielle was at Kingston University, undertaking a three-year product and furniture design course in 2010, when she joined the company as a 19-year-old student.

She spent three and a half years at The Kings Tun, where she progressed to team leader, before moving on to The Cap in Hand (Surbiton) now sold, The Oyster Rooms (Fulham) and The Railway (Putney) also now sold.

She recalled: "Area manager James Cobley and I both started at 'The Tun' and, when he became manager at 'The Cap', I joined him there.

"Once I got into my job and started to progress, like many others, I enjoyed it very much and decided to make a career with Wetherspoon.

"All of my uni friends got into the furniture industry, although hard to break into, but I always wanted the experience of learning design, rather than the career.

"Wetherspoon became my world. I enjoy the social aspect, where friends are part of work, and a lot of us progressed together, which was great.

"When you are a student, you don't aspire to be a pub manager, but once you are in the pub environment and enjoying success and promotion, it is inspiring, especially for the younger staff members.

"People are surprised that the company promotes from within – and Wetherspoon is definitely one of the best, in terms of training and progression."

Training is something which Danielle enjoys. She can see a possible future career path for herself, within the company, in that role.

She spent six months in Ireland, helping to train the management team, ahead of the opening of The Linen Weaver (Cork).

On her return, she joined the team at The Rocket (Putney) and enjoyed a spell there, as holding manager, before taking on her first pub manager role at The Moon on the Hill (Sutton).

Within two years, The Kings Tun position came up, so Danielle returned to her first pub.

She concluded: "I know I'll be here for a while. It's a longer-term commitment for me and, once I am fully settled, I might think about studying for my diploma, with the company.

"There are definitely plenty of different opportunities available for the future."

LAUDING OUR APPRENTICES AND LOOKING FOR MORE

Company celebrates its amazing achievers and looks forward to renewed recruitment at online ceremony

Wetherspoon has been celebrating our amazing achievers, together with the success and benefits of our apprenticeship programme.

An online celebration ceremony for our 2020 apprentices and our provider, Lifetime Training, promoting our achievers at the recent National Apprenticeship Week 2021 (8–14 February) have provided much-deserved recognition.

The annual national event aims to highlight the opportunities and the value which apprenticeships can bring, along with how the scheme can help individuals and employers to build for the future.

Training

With a past year full of so much uncertainty and job insecurity, particularly in the hospitality industry, our apprenticeship programme, which complements our internal award-winning training, certainly looks to the future.

Our apprenticeship programme offers individuals real and clear career prospects with Wetherspoon.

As well as training and progression, our apprenticeships offer skills, knowledge and confidence-building – they have kick-started so many rewarding careers with the company.

Opportunities

With various levels of hospitality apprenticeship opportunities on offer, nationwide, there are so many career paths available to everyone.

Why not enquire about how an apprenticeship could help your future career?

Launched in 2017, our nationally recognised apprenticeship programme is available from associate level through to pub manager and beyond, with the opportunity to gain qualifications along the way.

Subjects

Since 2017, we have had more than 300 employees successfully complete an apprenticeship and more than 600 employees achieve their functional skills in maths or English – a GCSE equivalent which employees can complete, if they did not previously hold GCSEs in these core subjects.

Wetherspoon's recruitment & qualifications manager, Michelle Crooke, said: "As a company, we are committed to offering each staff member the best opportunity to succeed and grow within the company – including studying for qualifications and apprenticeships."

"After a pause in 2020, because of COVID-19, we will soon launch our new-look apprenticeship scheme, with our provider – Lifetime Training."

"The future of our apprenticeships now includes the recruitment of apprentices, including school leavers."

● **Anyone interested in joining Wetherspoon on an apprenticeship programme or requiring further information should e-mail or call: wetherspoon@lifetimetraining.co.uk | 0333 014 3669**



Shift manager Jonathan Ayers, at The Kings Head Hotel (Beccles), said:

"I have completed the level 4 Hospitality Management course. I decided to take on the course as I had completed the Management Academy and, before applying for a role as pub manager, wished to continue my personal development."

"Completing the apprenticeship helped a lot with my confidence and helped me to know that I can apply my knowledge to a variety of situations."

"I would highly recommend the apprenticeship programme for anyone in a similar situation to my own, where training for a current role has been completed, yet there is perhaps some doubt about progression."

"Work on my business project, and the analytical skills gained through the course, has definitely helped with my ability to process information for my current role. I feel a lot more confident in my ability to produce a business plan for my own pub or for one for which I might apply in future."

"Support for the course from Lifetime Training has been amazing – and Dan Brown, the trainer I worked with, was always on hand to answer questions, no matter how small."

"Support within the pub, and from my area manager, was there if needed, although this mostly took the form of needing time (which was provided) for completing work."

"I feel that, having completed the course, I have a better understanding of my own skills and knowledge, and this has helped to fine-tune everything learned through the Management Academy."

"It had also given me a chance to really focus on one area of the job role – in my case, employees' well-being – and develop my knowledge and understanding."

"Having completed the programme, I am still looking for ways to continue to develop."

"I would still like to progress within the company, into a pub-manager role, or to take on some aspect of training or well-being."

"The next level available to me is the diploma in business management practice, with Leeds Beckett University, open to grade 4 managers and above – and I have already made enquiries about enrolling onto the programme."

Lee Utting, Wetherspoon's area manager, added: "It has been a pleasure to witness Jonathan's progress through this qualification. I am excited to hear that he has already made enquiries about enrolling onto the diploma."

"His desire to continue to learn and progress is admirable. I am sure that it will serve him well in future."

WETHERSPOON, ITS CUSTOMERS AND EMPLOYEES HAVE PAID £6.1 BILLION OF TAX TO THE GOVERNMENT IN THE LAST 10 YEARS

The government needs taxes, but there should be tax equality between supermarkets and pubs, says Wetherspoon

In Wetherspoon's 2019 financial year (12 months to July 2019), before COVID-19, it generated £764.4 million in tax – about £1 in every £1,000 of ALL UK government taxes. The average tax generated per pub in 2019 was £871,000.

In the financial year ended July 2020, when pubs were closed for a long period, and the company made a substantial loss, £436.7 million of taxes were generated, net of furlough payments.

The table* below shows the tax generated by the company in its financial years 2011–20.

During this period, taxes amounted to about 42 per cent of every pound which went 'over the bar', net of VAT – about 11 times the company's profit.

Wetherspoon's finance director, Ben Whitley, said: "Pub companies pay enormous amounts of tax, but that is not always well understood by the companies themselves or by commentators, since most taxes are hidden in a financial fog."

"Wetherspoon has provided a table which illustrates the exact amounts of tax which the company, its customers and employees have generated, highlighting the importance of the hospitality sector to the nation's finances."

Wetherspoon Tax Payments In Financial Years 2011 To 2020	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
VAT	244.3	357.9	332.8	323.4	311.7	294.4	275.1	253.0	241.2	204.8
Alcohol duty	124.2	174.4	175.9	167.2	164.4	161.4	157	144.4	136.8	120.2
PAYE and NIC	106.6	121.4	109.2	96.2	95.1	84.8	78.4	70.2	67.1	65.2
Business rates	39.5	57.3	55.6	53.0	50.2	48.7	44.9	46.4	43.9	39.8
Corporation tax	21.5	19.9	26.1	20.7	19.9	15.3	18.1	18.4	18.2	21.2
Corporation tax credit (historic capital allowances)	0	0	0	0	0	-2.0	0	0	0	0
Fruit/slot machine duty	9.0	11.6	10.5	10.5	11.0	11.2	11.3	7.2	3.3	2.9
Climate change levies	6.1	10.4	9.2	9.7	8.7	6.4	6.3	4.3	1.9	1.6
Stamp duty	4.9	3.7	1.2	5.1	2.6	1.8	2.1	1.0	0.8	1.1
Sugar tax	2.0	2.9	0.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fuel duty	1.7	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.9	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.9
Carbon tax	0	1.9	3.0	3.4	3.6	3.7	2.7	2.6	2.4	0.8
Premise licence and TV licences	1.1	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.6	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.4
Landfill tax	0	0	1.7	2.5	2.2	2.2	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.1
Furlough Tax Rebate	-124.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL TAX	436.7	764.4	728.8	694.6	672.3	632.4	600.2	551.5	519.3	461.0
TAX PER PUB (£000)	528	871	825	768	705	673	662	632	617	560
TAX AS % OF NET SALES	34.6	42.0	43.0	41.8	42.1	41.8	42.6	43.1	43.4	43.0

*Source: J D Wetherspoon plc's annual reports and accounts 2012–20

"Wetherspoon understands the need for taxes, yet, like the hospitality industry generally, believes that there should be tax equality among supermarkets, pubs, restaurants and similar businesses."

"Until recently, supermarkets have paid zero VAT on food sales, whereas pubs, restaurants and hotels, for example, have paid 20 per cent."

The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, announced a temporary reduction last summer to five per cent VAT for pub and restaurant food sales, but the government intends to revert to 20 per cent this year.

"Pubs also pay about 20p a pint in business rates, whereas supermarkets pay only about 2p."

"It's quite wrong that dinner parties in Chelsea, for example, pay zero VAT for food bought from supermarkets, when pub customers normally pay 20 per cent VAT for fish and chips."

"Equality and fairness are important principles of efficient tax régimes, and we urge the government to introduce equality in this area – sensible tax policies will increase investment and government revenues."

TIME STANDS STILL FOR THOSE WITH VOUCHERS OR GIFT CARDS

Customers with Wetherspoon food and drinks gift cards, as well as Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) vouchers, which may have expired during lockdown are advised that these will still be valid.

Originally extended for a six-month period, the validity of all gift cards and CAMRA vouchers has now been extended, after their original expiry date, for a full year.

For example, any Wetherspoon gift card or CAMRA voucher which may have expired during January 2021 will now be accepted in Wetherspoon pubs until January 2022.

Wetherspoon gift cards can be used to purchase any food and drinks at our pubs.

The CAMRA voucher scheme is a CAMRA members' benefit, entitling members to £30 (60 vouchers of 50p) off a pint of real ale, cider or perry.

Celebrating 50 years this year, CAMRA has been campaigning for real ale, pubs and drinkers' rights since 1971.

● For full details and membership information, visit: camra.org.uk



LOCKED OUT OF THE COURT LEET, JIMMY BUILDS ANOTHER



Spells of lockdown during 2020 made people slow down, perhaps take stock and, for some, discover new hobbies or rediscover long-forgotten pastimes – with extra and unexpected time on their hands.

Team leader Jimmy McCullough (pictured), who works at The Court Leet (Ormskirk), took advantage of his enforced leave from the pub to rekindle his passion for gaming.

He admitted: "Lockdown got me doing things I hadn't done in a while, including Minecraft, something I enjoyed years ago."

"I saw on Facebook that someone had created a pub, although not very detailed, so thought I would build The Court Leet, which took only two or three days."

"When I shared it on social media with work colleagues, everyone loved it. It got around 35,000 views."

Minecraft video game was released in 2011 and is the bestselling video game of all time.

Players explore a 'blocky' 3D world, can build structures and compete against other players.

Jimmy names Pewdiepie and TheSyndicateProject among the YouTubers he has watched.

Jimmy continued: "I had to get the right blocks to match the things I wanted to build and was working from memory, as the pub was closed."

"I think I captured the carpet perfectly though!"

"It can't be a normal carpet in a Wetherspoon pub – it has to be something funky."

Jimmy's virtual tour moves through the whole of the pub, even back-of-house areas, although he shares only the customer area on his video presentation.

Jimmy, who first started three years ago as a bar associate at The Frank Hornby (Maghull), added: "I used to draw quite a lot and enjoyed art, but my creative stuff now is all on computer."

"It was great to be able to reconnect with some different hobbies which you don't get so much time to do when working full time."

A CONVENIENCE TRUTH – YOU CAN'T BEAT OUR LOOS



The Henry Bell, Helensburgh

Wetherspoon reigned supreme, once again, in the Loo of the Year awards.

The awards are aimed at encouraging the highest-possible standards in 'away-from-home washrooms' across the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Independent inspectors visit thousands of toilets anonymously, including those in the hospitality sector.

The inspectors judge the toilets on a wide range of criteria, including décor, maintenance, cleanliness, accessibility, hand-washing and -drying equipment and overall management.

Toilets are rated bronze, silver, gold, platinum and diamond, with diamond being the highest and most prestigious award available. It focuses on the highest standards of cleaning and the provision of clean and well-maintained facilities to meet all users' needs.

Diamond

Wetherspoon achieved record levels of platinum and diamond awards – a total of 775.

The diamond winners were The Thomas Ingoldsby (Canterbury), The Troll Cart (Great Yarmouth), Harpsfield Hall (Hatfield), The Hengler's Circus (Glasgow), The Henry Bell (Helensburgh), The Kirky Puffer (Kirkintilloch), The Sir Norman Wisdom (Deal), The Society Room (Glasgow), The Tullow Gate (Carlow) and The Thomas Waghorn (Chatham).

In addition, Wetherspoon's pubs won a host of national category awards – for what the judges consider to be the best entry in each of the 61 categories throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Four Wetherspoon pubs were named as an award-winner in the pubs & wine bar category: The Swan & Angel (St Ives, Cambridgeshire), The Henry Bell (Helensburgh), The Red Lion Inn (Morrison, Swansea) and The Tullow Gate (Carlow).

A further four of the company's pubs were also named as a winner in the hotels category: The Bottle Kiln (Harwich), The Cross Keys (Peebles), The Castle Hotel (Ruthin) and The Old Borough (Swords).

Victorious

Wetherspoon pubs were also victorious in other categories.

Opera House (Tunbridge Wells), The Picture House (Ebbw Vale) and The Silver Penny (Dublin) were each named as a winner in the historic buildings category (what the judges consider the best historic building with at least platinum-award loos).

Two of the company's pubs, The Sawyer's Arms (Maesteg) and The Forty Foot (Dún Laoghaire), were named as a winner, in their respective country, of the accessible toilet awards.

The other awards, won by Wetherspoon staff, were washroom cleaner of the year awards – awarded to cleaning staff who look after Wetherspoon's loos, judges commenting that this was particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, the company's staff in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland won the in-house cleaning team national award.

The company also won the overall UK/Ireland in-house cleaning team trophy.



The Castle Hotel, Ruthin

Champions

Judges placed Wetherspoon in the 2020 UK champions' league, awarded to those entrants with eight or more entries, with five or more diamond or platinum awards (Wetherspoon achieved 10 diamond awards; of the remainder of its entries, 92.8 per cent achieved a platinum award).

For the third year running, Wetherspoon also won the 2020 corporate provider trophy.

This is a UK-only award, presented to the corporate organisation or authority with 10 or more entries which, in the judges' opinion, maintains a consistently high standard of away-from-home toilets.

Loo of the Year Awards' managing director, Mike Bone, said: "Wetherspoon entered pubs and hotels across the UK and Ireland. These were inspected, throughout August and September, during unannounced visits by Loo of the Year inspectors.

"All of the inspectors were impressed by the high levels of provision and cleanliness – and Wetherspoon should also be complimented on its COVID-19 measures to prevent infection, including rigid



The Cross Keys, Peebles

enforcement of track-and-trace procedures, hand-sanitising, separation of tables and isolation of facilities in washrooms to assist with social distancing.

"The reward for its achievements – record levels of prestigious diamond and platinum awards, national and UK/Ireland awards.

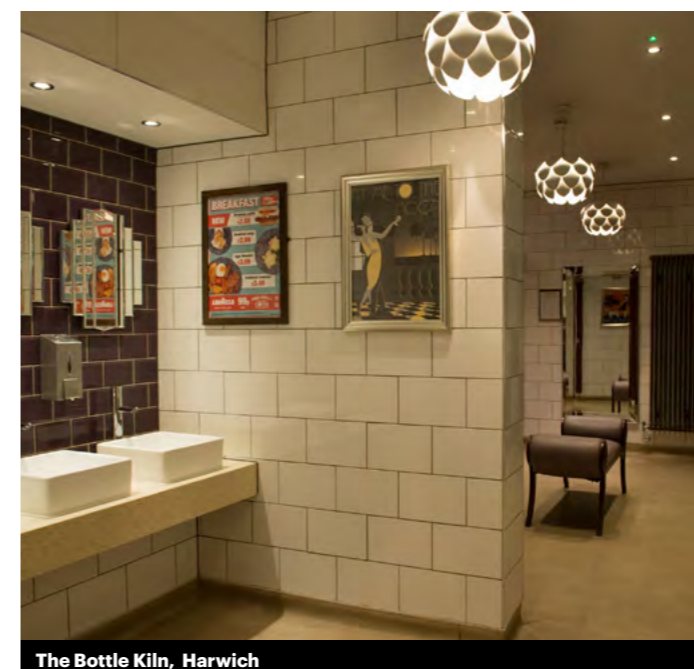
Spacious

"The market-leading pub provider not only offers exceptionally well-designed and unique pubs, but also has award-winning toilets which meet a basic human need of its customers, in spacious and attractive surroundings."

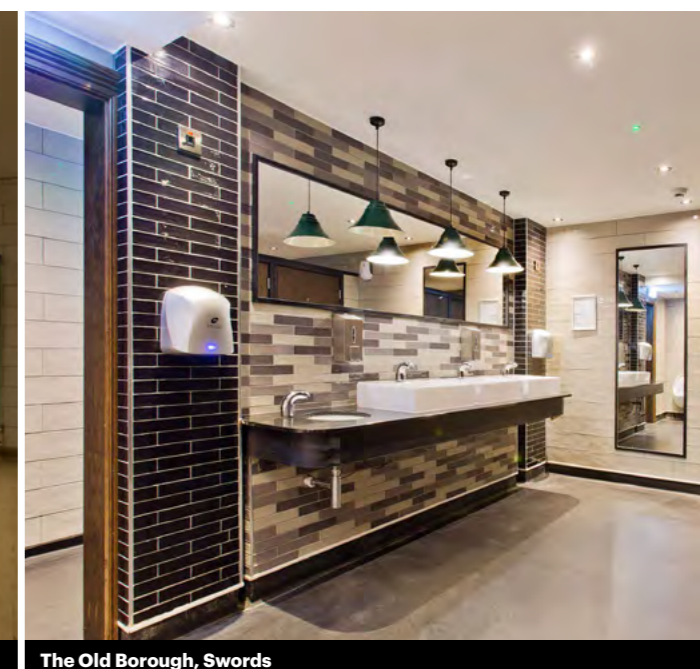
Wetherspoon's chief executive, John Hutson, added: "We are proud that our pubs have been recognised for the quality and cleanliness of their loos.

"Our staff work hard to maintain the cleanliness of our pubs' toilets for their customers.

"We will continue to invest heavily, in terms of design and money, to ensure that all Wetherspoon pubs offer first-class toilets."



The Bottle Kiln, Harwich



The Old Borough, Swords



The Silver Penny, Dublin



The Swan & Angel, St Ives, Cambridgeshire



Opera House, Tunbridge Wells



The Troll Cart, Great Yarmouth



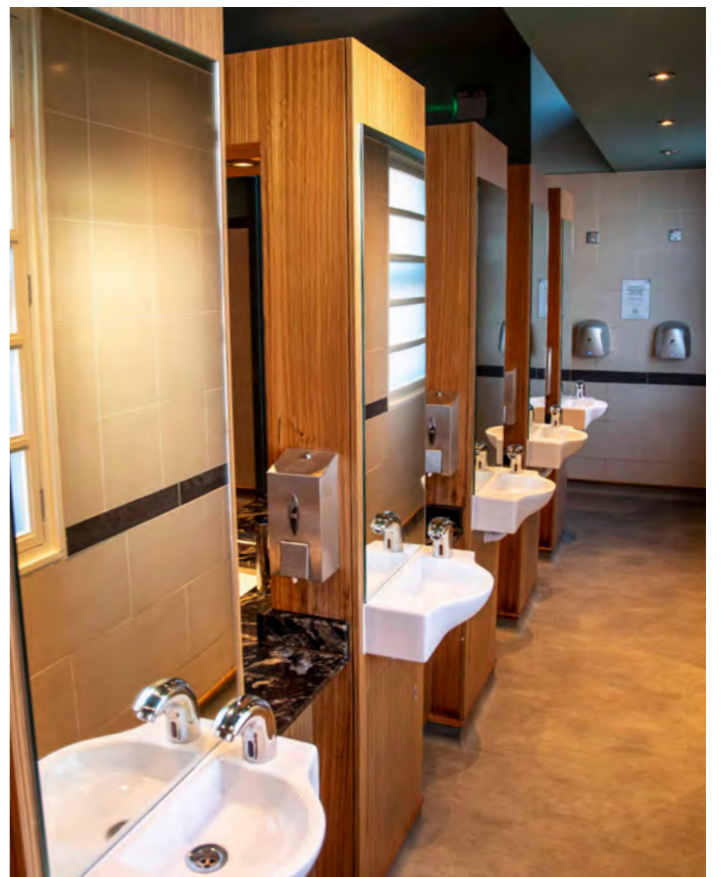
The Forty Foot, Dún Laoghaire



The Tullow Gate, Carlow



Harpsfield Hall, Hatfield



The Kirky Puffer, Kirkintilloch



Simon English is pictured at The Coronet (Holloway, north London)

SPOONS CAUSED A STIR FOR RELUCTANT REPORTER

Simon English, senior City correspondent at the London Evening Standard, tells how he was won over by Wetherspoon, after initially harbouring doubts

In 20 years as a business journalist – even longer if you count covering supermarket openings and village fêtes – few companies have attracted my attention quite like J D Wetherspoon.

