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THE GOOD PUB GUIDE 2010

EDITED BY ALISDAIR AIRD AND FIONA STAPLEY

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Pubs are thriving despite all the doom and gloom. The editors of **The Good Pub Guide** have seen flourishing enterprise as enthusiastic landlords and landladies show that there's plenty of life in the British Pub yet.

Working even harder with new ideas, landlords and landladies have been cutting food prices, brewing their own beer, importing wine direct from small vineyards, opening informal 'shops', and not only growing their own veg but rearing chickens, ducks, pigs and even cattle and sheep. Despite all this hard graft, publicans are usually earning under £15,000 a year for 15 hours work a day (with half an hour less on Sunday).



Now in its 28th year, **The Good Pub Guide 2010** (Ebury Press, £14.99), edited by Alisdair Aird and Fiona Stapley, is teeming, county-by-county, with the nation's most appealing and warm-hearted pubs that are bucking the trend. Celebrating outstanding award winners, 132 new main entries and 1,500 new small-print entries, the new edition of the guide is the must-have update on the best pubs in Britain. **The Good Pub Guide**, with over 5,000 independently chosen favourite pubs, is seen as the pub-goers' bible and is the UK's No 1 bestselling guide book.

"Around 4% to 5% of pubs have closed in this last year" writes editor Fiona Stapley. "Though this is grim news, it isn't in fact far out of line with the 3% rate of job losses in the private sector as a whole – bearing in mind that a failing pub is likely to have had fewer staff than a thriving one. And the closure rate certainly doesn't compare badly with the 5-6% contraction in the national economy."

Three or four years ago a young couple took over a near-derelict pub, closed for some time, in a remote village on the Hampshire/Wiltshire border – the sort of place which is at the heart of these statistics. They have put in the single magic ingredient that makes the difference between a failing local and a thriving and profitable pub – the enthusiastic, energetic and imaginative commitment with which thousands of other landlords and landladies across the country are ensuring the survival of their pubs. George and Sonia Humphrey have made their pub a welcoming and relaxing proper country pub, with well liked unpretentious food, good drinks and a fine log fire. Their **Cross Keys** at Upper Chute (Wiltshire) is **The Good Pub Guide's Country Pub of the Year 2010**.

In Scotland, a higher proportion of pubs have been closing than in the South. Here again, good landlords and landladies make all the difference. As in the countryside, good publicans can transform many town and city pubs. However handsome the building, however ornate the décor, the pub will fail unless it's well run. It's the publican that makes the difference between a tired and doomed mausoleum and a bustling success. An extreme case in point is the Café Royal in Edinburgh, a splendid building owned by Punch, the UK's biggest pubco. Its welcoming manageress Valerie Graham ensures good food and drink, helpful staff and a thriving atmosphere. **The Café Royal** in Edinburgh (Scotland) is **The Good Pub Guide's Town Pub of the Year 2010**. (continued overleaf)

- Visit www.thegoodpubguide.co.uk/eng/Info/Press to view the editor's introduction and overview of the fast-moving UK pub scene, the embargoed full list of 14 national award winners and the 37 regional winners for the County 'Dining Pub of the Year' titles.

SURREY BREAKS THE £3 A PINT BARRIER

The **Good Pub Guide's** annual drinks price survey has been running for more than 20 years and shows just how much prices change from year to year and vary for each region. In the country as a whole, the average pub price of a pint of bitter is £2.68. **Surrey** is now Britain's costliest area for pub-goers. The price of a pint there averages £3.01 – substantially more than **London's** average of around £2.90 a pint. Bad news too for drinkers in **Berkshire, Buckinghamshire** and **Sussex**, who now have to pay around £2.85. Averaging around £2.80 a pint, **Hertfordshire**, the **Isle of Wight**, **Kent**, **Scotland** and **Suffolk** are little better. The **West Midlands**, **Nottinghamshire** and **Staffordshire** are best value for beer, averaging around £2.40 a pint. **Cheshire**, **Cumbria**, **Derbyshire**, **Lancashire**, **Shropshire** and **Worcestershire** are also reasonable, at around £2.50 a pint.

NEW TRENDS IN PUB WINE

After over 20 years of working towards higher standards in pub wine, the editors are seeing a small but increasing number of pubs now go beyond simply serving a good choice. Several run tutored tastings, some import wine direct from small vineyards, while others are run by wine merchants. The **Harris Arms at Portgate** (Devon) and **Anchor at Nayland** (Suffolk) are the first we know of to grow their own vines. Quite a few now have their own wine shop (see *introduction for list*). The **Yew Tree at Clifford's Mesne** and **White Hart at Winchcombe** (Gloucestershire) both have an excellent scheme where you can have a bottle with your meal for just its shop price plus £5. This is much lower than the usual mark-up, and as mark-ups are normally a straight multiple (say, three times the cost price) the saving increases greatly as the price of the wine increases. The **Yew Tree**, with its charmingly informal 'shop', is **The Good Pub Guide's Wine Pub of the Year 2010**.

MANY PUBS NOW CUTTING FOOD PRICES

In a detailed comparison of prices that each of the main entries charge for snacks and starters, main dishes and puddings, compared with what they were charging last year, the editors found that prices have on average stayed virtually unchanged. Even more encouragingly, they found that 30% of pubs sell some food more cheaply than last year. There are significantly more special offers and bargains, with enterprising publicans coming up with appealing variations on two-course and three-course lunches, early-evening specials, theme nights, a meal with a free drink, and two-for-one bargains.

FIRST CATCH YOUR PIG...

Many pubs are venturing into farming their own ingredients – from cattle and poultry, rare-breed pigs and venison, trout and bees, to simply growing their own fruit and vegetables. For prime examples of enterprising good pubs, and extreme examples of the great care with which top pub chefs are now putting into getting superb ingredients for their cooking, please visit www.thegoodpubguide.co.uk.

THE GOOD PUB GUIDE'S TOP 13 NEW ENTRIES:

The **Queens Arms** at East Garston (Berkshire), **Victoria** at Perranuthnoe (Cornwall), **Yew Tree** at Clifford's Mesne and **Fossebridge Inn** (Gloucestershire), **Eagle at Barrow** and **Clog & Billycock** at Pleasington (Lancashire), **Crown** at East Rudham and **Dabbling Duck** at Great Massingham (Norfolk), **Plough** at Kingham (Oxfordshire), **Red Barn** at Blindley Heath (Surrey), **Holly Bush** in Alcester (Warwickshire), and **Potting Shed** at Crudwell and **Outside Chance** at Manton (Wiltshire). Among them, the **Potting Shed** at Crudwell is **The Good Pub Guide's New Pub of the Year 2010**.

WINNER OF THE PUB OF THE YEAR 2010

For real interest and great appeal, the editors pick our eight pubs that Fiona Stapley calls "absolute crackers", the **Bell** at Aldworth (Berkshire), **Five Mile House** at Duntisbourne Abbots (Gloucestershire), **Highwayman** at Nether Burrow (Lancashire), **Woods** in Dulverton (Somerset), **Bell & Cross** at Holy Cross and **Nags Head** in Malvern (Worcestershire), **Blue Lion** at East Witton and **Crown** at Roecliffe (Yorkshire). With its charming small rooms, helpful welcoming staff, good food and drinks, strong sense of individuality and must-come-again appeal, the **Bell & Cross** at Holy Cross, Worcestershire is **The Good Pub Guide's Pub of the Year 2010**.

EDITORS FIONA STAPLEY AND ALISDAIR AIRD ARE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW

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