



The Widecombe Tour Day 1 - Monday 10 September 2007

OUR TRUSTY TOUR BUS rolled up at the end of our drive around 10am with Tony & Teresa, and Tony & Wendy already a'board. Stowing our bag a' stern we joined the crew. Ensign Tony Morris – Helm Officer, Wendy in the Navigation seat, turret a-mid-ships Tony A & Bob, with Teresa and Kath in the aft bunks.

Destination – The Plume of Feathers, Princetown approx 120 miles as we have to go via *Tavistock??* Never mind, there is no rush, and Helm says The Tour Bus fully laden has a maximum safe cruising of 60 knots, allowing for wind !! (*Whose??*).

As usual Helm decided the best route for a busy Monday morning would be via Dorchester. Once again we joined the end of the queue on the A35 by-pass with the usual dissention in the ranks! Helm took its lambasting but as our refute earned us the usual "Fuck Off!!" we all realised Tony M had chosen the best route! After all, he always has a surprise stop up his sleeve which more than compensates for making use of the arduous route.

Drawing on our combined 'local' knowledge of Dorset pubs, we start to guess where our "*Elevenses*" - "11th Hour" wonder will be?

Kay Sir Ah, Sir Ah, Whatever will B will B The Future's not our 2C. Kay Sir Ah, Sir Ah Will it be Spyway, The Crown, or Loders, We'll have to wait and see! Will it be Bridport, maybe Shave Cross, or The New Inn at Eype! We hope it's Eype, it's Eype We hope it's Eype, it's Eype.....

Our hearts jump for joy as the bus takes the turning off the top of the Bridport by-pass for Eype!!! But jaws soon touch the floor in absolute disbelief as 'Tearoom' Tony swings the bus into the Eype Truck-stop for a nice cup of Tea!

• The Truckers Tearoom, Eype lay-by

A nice hidden lay-by with permanent brick built non-GBG listed Tearoom. Cup of Tea in a poly cup for 60p. Nice! In shock and disbelief I try in vain to revive myself with a hearty bacon sandwich at 1.90 Tables in & out and an all day breakfast for 4 quid. All-in-all you can't grumble. Well, not unless you want to upset Helm! I wish I'd taken a group photo.

As we proceed with our journey we pass many pubs and I mentally start to make a list of those which are no longer with us:-Travellers Rest – Loders Hill, Toll Gate Inn – Bridport, The Ship – Miles Cross, Bridport

We also pass many pubs that are actually open, as it is now well past 11am. But as we speed towards the Devon border our thoughts turn to The Old Inn, Kilmington which has the distinction of being one of those elite 10 pubs to have been in every edition of the Camra Good Beer Guide – 2008 the 35th edition having just been published. But NO!!

Helm is on a mission – Tavistock or Bust! Consequently we pass other 'old friends' – Fox & Hounds - Bridestowe Royal Standard - Mary Tavy Mary Tavy Inn – Mary Tavy Turning for Peter Tavy Inn *(Which would actually be open!).*

I gave a friendly wave as we drove by and of course Helm has a seemingly convincing reason for giving them a miss. *"Bin there, Dun that! We* need to try new venues – we could be missing a really great pub just down the road or round the corner!" OK, I'll buy it!

As we drift down the A386 on the outskirts of Tavistock we pass The Trout & Tipple at Hazeldon boasting its CAMRA Plymouth Pub of The Year 2007 status. Once in the town we attend to urgent business - I have to buy a new notebook – and look for a good pub. There are none, so about turn, and make a dash back to The Trout arriving at 13:50.

1 The Trout & Tipple, Tavistock

Despite sitting beside the busy A386 the pub looks attractive and the bar although empty is inviting. 5 real ales plus one scrumpy cider, a patio garden, separate restaurant and an upstairs games room.



O'Hanlon's, Yellow Hammer 4.2% Three Castles, Vale Ale 4.3% St Austell, Black Prince 4.0% Princetown, Jail Ale 4.8% Cotleigh, New Harvest 4.0%

I try the Black Prince which is jet black and a good starter at 4%, then Three Castles. Too early for the Jail, and anyway that's our next port of call. It's a bit late for food but our order is welcomed so the popular dish is Chilli in a Giant Yorkshire pud @ £6 And it's a good choice. The chilli had a good kick and really deserved to be washed down with a 3rd pint!