When I first started writing about 'Spoons for the London Evening Standard back in 2007, I may have been a bit snooty about the pubs, probably because my mates were.

I quickly learnt two things: one, the chairman is funny. This goes quite a long way if you are a reporter. Two, the pubs do exactly what pubs are supposed to do: cheer us up.

There are few purposes more noble than that just now – it is not a frivolous endeavour.

My favourite 'Spoons is The Coronet on Holloway Road in north London, a beautiful, cavernous old cinema that could have been invented with social distancing in mind.

I like to call in after a shift at the paper, about 3 or 4pm, to enjoy the quiet while not being quite on my own (this is one of the other things pubs are for).

Families

One of the things I noticed a while back was how many extended families used the pub as a sort of drop-off point for child care, as grandparents looked after grandchildren and busy parents came and went, juggling home and work.

In other words, 'Spoons was providing a rather nice crèche, a social service it is awfully decent of management to offer for free.

The company offers other social services, such as places where ordinary families can afford to meet, eat and drink together.

Over the years, the City has tended to be short-sighted in its view of Wetherspoon, always wanting it to increase prices and therefore profit margins.

Tim Martin's answer – if it wasn't a deliberate v-sign to the bankers, it might as well have been – was always to cut prices where possible and increase sales. The profits would look after themselves.

Like his hero Warren Buffett, he's thinking far further ahead than merely tomorrow.

Tim's ability to put noses out of joint has always been admirable, and I noticed that unlike other bosses, he was hardly picking on the powerless. Just the opposite in fact.

Newspaper

One newspaper executive a while back interrupted my treatise on why 'Spoons is great to say simply: "I Hate That Man."

You should, I thought, he can't stand you either.

It is possible to see Wetherspoon as pioneering, quite an achievement for a company in a sector, pubs, that has been around since at least the 1250s.

For a start the pubs are clean – they were sanitary long before that became an international necessity.

The staff seem to enjoy their jobs, seem to have a sense that they are part of something good. Nowadays we'd call that mental health in the workplace, or perhaps employee wellness management.

The bar managers are nothing like The Pub Landlord parodied by comedian Al Murray. They are likely to ask how you are, but not to burden you with what they think.

My favourite 'Spoons pint is a Ruddles, my favourite dish the steak & kidney pudding. If this is unavailable, I have been known to text the chairman to complain and ask if this is not an inevitable consequence of Brexit. He always replies. Bluntly.

Staff

What we want businesses to do is provide a good service that most people can afford, pay their taxes and treat their staff well.

You couldn't say we have too many businesses like that in the UK.

Some say Tim Martin is a gobby Brexit yob who should put a sock in it. Some say TM for PM.

I say neither. Like his pubs, he should just carry on.

I think that those who don't like him, and probably don't frequent the pubs, come from all sides of the political spectrum, yet tend to have one thing in common: a certain type of elitism – which looked ugly before coronavirus and is plain dangerous now, when the only way through this is together.

Critics of Wetherspoon's pubs tend to miss the point. The pubs are not like they are by accident. A successful company thought about it and knows what its customers want and, indeed, what they can afford.

Mates of mine have sometimes complained that the local 'Spoons does not show the football, as if this were evidence of its low-down cheapness, an attempt to deprive us of something we are due.

No... it's intentional. The pub is saying: if you want to watch the football, best go somewhere else.

Some of the other criticism is mean-spirited or just snooty.

A few years back, the restaurant critic of The Sunday Times lowered herself to visiting a 'Spoons in Ramsgate.

Do you think that she went there with an open mind or just because she thought it would be an easy chance to be rude? Correct.

The replies to the reviews on Twitter were amusing, with the tone best captured by this one: "You've done the lovely middle-class thing of looking down on something you're too privileged to understand."

The reply from 'Spoons was classier: "She is a reviewer and entitled to say what she wants."

Indeed. It is a free(ish) country. No one is forcing anyone to enter the pubs – the bigger issue lately has been their enforced closure.

I don't know whether this was a vital move or not or what infection rates would have been like, had they remained at least partially open.

Promise

I do know that pubs being shut makes lockdown life much harder, even for people who rarely go to them. The bright shining lights on the corner always offer cheer; a promise of conviviality which was in desperately short supply for most of 2020.

That's the thing about good pubs: they are friendly. They offer all sorts of possibilities.

Perhaps Wetherspoon should launch an in-pub dating app and a reality TV spin-off: We Met At A Wetherspoon.

One day, all this will be over and we shall meet up in large groups, perhaps to argue once more or perhaps to forgive one another our varying opinions.

When that day comes, we will all have earned a drink.

And I think we should meet in a Wetherspoon to talk things over.

FROM CARDIFF TO MOLD, WELSH PUBS STRIKE GOLD



Duty manager Brandon Williams

When CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2021 was published in autumn 2020, a total of 242 Wetherspoon pubs was included in the book. The 48th annual guide, regarded as the leading authority on real ale served in pubs, listed some Wetherspoon pubs for the first time, while others have been included for several consecutive years. Among the 20 Welsh Wetherspoon pubs in the guide were four new Welsh additions. The four pubs were also highlighted in an online newspaper feature by Wales Online, celebrating the fact. The Central Bar (Cardiff), The George Hotel (Brecon), Yr Hen Orsaf (Aberystwyth) and The Gold Cape (Mold) were included in the 'new pubs named among the best in Wales' and 'some nice places in which to sink a pint or two, after things return to some kind of normality'.

Wetherspoon's north Wales area manager, Alan Kay, said: "Well done to the four pubs which have been listed for 2021, among the best ale pubs in Wales. "It is a great testament to the hard work of our management and staff that they have been included in the guide." The George Hotel's pub manager, Joseph Davey, said: "My team and I work hard to ensure that the selection of real ales on offer is kept in first-class condition, at all times. "We are thrilled to be included in The Good Beer Guide 2021."

● CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2021 is available from bookshops and directly from CAMRA: shop1.camra.org.uk (£15.99 or £13.99 members' price)

LOCKED-DOWN CHRIS CREATES HIS OWN PUB

A call for help, to celebrate a lockdown birthday, was answered by Wetherspoon staff at our distribution centre in Daventry. Customer Chris Smith got in touch, via e-mail, to request some Wetherspoon posters to decorate the family home for his son Dylan's 19th birthday. Chris wrote: "I really need your help. We are in lockdown and, unfortunately, as a family, we are in isolation too, because I contracted coronavirus. "We wanted to make Dylan's birthday special, even though we are isolated, and thought

that we would bring his favourite venues to our house. "He loves our local Wetherspoon pub, The Bottle of Sack (Sutton Coldfield), so we wanted to create a makeshift Wetherspoon in one of the differently themed rooms of our house, so that we can visit virtually, as part of the birthday celebrations." The team at Daventry was only too happy to help with the request for old posters, dispatched by next-day delivery to Chris, in Sutton Coldfield, in time for Dylan's birthday surprise.

EXTRA MONDAY - V BREAKFAST
OPEN FROM 8AM SERVED UNTIL 11.30AM

DELI DEALS PANINIS & WRAPS
ADD CHIPS OR SALAD FOR AN EXTRA £1.50

SMALL PLATES
UP TO 21 AVAILABLE TO CHOOSE FROM
ANY 3 FOR £7.50

NEW WETHERSPOON BREAKFAST MUFFINS
ALL MUFFINS UNDER 500 CALORIES EACH Available until 11.30am

- Egg & cheese muffin 279 kcal
- Egg & bacon muffin 271 kcal
- Egg & sausage muffin 448 kcal
- Breakfast muffin 469 kcal

LAVAZZA 99p FREE REFILLS ITALIAN COFFEE

THE WRONG 'UN • BEXLEYHEATH

EL TEL SNEAKS OUT BACK DOOR AT THE WRONG 'UN



Pub manager Terry Fitzgerald retired at the end of November, after more than 20 years with Wetherspoon. Although not quite the career end which he had anticipated, owing to the second lockdown, Terry has left his pub, The Wrong 'Un (Bexleyheath), in very capable hands. Terry (centre) admitted: "I feel like I have sneaked out the back door and left them all to it!" He continued: "The new pub manager, Heather De Souza (right), has been my deputy for a few years, so it is good that everyone already knows her. "There are a lot of long-serving staff members at the pub - and I plan to take them all out to celebrate my retirement, when we are able to." Terry joined Wetherspoon as a manager, running The Edmund Halley (Lee Green) and The Banker's Draft (Eltham), before taking over at The Wrong 'Un in 2005. He has previously lived in the Algarve, Portugal, for 12 years, as well as three years in Spain, running bars and restaurants, which earned him the nickname 'El Tel', on his return to the UK. Terry recalled: "My wife Anne and I had a 'late' baby, our daughter Lizzie (now 22), so we decided that it was time to come home. "A friend of mine was running The Wrong 'Un and suggested that I talk to the company, so I did. The rest, as they say..."

"It has been fun. There have been a lot of changes and, more recently, a lot of pressure with the pandemic, but that is the name of the game. "If you can't take pressure, you don't work in this business. "After 40 odd years in the trade, I had it in mind that this was the right time to retire. I was 69 in January. I'm still OK, but felt that now was the time to call it a day. "It will be a wrench. I will miss people, but am settled in my head and quite happy with my decision. I will enjoy a bit of time off, before deciding what I might like to do." Terry concluded: "I play golf a couple of times a week and live near the pub, my local, so I will pop in for a drink from time to time and still see everyone." Richard Marriner (left), Wetherspoon's regional manager, added: "Terry has a wealth of experience, fantastic standards and has been brilliant in training and developing staff, bringing five people through to become pub managers themselves. "He is also a respected and much-loved pillar of the Bexleyheath community and a member of several local committees, including the business improvement district (BID). He knows what a community pub really means and its responsibility for local residents. "I'm sure that there will be plenty of people wanting to buy him a drink, on the other side of the bar, during his well-earned retirement."

CLIC SARGENT – GIVING STRENGTH TO FAMILIES IN THE HARDEST OF TIMES



Julie and Henry



Jane and Josh

Childhood cancer affects the whole family and disrupts everyday family life. That's why, from the moment of diagnosis, our charity partner, CLIC Sargent, is there and ready to help families to cope, providing day-to-day support for each child, young person and family. Two mums, Jane and Julie, share their stories about how CLIC Sargent helped when each mother's son was diagnosed with cancer, both at a young age, and how they coped during such a difficult time.

A mum's strength, by Jane

The day our life changed for ever – 22 April 2014. It was the day that our beautiful little three-year-old boy, Josh, was diagnosed with Burkitt lymphoma.

Our life crumbled in seconds. Those first few hours and days were filled with indescribable emotions and a never-ending stream of tears – our hearts were broken and it hurt so much.

Surely, they had got it wrong... he was so little and vulnerable.

When you hear the words 'your child has cancer', your head takes you to the worse situation imaginable... and how could we ever survive that?

But our precious little boy became a real-life superhero. He showed us bravery and courage which we could never imagine.

It took us a few days, but we eventually found terrific strength which we didn't know we had.

Brave

We were surrounded by so many amazing, brave children fighting this monster, their families all coming together and inviting us to be part of an incredible ward family – and we were being looked after by a wonderful team. I knew we were going to fight hard.

I still don't know where that strength came from, but, as Josh's mum, I had to protect him – and there was no other choice.

Josh's cancer was extremely aggressive, capable of doubling its size in 24 hours. The chemotherapy was going to need to hit it and hit it hard. Nothing could prepare us for the brutality of what it was going to do to Josh. It's too painful to think about, even six years on.

He lost his hair, he was constantly sick, had no energy, couldn't eat or drink, couldn't speak and developed raw open skin wounds.

He got severe mucositis, filling his mouth with horrific ulcers which literally ripped all the way through his tiny body.

He was fed via a Hickman line for a while, then via a nasogastric tube. There were times, watching our little boy lie in front of us in so much pain, looking so poorly, so weak and vulnerable, that we were broken, terrified whether we would make it through the night.

We were scared, but had to find strength – Josh needed us. He was fighting so so hard, finding amazing strength to offer us a smile, despite everything.

I searched online for positive quotes to help to find the strength and positivity which I needed. We shared Josh's story on Facebook with friends and family, and our support network grew and grew.

We had so many beautiful messages from friends and strangers too (many of whom became friends) – families whose children had had cancer reached out, giving us hope and strength.

This helped us so much.

Focus

The end-of-treatment bell was at the end of the ward corridor – a key focus for us. We celebrated with so much joy, for every child who rang it, praying for the day Josh would ring it too.

Ian, my husband and Josh's dad, was incredible throughout. We were each other's rock. We worked together completely.

On alternate nights, one of us would stay over on the ward while the other was able to stay at nearby free accommodation to try to get a few hours' uninterrupted sleep which, again, helped us to find strength to keep fighting and supporting Josh.

We can't forget our wonderful CLIC Sargent social worker Sairorse. Within the first few days, she was there to help us through the darkest days of our life, helping us daily emotionally, financially... and so much more.

She also helped us to support our other children who were only 12 and having to live with their grandparents for four months. They were suffering terribly – and Sairorse helped the whole family.

Having this support gave us so much strength to focus on helping Josh to fight and get better. Thank you CLIC Sargent. I don't know how we would have coped without you.

Unbreakable

The ward became a massive family – and the families we met are now our life-long friends. We share an unbreakable bond. We helped and supported one another through so many sad times, yet happy ones too.

There aren't the words for the amazing team on the ward – just phenomenal.

A children's cancer ward is a heart-breaking place, but, for anyone who spends any time there, you soon realise that it's the most inspiring place in the world.

Children who fight cancer are truly incredible... so brave.

Despite the children on the ward being poorly, it can be such a happy place with the sound of children's laughter and the sight of children, drip stands in hand, playing hide and seek in the corridor.

Josh and his friends gave us so much strength. He gave us the strength every single minute of every single day, fighting so hard – and we were in awe of his bravery and courage. Josh – you are our hero and always will be.

Seeing a child fight cancer really does change your life for ever.



A home away from home, by Julie



Back in October 2019, my son Henry was only 15 months old when diagnosed with juvenile myelomonocytic leukaemia (JMML), a rare blood cancer, and neurofibromatosis type 1 (NF1), a genetic condition causing tumours to grow along nerves.

The tumours are usually benign (non-cancerous), yet may cause a range of symptoms. There is no cure for NF1, but, to cure JMML, Henry needed a bone marrow transplant which would take place in Bristol.

We live just outside Belfast, in Northern Ireland, meaning that we would need to travel and pretty much move to an unfamiliar place, while his treatment took place.

On top of all the worries and fears which came with the diagnosis and along with the unknowns which we faced as a family, being away from home made us even more unsettled.

However, from the start, we were put in touch with such a lovely and kind-hearted CLIC Sargent social worker, who set our mind at ease and visited us for a cuppa and a chat.

She knew exactly how overwhelmed we were feeling, but, underneath it all, we knew that we had to just get through it.

We were absolutely blown away by all of the information which she shared with us and all the ways in which CLIC Sargent would support us every step of the way.

This included accommodation while in Bristol, financial help and, of course, emotional support while we faced and navigated the darkest time of our life.

Reassured

For various reasons, our trip to Bristol was postponed a few times. However, each time, we were reassured that all arrangements would be handled and we wouldn't need to worry about it at all.

We eventually got the green light to go over on 5 July 2020 and were to stay at CLIC House.

We had spoken to the manager of the house, Ann Grady, several times before arriving. So, even before meeting her face to face, she already felt like a friend.

We discovered that CLIC House was only a few minutes from the hospital, making it so much easier to get back and forth as quickly as possible, when necessary.

Only one parent could be in the hospital at a time, so it was comforting to know that the other was only a short walk away.

Even though the city itself is pretty busy, the house was located up a hill – and we were amazed at how peaceful it was.

The house itself amazed us, too. Our focus was on Henry's treatment, so we never really expected anything from the house, yet were blown away by how comfortable and homely it was.

We were given a beautiful room on the top floor, with its own bathroom – and the kitchen was only across the landing. From the kitchen, there was a lovely view of the quiet and peaceful back garden. At the front of the house, there was a green area with trees, where people would often meet up or read, making us feel somewhat connected with the world! It had everything we needed... and more!

There were a few COVID-19 restrictions while staying there: fewer families allowed to stay in the house at any one time and communal rooms closed off.

However, this didn't really affect us, as our own room was so comfortable and peaceful, allowing us to rest and process what we were going through.

Connect

We were still able, from time to time, to connect with the families staying there, but saw the staff regularly – and I can't sing their praises highly enough. Ann, Sandra and Sarah... these ladies made our journey so much easier.

There were painful times throughout, but having these ladies close by for a chat helped more than I can begin to explain.

When there was a tough night in the hospital, and there were many, knowing that we had the comfort of CLIC House and the support of these lovely people meant the world to us.

They became our family; when Henry was well enough to come back home, it was so hard to leave them.

When we are away from home as a family, it usually takes us a while to settle and get into our 'stride'... this was not the case at CLIC House.

We were so surprised at how quickly we settled. It felt truly like home to us – and we are forever thankful for all of the support received and friendships made through CLIC Sargent.



Henry with his parents

The Moon Under Water, Boston



Area manager Abby Herdman (left) and pub manager Dawn Cawston (right) have been clocking up the miles and raising funds for charity.

Dawn, who manages The Moon Under Water (Boston), and her area manager Abby are both in training for the London marathon.

The pair took part in the virtual race in October 2020, running and walking the 26.2 miles across Lincolnshire's historic water railway, which runs from Lincoln to Boston. Dawn's partner, Mark, provided the support crew, with her seven-month-old puppy Betty also joining in.

As part of their training and fundraising activities, the pair have also taken on a year-long virtual End to End challenge, aiming to run/walk the 874 miles from Land's End to John o' Groats, ending in September 2021.

Dawn said: "Fundraising for the London marathon event is still on going, as we are both going to run it for real in April 2022, but our combined total so far is in excess of £3,000."

The White Horse, Brigg



Husband-and-wife team Wetherspoon staff members Gareth and Jade Parnell were inspired by their young daughters, Olivia (aged seven) and Amber (five years old), to raise charity funds in a climbing challenge.

The Parnell family, together with friends and coaches from the girls' gymnastics club, climbed Scafell Pike, collectively raising £772.

Shift manager Gareth, who works at The White Horse (Brigg), said: "Olivia and Amber decided, after seeing lots of people struggling during lockdown, that they wanted to give something back."

"They chose the company's charity, CLIC Sargent, as both my wife Jade (shift manager at The Coliseum Picture Theatre, Cleethorpes) and I work for Wetherspoon."

"The girls are both keen gymnasts and asked their instructors to help us with planning; together, we climbed Scafell Pike, which was a good challenge for us all."

Joining the Parnell family on their climb were coaches Mark and Faith Nicol, together with young leader Mina Nicol, all from Grimsby Twist and Flip Gymnastics Club.



A LOT OF HISTORY IN OUR HUNTINGDON PUB

Sandford House has existed in various incarnations since the 19th century

Sandford House opened as a Wetherspoon pub in July 2016 in the Cambridgeshire market town of Huntingdon, saving and preserving two local landmark buildings in the process.

The £2.8-million development converted the old post office building and George Hall into the new pub. Both had been derelict for many years.

The company added the 22-bedroom Wetherspoon hotel (opening later in the same year) with a further £1.1-million investment, with accommodation as one family, 12 twin and eight double rooms, as well as one room suitable for guests with disabilities.

Before Wetherspoon's purchase in 2013, George Hall had last been in use as a furniture showroom, but was originally the Chapel of St John the Evangelist, built in 1845 on the site of the Huntingdon Theatre (c1800).

It was known locally as Lady Sparrow's church, after the deeply religious woman who paid for it to be built. The chapel was deconsecrated in 1925 and its tower demolished. The building also served as a first-aid post during World War II.

Chapel

In the panel over its main doors, the building next to the old chapel has the words 'Post Office'. However, the former post office was originally a substantial private residence, built in c1850.

This grade II listed building was called Sandford House, from which the pub takes its name and where Charles Sandford Windover set up home with his wife and numerous children. Windover was also the mayor of Huntingdon in 1886.

The son of a coach maker in Grantham, Lincolnshire, he came to Huntingdon to work at the flourishing 'carriage manufactory' of FC Armstrong, next to Sandford House.

Windover took over the carriage works in 1857, becoming CS Windover & Company and making horse-drawn carriages for royalty at home and abroad, attracting several royal warrants.

Its advertisements proclaimed that 'many state coaches have been supplied for Indian princes, the Maharaja of Baroda and the Sultan of Zanzibar'.

When times changed and the demand for horse-drawn vehicles declined, CS Windover & Company turned to making hand-built car bodies which were then fitted to a chassis.

Rolls-Royce

More than 800 bodies were built for Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars, with CS Windover making its first body for a Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost in 1910.

When CS Windover transferred to Hendon in northwest London, in 1924, the extensive George Street carriage works became the food-processing plant of Chivers and then Batchelors.

A portrait of Charles Sandford Windover is on display at the pub, together with illustrations and photographs of Windover Carriage Works, designs for carriages and a state coach.

