

41 THE SPORTSMAN, WHITSTABLE

According to Andrew Turvil, this Shepherd Neame pub "demonstrates that independent brewers can provide a platform for creative landlords to do their own thing". The rather isolated Sportsman is a new entry in this year's *Which? Guide to Country Pubs* and looks out across marshes to the seaside town of Whitstable. "Chunky wooden furniture, made from reclaimed timbers, sets the informal tone inside," adds Turvil, "and you'll find some great fish dishes on the blackboard menu, and ultra-thin pizzas, too."

Where: Faversham Road, Seasalter, Whitstable, Kent (01227 273370).

When: Mon-Sat 12noon-3pm and 6pm-11pm, Sun 12noon-10.30pm.



Sea breezes: Sportsman (No 41)

42 ROYAL INN ON THE PARK, LONDON E9

"This is a good family pub," says David Eyre. "Weekends are rather chaotic, with kids running in and out, but there are board games, space outside for eating and a garden. I like to walk across the park, drink some proper bitter, have one of the nice malts as a whisky chaser, and then walk back home across the park." They also serve European bistro-style food.

Where: 111 Lauriston Road, London E9 (020-8985 3321).

When: Mon-Wed 12noon-11pm, Thur-Sat 12noon-midnight, Sun 12noon-10.30pm.

43 THE CORNER CUPBOARD INN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

According to John Campbell, this old Cotswold-stone pub offers one of Britain's best traditional Sunday lunches. "They have roast meats and gravy, plus as many vegetables as you can think of, served in several ways. They also put extra roast potatoes and Yorkshire puddings on the bar, so you can just go up and help yourself." The architecturally interesting building dates from at least 1550 and includes a huge fireplace, some walls from the ruins of Winchcombe Abbey, and possibly a ghost.

Where: Gloucester Street, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire (01242 602303).

When: Daily 11am-11pm.

44 THE SARACEN'S HEAD, NORFOLK

It may seem more like a Tuscan villa than an English pub, but the eccentric Saracen's Head offers serious drinkers beers from Adnams and Woodforde's in its homely bar and parlour with log fire. Dining in the courtyard is a treat. Chef Robert Dawson-Smith's blackboard menu concentrates on seasonal ingredients, used in traditional dishes as well as imaginative combinations. Think Gressingham duck with honey and marmalade, seafood au gratin and comforting puddings.

Where: Wolterton, Erongham, Aylsham, Norfolk (01265 763909).

When: Daily 11.30am-3pm and 6pm-11.30pm.

45 WHITE HART, OLDHAM

"Pub" may not be the right word to describe this former coaching inn – it's perhaps more like a small hotel with 12 rooms for B&B, plus a brasserie and separate restaurant. For those who just want a drink, there's a bar featuring Pendle Witches Brew from the nearby Moorhouses Brewery. The main focus, however, is wine, and from the list of more than 100 bottles, nearly 30 are available by the glass. Quality sausages and artisan British cheese are other attractions.

Where: 51 Stockport Road, Lydgate, Oldham, Greater Manchester (01457 872566).

When: Mon-Sat 12noon-11pm, Sun 12noon-10.30pm.

46 THE CANNY MAN, EDINBURGH

Confusingly, although the official name of this pub is the Volunteer Arms, everyone knows it as the Canny Man. "The décor is very idiosyncratic," says Keith, "with alcoves, knick-knacks hanging from the walls and ceiling, and staff wearing white shirts and black ties. The food is very good, and there is an impressive whisky list and a wide range of real ales. You wouldn't wander in by accident, but it's worth making the trip to Morningside for a visit."

Where: 237 Morningside Road, Edinburgh (0131-447 1484).

When: Mon-Sat 12noon-midnight (Fri to 1am), Sun 12.30pm-11pm.

47 WHITE HART, WEST SUSSEX

This popular Tudor pub is run by successful local restaurateurs John and Maria Dicken. The menu mixes traditional recipes and good, light meals with modish dishes featuring international flavours, all of which can be enjoyed in the bar, dining room or garden. Considerable attention has also been paid to the drinks side of the business. You'll find Adnams Best Bitter and guest beers, imported lagers, Weston's cider, organic Suffolk juices and an interesting wine list, with many available by the glass.

Where: Poole Street (on the A1017), Great Yeldham, West Sussex (01787 237250).

When: Mon-Sat 11am-3pm and 6pm-11pm, Sun 12noon-5pm and 7pm-10.30pm.



Sussex success: White Hart (No 47)

48 THE VILLAGE PUB, CIRENCESTER

This rustic Cotswold-stone building comprises a warren of beautifully refurbished rooms and attracts local drinkers as well as well-heeled foodies, says David Hancock. "Warm terracotta walls, rug-strewn stone floors and an eclectic mix of furnishings set the style in which to enjoy ambitious, modern British dishes cooked with flair and imagination," he says. "Order a pint and a sandwich and sit at the bar, or linger over four courses by the open fire."

Where: Barnsley, Cirencester, Gloucestershire (01285 740421, www.thevillagepub.co.uk).

When: Mon-Fri 11am-3.30pm and 6pm-11pm, Sat 11am-4pm and 6pm-11pm, Sun 12noon-4pm and 7pm-10.30pm.

49 THE FAT CAT, NORWICH

The first winner of the Campaign for Real Ale's National Pub of the Year award, the Fat Cat in Norwich has an exemplary range of more than 20 perfectly kept real ales, including Timothy Taylor's Landlord, all listed above the bar. Seating is limited – most of the cramped interior is claimed by the bar and cellar – but there are intimate nooks for a quiet chat and picnic benches outside. Filled rolls are available at lunchtime, but the emphasis here is on drinking.

Where: 49 West End Street, Norwich, Norfolk (01605 624364).

When: Mon-Fri 12noon-11pm, Sat 11am-11pm, Sun 12noon-10.30pm.

50 DRUNKEN DUCK, CUMBRIA

Recommended by David Hancock, this rambling 17th-century inn, high in the hills, boasts its own fishing tarn, microbrewery and some of the best Lakeland views to be enjoyed from a pub. "Relax with a pint of Cracker Ale on the sunny front verandah and savour the vista across distant Windermere," he advises. "It's also worth taking some time out to stay in one of the stylish, individually designed bedrooms and tuck into imaginative, freshly prepared food in the civilised beamed bars."

Where: Barnegates, Ambleside, Cumbria (01539 436347, www.drunkenduckinn.co.uk).

When: Mon-Sat 11.30am-11pm, Sun 12noon-10.30pm.