One further point worthy of mention is the Gents. An attraction of this pub where, like the Philly in Liverpool, tours are arranged for the Ladies!



But....Upwards and Onwards!



"Hey! Wait for Me!"

We take the B3357 towards Princetown and head into the Moors for a visit to the local brewery.

2 The Princetown Brewery

A new purpose built brewery on the site of the old railway and the highest in England. I phoned Simon, Brewer & Owner, revered creator of Jail Ale, who cut his teeth at the Hop Back brewery, Salisbury, where he brewed up the recipe for Summer Lightning! Simon is delighted to learn that we are returning the much cherished anorak that he left behind at our local earlier this year!



Simon had to go out, but we were treated to a tour of the brewery by his new Head Brewster Claire Connolly from Co. Waterford.



After viewing the all new state of the art brewing kit we retired to the bar to enjoy a glass of Jail Ale!







Jail Ale 4.8%

Dartmoor Inmate Pale Ale 4.0%

After a very pleasant time at the brewery we move on to our chosen retreat.

3 The Plume of Feathers, Princetown



This pub was at its heyday some 15 years ago, but although dropped from the GBG the beer was still good on my last visit with Kath, some 18 months ago. We didn't find anything wrong with the pub although we ate in The Railway, next door, as it was cosier. While the barman sorts out our rooms we sample the beer, three hand pulls offering:

> St Austell, Tinners 3.7% St Austell, Tribute 4.3%. Princetown, Jail Ale 4.8%

Now I have to say, I thought we were booked into rooms above The Plume, but we are told we are going to be next door in The Railway which is their pub too. Remembering this to be the cosier of the two, I guess I wasn't bothered by this news.

7 The Railway, Princetown

As we troop into The Railway, I find it strange that it's locked (ie not open) and as the room keys are retrieved from the bar it becomes apparent that the pub is actually closed down. Somewhere I think I can hear a bell ringing.....



Our guide starts to put lights on and we are greeted by a rickety staircase....



And at £70 per room per night it was also surprising that only one room had something en-suit. Then there was the mouldy shared bathroom...... It wasn't just the bathroom that smelled damp and it suddenly dawned on me that we were probably going to be the only people in the building which was otherwise locked up. At this point a Health & Safety warning bell from a previous life began to ring.

As I voiced the question to the barman/guide/bellboy the door of another room opened and some old witch bellowed:

"No you're not! I'm in 'ere!"

and slammed the door shut again! I think that just about did it for everyone!

We retired to the bar of The Plume and sucked on another beer while discussing tactics for venting our disgust with the Landlord/Manager who it transpires will "not be down" until later. A waitress approaches with a sandwich and asks rudely if it is ours? We say not. Scowling, she retreats to the kitchen with a *"Whose F***ing sandwich is it then?"* Things are getting "Endy" I fear. We drank up and walked down the road, a) to get some fresh air, and b) to get to the next pub.

4 The Prince of Wales, Princetown

A friendly Landlord greets us. Although this is no longer a GBG listed pub there are 4 hand pulls offering:

Princetown, Inmate Pale Ale 4.0% Princetown, Jail Ale 4.8% No one wants to stay at The Railway and there is talk of simply going elsewhere, losing the 50% deposit, maybe staying 1 night and going home straight after't fair. It's all going horribly wrong and it's all my fault!! A few kind words fall on my deaf old ears as my mood spirals helplessly downward.

Terry, our Landlord here at The Prince says this is a common tale he hears most weeks. The 2 pubs of our nightmare are owned by a brother and sister act, mostly nice people, unless breakfast was a bottle of wine! Wendy ventures to ask: *"I don't suppose you have 3 double rooms for tonight?"*

"Yes."

"En-suite?"

"Yes. Up the stairs, on the right. Have a look."