The framework supporting the overbar in the pub, which can be viewed from the balcony, was designed to represent the elliptic carriage springs.



Developed by Windover & Company, they were designed to soften an otherwise bumpy ride for their prestigious clients, who included Queen Victoria, as well as members of other royal families.

Sandford House became the town's main post office, until the 1960s, although Royal Mail continued to operate a sorting depot at the rear of the site.

Coaching

In earlier times, Huntingdon was an important post town and coaching centre on the Old North Road, served by inns.

Some were posting houses, providing travellers with a change of horses and accommodation.

Sandford House, which has split-level ground floors within the pub, with full accessibility, features one bar.

The interior design and colour scheme contain a subtle theme of the Rolls-Royce and carriage historical connection.

Decorated in heritage colours, the walls of the George Hall section are deep red, with the balcony dominating one end of the room and chandelier lighting suspended from the dark wooden-beamed ceiling.

The other building, by complete contrast, is designed to evoke the premises' residential past in a drawing-room style.

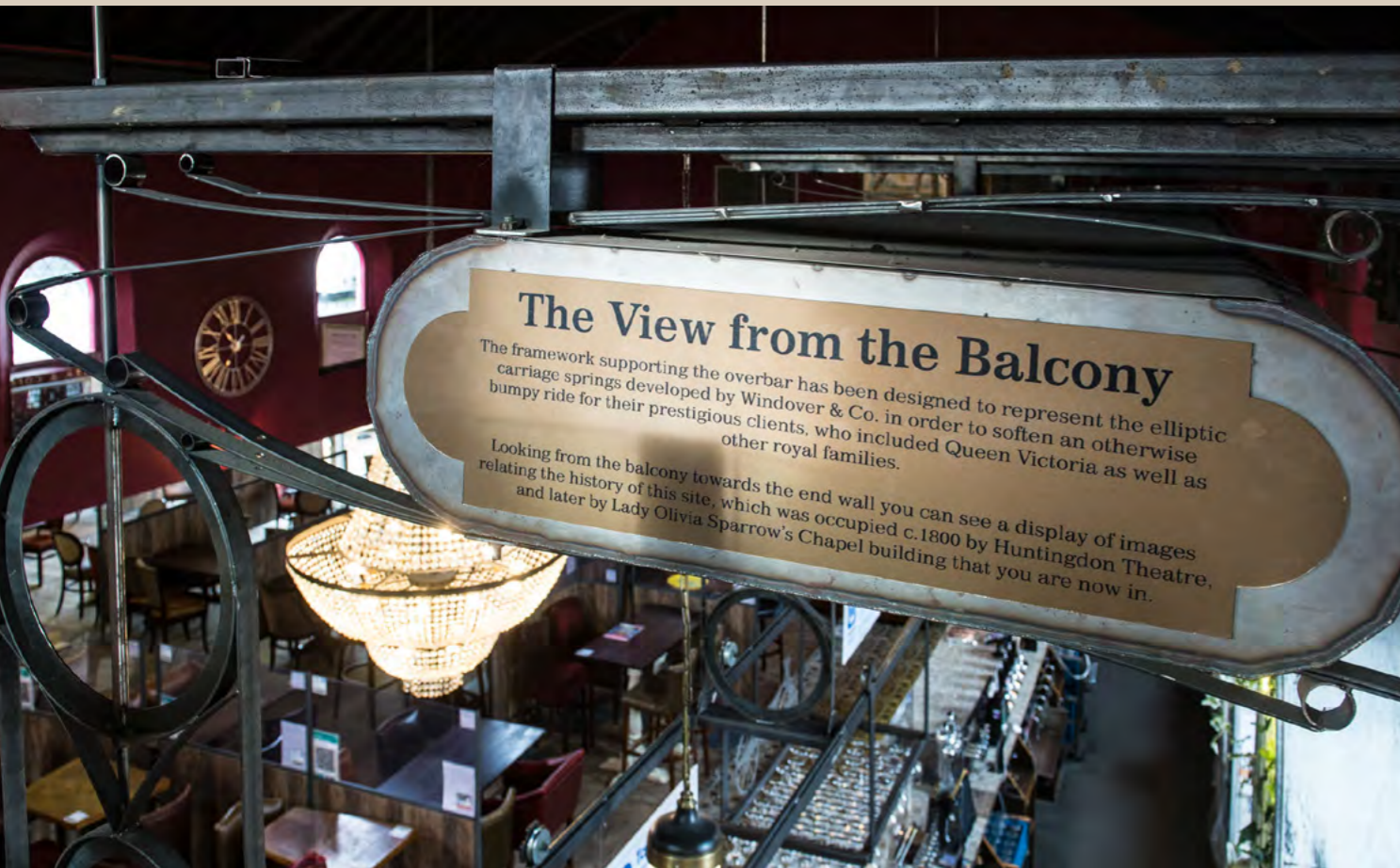
Rich coloured carpets are offset by a light and airy colour palette on the walls and ceiling, with photos, portraits and artwork adorning every available space.

Period-style light fittings give the sense of a bygone era.

There are two courtyard gardens, at the front and rear of the premises, with a link added to join the once-separate buildings – to allow ease of access between the two.

● George Street, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 3BD





THE BROCKLEY BARGE • BROCKLEY

LONG TRIP BRINGS CESAR TO THE BROCKLEY BARGE



When Cesar Kimbirima joined Wetherspoon in October 2004 as a kitchen associate, it was his first real job in the UK.

Originally from Angola, Cesar was studying a hospitality and catering course at Croydon College, in Croydon, when the position came up, at the Bromley Job Centre, in a list of available posts.

Cesar (pictured) recalled: "When I first came to the UK, I had help finding a place to live. While at college, I had to visit the job centre every two weeks.

"On one occasion, I was given a list of local jobs, went for an interview at The Richmal Crompton (Bromley) and was working my first shift four days later."

Cesar had previous kitchen experience, although a very different style, working as a hotel chef in his home country.

After moving to the UK, he took various jobs, including cooking in local restaurants, but was keen to learn more, so embarked on his college studies.

He said: "My working background was catering, so I was obviously looking for kitchen jobs.

"I didn't know anything about Wetherspoon the company, at first, but was soon enjoying my experience in the kitchen at The Richmal Crompton."

Cesar was then promoted to kitchen team leader, and eventually to kitchen shift leader, but decided to switch to a front-of-house role as a bar shift leader.

Cesar reported: "I then worked my way up to shift manager, before moving to The Greyhound (Bromley) with my pub managers Andy and Doreen Bawn.

"They are responsible for my journey with the company, as they gave me my chance to join Wetherspoon, believed in my ability and guided me through.

"They also recommended me for the interview with my area manager Richard Marriner, who had promoted me to shift manager and then eventually to pub manager at The Brockley Barge (Brockley)."

Cesar worked at The Greyhound for three years, as deputy manager, before taking over at The Brockley Barge in January 2014, where he has remained.

When he took on that kitchen job, more than 16 years ago, did he ever think that he would run his own pub in future?

Cesar, 48, admitted: "Never, but a lot has happened. I completed my advanced diploma two years ago, all paid for by the company, and plan to do my degree next. That has really helped me.

"The company, my fellow colleagues and pub managers, have also helped me a lot and provided great support. Richard Marriner has known me since I was a team leader. He has helped to drive my career as a manager and shown massive support."

It is a very long way from Cesar's tough early years in Angola, including National Service in the army, from the age of 17, which Cesar explained "only ends when something happens to you".

For Cesar, that 'something' was being shot for the fourth time (all separate occasions), five months in a coma and surviving the bullet wound to the neck and mouth.

He revealed: "It could have been worse.

"They were hard times, during the 80s and 90s, but I made a choice to separate from my family and get out of my country."

Cesar has a good career and wonderful family of his own, along with his wife Sonia, who came with him to the UK from Angola.

The couple has four children, two girls and two boys: Duanie, Joe, Nathaniel and Oriana.

He concluded: "The company has really looked after me - and I am happy."

THE REGAL MOON • ROCHDALE

LOCKDOWN LEAVES KRINGER SINGER HOWLING AT THE MOON



Like all of us, shift leader Jonathan Talents is looking forward to a return to a more recognisable way of life.

As well as the impact on his work at The Regal Moon (Rochdale), restrictions have also put his live music career on hold.

Jonathan (pictured) marked five years with the company in October 2020, having worked his way up from bar associate. His band has been gigging for the same amount of time, but has been working on material for 10 years.

Jonathan, 36, said: "I have always worked at The Regal Moon, apart from a three-month spell at The Shay Wake (Shaw), when the pub was closed because of flooding.

"My managers have always been so accommodating, with shifts and time off for gigs and filming music videos – with plenty of notice, of course."

Those music commitments are with his band Kringer and the Battle Katz, a five-piece outfit which includes lead vocalist Jonathan 'Lunatic Fringe', guitarist Adam 'Manslug', drummer Joel 'Sgt. Stiltz', bass player Katie 'Battle-Kath' and dual vocalist 'Mr Kris'.

Jonathan continued: "I have been in various bands before, including Manchester punk band The Distrakted, and have been gigging since 2005.

"Kringer and the Battle Katz has been gigging for five years, up and down the country.

"We love to get in and around Manchester and Stockport as much as possible, pretty much anywhere we can get a gig really.

"Over the years, we've played with countless great bands, from all walks of life, from the outrageous Footprints in the Custard to our extended family – Dischord, based in Blackpool.

"Similar to working, when gigging, you meet all of these different people. You spend a lot of time together and become close.

"It's almost like gaining an extension to your family.

"We also enjoyed a weekend tour in Poland, in October 2019, which was great, and have plans to return, as well as go to Germany, once we can travel again.

"We also play once a year in Edinburgh and Glasgow, on a regular mini tour in Scotland."

He concluded: "We started out as a nu metal/hardcore band, but we all like such a mish-mash of different music.

"Our sound includes influences including thrash, hardcore, punk, ska and even rap, a real mix, so we have created our own individual genre which we call idiotcore."

The band has now signed to guitarist Adam's co-founded independent label – Lickerish Records – whose albums include Space T-Rex, Pilot and The New Adventures Of..., available on all the usual streaming channels.

Our pub histories

The Wicket Gate, Chester-le-Street

SHROVE TUESDAY BATTLES LEAVE THEIR MARK ON THE WICKET GATE

Manic form of football which was outlawed in 1934 is remembered in pub history of Chester-le-Street hostelry



Our online pub histories series continues to prove a hugely popular source of historical information since its launch at the end of 2016.

Initially showcasing just a handful of our pubs, in major UK city centres, including Glasgow, Cardiff, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Sheffield, our website history catalogue has now grown to encompass more than 750 of our premises.

Wetherspoon takes immense pride in the restoration and refurbishment of some wonderful and, in several cases, unique buildings, to create our pubs – and our pub histories series has uncovered some interesting discoveries.

Artwork

The online historical information, detailing the story of our pubs, includes numerous images of the artwork on display and old photographs, as well as photos of the interior, exterior and features of each building.

In this pub histories spotlight, a now-regular Wetherspoon News feature, we focus on The Wicket Gate, in Chester-le-Street.

The building housing our pub, which opened in August 2009, may be of modern construction, but the rich history of the surrounding area is detailed in our extensive artwork adorning its walls.

Chester-le-Street Cricket Club is situated nearby, at its Ropery Lane ground, where it has played since 1866, having been founded some 30 years earlier.

Sheep

Also nearby is the new Riverside ground, home to Durham County Cricket Club. Its modern home is a far cry from the early days of cricket, when the target was usually the wicket gate of the sheep pasture.

Cricket isn't the only sport to have historical roots in this area of County Durham. The Shrove Tuesday football game in Chester-le-Street was once contested by the Up Streeters and the Down Streeters, who were separated by a line drawn at Low Chare.

The teams waited for the one o'clock pancake bell, when a ball was thrown from an upstairs window. The object of the game (or battle) was to have the ball either north or south of Low Chare, when time was called at six o'clock.

Disruption and damage saw the annual game eventually outlawed by the police – and it stopped in 1934.

Saints

From sport to saints – the former Scottish shepherd, later Prior of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, Saint Cuthbert is remembered in artwork at the pub.

In AD 883, Viking raids forced monks to flee the island with Cuthbert's miraculously preserved body and the manuscripts known as the Lindisfarne Gospels. After seven years' wandering, they built a shrine to him at Chester-le-Street, where he rested for 112 years.

Photographs and text of the area, as well as details of Lumley Castle, Richard Viscount Lumley, first Earl of Scarborough and the Lumley family, as well as the Lambton family, once leading local landowners, are also among the history artworks displayed.

193 FRONT STREET, CHESTER-LE-STREET, COUNTY DURHAM, DH3 3AX



WETHERSPOON RATED TOP FOR FOOD HYGIENE

Our pubs are squeaky clean

Wetherspoon's pubs consistently top the charts in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), among the biggest pub chains.

The FHRS is run by local authorities and is the only independent government scheme assessing the level of hygiene standards in pubs, restaurants, take-aways, clubs and cafés.

It scores outlets 0–5, with the highest-possible rating of five meaning 'very good' hygiene practices and safety systems in place, fully complying with the law.

Outlets with a rating of four are deemed to have 'good' hygiene standards, while three is 'generally satisfactory', two needs 'some improvement', a rating of one requires 'major improvement' and 0 'urgent improvement'.

Wetherspoon had the highest average FHRS rating, per premises, of any large pub company.

It was ahead of pub companies including Slug & Lettuce and Walkabout and was also rated higher than restaurant and sandwich chains, including Miller & Carter, PizzaExpress, TGI Fridays, Pret a Manger and Greggs – although all of those companies also scored highly.

Of our pubs, 793 currently have an FHRS rating, with 97 per cent of those having achieved the highest-possible rating of five.

Scotland operates the Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS). This scheme has a pass/fail rating – with 65 Wetherspoon pubs in Scotland having a 'pass' score – a 100-per-cent success rate.

The ratings for both FHRS and FHIS follow an independent assessment of food hygiene at a premises, determined by local authority environmental health officers visiting outlets to assess hygiene levels.

Environmental health officers assess three areas: food hygiene and safety procedures; structural compliance; confidence in management.

The ratings (as well as the date of inspection) can be found online and on stickers displayed at businesses' premises.

Wetherspoon's audit director, James Ullman, said: "We are proud of our pubs' hygiene ratings. However, we also take it extremely seriously when a pub does not achieve the maximum rating in either scheme.

"Where a maximum score is not achieved, we work hard with each pub's team and local authority to ensure, as quickly as possible, that standards are returned to expected levels."

To achieve the highest-possible rating of five, our pubs' management and staff must achieve and maintain the highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene, including:

Hygienic food-handling

This is how food is prepared, cooked, cooled, reheated and stored:

- checking fridge temperatures
- hand-washing facilities and practices
- equipment used for raw and cooked foods being kept separately
- staff members' understanding of food hygiene

Physical condition of the premises and facilities

This is the assessment of the standard of cleanliness and upkeep, including whether:

- the condition of general decoration, layout and lighting is of a good standard
- it is clean and cleaning materials meet requirements
- there is suitable ventilation and pest control
- rubbish and waste are disposed of correctly

Food safety management

This ensures that suitable precautions are taken to keep food safe, including:

- staff training records
- logs of relevant checks, such as fridges' temperatures and cleaning
- safety procedure records

Did you know?

As well as the independent assessments by the FHRS across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the FHIS in Scotland, Wetherspoon also monitors its own pub hygiene standards.

Every pub receives at least five quality-assurance visits each month from a combination of its area manager, Wetherspoon's own audit department, an external 'mystery shopper' company and other head-office managers.

The only independent government scheme assessing food hygiene standards



	Total premises scored	Average premises score out of 5
Las Iguanas	48	5
Aldi	608	4.99
ASK	62	4.98
McDonald's	1,173	4.97
Nando's	407	4.97
Waitrose	351	4.97
Wetherspoon	793	4.96
Sainsbury's	959	4.95
PizzaExpress	375	4.95
Walkabout	21	4.95
Browns	21	4.95
Pret a Manger	382	4.94
Slug & Lettuce	82	4.94
TGI Fridays	74	4.93
Gourmet Burger Kitchen	42	4.93
Greggs	1,387	4.92
Lidl	679	4.92
Zizzi	115	4.92
Tesco	1,777	4.91
Miller & Carter	106	4.91

Information in this table was sourced from www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk on 3/2/21, listing 793 pubs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with an average food hygiene rating of 4.96. Please note that, where councils are yet to assess or submit their pub inspection, there may be a slight gap in the number of pubs, compared with that in our records.

Businesses are rated from 0 to 5 which is displayed at their premises and online. The top score is 5.



THE GLASS BLOWER – TRANSPARENTLY TIP-TOP

Many of our pubs have a long history of gaining the highest-possible rating of five (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), having achieved and maintained the maximum score successively over the past decade.

Sarah Heppinstall, who has been pub manager at The Glass Blower since 2013, explains what it takes to keep her pub in tip-top condition and what it means to her team and customers.

Sarah said: "I have a team of three cleaners. Two of them come in every morning to clean the pub throughout.

"I have always placed great importance on a good back-of-house standard too, so it is a whole-team effort for us.

"The company has a defined checklist of activities which must be completed daily and weekly – in all of our pubs. We ensure that these are rigorously followed.

"We have an established team, some of whom have been at the pub longer than I, so we all know what needs to be done.

"It is a cliché, yet we are a bit like a family and make sure that everyone pulls together.

"Customers are well aware of the hygiene rating – and I know how important it is.

"You hear so many horror stories – and I would always check a rating of a place which I intended using.

"So, I certainly don't want to lose our five rating."

LOUISE AND STEVE HIT HIGH NOTE AT OPERA HOUSE



Despite pub closures throughout much of 2020, customers Louise Grindley and Steve McDonnell reached a significant milestone in their Wetherspoon pub visits.

The couple, from Kent, have spent the last few years 'collecting' different pub visits and reached their 100th Wetherspoon, with a specially chosen venue.

Louise, pictured with Steve and their list of 100 pubs, outside The New Cross Turnpike (Welling), said: "For our 100th Wetherspoon pub, we decided that we needed to choose a special one, so selected Opera House (Tunbridge Wells) for our special occasion."

She continued: "We have always used local Wetherspoon pubs for coffees, while shopping, a few drinks after work and weekend catch-ups with friends.

"However, it was when our son started looking at universities that we started checking out different Wetherspoon pubs further afield.

"We quickly began to add to the Spoons list and, when our daughters also looked at universities, our list continued to grow at quite a pace.

"Now, wherever we go, we check our trusty Spoons app to see where we can stop and visit a new pub.

"We have been to several old cinemas, furniture stores and car showrooms, all lovingly turned into pubs by Wetherspoon.

"We do have our favourites and try to revisit when nearby.

"We have been to towns we have never heard of before and probably would never have visited if it weren't for a Spoons being there.

"One thing we have found in all of the pubs is a warm welcome from staff and regulars.

"We have struck up many conversations with complete strangers and even shared Wetherspoon knowledge with them.

"We are looking forward to visiting even more Wetherspoon pubs in the near future."

COLIN TO RUN 100 MILES TO GET SEPSIS NOTICED

Wetherspoon customer Colin Childs has set himself a 24-hour challenge to raise awareness of sepsis (also known as blood-poisoning).

Colin is planning to run the 100 miles (160km) from The Four Candles (Oxford) to The Prince of Wales (Cardiff), aiming to leave from one Wetherspoon pub at 9am and arrive at the other at 9am the following day (during 26-27 March 2021).

Owing to the pandemic, his original date in June 2020 was cancelled, but he is not letting anything stand in his way this time around.

Colin, who is a driver for Cardiff Bus and a regular visitor to The Tumble Inn (Pontypridd), explained: "My wife Julie almost died of sepsis, around five years ago.

"We initially thought that she had pulled a shoulder muscle at work.

"However, within a week, her condition was so severe that she was hospitalised and didn't even recognise me, because of an infection in her spine which went to her brain."

Almost five years on, after treatment and a long road to recovery, Julie is now thankfully well again and has returned to work.

Colin, a very keen athlete who runs to his work twice a week from their home in Porth (17 miles), said: "I am doing the run mainly to raise awareness – the sponsorship money for The UK Sepsis Trust will be a bonus."

Colin's friend and work colleague Richard Taylor will provide back-up and support, keeping Colin fed and watered, thanks to sponsorship and donations.

● If you would like to show your support, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/y44ok9ep>



What is sepsis

Sepsis (also known as blood-poisoning) is the immune system's overreaction to an infection or injury. Usually, our immune system fights infection, but, sometimes, for reasons we don't yet understand, it attacks our body's own organs and tissues.

If not treated immediately, sepsis can result in organ failure and death. Yet with early diagnosis, it can be treated with antibiotics.

Symptoms: Sepsis can initially look like flu, gastroenteritis or a chest infection. There is no one sign, with symptoms presenting differently between adults and children.

● Information from: www.sepsistrust.org



BONUSES AND SHARES

Of the recipients, approximately 96 per cent were employees below board level, with around 83 per cent paid to employees working in pubs.

Employees are eligible for bonuses from the commencement of their employment and are eligible for free shares after 18 months.

In the financial year ended July 2020, when pubs were closed for a substantial period and the company made a loss of £29.9 million, bonuses and free shares of £33 million were awarded (see table* below), with 97 per cent of employees receiving a bonus and/or shares in that period.

In previous financial years, when pubs were open for the entire time, substantially higher payments were made. For example, £46 million was awarded in 2019, when 97 per cent of staff also received a bonus and/or free shares.

At the current time, 15,032 of our 37,582 employees have been awarded free shares in the company.

It's probably true to say that no one earns a vast fortune from these schemes. However, as far as the company is aware, Wetherspoon consistently pays a bigger percentage of its profits to its employees, by way of bonuses and free shares, than any other large pub/restaurant company or retailer – more even, in the last five years, than John Lewis – a company owned by its employees.

Since the share scheme was introduced, Wetherspoon has awarded 20.6 million shares to employees – approximately 16 per cent of all shares in existence today.

Wetherspoon's chief executive, John Hutson, said: "People are vital to the success of the business. Our bonus and share schemes are a good way to share in the company's success. A small number of pub employees, who have never sold any of the shares given to them, each have shares worth more than £350,000."

Note from editor: Wetherspoon has been named as a top employer by the Top Employers Institute for the last 17 years in a row (as featured on The Guardian newspaper's website).

The article below outlines Wetherspoon's bonus and free shares scheme. No company is perfect, but Wetherspoon believes that it pays a higher percentage of its profits in this way than most, or possibly any, large companies.

£428 MILLION IN FREE SHARES AND BONUSES PAID TO EMPLOYEES SINCE 2006

83 per cent paid to pub staff

Since the early 1980s, Wetherspoon has awarded bonuses, free shares and 'share options' to pub employees.

The current scheme of paying monthly bonuses to all pub employees, subject to certain criteria, started in 1998, with a government-approved free share scheme introduced in 2003.

Bonuses and share schemes provide an extra incentive for people to stay with the company: there are 10 employees who have worked for the company for over 30 years, 326 for over 20 years, 3,049 for over 10 years and 8,827 for over five years.

Since 2006, the company has paid £428 million to its employees in respect of bonuses and free shares.

Wetherspoon: Bonuses and free shares V profits, 2006-20

Financial year	Bonuses and free shares	Profit after tax	Bonus etc as % of profit
	£m	£m	
2020	33	-30	-
2019	46	80	58
2018	43	84	51
2017	44	77	57
2016	33	57	58
2015	31	57	53
2014	29	59	50
2013	29	65	44
2012	24	57	42
2011	23	52	43
2010	23	51	44
2009	21	45	45
2008	16	36	45
2007	19	47	41
2006	17	40	41
Total	428	777	55

*Source: J D Wetherspoon plc's annual reports and accounts 2006-20

NOW OPEN



Battersea

THE LONDON AND SOUTH WESTERN

Pub manager Fran Smith is pictured (front) with members of her team at the opening of her new pub in Battersea, southwest London.

Fran, who was previously manager at The Barrel Vault (St Pancras International), is the new manager at The London and South Western.

Wetherspoon has spent £860,000 developing the pub on the site of the former Revolution cocktail bar on Lavender Hill, near Clapham Junction station.

The company has taken on 22 staff members from Revolution.

This distinctive building opened around 1935 as the new flagship store for 'dealers in furniture' Hastings Ltd, which had occupied a row of shops on the same site, part of Queens Parade.

The arrival of the railways transformed this once-rural area, with the first line opened in 1838 and operated by the London and South Western Railway (LSWR).

Later, other railway companies would extend lines through the area. However, the first station did not open until 1863, after LSWR had joined forces with rival companies to build one at Falcon Bridge – later renamed Clapham Junction.

The new-look pub has one bar, as well as a pavement café-style outdoor area at the front of the premises.

Historical photographs and details of local history, as well as artwork and images of local scenes and characters of the area, are displayed in the pub, together with information boards relating to local events.

Fran said: "My team and I are looking forward to welcoming customers to The London and South Western, located near the busy Clapham Junction station.

"We are confident that it will be a great addition to the local community for residents, as well as visitors to the area."

276-288 LAVENDER HILL, BATTERSEA, LONDON, SW11 1LJ



THE WRITE STUFF: PUBS PAYING TRIBUTE TO AUTHORS AND BOOKS

Novelists and poets, from Rupert Brooke to HG Wells, lend their names to several of our pubs

Wetherspoon takes great trouble and pride in researching the history of the local area, celebrating the past in numerous artwork displays throughout our pubs.

Many of our pubs' names also remember and celebrate historical characters with connections to their local area.

Famous names and some relatively unknown are recalled for their deeds, including inventors, war heroes, sporting icons and stars of stage and screen, as well as those involved with politics and social reform. Here, we highlight some of our pubs which celebrate literary giants and their work, including poets, novelists and playwrights.

THE LADY CHATTERLEY

59 NOTTINGHAM ROAD
EASTWOOD, NOTTINGHAM
NG16 3AL

Our pub in Eastwood, which opened in June 2014, is named after the famous novel by DH Lawrence, born locally in 1885.

The influential, widely read and controversial author published many novels, short stories and poems during his lifetime – and Eastwood features in much of his work, especially his first novel *The White Peacock* (1911).

In his best-known and most controversial work, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, published abroad in 1928, Lawrence 'borrowed' the name Chatterley from the local colliery agent.

George Chatterley was the right-hand man of the Barber and Walker families, who owned most of the collieries in Eastwood.

There is a memorial stone to Lawrence in Eastwood Cemetery, where his parents and brother Ernest are buried.

The author died in France in 1930.

He was later exhumed and his ashes scattered in New Mexico.



THE LOOKING GLASS

41-43 BUTTERMARKE STREET
WARRINGTON, CHESHIRE, WA1 2LY

The Mad Hatter's Tea Party was unveiled in Warrington Market Place in 1984.

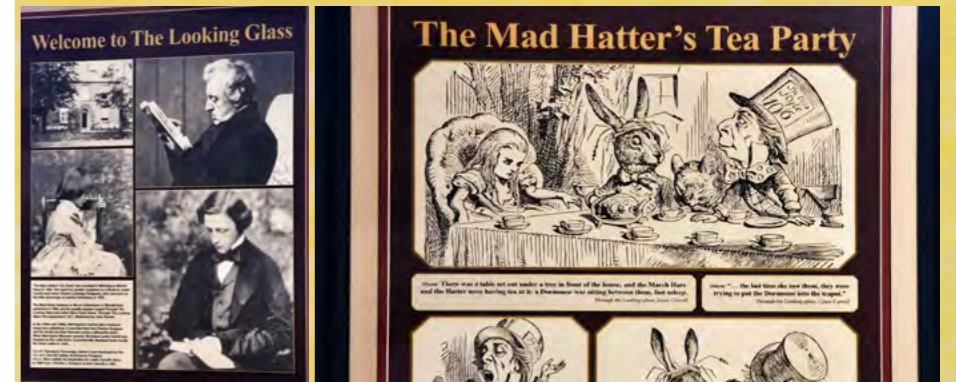
The eight-ton granite sculpture is a tribute to Lewis Carroll (real name Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), who was born in 1832 at the little parsonage at nearby Daresbury.

The Mad Hatter features in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865, and its equally popular sequel *Through the Looking-Glass*, and *What Alice Found There*, which first appeared in 1871, illustrated by John Tenniel.

Carroll knew Warrington well – and the Warrington Museum served the young man as a source of inspiration.

He had already inherited a surreal sense of humour from his father; the strange creatures on display in the museum gave him plenty of odd animals to fill and stimulate his imagination.

Our pub, which opened in February 2010, celebrates his literary classic.



THE ALBERT AND THE LION

BANK HEY STREET, BLACKPOOL
LANCASHIRE, FY1 4RU

This pub's name is derived from the title of a best-selling comic monologue, written by Marriott Edgar in 1932 and immortalised on record by Stanley Holloway.

The narrative verse makes reference to the venue, which opened as a Wetherspoon pub in July 2010, but was a former Woolworths store.

The original 78rpm monologue recording was sold in the Woolworths store, in Blackpool, for sixpence.

In the story, a small boy named Albert purchased a 'stick with an 'orse's 'ead 'andle, the finest that Woolworths could sell'.

Unfortunately, on a visit to the zoo, Albert used the implement to poke a resting lion, called Wallace, in the ear.

The lion subsequently pulled 'Albert inside the cage with 'im, And swallowed the little lad 'ole'.



SHAKESPEARE'S HEAD

AFRICA HOUSE, 64-68 KINGSWAY
HOLBORN, LONDON, WC2B 6BG

This pub, which was opened by Wetherspoon in March 1998, takes its name from its famous namesake which was in nearby Wych Street, off Drury Lane, frequented by actors and literary figures such as Charles Dickens.

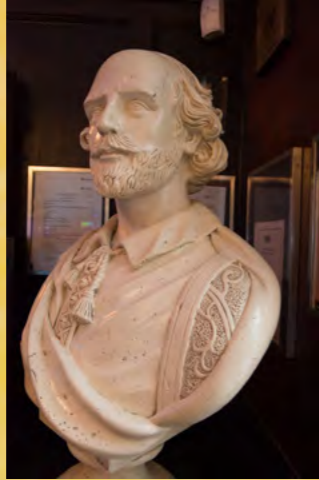
The writer Mark Lemon spent several years as the Wych Street pub's landlord.

The son of a hop merchant, he later founded Punch magazine, which he edited for nearly 30 years, until his death in 1870, at the age of 60.

A bust of William Shakespeare is among the artworks on display in the pub, together with numerous prints, posters and illustrations of many of his plays.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) is widely regarded, of course, as the greatest dramatist of all time.

Born and died in Stratford-upon-Avon, he was an English poet, dramatist and actor, who devoted himself to his art for 20 years, writing more than a million words of poetic drama.



THE SIR WALTER SCOTT

AFTER SECURITY, EDINBURGH
AIRPORT, EDINBURGH, EH12 9DN

Born in Edinburgh, in 1771, Walter Scott produced a string of highly successful novels, such as Rob Roy and Ivanhoe.

Knighted in 1820, Scott practically reinvented Highland society and the clan tartan.

His interest in things Scottish led him to rediscover the Scottish crown and sceptre, which had been left, forgotten, in Edinburgh Castle.

He also fought a successful defence of Scottish banknotes, with his portrait on current Bank of Scotland notes, in memory of his efforts.

Sir Walter Scott died in 1832, with a grandiose monument erected to him eight years later in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh.

Our pub, which first opened at Edinburgh Airport in November 2009, also remembers him.



THE EDWIN WAUGH

10–12 MARKET STREET, HEYWOOD
MANCHESTER, OL10 4LY

Edwin Waugh (1817–90) was a poet and author in the Lancashire dialect.

Born in Rochdale, he is described as the Burns of Lancashire – and our pub (opened November 1998) remembers him.

In 1847, Waugh became assistant secretary to the Lancashire Public Schools' Association and moved to Manchester, which he hated.

However, his horizons were widened by new acquaintances full of political ideals and wide reading.

His literary work began in 1852 and his most famous poem, Come whoam to thi childer an' me, was written in 1856.

He earned a living by writing poetry and reciting verses in public.

When he died in 1890, he was mourned by thousands as the 'voice of Lancashire's homely virtues'.



THE HERBERT WELLS

51–57 CHERTSEY ROAD, WOKING
SURREY, GU21 5AJ

Herbert George Wells (1866–1946), better known as HG Wells, was an English novelist, journalist, sociologist and historian, born in Bromley, Kent, to domestic servants turned small shopkeepers.

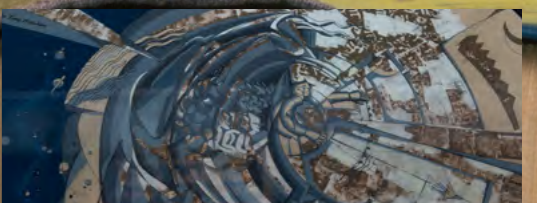
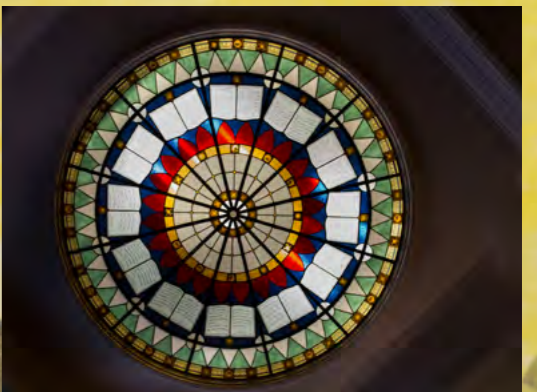
He was world renowned for his science fiction novels, including The War of the Worlds, which he wrote during a three-year stay in Woking, where our pub (opened June 1995) celebrates him.

A graduate with first-class honours from London University, he was in the teaching profession until 1893, when he abandoned an academic career for literature.

His books The Time Machine, The Invisible Man and The First Men on the Moon still rank high in the long list of this distinguished author's work.

A large, very striking sculpture of The Invisible Man, one of HG Wells' famous characters, sits cross-legged in the pub window, reading a book.

There is also a 'time machine' depicted on the ceiling.



THE WILFRED OWEN

17 WILLOW STREET, OSWESTRY
SHROPSHIRE, SY11 1AJ

Wilfred Owen, widely regarded as one of Britain's greatest war poets, was born in Oswestry, in 1893, the son of an employee of the Cambrian Railways.

Our pub, which opened in April 2003, remembers him.

Owen was teaching English in France when World War I broke out and he felt compelled to visit wounded soldiers in the local hospitals.

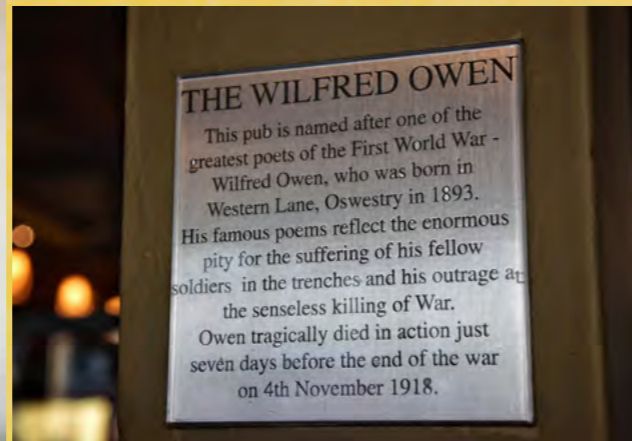
Deeply affected by his hospital visits, he returned to England to enlist in the British Army, aged 22.

In 1917, he spent three months fighting on the front line in France, was diagnosed with neurasthenia and evacuated to Craiglockhart War Hospital, near Edinburgh, where he wrote most of his poetry during his convalescence, before returning to France.

He was killed in action in November 1918, one week before the end of the war.

His poems concentrate on the sadness and futility of war, writing from the perspective of his personal experience on the front line.

They include Anthem for Doomed Youth and Dulce et Decorum Est.



THE JOHN MASEFIELD

70-72 NEW CHESTER ROAD, NEW FERRY, MERSEYSIDE, CH62 5AD

Poet Laureate from 1930 until his death in 1967, John Masefield attributed his love of books and poetry to his time in New Ferry, as a young man, where our pub (opened November 2007) now remembers him.

Born in 1878, Masefield was sent to a naval training ship, moored off New Ferry Pier, at the age of 13.

The future poet spent several years aboard HMS Conway, listening to tales about the sea, and was compelled to become a writer and storyteller himself.

His first collected works, Salt-Water Ballads, published in 1902, enjoyed immediate success.

His widest-known poem, Sea Fever, famously opens with the lines: 'I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky; And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by.'

His ashes are in the Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey.



THE JOLLY TARS • CLEVELEYS

JOLLY TARS CUSTOMERS SEE DOUBLE WITHOUT A DRINK



Twin sisters Rachel (left) and Amy Bullock are inseparable best friends. In April 2021, they will both celebrate working for the company for seven years, having joined Wetherspoon – just turned 20 – as a bar associate at The Jolly Tars (Cleveleys).

Rachel said: "We both worked part time in a local restaurant-café, when we were at college, where we had started at the age of 16.

"After college, we took on a full-time role there and worked there for four years, until a friend at The Jolly Tars, just by chance, told us that there were some job vacancies.

"Both Amy and I applied. Amy had the first interview; I was interviewed a day later – and they liked us both.

"We joined the team at the same time, as a bar associate, although working alternate days."

The twins, originally from Bispham near Blackpool, were then subsequently both promoted to team leader, pretty much simultaneously, although, again, with interviews just a day apart.

Rachel revealed: "We have different-colour hair, at the moment, yet that changes and is sometimes the same, so – unless you know us and our different characters – most people don't know who's who.

"At the pub, half of the customers can't tell us apart, so just call both of us 'Twinny'. We don't mind... it could be worse!"

Not only does the pair work together – occasionally on the same shift – but they are also house mates and clearly the best of friends.

They moved out of the family home together, at the age of 23, into a flat share, but now share a 'nice little house'.

Rachel, the youngest by just four minutes, said: "When we are older, I know that work and family commitments will mean that we won't be together, but, while we can, we are inseparable.

"It is lovely working and living with your 'bestie'."

Rachel and Amy are each also an aunty, to their elder sister Carly's two-year-old son, Sebastian, with a second eagerly anticipated baby boy on the way. Rachel said: "We can't wait!"

Amy added: "We are both very happy in our job at The Jolly Tars.

"As for the future, we will just have to see what happens and go with the flow."

HOTELS RATED HIGHLY IN WHICH? SURVEY



The Old Borough, Swords

Wetherspoon has been rated highly in a Which? survey of the best and worst hotels in Britain.

More than 4,000 customers were asked by the consumer champion to rate their experiences at UK hotels.

Guests rated the hotels on a range of criteria: bathrooms, bed comfort, bedrooms, cleanliness, communal areas/facilities, customer service, description matching reality, quality of food and value for money.

Wetherspoon scored four out of five in all categories, with the exception of quality of food and communal areas/facilities, where it scored three out of five.

The company received an overall customer score of 74 per cent and was rated higher than several leading hotel operators, including Holiday Inn, Travelodge, Hilton and Novotel.

Wetherspoon operates 58 hotels in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

All hotel bedrooms feature an en suite bathroom, complimentary tea- and coffee-making facilities, hair dryer, flat-screen television with Freeview TV (Saorview Freesat TV in Ireland) and unlimited free Wi-Fi,

as well as most with digital air-conditioning and temperature control.

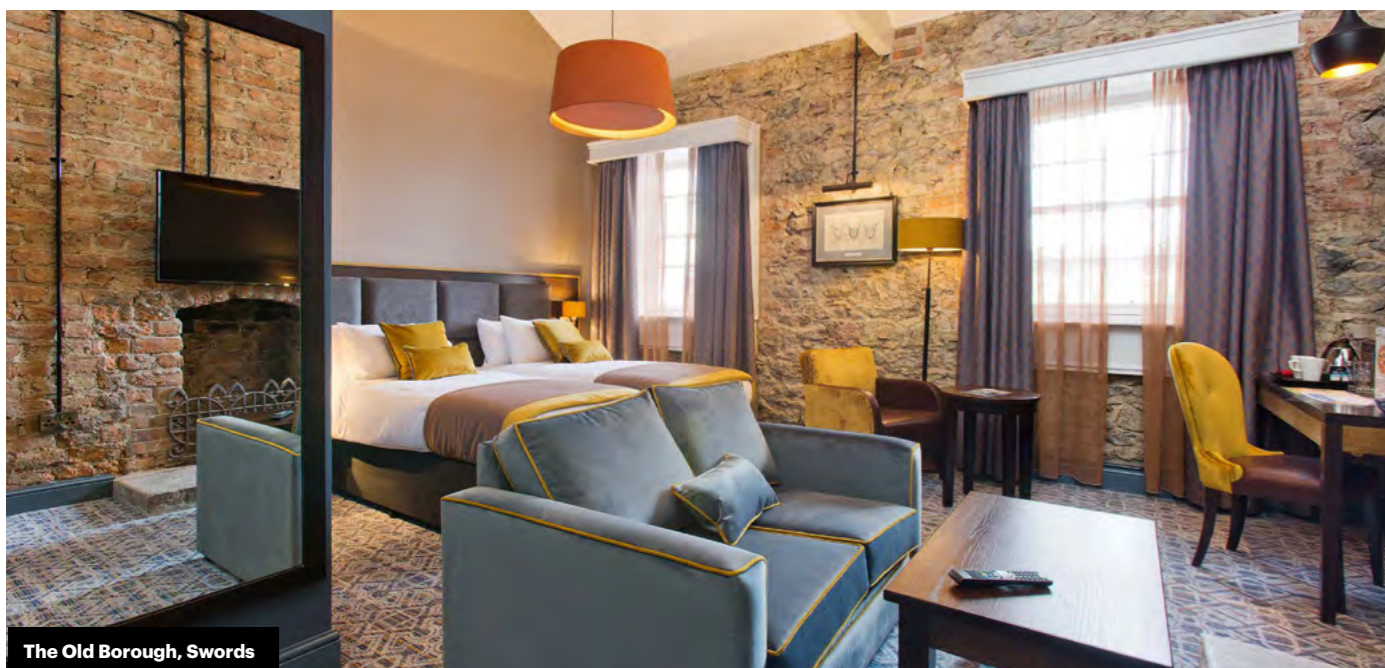
The hotels all offer 24-hour reception service – and our rooms can accommodate a mixture of double, twin and family occupancy, many being interconnecting. There are also accessible bedrooms, with wet-room facilities, suitable for guests with disabilities.