It's like a complete reverse of the Cheese Shop sketch! The girls scramble off to have a look and come back beaming. This is where we should have booked in the first place, and only £55 per night, not £70. Suddenly life is looking much better and we gather around the pool table to unwind before we check the guns, saddle up and mosey back up to the OK Coral.

Who will be the Spokesperson ??



The Finger is pointed! (Terry & Shelly at Bar – far right)



Teresa practicing 'The Look' !



Tooled up & ready for a fight.....

There is an eerie feel to The Plume as we walk into the bar. Heads turn and there are knowing glances. It's Them! They're back! Johnny Barman talks to a guy next to him behind the bar and nods in our direction. Clearly this is the 'Boss' – manager or whatever. Our team remain steely faced. Unexpectedly, this man is quiet and polite. Mr.Addley only needs one barrel of quite succinct nutshells to stop him in his tracks. At this point Teresa gave him that 'Look' and he simply asked how we would like our money. £210 wasn't it? For some reason beyond comprehension I mumbled that I had paid by card, but he couldn't get the cash out of the till fast enough. **A Result!**

All's well that ends well, but the whole saga has taken its toll on me. I am very down as we head back to our new home.....but I insist on taking the Helm to get the Tour Bus there.

O The Prince of Wales, Princetown

We are warmly greeted by Terry, his wife Shelly and bar staff. They are also delighted with our result. A table has been set aside for us to eat and we begin to relax by the pool. Table that is, and Darts! It's time to attempt to recapture the Air Gold Cup. I feel that the effect of circumstance upon my stomach may at least have given me an advantage here and I fart with considerable gusto! For some reason, the Farting Contest has been forsaken and everyone is disgusted with the ripeness of my efforts, including the barmaid who comes out with a can of air freshener. I really can't win here can I?



Unless of course I can beat Tearoom Tony at black & white pool. Oh, Yus!!! Rack 'em up Kath!

Most of us seem to have ordered the Mixed Grill which at £12.95 seems like it could be good value. A very amiable lad from the kitchen lays up our table and asks us to take our seats as the meal is ready. With a smile on his face he asks:

"Never had the mixed grill here before, then?" As we are all muttering the, *"No, why?"* out he comes with the first plate. It's so huge he can only carry one at a time!



Just look at the size of those plates! They hardly fit on the table, and that is certainly a load of food! In fact we end up spilling over onto the next table.

This really is the pub of the moment. The service is great and they can't seem to do enough for us. We decide we need a couple of bottles of red to start with and Terry brings over two glasses for us to sample before we choose. I know which one I prefer but I really have no confidence left so I ask 'Mousebender' for his casting vote. It's a very good Shiraz at £9.50 a bottle!!

A great evening, but this long day has taken its toll, and I just need to go to bed early!

Day 2 - Tuesday 11 September 2007 Widecombe Fair

Shelly agreed we could breakfast early at 0800 to get an early start for the Fair. So fully kitted out in our SADCATS Tour shirts we all order the Full English. Out come the orange juice and tea, and to save time we have foregone cereals. We should have known by now...... Those Plates!! This time they are loaded with a very FULL English. Some begin to struggle and I feel obliged to step in and mop up the leftovers to save embarrassment! I really shouldn't have done that! I am full to bursting point and probably won't be able to eat until tonight. That was a breakfast and a half!! We are on the road by 0840 which in the circumstances is very good indeed. The plan was to get to Widecombe by 0900 before the one way starts and get a good parking spot. Navigating from the boot, I steer Mousebender towards Widecombe-in-the-Moor by the shortest route along the Ashburton road with next to no traffic but when we were nearly there we were forced off course by the One-Way Fair signs. This circular route brought us in from the north and we joined a small queue. But there really wasn't much waiting and we were in the 1st row of the main field waiting to go in when the Tannoy announced it was 0930 and starting time. Excellent timing.



Tom Pearce, Tom Pearce, Iend me your grey mare All along, Down along, Out along lee, For I want to go to Widecombe Fayre Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Guerney, Peter Davy, Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk, and Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all And Uncle Tom Cobleigh and <u>All</u> !!

A quiet easy start, but I just can't get that song outta of moi 'ed!



Where shall we start?



Too early for the Beer Tent. How about a nice cup of Tea, Tony?

At this point a TV presenter comes up to me and asks: *"Are you the family from Tasmania?"*

"No, but I've just got back from Africa if that helps"



Where are all the pretty sheep then?



What about us then?

THE LEGEND OF THE FAIR commenced with the historic journey of Tom and his friends from Speyton on a September day in 1802 although a reporter for the Exeter & Plymouth Gazette commented (incorrectly) that a Cattle Fair had been held at Widecombe for the 1st time on Tue 29 Oct 1850. There was little written of the fair until 1913 when the event was billed as 'Widecombe Races'. Since then much has been written each year and can be read in 'The History of' published by the Local History Group. But it wasn't until 1928 that local authoress Beatrice Chase (aka Olive Katherine Parr) persuaded Edward Dunn to dress up and take the part of Uncle Tom Cobley on his Grey Mare. A practice which has continued to this day using 10 impersonators.

[Note: Fair cancelled 1939-45 for WW2, and 2001 Foot & Mouth]



Uncle Tom the 10th – Tony Deeble & friends

Having looked around the 'Old Fair Field' we headed into the village only to discover that the Fair spilled out all over. But this was no car boot sale like other fairs not a stones throw from home. This was a whole village come alive and it was all so relaxed. Various trinkets and mementos were bought and left in the care of stall holders while we ambled round.



Outside the Old Forge, home of Uncle Tom's chair



Uncle Tom's Chair



More Tea Tony? Or time for the pub yet?



Not surprisingly, we decided to leave the Badger pub for later. Much later!



Luckily we saw another sign!

As we head towards the pub we bump into the town crier but as I take the picture, others are also taking pictures of us, and asking who are we? The amount of publicity we generate for The Saxon!



6 Rugglestone Inn, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

A GBG entry for many a year. A nice original village pub where nothing really changes aside from a few wooden structures in the garden away from the pub. A perfectly clear stream babbles past the door where the ducks like to paddle. 3 beers on gravity:

St Austell, Dartmoor Bitter 3.9% Butcombe, Bitter 4.0% Scattor Rock, Tom Cobleigh 4.3%





The idyllic Rugglestone Inn...



...and Beer Garden

We stagger back up the hill to the village centre and head back into the Fair Field to sample the wares of the beer tent:

6 The Beer Tent



Tent down on the right behind the Hog Roast

The Fair is a lot busier now, as was the village, but our timing of moving around has been impeccable. There were two queues in the tent to a pair of efficient barmen working flat out but remaining cheerful. 3 Beers on gravity

> Otter Bitter 3.6% Otter Bright 4.3% Otter Ale 4.5%

While supping a couple of Otters we watched



The sheep shagg shearing contest

In the late afternoon we decide it is obligatory to sample the Old Inn so that we can write an account. So it's back to the village.

The Old Inn, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Why oh why were Hall & Woodhouse allowed to desecrate this historic village pub, especially on Dartmoor?



There is nothing of character left on the inside of the pub as this shot of the bar area shows



New Bar at The Old Inn

The historic looking frontage belies the inside and the beer garden is not much better having been tabled to the maximum. Ours was No.96 !!



To restore our faith in life it was necessary to make a final visit to

B Rugglestone Inn, Widecombe-in-the-Moor



Happy Days!





Returning to the Fair Field just after most people had left made our journey out very easy!



We watch the hot air balloon being inflated

16 people are waiting to have a ride, but not us, we're off to another pub!

3 Two Bridges Hotel, Two Bridges

On the face of it this building has been given a nice face lift since I last saw it. It's disappointing to find no proper bar, just a drink servery in the hotel reception. They only have Jail Ale so we order a round. Shortly after we witness some poor sod being refused service because he is 'non-resident'.



Who's going to take the glasses back?

So, it's home James (well Wendy actually) and don't spare the horses! Back at the Prince of Wales we feel at home, and everyone asks if we have enjoyed our day out at the Fair. Yes we have!