Every hotel is also attached to a Wetherspoon pub, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, including our excellent club deals, as well as our range of hot, soft and alcoholic drinks, all conveniently located for hotel guests to enjoy during their stay with us.

Wetherspoon's general manager, Tom Ball, said: "We are proud of the fact that our hotels scored highly across so many varying criteria.

"Our staff work hard to ensure that the hotels are welcoming places for guests to visit and this is borne out by the four-out-of-five rating for customer service.

"We have invested millions of pounds across our hotel estate and will continue to open hotels in the future."



The Old Borough, Swords



The White Hart Hotel, Okehampton



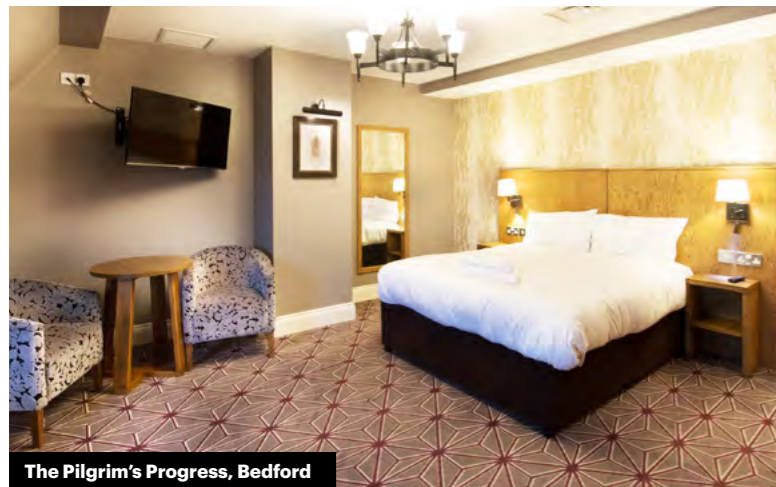
The White Hart Hotel, Okehampton



The Admiral of the Humber, Hull



The Thomas Ingoldsby, Canterbury



The Pilgrim's Progress, Bedford



The Angel Hotel, Whitby

THE HERBERT WELLS • WOKING

PUBS RUN IN THE FAMILY FOR WOKING MANAGER GARY



Pub manager Gary Hollis will be marking 25 years with the company this year.

He joined Wetherspoon in 1996, as a shift manager, then working at our pub (now sold) in Walton-on-Thames.

He spent six months there, including a role in the kitchen, before applying to be pub manager at The Herbert Wells (Woking).

Gary (pictured) recalls: "I took over the pub on my birthday (17 December) in 1996, not the ideal time, just before Christmas, but I had the chance to watch how the pub operated at the busiest time of year."

More than 24 years later, Gary is still at the helm at The Herbert Wells, which had first opened as a Wetherspoon pub in June 1995, just 18 months before his arrival.

The pub has also celebrated 25 consecutive years in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide, with its inclusion in the 2021 edition.

Gary said: "It is one thing to get into the guide, but to remain there for 25 years is a great achievement."

"My mum's husband, Colin Hayling, also runs a pub, The Crown at Little Walden, in Essex, so we often chat about pubs and bounce ideas off each other."

Gary's family pub connections go back even further and are practically in his blood.

He revealed: "My parents had pubs and I grew up in them. We lived upstairs in a pub in Welling, Kent. When my parents had a day off, I often ran the place for them, from the age of 15!"

"I also ran a snooker and health club, under The Connaught Rooms, near Covent Garden, in London, so I had been in the hospitality business for years before joining Wetherspoon."

Gary added: "For me, a pub is all about the people. It should be inclusive to everybody and appeal to a mixture of people – from families to office workers and the elderly... everyone."

"The Herbert Wells is what a pub should be all about."

"It was designed and built in the right way, is all on one level and easy to run."

"I have a great team too, many of them having also been here for a long time. It makes my life easier to have such experienced management team members, who all know what they are doing."

Gary concluded: "I also met my wife Viera at the pub, more than 22 years ago. She is a shift leader and has worked here for 10 years. Our daughter Yasmin (20) is also on the team as an associate."

WHAT DOES THAT FISH LABEL MEAN? THEREIN LIES A TAIL...

Piscatorial picture signifies that our cod and haddock are sustainably sourced

Fish and chips is one of the nation's best-loved pub meals, whether you enjoy it smothered in tartare sauce or with lashings of salt and vinegar.

But have you ever wondered what the blue fish ecolabel means, next to the dish on your Wetherspoon menu?

It shows that all cod and haddock eaten in Wetherspoon are sustainably sourced.

They've been caught by fishermen in fisheries which have been certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) as sustainable.

The MSC is an international charity which wants to see the world's oceans teeming with life.

It sets globally recognised, science-based standards for sustainable fishing and seafood traceability.

We know that British people really care about where their food comes from – now more than ever.

David Attenborough's brilliant documentaries, such as *The Blue Planet*, *Life On Our Planet* and *Extinction: The Facts*, have highlighted how everyone can play a part in turning around the destruction of the planet and our oceans.

Protein

Oceans are vital to life on earth, with seafood providing an important source of protein to more than three billion people across the world.

However, one-third of fisheries globally has been fished beyond sustainable limits, with a further 60 per cent fished to their maximum capacity.

This leads to the obvious thought – whether we should stop eating fish completely.

However, in a sustainable fishery, the fishermen work hard to ensure that the seafood they catch will be there for future generations.

They take measures such as using nets which allow the juvenile fish to go back into the water.

They avoid fishing in certain areas to protect vulnerable habitats and they work closely with scientists doing further research, so that improvements can be made all the time.

It's important for consumers, when they can, to be able to make sustainable choices – and businesses like Wetherspoon can make it easier for them to do that.

In fact, in 2019, Wetherspoon was awarded the MSC Newcomer of the Year Award for its strong commitment to the MSC programme and protecting our oceans.

Diet

Certainly, data shows that the British public is taking steps to live in a more sustainable way, in everything from cutting down on plastic usage to recycling more – and many people are taking small steps to alter their diet.

A study conducted in 2020 revealed that half of the UK's seafood shoppers have made changes in the last year to the way in which they choose and buy seafood, with one in five switching to a brand or product which says that it helps to protect the oceans or fish.

The study conducted for MSC by the consultancy Globescan also found that nearly one in three people in the UK worries that a favourite fish will be off the menu in 20 years' time, with this concern being higher in younger age groups.

Encouragingly, some 83 per cent are willing to take action to protect fish and seafood in the future – with most saying that they would like guidance and more information to make more environmentally conscious decisions.

Certified

Choosing to eat fish and chips from Wetherspoon, which is the largest pub chain in the UK certified to use the MSC blue fish ecolabel, is one simple way in which you can enjoy the seafood you love, while ensuring that there will be plenty of fish left in our oceans in future.

The label gives you the assurance that your seafood comes from a wild-catch fishery, independently certified to the MSC's science-based standard for environmentally sustainable fishing – fully traceable to a sustainable source.

The MSC blue fish ecolabel is found on more than 100 species of seafood in 100 countries and it's also on hundreds of British supermarkets' products.

So, look out for it next time you are shopping. It's on everything from fresh fish to canned tuna and pet food.

Our individual actions can make a difference, even for issues as daunting and global as overfishing.

Choosing dishes or products with the MSC blue fish ecolabel is a simple step which we can all take to keep fish on our plates and in the sea... now and for ever.



Freshly battered cod and chips

THE POMMELERS REST • TOWER BRIDGE, LONDON

HOW REGGIE'S SIX-MONTH UK VISIT LASTED 20 YEARS



In August this year, pub manager Recep Cinar (pictured) will be celebrating 20 years with the company.

That's quite an achievement, considering that he was going to stay in the UK for only six months, to study and improve his English, on a visit from his home in Fethiye, Turkey, in October 2000.

Originally staying in Catford, south London, with a couple he knew from their visits to the Turkish coastal resort, Recep eventually studied English for two years, through to advanced level.

Recep, known to everyone as Reggie (an early nickname which stuck), recalled: "My English teacher was a Wetherspoon customer – and it was she who encouraged me to ask about working for the company."

"I had previous experience working in many hotels and bars in Turkey and had studied tourism and hotel management at home, so I took her advice.

"I asked about work at Wetherspoons in Bromley (now called The Richmal Crompton), got an interview and a job offer, then started work pretty quickly.

"I really enjoyed it – and the people were all lovely and so supportive.

"With my previous experience, it was easy to adapt, with the language barrier being the only difficulty, but we had a great team there and I was lucky.

"Coincidentally, I had had my first pint in a Wetherspoon pub in Catford, not knowing that I would work for the company, let alone become a pub manager."

Within a few months, Recep had progressed to a supervisor role. When the pub manager then moved to The Milan Bar (Croydon), he asked Recep to join him.

It was there that Recep progressed to shift-manager level and had spells in three different Croydon Wetherspoon pubs.

He added: "All of the pub managers were very supportive and encouraging."

Recep was also keen to become a teacher, so took an access course, in teaching, at Lambeth College, studying there in the mornings and working at the pub in the evenings.

Recep revealed: "I couldn't decide whether I wanted to have a career as a teacher or a pub manager, until I was working on a school placement – and that made up my mind... teaching wasn't for me.

"I decided to focus on a pub manager position, work hard and achieve my goal. I applied for a couple of pubs and was unsuccessful, yet that made me only more determined to work harder and improve.

"At my third attempt, I was successful when applying in 2009/10 to become pub manager at The Pommeliers Rest (Tower Bridge, London). I have now been at the pub for more than 10 years."

However, things could have been so different, when Recep was very homesick at one stage and was considering returning to Turkey.

He said: "It was then that I met my wife-to-be Viktorija, who changed my whole world and she made me stay in the UK.

"She is from Lithuania and was working for Tiger Tiger, but I managed to persuade her to join the company with me.

"Viktorija is now a shift manager at The Pommeliers Rest and we make a good team at work and at home."

The couple, who commute from their home in Dartford, have a six-year-old son, Emir, and swap home and work duties with each other, to run the pub and look after their child.

Recep, 41, who also successfully completed his professional diploma in leisure retail management in 2013, admitted: "It is hard work, but we have a great arrangement, working different shifts and sharing all responsibilities.

"I have a good career and family and am a positive and happy person.

"This last year has made us all realise that you have to be grateful for what you have and make the most of life."

THE WILLIAM WITHERING • WELLINGTON

LOCKDOWN INSPIRES PUB BOSS HELEN TO VOLUNTEER



This April, pub manager Helen Fielding has been at the helm of The William Withering (Wellington) for four years.

Originally from Newport, in Shropshire, she first started out with the company in June 1999, while studying biomedical science at Sheffield Hallam University.

She needed a part-time job and was taken on as a bar associate at Wetherspoon's only pub in the city then, The Bankers Draft. Helen worked her way up to become a shift manager in 2001, before moving to our Lloyds No.1 bar in Milton Keynes (now closed).

Spells in various pubs across Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire followed, before she took on her first pub as manager in Stevenage – The Standard Bearer.

Helen also ran The Standing Order (Stevenage), The Colombia Press (Watford) and Luton's The London Hatter (now closed), before returning to her native Shropshire in April 2017.

More than 20 years since she left university, Helen is now continuing to challenge herself, qualifying towards the end of 2020 as a bereavement volunteer.

Helen explained: "During the first lockdown from March 2020, with the pubs closed, I was at home looking after my young daughter Mia.

"I wanted to do something constructive with my time, so applied online to volunteer with Cruse Bereavement Care."

Founded in 1959, this is a leading national charity, providing free care and bereavement counselling to those suffering from grief.

Helen (pictured) continued: "Like almost everyone, I have lost loved-ones and had been through bereavement counselling myself, in the past.

"I had that personal experience and wanted to learn the skills to help others.

"As well as doing something positive in the community and helping the referred clients, I wanted to develop myself.

"I also thought that I could use the skills in the daily situation at work to help my team.

"Many people suffer with various mental health issues stemmed from loss of some sort, although not just bereavement. What I have learned – which is so much – will be a great asset."

Helen's training, which eventually started at the beginning of October, was all online (owing to the pandemic).

Weekly four-hour sessions, as well as assignments, lasted for the two-month course, followed by successful interviews.

● **At the time of writing, Helen was awaiting her DBS checks and safeguarding course, before starting her first telephone-based sessions with referred clients.**

Meet the brewer

Wetherspoon is committed to serving the best range of beers in its pubs, including sourcing from microbreweries throughout the UK and Ireland annually. Here, we feature two brewers whose beers are enjoyed at our pubs.

HOW MAXIM POURED FORTH FROM WRECK OF SUNKEN GIANTS

New brewery created by ex-employees of famous firms from Sheffield and Sunderland

Brewery's name: Maxim Brewery, Houghton-le-Spring, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear



Following the closure of Vaux Brewery in Sunderland and Sheffield-based Wards Brewery, in 1999, ex-employees of both brewing giants joined forces to establish, in 2000, the Double Maxim Beer Company Ltd.

The initial aim was to preserve the famous northern beers which discerning beer-drinkers had enjoyed for years, with the long-term goal of resurrecting the brewing tradition in the north of England.

The managing director of the now-renamed Maxim Brewery, Mark Anderson, was one of the founders of the new venture and a former director at Vaux.

Mark (pictured) recalled: "Vaux was a big regional brewer and, when it closed, we bought the brands and kept them alive."

Equipment

"The ex-Vaux employees, together with brewing equipment and plant we bought from Scottish and Newcastle's brewhouse in Scotland, in 2006, are what is left of the major north-of-England breweries."

That purchase of the 20-barrel brewery, previously housed at the Canongate Brewery on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, enabled Maxim to set up its own production of cask ale.

It was then that its relationship with Wetherspoon began.

Mark said: "We started to supply local Wetherspoon pubs in 2007, delivering directly... and still do. We established a reputation as a good supplier, with the quality of our beer speaking for itself."

"Wetherspoon was a good customer from the beginning and continues to be."

Chance

"It is a difficult market, still dominated by the major players. However, we appreciate how Wetherspoon gives small brewers the chance to shine."

"Real ale needs to be looked after and served well. Wetherspoon provides a lot of training for managers and staff, so the partnership works very well."

"It is fair to say that we would be struggling without Wetherspoon."

"There is a lack of cask ale pubs in the northeast, with Wetherspoon our biggest real-ale customer in the area."

As well as supplying directly to our pubs across the northeast, Maxim Brewery has also featured in our bi-annual real-ale festivals with several special brews, as well as being listed among our guest ales.

Historic

Double Maxim Premium Brown Ale, its most famous and historic bottled beer, is also served in some of our pubs across the northeast.

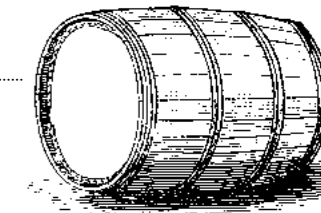
However, it isn't just the historic northern brands which Maxim produces. Its cask beer range features many newly created brews, as it continues to fly the flag for the northeast's growing, independent craft brewing industry.

Mark revealed: "We have managed to adapt and survive the devastating impact of the pandemic, so far, including supplying customers via a drive-thru collection service."

"That has enabled us to keep brewing, although at a vastly reduced capacity, but, more important, we have been able to keep our yeast going. If you don't brew, the yeast dies."

He concluded: "However, now, the government is reviewing the small brewers' relief and that could hit hard, seriously damaging small breweries like ours."

"Any changes or further increases in tax pose a real danger, in terms of breweries' survival – with more closures a real possibility."



BREWERS STUART AND CLAIRE KEEP IT REAL

Husband-and-wife team celebrates a decade running East London Brewing Company

Brewery's name: East London Brewing Company, Leyton, London, E10



Claire Ashbridge-Thomlinson and head brewer Adrián Morales Maillo

Husband-and-wife team Stuart Lascelles and Claire Ashbridge-Thomlinson are celebrating a decade's brewing this year, having set up their east London-based microbrewery in 2011.

After each enjoying a successful 20-year-long career, Stu as an industrial chemist and Claire working in political PR, the couple had become increasingly disenchanted with their jobs and wanted to make a reality of their brewery dream.

Claire recalled: "Stu, who was a keen home brewer, left his day job. We found a single unit on a small industrial site, where we installed new floors, electrics and a brewhouse."

Brewed

"In August 2011, we brewed our first batch of Foundation Best Bitter. It was delivered to local pubs, including nearby Wetherspoon pubs in the area – our customers from the very start."

Claire joined the brewery in 2013 which had, by that time, grown too big for Stu to manage on his own. On her maternity leave with their second child, Claire was ready to make the leap from her day job too – and join the family adventure full time.

She said: "Stu had been closely watching the explosion of microbreweries in the US – it was exciting."

"Then, the government's small brewers' relief initiative was also introduced in the UK, really setting the scene for us and making it economically viable to start out."

"The interest in well-made British beer was also increasing, creating the perfect storm, with new audiences and a growing enthusiasm."

Gastro

"Much like with wine, customers were starting to pair food with beer, as dining out became more of a gastro experience, rather than just a necessity to eat."

"Now, 10 years on, and after the brewery expanded in 2019, the East London Brewing team is just as passionate about beer and celebrating brewing."

"It is one of the many wonderfully diverse, creative and innovative traditions of east London – and our brand reflects that rich heritage."

East London Brewing Company continues to supply Wetherspoon's pubs across London regularly and has been featured in our London real-ale festival, with its ales Seven Boroughs (2020), Wolf (2019) and Dandy (2018). Its bottled APA, Cowcatcher, was also included on the 2017 Wetherspoon national listing.

Supportive

Claire added: "Wetherspoon has always been massively supportive of local breweries – and we take our hats off to the company for maintaining the great British tradition of real ale."

"It is essentially a peculiarly British thing and, as brewers, we very much depend on good pub cellar management – something at which Wetherspoon is also brilliant."

"Wetherspoon trains young people in the art of real ale, too, so the knowledge will not be lost, helping to maintain that important British tradition."

"We are grateful to Wetherspoon for that."

ST HELENS

GENEROUS GLASS HOUSE GANG FILLS BOOTS IN ST HELENS



Chantelle (centre), Ashleigh (right) and shift leader Emma Goulborne (left)

Staff and customers at The Glass House (St Helens) have shown their generosity by supporting the local community during the pandemic.

Pub manager Ashleigh Briscoe-Williams and the team aimed to fill a car boot full of food donations for the St Helens foodbank, during a two-week collection period.

However, within just a couple of days, generous donations of tinned and dried food, as well as toiletries and essentials, were collected at the pub's collection point.

Shift manager Chantelle Briscoe-Williams said: "We came together as a community, all of the staff and our wonderful customers, to help those of our community's children and families who are struggling through the pandemic."

"A huge thankyou to everyone for their generosity and support at this difficult time."

DUNDEE

CAKE-BAKING TRIO TAKES THE BISCUIT IN DUNDEE

Bar associate Paula Wilson organised a bake sale and raffle at The Counting House (Dundee) in support of the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2020.

The event raised £250 in funds for Poppy Scotland, with the sale of homemade cakes and biscuits decorated in poppies, as well as poppy appeal merchandise and raffle tickets to win a hamper.

Assisting Paula with the baking and selling were Cara Berwick (aged 10) and James Wilson (11), both pictured at the pub.

Pub manager Stevie Reid said: "Well done to Paula, James and Cara for all of their hard work, and a huge thankyou to everyone who generously supported the poppy appeal event."



THE PLAYHOUSE • COLCHESTER

JACKIE'S THE STAR OF THE SHOW AT THE PLAYHOUSE

A surprise presentation at The Playhouse (Colchester) awarded pub manager Jackie Dungey for a remarkable milestone.

At the beginning of December, Jackie celebrated 30 years' service with Wetherspoon and was congratulated by general manager Alistair Broome and area manager Alex Jonas, with a special presentation.

Jackie joined the company in 1990, as a trainee manager, with her husband Paul. The couple first worked at The College Arms, at Walthamstow in east London, which has since been sold.

She recalls: "We were in the right place at the right time, really, and worked our way up."

"We had spells at The Three Horseshoes (Hampstead) and The Dog (Archway) (both since sold), which was originally the head office, before opening Goldengrove (Stratford)."

Originally from Chelmsford, Jackie then moved to The Playhouse, together with Paul, six months after it first opened. Jackie has been there ever since – a 26-year stint (so far).

Jackie said: "We wanted to get out of London and move back nearer to home. The Playhouse was a great move – and I still love the place."

"While Paul left Wetherspoon around eight years ago, I have continued to manage it, and both of our kids, Ella and Sam, have also worked here."

"Ella is now an ICU nurse at King's College Hospital, London, while our son Sam took film studies at the University of Greenwich and is currently a kitchen team leader at the pub."

Paul, meanwhile, took a completely different career path, setting up a dog-walking and -behaviour business – and the couple celebrated their silver wedding anniversary in 2019.

Jackie, pictured with Paul and their son Sam, said: "So much has happened in the past 30 years, although it also seems like I have snapped my fingers and it has gone just like that."

"We are very lucky to have a fantastic building at The Playhouse. We have a core group of great regular customers, as well as a lot of students – there is a lovely atmosphere."

"During lockdown, I was itching to come back; I had missed it very much."

"I still love my job and get a great buzz when the place is busy." Wetherspoon's general manager, Alistair Broome, said: "Jackie was my first pub manager, when I joined the company with my wife, more than 27 years ago."

"We followed Jackie and her husband Paul to the new opening at Stratford, our pub Goldengrove, after which Jackie and Paul eventually left to go to The Playhouse, where she still continues as pub manager today."

"During her amazing 30 years, Jackie has trained and recruited numerous pub and kitchen managers – many of whom continue with Wetherspoon to this day."

"Along with many others, I owe both Jackie and Paul a huge amount of gratitude for their guidance and help in those first years with the company."



SWADLINCOTE

OUR GRESLEY GROUP GIVES ALL IT'S GOT



Pub manager Rob Winterton and his team at The Sir Nigel Gresley (Swadlincote) didn't allow the tier-three lockdown to hinder their community spirit.

The team at the pub collected non-perishable food items from their own cupboards at home, as well as organising specific supermarket trips to help those in need.

The donations were delivered to the nearby South Derbyshire CVS as part of its 'winter giving campaign' – a local charity working to improve the quality of life for people in South Derbyshire.

The charity's appeal, asking for help to feed people in need, was in response to the growing demand at its food bank.

This was a result of the pandemic's impact on the lives, health and welfare of local people.

Rob said: "I saw the appeal on social media and suggested it to the team, who all thought that it would be a great thing to do.

"Although, through tier-three restrictions, the pub was temporarily closed, we arranged for a few of us to meet up and get everything together for the donations.

"It has been a difficult time for so many people – and we wanted to do our bit for the local community."

Rob is pictured (centre) with team members, together with their children and helpers.

INVERURIE

HIGHLANDER'S HEROES HELP THOSE WHO ARE STRUGGLING

Customers and staff at The Gordon Highlander (Inverurie) donated food and other products to their local foodbank over the holiday period, before the pub was forced to close.

Shift manager Taimer Dixon and shift leader Robyn Morrison are pictured with the donations, shortly before they were delivered to Aberdeenshire North foodbank.

Opened in 2013, the Inverurie Foodbank Centre is one of five locations across the region helping local people in crisis.

Among the non-perishable items donated by generous folks at The Gordon Highlander were tins, jars, long-life products, toiletries, dried food and pasta.

Pub manager Louise Eddie said: "This pandemic has seen more and more ordinary people struggling to make ends meet.

"We wanted to help our local community, especially during the holiday season, and thank our wonderful customers for their kind donations."



THE MOON UNDER WATER • WIGAN

DAVE AND LAUREEN FIND A CAREER – AND EACH OTHER



Shift managers Dave and Lauren Higham have been married for seven years, having first met as colleagues at The Bocket Arms (Wigan), where they then both worked.

Dave joined the company in August 2004 as a 21-year-old bar associate, while Lauren arrived in February 2007, also as a bar associate. Within six months, the couple was dating.

Dave, now 37, recalled: "I was looking for a job when a mate who was working at The Bocket Arms suggested that I apply for a job there. I never imagined for a minute that I would still be with the company 16 years later.

"Every day is different and that is what I like about it. I have achieved promotions gradually and have been a shift manager for the last six or seven years."

Dave and Lauren (pictured) now both work at The Moon Under Water (Wigan), although Dave has had two spells at both Wigan pubs during the past 16 years.

He admitted: "I never really previously thought about being a pub manager, but, for the past couple of years, it has become a possibility, now that I have more experience and would like a new challenge.

"I feel like I have done well so far and am definitely proud of what I have achieved, especially as I had no clue, when taking media studies at college, as to what kind of career I wanted to pursue.

"I don't drive, so any further promotion or move would have to be fairly local, accessible by bus. I am pretty relaxed and don't want to plan. I will just see where things take me."

Dave and Lauren, 33, who are both from Wigan, share shift manager responsibilities, as well as family commitments – they have two sons, Dylan and Lucas.

Dave concluded: "Working at the same pub helps massively, in terms of planning shifts and hand-overs, to accommodate our family life with the children, especially school runs."

RUNCORN

THE FERRY BOAT CREW BAILS OUT THOSE IN NEED



The team at The Ferry Boat (Runcorn) has been supporting its local community during the pandemic.

Pub manager Christian Greenlee reported: "My staff have been collecting food donations for Halton Haven – local to us at the pub."

The donations, including dried and tinned items, were made to the Halton Haven Day Centre, part of Runcorn & District foodbank and one of seven food distribution centres in and around the local area.

The foodbank, supported by The Trussell Trust, provides three days' nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people who are referred to them in crisis.

It is part of a nationwide network working to combat poverty and hunger across the UK.

Christian added: "It has been a tough time for so many people. We just wanted to do our bit to help to support those in need, in difficult circumstances."

The pub also donated fresh chilled food, on three previous occasions, owing to lockdown closures.

Pub staff are pictured presenting some food to Halton Haven. Pictured (left) duty manager Gemma Jones, with healthcare assistant Brenda Donaldson, shift leader Amy-Leigh Willis, staff nurse Natalie Huyton and kitchen shift leader Sarah Booth.

ABERDARE

STAFF AT ABERDARE SHOW THEY CARE

The team at Yr Ieuan Ap Iago (Aberdare) has shown great generosity, throughout the pandemic, in helping its local community.

Like many Wetherspoon pubs, it donated all of its fresh produce at the start of the first lockdown – in March 2020.

The Laurels nursing home, 15 minutes' drive from the pub, was the grateful recipient.

During and after the second lockdown in Wales, kitchen manager Stephanie Morse, together with shift leader Lucy Mooney, organised a further collection for The Laurels, as well as the foodbank at Ramoth Christian Centre, in Aberdare.

Stacey-Marie Taylor, currently the 'holding' pub manager for Stef Prosser, on maternity leave, said: "Instead of our usual 'secret Santa' collection, we encouraged everyone to spend their £5 on food and gifts to donate."



Shift manager Abigael Pemberton, kitchen manager Stephanie Morse and shift leader Lucy Mooney (left to right)

"Our team of 38 went above and beyond, did an amazing job, despite tough times, and we managed to present a hamper of goodies, worth £100, to The Laurels.

"The food and toiletries for the foodbank also came to £350, which was absolutely fantastic, a brilliant team effort."

A thankyou message to the team from The Laurels said: "Thank you all so very much. You have put a huge smile on the residents' faces."

"It has been a very difficult time for us all. Thank you for your kindness."

THE DRABBET SMOCK • HAVERHILL

MUMS AND DAUGHTERS FIND THE SMOCK FITS



Tammie, Tiapaige, Toni and Tracey (left to right)

Two mum-and-daughter teams, on pub manager Ryan Moore's staff, certainly help to keep his pub running smoothly and efficiently at The Drabbet Smock (Haverhill).

Kitchen manager Toni Dawkins, 26, joined the team nine years ago this coming April as a kitchen associate and is the longest-serving staff member.

Toni revealed: "I had been working in a local café since the age of 14, where my mum was my boss, across the road from the pub – so had a background in the food industry."

"I was just 18 when I got the job at The Drabbet Smock and, in truth, I went into it as a stop-gap job."

Toni was encouraged to apply for a team leader role, yet didn't take it. She then left on maternity leave to have her first son, Dexter, before returning and taking up that chance of promotion.

Another maternity break followed, with the arrival of son Spencer, before Toni returned to apply for a shift leader position.

She recalled: "I remember my first day back was Curry Club and it was so busy. I had missed the buzz and adrenaline rush and it made me realise that I wanted this as a career."

"Maybe having my family made me focus, but I was ready to progress at work."

"The next step I wanted was kitchen manager, so I did all of the courses and spent the next two years wanting to know and learn everything about the job."

Toni achieved that promotion at the beginning of September 2020 – and her mum, kitchen associate Tracey Dudley, who joined the company less than a year after Toni, is a member of her kitchen team.

Toni said: "When I was promoted to kitchen manager, I felt overwhelmed at first, but knew I could do the job."

"It was just nice to get the recognition, proving that I am good enough and can do a good job... and I feel appreciated."

"I have had a lot of encouragement, support and help at work from the managers, including my pub manager Ryan and duty manager Karen Wilson, for which I am grateful."

"However, I couldn't even have considered the kitchen manager position without the help of my mum."

"She helps with childcare for my two boys; in fact, we say that she is a co-parent! She is also my best friend."

Meanwhile, front of house, duty managers Tiapaige Hardy, 23, and her mum Tammie Brown are another dynamic duo.

Tiapaige has been at the pub since 2014 when she joined her mum on the staff.

She worked as a 17-year-old part-time floor associate, while studying at college in Cambridge to become a makeup artist.

At 18, she stepped up to bar associate, working evenings and weekends, when her college course allowed.

Tammie had been promoted to team leader six months after joining and then progressed to shift leader.

Tiapaige recalled: "Two years ago, out of the blue, I was offered the chance to become a team leader, as my pub manager thought I was doing well. Then, in 2019, I became a shift leader."

"I was then promoted to duty manager earlier this year, in March, on the Friday before lockdown. My mum and I both went for the same jobs and were both successful, thankfully!"

Tiapaige concluded: "I think that I am quite a bossy person and I can see myself as a pub manager in the future, 100 per cent."

"My mum is fairly laid back and wants to help everyone – that is her strength. She is definitely a people person and always goes that extra mile."

"I enjoy the technical side of things more, the paperwork, finances and behind-the-scenes responsibilities, so I guess that we make a good team."

HEXHAM RUNNER JOHN HAS TWO TARGETS TO BEAT



Shift manager John Cruddas is hoping to achieve a half-marathon personal best, as well as smash a fundraising target of £1,000 for CLIC Sargent.

John, who works at The Forum (Hexham), will be competing in September in the 2021 Great North Run, after 2020's planned event had to be cancelled, along with so many others.

He previously took part in the Simplyhealth Great North Run 2019, collecting £700 in sponsorship and donations.

John said: "When I decided to do the Great North Run two years ago, I could barely run a mile, let alone a half marathon, and was pretty unfit."

He crossed the finish line in 2:16:41. However, this year, John aims to complete the race in under two hours and raise even more charity funds.

He said: "This year, I want to take the 16 minutes off the end and finish in under two hours."

He added: "I know that this year is going to be a tight year for everybody, money wise, but it's been tough for the charities too, missing out on fundraising from so many cancelled events."

"Hopefully, we can all pull together and raise some decent money for CLIC Sargent."

The 40th Great North Run takes place on Sunday 12 September 2021.

Since it started in 1981, more than 1.2 million people have taken part, making it the world's biggest and best half marathon.

● **Support John and CLIC Sargent: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/johncruddas**

MALTBY

BETH BACKS SCHOOL MEAL PUSH IN MALTBY



Pub manager Beth Burns and her team at The Queens Hotel (Maltby) have joined forces with another team to support their local community.

The local football club, Maltby Main, organised free school meals for local children during the school half-term holiday, all funded by local donations.

Beth said: "We donated some soft drinks and mini-pack biscuits for the school meal initiative, as well as some raffle prizes for the Maltby Main Under-14s Christmas fundraiser."

"The raffle prizes included two hampers, one for the adults and one for children, with donations from staff."

"We also donated a meal voucher for the winner to dine at The Queens Hotel."

Beth is pictured (centre) with shift manager Ricky Brown (back left), together with Maltby Main Juniors Under-14s coaches Sam Taylor, Ben Platt and Martin Hardstaff.

PLYMOUTH

PLYMOUTH MOUTHS FED BY THE GOG AND MAGOG

When the second lockdown came into force at the beginning of November, staff at The Gog and Magog (Plymouth) turned their disappointment into positivity.

After completing an extensive check and count of all stock, kitchen manager Becky Holbrook put together a food parcel for a local youth charity.

In her spare time, Becky volunteers with the charity Barefoot, a youth charity based in the Ernesettle area of Plymouth.

Set up in 1996, the charity works with young people and their communities to break down barriers, through involvement of young, vulnerable and disadvantaged people in open-access youth work, activities and projects.

Barefoot aims to build confidence and skills, while encouraging real community engagement, specialising in working with those who are, or feel, marginalised or excluded.

Shift manager James Evans (right) said: "All of the food would have otherwise perished, owing to the timescale of the closure."

"However, rather than have that waste, Becky decided to do some good with it and help out the local community which needs it the most."

"Barefoot's fieldwork supervisor, Jonathan Dingle (pictured centre with Becky left) was delighted with the donation and assured Becky that it would all be used to support the charity, in these unprecedented times."



PUTTING OUR STAMP ON POST OFFICES

Many types of disused historic building have become a Wetherspoon pub, but mail-related edifices have delivered particularly well

Wetherspoon has the unrivalled reputation, as well as numerous accolades to show for it, for its sensitive restoration and renovation of many towns and cities' historic, and often derelict and neglected, landmark buildings.

Among those architectural gems now enjoying a second (sometimes more) life as a pub are former cinemas and theatres, police stations and court houses, churches and chapels, banks and shops – even an old dairy.

Former post office buildings, in towns and cities across the UK, are also among the recycled and rejuvenated premises, with many of the purpose-built premises dating back more than a century.

Here, we highlight some of our pubs with a post office past which are no longer a place to buy stamps and send mail, but are nevertheless an important hub in their local community.

THE PENNY BLACK

110 WITTON STREET, NORTHWICH
CHESHIRE, CW9 5AB

Purpose built during 1914–19 by architect Charles Wilkinson as the town's main post office, this is now home to our pub (opened in September 1999), taking its name from the world's first-ever adhesive postage stamp.

Although the building was originally finished in 1915, World War I prevented it from being opened or used. It remained closed until 1919, after the end of the war, when it was finally opened.

When built, this grade II listed property was the town's 'largest liftable building'. 'Liftable' or timber-framed structures have been used in Northwich so that they can be jacked back into position, following subsidence.

The Royal Mail was established in 1635.

Over two centuries later, the modern postal system began with the Penny Post, instituted by Sir Rowland Hill in 1840.



THE POSTAL ORDER

32–33 WESTOW STREET, CRYSTAL PALACE
LONDON, SE19 3RW

The site of this pub (opened November 1996) was the Norwood chief district post and telegraph office before World War I.

By the beginning of the next war, it had become a sub post office; by the 1950s, it was in use as the post office sorting rooms.

Sir Rowland Hill, teacher and social reformer, who wrote Post Office Reform in 1837, proposed a country-wide, cheap-rate postal charge, prepaid by stamps.

In 1840, a uniform penny rate was introduced.

Under the Liberal government, Hill became Postmaster-General and, in 1854, was made secretary to the Post Office. By then, he had also reformed the money order office.

After retirement, Hill took up a new public cause – nationalisation of the railways.



THE FIRST POST

42 HIGH STREET, COSHAM
HAMPSHIRE, PO6 3AG

This pub, which opened in December 1998, stands on the site of a chemist's, built in the 1840s, which housed Cosham's first post office.

During the second half of the 19th century, Thomas Baker, the chemist who traded from the premises, was also Cosham's first postmaster.

In the 1840s, he would have seen the introduction of the Penny Post, a reform advocated by Sir Rowland Hill.

Before that time, the cost of sending a letter was borne by the addressee and varied with the number of sheets and the distance.

The minimum charge was 4d (1½p) for up to 15 miles.

Even after the Penny Post was established, by means of the now-famous Penny Black stamp, individual households were not guaranteed delivery.

For some time afterwards, country dwellers around Cosham would have collected their mail from Thomas Baker's chemist's shop.



THE MAIL ROOMS

GLOUCESTER ROAD, ROSS-ON-WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR9 5BS

This pub's name (opening as a Wetherspoon in May 2001) recalls the building's previous use as the town's long-standing main post office.

Constructed in 1899-1900, it replaced smaller premises, of a similar design, almost opposite the site.

Ross Gazette (15 December 1898) wrote: "The erection of the new post office for Ross having just been commenced, we are now able to supply our readers with a few particulars concerning this much-needed improvement.

"The building, which will be of brick with Bath stone dressings, will be of a plain domestic character, having a frontage of 45 ft to the Gloucester road.

"On the ground floor will be the public office, the postmaster's room, instrument room and a large sorting office, 54 ft by 26 ft.

"This sorting room is larger than usual for towns the size of Ross, and will be a great improvement on the present arrangement of sorting the letters in the public office.

"The architect of the building is Mr WT Oldrieve, of Storey's Gate, Westminster, and the work will be carried out under the superintendence of Mr John EP Ladd, clerk of works."



THE PENNY BLACK

58 SHEEP STREET, BICESTER OXFORDSHIRE, OX26 6JW

This pub, which opened in October 1997, bears the name of the famous stamp which marked the birth of the modern postal system.

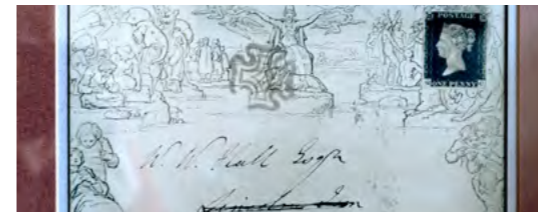
The world's first-ever adhesive postage stamp, the Penny Black was introduced in 1840.

However, the black ink was so permanent that a red cancellation mark could be wiped off, allowing people to reuse the stamps. After only nine months, the post office changed from the Penny Black to a red version.

Our pub is housed in the former Banbury post office building, built in 1914 by architect Henry Collins.

Banbury Guardian (26 February 1914) wrote: "The ground floor, raised by three steps, will contain the public counter, longer than the depth of the present Post Office, the Postmaster's room etc.

"The second floor will contain the telegram and telephone rooms, and the women's retiring room etc. The top floor is for the caretaker operator... Speaking generally, the new office will be much more elaborate than the public anticipate, and it will rank amongst the new offices in much larger towns."



THE LORD JOHN

15-17 RUSSELL STREET, STROUD, GLOUCESTERSHIRE, GL5 3AA

Russell Street and nearby John Street are both named after Lord John Russell, remembered in the name of this pub, who was MP for Stroud and also the architect of the Great Reform Act of 1832.

The pub, which opened in July 1998, was previously Stroud's main post office, itself having first opened for business on 31 July 1886.

The architect may have been Ernest Rivers, who was responsible for several contemporary West Country post office buildings.

Gloucester Journal (31 July 1886) reported: "The building, as regards its exterior, is of the 'not beautiful but massive' type, and the interior

has been arranged with all due regard to the efficient working of the various departments.

"The parcels post business will be conducted in the building.

"The public offices are roomy - in marked contrast to the apology for an office in George Street, which has long done duty.

"The public office is connected with the telegraph department (on the second floor) by a pneumatic tube, up which the messages will be forwarded to the operators."



THE NARROWS

25 HIGH STREET, ABINGDON-ON-THAMES, OXFORDSHIRE, OX14 5AA

Number 25 High Street was Abingdon's main post office for more than a century, until its closure in January 2009.

The present-day High Street extends east-west from Market Place to The Square.

The stretch by the post office (next to The Square) was long known as The Narrows, from where the pub (which opened in October 2013) takes its name.

In 1883, most of the buildings were destroyed by fire and, in the regeneration, the street was widened.

The post office was one of the new buildings erected in the early 1890s. It opened on 26 September 1892, with James Smith as postmaster.

Reading Mercury (1 October 1892) reported:

"The premises are very substantial and commodious, and the front elevation has a light and pleasing appearance.

"The large sorting room in the rear is well lighted from a skylight in the roof and is fitted with every convenience for making up the mails."



THE LAST POST

CHILWELL ROAD, BEESTON
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, NG9 1AA
This pub was once Beeston's main post office, opening as a Wetherspoon pub in September 2000.

The post office, formerly on High Road, occupied a new building in the square early last century.

In 1935, the post office was rebuilt at the junction of Chilwell Road and Foster Avenue, first opening on 8 July 1935.

Nottingham Evening Post (8 July 1935) reported: "This afternoon, Beeston's new Post Office was opened by Mr Ireland, Chairman of the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council.

"It is one of the best erected buildings of its class in the county, and the whole of the materials used are either British or of Empire origin.

"Doors, furniture and fittings, together with the panelled walls, are in polished figured walnut.

"The exterior of the building is faced with Loughborough buff-facing bricks, with Hollington stone dressings, plinths and copings and roofed with Precelly green slates."



THE ALEXANDER BAIN

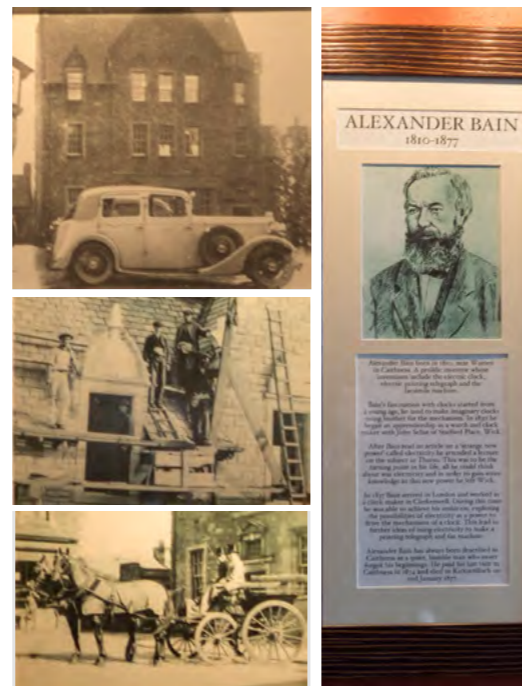
MARKET PLACE, WICK, HIGHLAND, KW1 4LP

The pub opened in May 2003 in the former post office building in Market Place.