There's a darts match tonight and we can't play on the pool table to we take our table to enjoy another good meal. I don't think I can manage the mixed grill so I order a steak. A T-Bone actually. Guess what? The kitchen lad says: *"Have you ever eaten a T-Bone here?"*



That's what I call a Steak - 18oz!



And they even have a poor old Sooty.

Day 3 - Wed 12 September 2007

0830 Hrs – It's time for breakfast again!! This time I've told Kath just to order the bits she *can* eat as I can't manage any extras from her plate. So she orders beans on toast. The rest of us are struggling with our Full English when Kath's comes out. Should have known! A large square plate, four pieces of toast and a full tin of beans! Anyway, I managed all mine and noticed Teresa was leaving a sausage, so I enquired after it. Kath is quick to point out that I said I didn't want any extras, but Teresa sticks up for me:

"No, he only said he didn't want any extras off your plate!"

I've volunteered to pilot the bus this morning and in pre-mission briefing we have elected to take the southern perimeter of the moor via Ashburton. This narrow hilly route tests the gearbox of The Bus to the full but it copes manfully with the job.



Ashburton is a small quiet town and we take a while to explore. As we finished our circular tour I was just about to look in a pub up towards the car park when Tony Mousebender took us into another delightful Tearoom.

O Moorish (Morris?) Café, Ashburton



This remote non-GBG Mousi Tea Room has a Mediterranean feel to it with Tunisian dishes on the menu, terracotta paint on the walls, and bars on the windows! But a lovely cup of tea. Nice one Tony! Still at the helm I pilot the Tour Bus along the M5 where I found that this marvellous machine was more than capable of cruising at 85mph and I don't mean flat out. From Honiton we motor along the A35 and with the time approaching 1pm some of the crew are anxious for a beer. As we discuss where to stop a familiar pub looms on the horizon and I realise this will be the best place to stop so in the blink of an eye we swerve into the car park.

O White Hart, Wilmington



This non-GBG pub was burned down in May 2004. When the site was cleared it looked certain to be redeveloped with houses so we're very pleased to see a new White Hart rise from the ashes and as an Otter House. Very tastefully restored to near original condition with 3 B&B rooms, 2 real ales are on offer which are dispensed under top pressure.

Otter Bitter 3.6% Otter Ale 4.5%



Bar is in the middle of the pub



After our 1st pub stop Tony A takes the helm and we head for Bridport and take the coast road towards Weymouth. Next stop.....

O Three Horseshoes, Burton Bradstock

This GBG listed pub has been the popular one of this village for many years although on this visit we did not have time to do both. A cosy bar, Palmers Beers, and a pleasant secluded beer garden to the rear. *Palmers, Copper Ale* 3.7%

Palmers, Copper Ale 3.7% Palmers, IPA 4.2% Palmers, Dorset Gold 4.5% Palmers, Tally Ho! 5.5%





What is it about waitresses this trip? Here we have one who will not believe Mr Morris when he refuses to be the response to her "*Food Order No.7*?" If she asks him again it won't be pretty!!!

00 The Bull, Swyre

This non-GBG pub serves both the local caravan park which Tony A used to run,and its own behind the pub. 3 real ales on hand pull seem to be in reasonable condition. Pool table, skittle alley, food and plenty of seating. We suspect it has changed a fair bit since Tony & Wendy came here on their Honeymoon all those years ago!

> Wadworths, 6X 4.3% Dorset Brewing Co, JD 1742 4.2% Dorset Brewing Co, Durdle Door 5.0%



The Bull









Non-GBG pub. Small bar, Internet Café, Function room. and rear beer garden. All day food, dodgy ham roll.

Courage, Best Bitter 4.0% Theakstons, XB 4.6%



Shoe-horned into the only table in the front bar, we adjourn to the rear beer garden.

Wendy had taken the Helm a couple of pubs ago and we decide to skirt around Weymouth and visit The Smugglers at Osmington on our way home to see what honorary Sadcat Matt is doing.