The distinctive three-storey building, by architect William Oldrieve, first opened in 1914, housing the telegraph and telephone rooms, serving until the early 1990s as the town's main post office.

The pub is named after a prolific inventor, born in 1810 on the outskirts of Wick, near Watten, Caithness.

Alexander Bain invented the electric clock, electric printing telegraph and the facsimile machine.



THE JOB BULMAN

ST NICHOLAS AVENUE, GOSFORTH
NEWCASTLE, TYNE AND WEAR, NE3 1AA

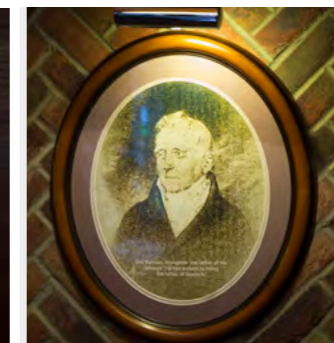
This former post office and telephone exchange was built in 1928 by architect Henry Rees, serving the people of Gosforth and surrounding areas as its general post office and sorting rooms for more than 50 years.

The post office moved from High Street to the site on St Nicholas Avenue.

The old post office stood near the Turnpike Gate and opened in 1870s.

Postal facilities were first introduced into Gosforth in c1840.

The pub, the name of which remembers a respected local doctor who had a hand in the early development of Gosforth, opened in October 2005.



THE THOMAS WAGHORN

14 RAILWAY STREET, CHATHAM
KENT, ME4 4JL

The well-known statue (erected in 1888) by the bridge over Railway Street, near to the pub, commemorates the 'postal pioneer' Thomas Fletcher Waghorn – the Chatham-born naval officer and merchant seaman who developed a new postal route from Great Britain to India.

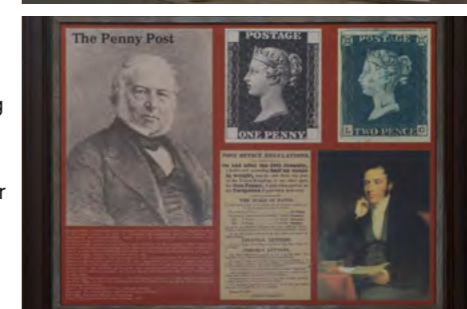
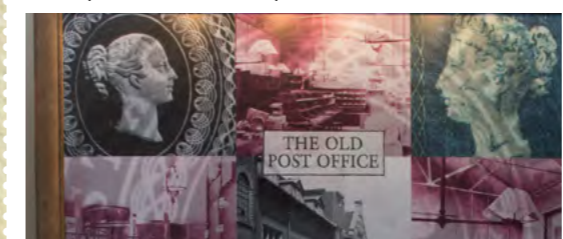
The pub, which opened in July 2016, remembers the man whose 6,000-mile overland route replaced the 16,000-mile sea journey, reducing the time taken to reach its destination.

Waghorn, born in 1800 and a self-confessed 'plain, blunt fellow', boasted: "Give me your mail and I'll deliver it to India in 90 days."

The three-month service was set to replace the existing route around Africa which could take up to two years.

The building itself, in classic Edwardian style, was built for the General Post Office by its Office of Works, under the direction of William Oldrieve.

First opened in 1902, the post office closed c1994.



THE LAST POST

COUNTY SQUARE, PAISLEY
RENFREWSHIRE, PAISLEY

The pub, which opened in December 1998, takes its name from the building's former use as Paisley's main post office.

The original post office building (opened in 1893) was designed by Walter W Robertson of HM Office of Works, Edinburgh, and built in the Tudor or Domestic Gothic style, 'in harmony with Paisley Station and the Burgh Municipal Buildings adjoining'.

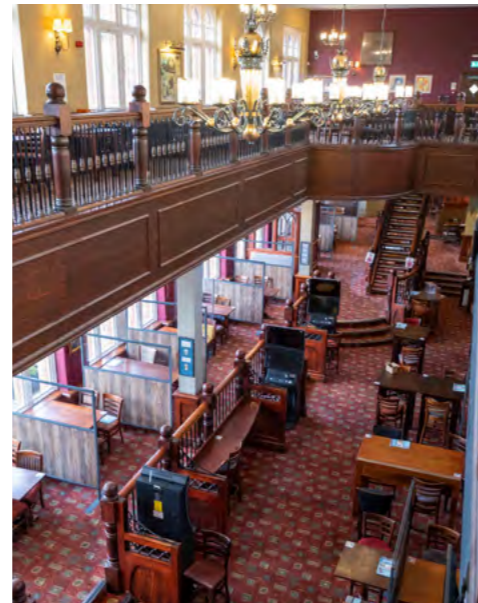
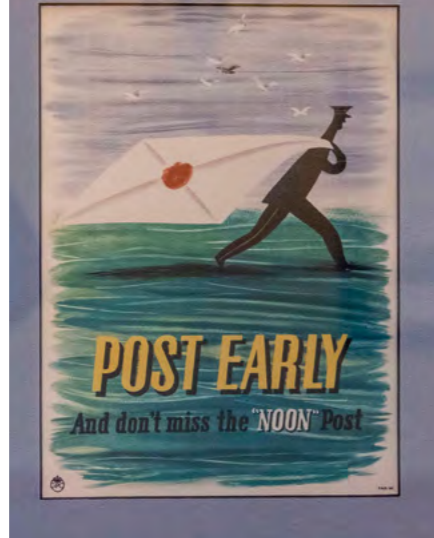
The Glasgow Herald (6 February 1893), which reported on the opening, said: "In the public office, there is ample accommodation for the public, both as regards the postal and the telegraphic work, and behind the counter of the public office accommodation has been provided for, should the occasion be necessary, the service of twelve clerks."

"On the first floor, above the public office, is the telegraph room. It is splendidly lighted from three sides by means of ten large windows."

"Retiring rooms for telegraph clerks and messengers are also placed on the first floor."

"The building is heated throughout with steam pipes."

"Externally the new Post Office has a very fine appearance, and its internal arrangements have been carried out in accordance with the best methods for the efficient and prompt discharge of postal work."



Among some other former post office buildings, now housing Wetherspoon pubs, are The Ralph Fitz Randal (Richmond), The Last Post (Loughton), The James Watt (Greenock), The Last Post (Southend-on-Sea), The Postal Order (Blackburn), The Post & Telegraph (Brighton), The Postal Order (Worcester), The Leyland Lion (Leyland), The Tumble Inn (Pontypridd), The Poste of Stone (Stone), The Humphrey Bean (Tonbridge), The Weeping Ash (St Neots), The Glass Blower (Castleford) and The Exchange (Banbury).

ST HELENS

EVEN MORE CARE ON THE MAP IN ST HELENS



The success of a 2019/20 community artwork project, which included our pub The Running Horses (St Helens), has prompted an update to the initiative.

The St Helens Care Map, featuring safe and friendly venues and places in St Helens, has now been enhanced, with additional new spaces where local people feel welcome.

Organised by The Take Care St Helens Project and recognising mental health issues, the original watercolour artwork map was produced by Liverpool-based artist Hwa Young Jung and reproduced for local residents to use as a practical tool.

The large town plan plots special and welcoming spaces, including pubs (among them The Running Horses), restaurants, churches,

charities, arts organisations and other places of sanctuary, suggested by local residents.

The Running Horses' pub manager, Colin Hughes, said: "This care map has proven a great success and has now been added to."

"The Running Horses was selected for the map and continues to provide a friendly and welcoming community atmosphere, where our staff and customers feel safe to work and socialise."

● Pictured with the original artwork map are (left to right) artist Hwa Young Jung, team leader Declan Barrow (The Running Horses), Heart of Glass producer Rhyannon Parry and St Helens College students Caitlin Lacey and Keeno Marrett

THE SIR HENRY TATE • CHORLEY

KASPER SCRUBS UP AS BOSS, AFTER STARTING AS POT-WASHER



From part-time pot-washer to pub manager, Kasper Abols is a true Wetherspoon success story.

In October 2006, he arrived in the UK from his home in the Latvian capital Riga – to study drumming.

Kasper (pictured), 37, recalls: “I flew into Manchester airport, took the first train out and got off at the last stop in Southport.

“I couldn’t speak English and took a risk with a part-time job at the Wetherspoon pub The Sir Henry Segrave.

“I worked for three months on Saturday and Sunday, noon to 6pm. At first, the work wasn’t ideal, because I was used to building jobs and loading ships at the docks, back at home in Latvia.

“But, working with the English people helped me with my language skills and I soon progressed, becoming a kitchen manager after 18 months.”

Kasper then moved to The Raven (Liverpool) where he worked hard and managed successfully to build the pub’s food sales.

He caught the eye of Wetherspoon’s area manager Craig Coombes and was asked to move to a bigger and busier pub kitchen in the city centre – at The Richard John Blackler (Liverpool).

A spell at The Welkin (Liverpool), followed by a return to The Richard John Blackler, saw Kasper gain plenty of experience during his 10-year stay in Liverpool.

He said: “I also worked with the regional catering managers, helping with menu training and support for the four Liverpool city-centre pubs, before I was asked to go to The Velvet Coaster (Blackpool).”

Kasper was one of three kitchen managers running the food operation at this huge and busy pub in the seaside resort.

He then wanted to challenge himself further and applied for a pub manager role at The Sir Henry Tate (Chorley).

He admitted: “The first three months were very stressful and very different from being a kitchen manager.

“I was responsible for the whole pub, the staff, the cash, the cellar, serving customers, so many things – yet the company was confident in my ability.

“It is nice to be recognised for your hard work – and the company is good at that. Hard work pays back with Wetherspoon.

“I was also offered to take my diploma, which was amazing and free – not many companies do that.”

Kasper also fondly remembers attending a pub awards ceremony with the company and meeting former England football captain David Beckham there.

He laughed: “I sometimes tell people my story, working up from being a part-time pot-washer to shaking David Beckham’s hand.

“Most people find it difficult to believe.”

Kasper concluded: “I don’t take anything for granted and I’m motivated when customers, complete strangers, give you praise when recognising your hard work.

“Hard work pays back.

“A big thankyou to regional manager Ged Murphy and area managers Craig Coombes, Paul Curran, Chris Place and Paul Miller (former catering manager) for supporting me in my career progression with Wetherspoon.

“They all believed in me, helping me to achieve my goals and targets, while working with this great company.”

POOLE

CARTER FAMILY LOOKS TO HELP DAUGHTER LACIE

Kitchen manager Mitchell Carter, who works at The Quay (Poole), and his wife Laura-Lea are looking to raise £55,000 for medical treatment for their daughter Lacie.

Thirteen-year-old Lacie has scoliosis, a painful condition where her spine twists and curves to the side, diagnosed in October 2020.

The family (pictured) is fundraising (www.gofundme.com/f/26xat051o0) to pay for vertebral body-tethering (VBT) surgery overseas, to correct Lacie’s double-S-curved spine.

Mitchell said: “All funds raised will go directly to the cost of the VBT spine surgery.

“This cost does not include flights, accommodation or the months of rehabilitation which Lacie will need afterwards to retrain her muscles and adjust to her newly aligned body.

“We believe that we have to give Lacie the opportunity to have the best spine-saving surgery available, in order to have a flexible spine and freedom of movement in her future.

“Lacie is a kind-hearted, lovely girl who would do absolutely anything for anyone. She also loves dance, yet has now had to stop because of the pain.

“Lacie has now lost so much confidence.

“If she has VBT, she will hopefully be able to go back to dancing again.”



YATE

THORN’S FARM FOLK DIG DEEP TO SUPPORT THEIR COMMUNITY

Pub manager Paul Hendry and his eldest daughter Freya are pictured delivering food donations to a local community group – Family Food 4 Free.

Paul and his team, thanks to the generosity of their customers at Thorn’s Farm (Yate), raised money before lockdown, through charity football cards, and were planning to buy prizes for a Christmas raffle.

Paul explained: “Obviously, our raffle plans became impossible because of lockdown, so we used the funds to buy tinned food, pasta, rice and noodles to give to charity.

“Family Food 4 Free is doing amazing work in our local community, providing emergency food boxes for families in need, as well as feeding the homeless in the Bristol area.

“We wanted to do what we could to help too.”

Family Food 4 Free is a non-profit volunteer-run group, started by Aimee Waters, providing help for those in need and relying on food donations from the local community and businesses.



TREE-MENDOUS: HOW NATIVE FOREST SPECIES HAVE INSPIRED PUBS' NAMES

Ash, cherry, elm, oak and willow are just some of the woody wonders to have inspired the titles above our doors

At this time of year, as spring fast approaches, the daytime temperature is beginning to increase and our long dark winter nights are starting to shorten.

After a period of hibernation, Mother Nature is springing into life once again, with new growth.

Bare tree branches are blossoming, spring flowers are blooming and the green shoots of renewal are beginning to emerge.

Here, we take a look at some of our pubs named after trees and delve into the local history behind their arboreal monikers...

THE ASH TREE

9-11 WELLINGTON ROAD
ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE
LANCASHIRE, OL6 6DA

This pub's name has the same origin as its place name, Ashton-under-Lyne, referring to the ash trees which are thought to have given the town the first part of its name.

Ash trees were of religious significance to worshippers of the Norse god Woden, so the name might indicate that Woden (also written Wotan, Wotan and Odin) was worshipped in the area before the arrival of Christianity.

The word 'ton' means a settlement, such as a farm or small village, 'under' means near to, while 'lyne' is probably a corruption of 'lyme'.

Some say the meaning of 'lyne' refers to the boundary line between the Saxon kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria, while others claim that it refers to a Roman road.



THE NEW FAIRLOP OAK

FENCEPIECE ROAD, BARKINGSIDE
GREATER LONDON, IG6 2JP

This pub is named after the oak tree, planted in 1951 on the green at Fullwell Cross, close to the pub.

The original Fairlop Oak was blown down in 1820; in 1909, a new oak was planted in the recreation ground, on the site thought to be that of the former tree.

More than 300 years ago, Hainault Forest covered much of the local area and was home to the original Fairlop Oak, one of Britain's largest-ever trees.

It was thought to have been named on a visit by Queen Anne in 1704 and grew on a spot occupied by the present-day boathouse at Fairlop Water.

Fairlop Oak stood alone in a vast clearing and became the setting for the annual Fairlop Fair, which started in July 1725. Taking place during the first week in July, the fair ran almost without break until 1900.



THE ELMS

1060 LONDON ROAD
LEIGH-ON-SEA, ESSEX, SS9 3ND

This pub is named after Adam's elm, a magnificent tree which stood for many years between what is now Station Road and Cranleigh Drive.

It was 30 feet in circumference and hollow. Kegs of brandy were left in it by Leigh's smugglers for collection by their overland counterparts.

The elm disappeared in the 1830s, but gave its name to the farm and nearby area.

The farmland was sold for development in the 1860s, with the 1861-built farmhouse becoming the Elms Hotel in the 1930s.



THE BOURTREE

22 BOURTREE PLACE, HAWICK
SCOTTISH BORDERS, TD9 9HL

The bourtrees, or elder (alder) trees, which once grew on this site are recalled by the name of this pub and the street where it stands.

The natural bending of the branches of elder trees cause shade, or bower, hence the name in Scotland bourtree (bower-tree, boortree, boretree or bountree).

This shrub was supposed to possess great virtue in warding off the force of charms and witchcraft.

Hence, it was customary to plant it surrounding country houses and barnyards.



THE WILLOW TREE

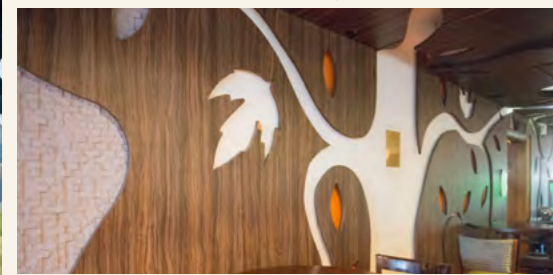
101 IPSWICH STREET
STOWMARKET, SUFFOLK, IP14 1BB

The name for this pub comes from the source of one of the main industries to thrive in the area, until around 100 years ago.

The growing of willow twigs in Stowmarket led to the development of basket-making; this thrived until the early 20th century.

The long flexible twigs, known as osiers, were grown in beds in various parts of the town, cultivated and then woven to produce high-quality baskets.

Willow basketwork came in many shapes and sizes: river fish traps, garden seats and arbours, bird cages, containers for various fruits to protect them in transit, fine baskets for shopping and needlework.



THE CHERRY TREE

PEARL ASSURANCE HOUSE, 14-18
JOHN WILLIAM STREET, HUDDERSFIELD
WEST YORKSHIRE, HD1 1BA

This pub preserves the name of an old inn which stood on the Westgate/Railway Street Corner.

It was cleared away in 1868, along with other buildings on Westgate, to make way for the Ramsden Estate offices.

A new Cherry Tree Inn was built diagonally opposite the old site and, by the 1920s, had become the Cherry Tree Commercial Hotel, but this was later also demolished.

However, its site at the junction became known as Cherry Tree Corner.

One of seven inns in Westgate, the original Cherry Tree was favoured by many of the clothiers who came into the town on market day – with a great deal of business conducted there.



YR HEN DDERWEN

47-48 KING STREET
CARMARTHEN
CARMARTHENSHIRE
SA31 1BH

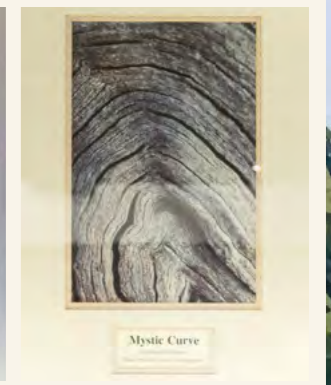
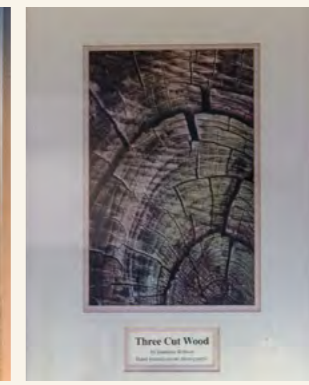
This pub is named after the town's most famous landmark, Yr Hen Dderwen (meaning 'the priory oak'), which stood in Priory Street for more than 300 years.

Carmarthen's old oak is said to have been planted to celebrate the return from exile of King Charles II.

It became a popular meeting place and social location for local people because the area was quiet and central.

The oak was dead by 1856, allegedly poisoned by a resident who objected to the noise of those who gathered beneath its branches.

The mythical character of King Merlin has been associated with the old oak since the 19th century, with remnants of the tree now on display in Carmarthenshire Museum, Abergwili, and St Peter's Civic Hall.



THE GREAT WOOD

WESTEND SHOPPING PARK
BLANCHARDSTOWN, DUBLIN
COUNTY DUBLIN, D15 ED86

This pub is named after Great Scaldwood, an ancient forest covering much of the present-day area of Blanchardstown, stretching from the River Tolka to beyond Coolmine.

The dense wood was originally home to wolves and wild boar, hunted by the local gentry and landowners. By 1652, wolves inhabited the wood in such numbers that the authorities ordered a cull to protect livestock. Only tiny fragments of this once 'great wood' have survived.

The name Blanchardstown comes from the Blanchard family which was granted its estate in c1255. The town was located within the historical barony of Castleknock and was a rural village in western County Dublin until the late 1960s, when the first housing estates started being developed.



Other Wetherspoon pubs named after trees and shrubs, as well as flowers, include: The Blue Bell (Hemsworth); The Blue Bell Inn (Scunthorpe); The Briar Rose (Birmingham); The Giant Bellflower (Selby); The Gooseberry Bush (Nottingham); The Jubilee Oak (Crawley); The Pear Tree (Birmingham); Penderel's Oak (Holborn); The Pilgrim Oak (Nottingham); The Royal Oak (Dorchester); The Staple Hill Oak (Bristol); The Walnut Tree (Leytonstone); The Weeping Ash (St Neots); The Wild Rose (Bootle).

THE GLASS HOUSE • ST HELENS

UNFORGETTABLE YEAR ENDS WELL FOR ASHLEIGH AND CHANTELLE



The year 2020 will be unforgettable for everybody, mostly for all the wrong reasons.

For pub manager Ashleigh Briscoe-Williams (left) and duty manager Chantelle Briscoe-Williams (right), 2020 was unforgettable for all the right reasons.

Ashleigh took over as pub manager at The Glass House (St Helens) in September and, despite closures and lockdowns, the first few months started well.

In November, Ashleigh and Chantelle moved into a new home together, and were married in December, having originally met through their mums both working at the same Wetherspoon pub.

While still a sixth-form student at St Julie's High School, Woolton, Ashleigh started with the company in 2008 at The Richard John Blackler (Liverpool) as a 16-year-old part-time glass-collector.

She spent a year and a half at the pub, progressing to bar associate, before a move to the newly opened pub The Childwall Fiveways Hotel (Liverpool), where she spent a further two years, training and moving up to shift-manager level.

Ashleigh recalled: "I was meant to go to university, to train as a primary school teacher, yet had a gap year and started working.

"I was asked whether I would be interested in promotion, was enjoying what I was doing, so decided to carry on with a career at Wetherspoon and haven't looked back since."