1 b The Smugglers, Osmington



Obviously not a GBG candidate this busy Hall & Woodhouse pub lacks both character and atmosphere. It is simply – *Managed* and Matt appeared a bit too busy to socialise.

Hall & Woodhouse, Fursty Ferret 4.2% Hall & Woodhouse, Tanglefoot 4.9%



0 9 Milton Arms, Winterbourne Whitechurch

Last stop on the crawl home. A banner outside proclaims 'New Management, New Attitude'. From my last visit I would say anything would be an improvement, as clearly the pub was not living up to it's potential. Has anything changed? It's difficult to say. Pleasant guy behind the bar, but a quiet ineffectual character who is unlikely to stamp his mark on anything. However, the menu looks good and T&T book a table for Friday night to treat the family. We'll wait for reports!

In the meantime the Lightning isn't exactly crystal... Hop Back, Summer Lightning 5.0% Wadworths, 6X 4.3% Ringwood, Best Bitter 3.8%



Tour Bus outside The Milton Arms



A final group portrait in the public bar of The Milton

I'm glad we stopped here this time and didn't have a repeat of the 'Loo Saga' at the end of our 1^{st} Tour.

And so we come to the end of our 2nd little adventure – 'Six Go Mad on the Moors'.

And once again we all agree it was :

"TRULY AMAZIN'!"

A Post Script from The Moor

After returning from our previous expedition to Dartmoor, I discovered a pastime enjoyed by many visitors to The Moor, 'Letterboxing'. There are over 5000 Letterboxes hidden on the Moor and a book of clues is available from The Letterbox 100 Club. After a small amount of research, I was amazed to find that most of the pubs we had visited last time were actually listed as having a secret Dartmoor Letterbox.

This was enough for me to read on. Each Box contains a Visitors Book and a unique rubber stamp. When a 'Letterboxer' finds a box they record the fact by **①** making an entry in the Visitors book and **②** 'collecting' an impression from the rubber stamp in a book of their own. Some collectors have their own rubber stamp to leave a unique signature in the Visitors books.

You guessed it!!!

In readiness for this trip I have designed and ordered a special self inking rubber stamp. I did this while I was in Swaziland, but it didn't arrive in time, so I have improvised with an old 'Western Class' railway stamp and 'Wildernis' address stamp.

According to my research there are 9 stamps to be found in 4 pubs in Princetown, plus a further 8 in shops and Cafés. I'll just get my anorak before we go!!!!!

Unfortunately 6 of the stamps were in The Railway or Plume of Feathers and due to the 'Rooms Incident' I didn't feel like asking about them.

Fortunately, I did enquire in The Prince of Wales before we left and they had two very decorative stamps hidden away in a lovely wooden box which stands innocuously behind the bar for all to see. During our visit to Tavistock I bought a nice little book in which to collect the stamps! So on this occasion I only 'copped' the 2 in the Prince of Wales which I have scanned in here for you all to see. There will be other tours to Dartmoor, but I won't be going back to the Railway or Plume until there is a change of ownership!!

Fascinating isn't it?

Nos.1+2 The Prince of Wales, Princetown





S.A.D.C.A.T.S. 1st Stamp



New Stamp for Tour 3

APPENDICIES

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

The Statistics:

Non-GBG Pubs visited –	9 (+5)
GBG Pubs visited –	4 (no change)
Total Pubs visited –	13 (+5)
New Beers drunk –	2 (+1)



Chairmen's Award for Best Pub:

Prince of Wales, Princetown

Chairmen's Award for Best Beer:

Princetown, Jail Ale 4.8%

Explorer's Award for Barperson of the Weekend:

One very smug Kitchen Lad, P.O.W

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

Prince of Wales, Princetown

<u>Tony's Top Tea-room:</u>

Moorish Café, Ashburton

and finally - Awards for Crapiness

The Watney's Red Barrel Award

The Railway Inn, Princetown



Tuesday 9th September - a day for all ages

NEXT STOP !

YELVERTON Fri 23rd & Sat 24th Nov 2007

Contact the team via their Facebook page S.A.D.C.A.T.S. Via <u>www.facebook.com</u>