Ashleigh gained further experience with subsequent moves in and around Liverpool pubs, including The Frank Hornby (Maghull), The Welkin, The Queen's Picture House, back to Maghull as kitchen manager and at the newly opened pub in Ormskirk, The Court Leet, also in the kitchen.

Ashleigh revealed: "I met up again with Chantelle at The Court Leet, having met originally at The Gold Balance (Kirkby), where my mum Michaela was pub manager and Chantelle's mum Sheila worked as a cleaner.

"Then, in 2015, I got my first pub as manager, at the age of just 21, The Barker's Brewery (Huyton), where I spent a year and a half."

The Lifeboat (Formby) opened – and Ashleigh took over there as pub manager, where Chantelle was also working as a kitchen associate, after a spell away from the company.

Ashleigh said: "I had been with the company from a very early age and been pub manager since I was 21, so stepped down for a while to focus on my personal life.

"I moved to The North Western (Lime Street Station) as kitchen manager for a year, before the position came up at St Helens.

"Since I took over in September, it has been quite a frustrating stop-start time for everyone.

"We reopened in the run-up to Christmas and, considering the situation and all of the regulations, the pub was busy and going well.

"All of the team members are lovely, and I have settled quite quickly, so can't wait to get going again properly, as soon as we are able."

Like Ashleigh, Chantelle started with the company as a glass-collector in 2009, aged 17, at The Thomas Frost (Liverpool).

A student at Hugh Baird College, she was studying childcare and training to become a teacher.

Her mum Sheila was a shift leader at The Wild Rose (Bootle), where Chantelle spent five years progressing from bar associate to shift leader, before leaving the company.

Chantelle returned in 2016 as a kitchen associate at The Lifeboat, where Ashleigh was pub manager.

Within two months, she had been promoted to team leader, before a move to front-of-house roles and further promotion to shift leader and then duty manager.

Chantelle moved to The Glass House as a duty manager and, when the position as pub manager became available, she knew just the person for the job!

Chantelle said: "I encouraged Ashleigh to apply for the position, as I knew that the pub would suit her perfectly.

"There were a few applicants, but, luckily, she was successful and took over in September.

"It was definitely quite a year, all round, for us both.

"Let's hope that things get back on track for everyone, as soon as possible."



SIX OF THE BEST CELEBRATE THEIR SILVER ANNIVERSARY

During November and December 2020, six Wetherspoon pubs celebrated their silver anniversary.

As the pubs turned 25, a combined 150 years' trading, they continue to serve communities in towns and cities across the UK, with our traditional, warm Wetherspoon welcome.

Here, we focus on the six milestone pubs, which all opened in 1995, and reached their quarter-century birthday as last year drew to a close.

Restrictions prevented any large celebrations and events, but managers and staff still marked the occasion at the various venues.



THE JUBILEE OAK

GRAND PARADE, HIGH STREET, CRAWLEY WEST SUSSEX, RH10 1BU

This pub, which opened on 16 December 1995, in the former Woolworths store, is named after an oak tree planted in 1887 by Lord de Blaquiére, resident of Springfield House, to commemorate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee.

The coffee house which occupied part of the site around 1900 was called the Oak Tree.

Located half way between London and Brighton, it was a popular refreshment stop for cyclist groups.

In 1939, Grand Parade, featuring Woolworths in the centre, was built where the oak tree and the adjoining terrace of cottages had stood.

● **Back (left to right) are bar associate Lucia Freitas, shift leader Tom Flanagan, shift leader Mia Hall, pub manager Stuart Barath and bar associate Jamie Harman. Front (left to right) are shift manager Leigh-Anne Southey and kitchen associate Cat Carlile**

THE CLIFTONVILLE INN

98-101 GEORGE STREET, HOVE EAST SUSSEX, BN3 3YE

This pub opened on 15 December 1995, in the Cliftonville area of Hove, on the site of a former retail store; its name reflects the local area.

Cliftonville was developed in the mid 19th century by local brewer and landowner George Gallard (1809-89), who gave his name to George Street, where the pub is located.

Before the 1850s, Hove consisted of the old village, with houses in Hove Street, a few cottages near the seafront and on the beach and St Andrew's Old Church.

● **Pictured are (left to right) pub manager Ellie Lawrence, bar associates Amelia Topper and Billy Gathercole and team leader Connor Andrews**



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

WETHERSPOONS

201 MIDSUMMER BOULEVARD BOUVERIE SQUARE, MILTON KEYNES, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE MK9 1EA

First opening on 15 November 1995, this pub is one of several in the company named Wetherspoons.

When chairman Tim Martin opened his first pub in Muswell Hill, north London, in 1979, he named it Wetherspoons, after a Mr Wetherspoon - his school teacher in New Zealand.

The reason was that Mr Wetherspoon was too nice to be running Tim's particular class and couldn't control it; Tim thought to himself that, likewise, he couldn't control his first pub, so considered the name appropriate.

● **Pictured (left to right) are shift manager Ben Miles, kitchen associate Jason Reid and bar associate Rory Durnford**

THE MUGGLETON INN

8-9 HIGH STREET, MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME14 1HJ

Charles Dickens knew the Medway towns well, with Maidstone, or 'Muggleton' as he called it, featured in *The Pickwick Papers*.

Our pub (opened 12 December 1995) recalls that local history.

The premises, grade II listed, were built in 1827 as the new offices of the Kent Fire Insurance Company, on the site since 1802.

The palatial property was built to the designs of noted local architect John Whichcord Snr.

The company's horse-drawn fire engine was stored at the rear of the premises.

The Royal Insurance Company took over in 1901, remaining for around 90 years.

Tim Heathfield took over as pub manager at The Muggleton Inn in January 2020, having first started as a part-time associate at the pub in June 2000.

He spent 18 years at The Society Rooms, also in Maidstone, where he was pub manager for 15 years.

Deputy manager Karl Adams, who has been with the company for 20 years, also joined the team during 2020. Shift leader Zoe Bradwell is the pub's longest-serving staff member (11 years).

THE TOLLEMACHE INN

17 ST PETER'S HILL, GRANTHAM LINCOLNSHIRE, NG31 6PY

The pub, which opened on 15 December 1995, is named after the Honourable Frederick Tollemache, whose statue stands outside its front doors.

Tollemache (1804-88) was a member of parliament for Grantham for 40 years, spread over four periods during 1826-74.

Born at Buckminster (where there is another pub named after him) and educated at Harrow, he was the fifth son and the 10th child of William, Lord Huntingtower.

He was elected as a Liberal at the age of 22, one of two MPs for Grantham.

Pub manager Steven Hamilton joined Wetherspoon in September 1999 and took over at The Tollemache Inn in November 2018.

Among his long-serving staff members are duty manager Dan Willis (almost 13 years), kitchen shift leader Christopher Marshall and kitchen team leader Alice Metcalfe (10 years each), kitchen associate Britt Scoffins (eight and a half years) and duty manager Gemma King (seven years).

WETHERSPOONS

49 PICCADILLY, MANCHESTER, M1 2AP

This pub, also named Wetherspoons, opened on 5 December 1995 in a prime location in the heart of Manchester's city centre, overlooking Piccadilly Gardens and just minutes' walk from Manchester Piccadilly rail station.

From 1780, the street was named Piccadilly.

Eventually, from around 1812, the name consumed the whole area (originally known as Daub Holes, because of the wattle-and-daub building construction).

Piccadilly took its origins from the name of the street in London which itself is believed to have been named after the piccadill, a large, stiff lace collar popular in the late 16th century and likely produced in the area.

Pub manager Rachel Naylor has been with the company for 18 years, almost 15 of them as manager at Wetherspoons.

Her experienced management team members are also among the long-serving staff at the pub, including deputy manager Natalia Wolska (14 years), duty managers Brian McCann (11), Caroline Polwarth and Isabel Edwards (more than five years each) and shift leader Selina Begum (more than 10 years).



★ BELFAST THE BRIDGE HOUSE

20
YEARS

The Bridge House (Belfast), managed by Phil Annett, marked its 20th birthday towards the end of 2020.

Belfast-born Phil took over at the pub in the summer of 2016, having originally opened The Bridge House in 2000.

It is our oldest pub in Northern Ireland. Part of the premises was built originally in 1868, designed by the eminent architect Sir Charles Lanyon – for a fancy box manufacturer.

The adjoining part of the building, built around 1865, stands on the site of two warehouses which were Thomas Johnson & Sons – ‘funeral furnishers and furniture removers’.

The warehouses had a very tall ground floor to house the firm’s various horse-drawn carriages. The building was demolished in 1991.

The pub’s name refers to the Old Dublin Bridge (over the Blackstaff River) which once stood near these premises. The bridge was demolished when the river was channelled underground in the late 19th century.

Phil, pictured (front left) with his team, said: “There has been a lot of changes since I first opened the old pub 20 years ago, before it was closed and refurbished.

“The Bridge House has become extremely popular, busier and busier, and is now very well established. Everyone knows us and comes to find us.

“As a city-centre pub, lots of our customers are shoppers and students, although we have a handful of regulars who have supported us for 20 years.”



★ GREAT MALVERN THE FOLEY ARMS

10
YEARS

Pub manager Matt Wear (right) and members of his team mark the 10th anniversary of The Foley Arms Hotel (Great Malvern). Also pictured are bar associate Carol Kettles and shift manager Chris Mills.

The longest-serving staff member and housekeeping team leader Theresa Clark organised the balloon display on the building. One of seven housekeepers, Theresa has worked at the 23-bedroom hotel for almost 10 years.

She said: “It is a nice place to work and has got better and better during the past 10 years.”

Previously The Foley Arms, it closed suddenly in January 2010 and was subsequently taken over by Wetherspoon, reopening in December that year.

The hotel’s history had begun exactly 200 years earlier, at a time when Great Malvern was developing into an important spa town. The Georgian-style coaching inn was designed for John Downs by Samuel Deykes.

It was originally named the Downs’ Hotel, but was soon renamed The Foley Arms, in honour of Edward Foley. He was lord of the manor and responsible for building the Coburg Baths, the Pump Room and



the Royal Library next to the Foley Arms – which formed the hub of the fashionable health resort.

The crest on the outside of the building is that of the Teck Family Coat, which belonged to Princess Mary of Teck, the present queen’s grandmother. She presented the crest to the hotel, after staying there for six weeks.



★ BASINGSTOKE THE MAIDENHEAD INN

18
YEARS

It was balloons and banners for the birthday celebrations, as well as the British Classics real-ale festival at The Maidenhead Inn (Basingstoke).

The pub, managed by Jon Fletcher (pictured left with colleagues and customers), marked its 18th birthday during our real-ale bi-annual event.

Opened in 2002, our pub stands on the site of the ‘Bolton Arms Inn, late the Maidenhead Inn’, according to an 1802 advertisement in the Hampshire Chronicle newspaper.

It was at this ancient hostelry in 1686, after which our pub is named, that Sir Henry St George (second King of Arms) held his court to register the pedigrees of local gentry.



★ MUSWELL HILL THE MOSSY WELL

5
YEARS

The Mossy Well (Muswell Hill) marked five years since the pub first opened its doors to Wetherspoon customers.

Duty manager Kabil Braiek and team leader Maxine Saunders are pictured toasting the occasion in the ‘milk float’ bar, in the beer garden.

Wetherspoon spent just over £3 million developing the pub on the site of a former licensed premises, previously the Express Dairy Building and tea rooms, in Muswell Hill, north London.

Muswell Hill takes its name from a medieval holy well and its hill-top location.

A Scottish king was said to have been cured here, after drinking water at the ‘mossy well’ – which became a place of pilgrimage.



★ PERRANPORTH THE GREEN PARROT

10
YEARS

Pictured (left to right) are team leaders Chris Connolly and Tash Mackay, pub manager Marianna Brackley, shift manager Matthew Williams, shift leader Gareth Duncombe and team leader Will Daden.

The team members are marking the 10th birthday of their pub, The Green Parrot (Perranporth), which opened in October 2010.

Originally built as a private residence in the late 1890s and early 1900s, it was home to Joseph Teague, ‘Capt & Hon Major’ in the 1st Volunteer Battalion, Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry, Perranporth.

The building, originally named Pentrig House (Cornish for ‘end of the sea’ or ‘low tide’), was purchased in the late 1970s and converted into The Green Parrot pub by Tony and Grace Wheatley. Our pub remembers that name.





★ BROCKLEY
THE BROCKLEY BARGE

20 YEARS
Pub manager Cesar Kimbirima is pictured, with balloons and a banner, marking the 20th birthday of his southeast London pub.
The Brockley Barge (Brockley) celebrated two decades since it first opened.
Formerly The Breakspear Arms, which was built in 1868 and closed in 1994, the Brockley Barge name recalls the barges which plied their trade on the nearby Croydon Canal.
Opened in 1809, the canal ran from Croydon to New Cross, where it joined the Great Surrey Canal to access the River Thames. It was replaced in 1836 by the railway line, laid largely along the same



★ CONSETT
THE COMPANY ROW

18 YEARS
Pub manager Shelley Hobbs (left) is pictured with team leader Kelly Williamson and customer Alan Guest at The Company Row (Consett), celebrating the pub's 18th birthday.
Alan was the first customer to buy a pint at the County Durham pub, when it first opened in October 2002.
Consett came into being after the chance discovery of ironstone, leading to the formation of the Derwent Iron Company in 1841.
The company constructed rows of houses for its workers, known as Company Rows – and the pub's name refers to those now-demolished homes, built on the site where the premises now stands.



★ CARLISLE
THE WILLIAM RUFUS

16 YEARS
Pub manager Matt Potts and shift leader Jessica Fellowes are pictured marking the 16th birthday of their pub.
The William Rufus (Carlisle) opened, on the site of various former shops, including JS Hope's drapery, a long-standing grocery shop called George White and Tom Ridley's chemist shop.
The listed façade of 10-16 Botchergate forms part of the pub's premises, with the street taking its name from the long-demolished gateway into the city.
It was through Botchergate that William Rufus (William II, c1056-1100), the third and favourite son of William the Conqueror, entered the city and restored Carlisle to the English kingdom.



★ GOSFORTH
THE JOB BULMAN

15 YEARS
Bar associates Poppy Sumpter (left) and Miriam Warren celebrate the 15th birthday of The Job Bulman (Gosforth) with balloons.
Managed by Stephen Bell, the pub near Newcastle, opened in the former post office building.
The Job Bulman is named after a respected local doctor who had a hand in the early development of Gosforth.
At the end of the 18th century, Job Bulman returned from India and built, as his home, the now-demolished Coxlodge Hall. He also sold plots of land along High Street to build the cottages which were long known as Bulman Village.



J.J. MOON'S • RUISLIP MANOR

THREE BROTHERS WORK IN RELATIVE HARMONY



Brothers Zach, Jake and Josh Nicholson (right to left) all work at J.J. Moon's (Ruislip Manor), just a five-minute walk from their home.
Like any parent, mum Louise is understandably proud of her three sons.
She said: "I'm not sure whether it's a common thing to have three siblings working at the same Wetherspoon pub. I think it is great."
"All three of them started at J.J. Moon's while still at school and are thought of highly by their colleagues at the pub."
The eldest, Zach, who turned 21 in October 2020, is a shift manager. He started out as a part-time floor associate, while studying maths, physics and history at sixth-form college.
Zach said: "I took a broad range of subjects because I wasn't sure which career path to follow."
"I needed a part-time job and knew J.J. Moon's. I also knew that Wetherspoon was a large chain, but didn't realise how big or how the company operated."
When he reached 18, Zach became a bar associate and, within 18 months, had progressed through the team-leader and shift-leader role. He was promoted to shift manager in October 2019.
Zach continued: "I really enjoy it at the pub, particularly interacting with the customers. I also enjoy working with the team – we are similar in age and can relate to one another easily."

Jake, 19, also started out as a floor associate, while studying for his A levels at school, and is now a full-time bar associate at the pub.
Josh, 16, is in the sixth form at school and joined the team as a floor associate in September 2020.
Zach added: "We are sometimes all on the same shift together – and that is good fun."
"I know I'm senior, but we all help one another and are colleagues together, as well as brothers."
He revealed: "I have never closed the door on extra qualifications, will take every opportunity that comes along and intend to go as far as I can in my career with Wetherspoon."
"There are a lot of opportunities to progress within the company. The sky's the limit. You don't even have to stop at pub manager either, as there are many different pathways to progress."
"I feel that I am doing well in my current position."
"However, with good training, I could go further, but need to put in a lot of time and effort. Pub manager is a huge responsibility."
Zach concluded: "My dad sometimes jokes that he will join the team too, when he retires from the police... that would be interesting."



Abi Newton is vice-chair of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale

Cheers

1971 – A GREAT YEAR FOR LOVERS OF BEER

It was 50 years ago that CAMRA was created by four friends offended by the dismal keg beers which were then ubiquitous, writes Abi Newton, CAMRA's vice-chair

The year 2020 may stand out in people's memory for decades to come – but, at CAMRA, it's 2021 which is truly a year of special significance.

CAMRA was founded in March 1971 by Michael Hardman, Jim Makin, Bill Mellor and Graham Lees – meaning that it has now been campaigning for half a century for beer, pubs, cider, perry and clubs.

Fifty years ago, the UK was an unrecognisable landscape for the dedicated beer-lover and pub-goer.

The 'Big Six' brewers had a monopoly on entire regions of the country.

Each owned hundreds of pubs which were allowed to sell only their brews, giving them free rein to push onto consumers tasteless kegged beer.

Real ale was so hard to find that there were just five bottled conditioned beers in existence in the world.

BORN

CAMRA was born on a trip to Ireland as the four founders discussed the dismal choice of beer available for consumers.

Graham Lees' first bit of communication to the public was the distribution of 100 Christmas cards which read: "Be on your guard against bad ale or you'll never live to tell the tale – happy Christmas from CAMRA."

When the questions started coming in, they decided to take the idea head on – and the campaign snowballed from there.

In the 50 years since, CAMRA has grown into what can only be called a quintessentially British movement.

Activists marched through the streets and organised demonstrations against poor-quality beer and pub closures.

The first-ever beer- and pub-centric publications – the What's Brewing newspaper and the Good Beer Guide pamphlet – made a national debut.

The very first beer festival in modern times was introduced in St Albans, boasting 26 casks from 14 brewers.

In 1975, the Great British Beer Festival took place in Covent Garden and was hailed a 'roaring success'.

Beer kept running out over the weekend, with queues snaking down the road outside as thousands clamoured to sample the huge range of beers available.

Even Anthony Fuller from Fuller's Brewery got involved behind the bar at a time when – if you can believe it – Fuller's was known for its kegged beer only.

CAMRA soon started to draw attention from brewers and the highest echelons of government. In 1976, Allied Brewing introduced Burton Ale, the first real ale it ever produced.

Watneys soon followed with a cask-conditioned beer, and Truman's came out with Truman's Tap.

The business of beer started to make its way onto governmental agendas, with the monopoly situation and price rises taking centre stage.

In the late 70s, the government recommended pub-swapping – to encourage regional brewers to showcase other types of beer in their pubs.



Be on your guard against bad ale or you'll never live to tell the tale



REFORMS

Finally, in 1989, the Beer Order was introduced. These wide-reaching reforms aimed to break up the brewing cartel by restricting the number of pubs a brewer could own to just 200, resulting in the Big Six selling or freeing from tie over 11,000 pubs.

It also forced brewers to stock at least one competitor's beer in their pubs – and, thanks to CAMRA, that guest beer had to be a cask-conditioned beer.

Since these early days, CAMRA has evolved into what has been described as the largest consumer organisation across Europe, with nearly 180,000 members.

It inspired similar organisations across Europe, ultimately forming the European Beer Consumer Union (EBCU) and expanded its remit from real ale and pubs to include cider, perry and members' clubs.

We've given consumers a say on numerous pieces of legislation since, from the 2002 Small Brewers' Relief and the 2003 Licensing Act to campaigning to scrap the Beer Duty Escalator, Pubco Reform in 2014, planning protection for pubs in England in 2017 and more.

Yet, after a decade of what has been described as an 'explosion in brewing', which saw the number of UK brewers rise to nearly 2,000, we're now starting to see the first hints of decline.

The latest Good Beer Guide reported the first slowdown in brewery numbers since 2008.

Reports are coming in that 2,500 pubs closed in 2020. COVID-19, the forced closures of Britain's pubs and ongoing restrictions will have a long-lasting and devastating effect on our beer and our pubs' trade.

An organisation like CAMRA is needed now more than ever before.

That is why we will be focusing, this year, on celebrating our achievements over the last 50 years and telling the story of what can be achieved with the help of dedicated campaigners.

VALUABLE

In the absence of our regular competitions, we will be announcing 50 Golden Award recipients – people, groups, pubs, clubs, brewers or cider producers which have made a valuable contribution to the world of beer and pubs over the last 50 years.

A series of virtual beer-tastings will also be organised throughout the year, offering people the chance to sample those brews which have defined the last half century, led by a panel of industry experts.

We'll be sharing our story with a new book by Laura Hadland entitled 50 years of CAMRA – now available, documenting an oral and written history of CAMRA's campaigning.

● **More information, activities and celebrations will be taking place throughout the year. To get involved, learn a bit more or to check out the latest, simply visit: <https://camra.org.uk/50-years>**

To join CAMRA this momentous year, visit: <https://join.camra.org.uk>

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