

The Deal Dover Sandwich & District Branch Magazine

CHANNEL DRAUGHT

Issue 82

Free

Winter 2019/20



Inside:

MONASTIC BEERS

*A look at the history and tradition of
Trappist brewing*

Plus Local News, National News. and more



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

CHANNEL DRAUGHT

Issue 82
Winter 2019/20

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**Please note that views
expressed herein are not
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branch or CAMRA Ltd**

**Please drink
sensibly!**

Cover Photo

**The Louis Armstrong
Dover
Good Beer Guide 2020 pub**

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BRANCH DIARY

Events shown in blue are not organised by CAMRA
Branch Meetings start at 7.30pm

Mon 3 Feb	Dover Town Hall, White Cliffs Festival Set-up 0900
Fri 7 - Sat 8 Feb	Dover Town Hall, White Cliffs Festival of Winter Ales
Sun 9 Feb	Dover Town Hall, White Cliffs Festival Take-down 0900.
Mon 17 Feb	Branch Meeting & Festival Wash-up, Louis Armstrong, Dover
Thur 5 Mar	First 2020 Thirst Thursday (details to be confirmed)
Fri 6 - Sat 7 Mar	Roger Marples Beer Festival, Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club, Dover (see Page 32)
Mon 16 Mar	Branch Meeting, Alma, Deal
Thur 2 Apr	Second 2020 Thirst Thursday (details to be confirmed)
Thur 9 - Mon 13 Apr	Beer Festival, Chambers, Folkestone
Fri 10 - Sat 11 Apr	Thanet Beer Festival, Winter Gardens, Margate
Fri 10 - Mon 13	Beer Festival, Five Bells, Eastry
Mon 20 Apr	Branch Meeting, Chequer, Ash
Thur 7 May	Third 2020 Thirst Thursday (details to be confirmed)
Mon 18 May	Branch Meeting, Plough, Ripple

As we enter a brave new world, and 'float' away from our former associates in the European Union, we trust that, whatever developments ensue, it will leave our pubs and real ale unaffected and unaltered.

But then of course there have been major changes already. In our magazine we describe an old Dover pub, the Criterion, which saw its last days just a few years before CAMRA was formed. In many ways though, it reflected exactly what CAMRA was set up to campaign for. It was then typical of many tens of thousands of pubs across the country, often referred to as locals, and before the television, internet and cheap supermarket beer, played a central role in the lives of many ordinary people.

And in their tens of thousands they have closed. Look around your own locality, how many pubs that were there fifty or sixty years ago are still there today? In Dover there were seven pubs in Tower Hamlets in 1960. Today there is just one open. We are told that for the first time in recent years that there are more pubs opening than closing – no doubt true, but how many of the new breed are really just cafés or family diners with a license or just city centre bars?

The British pub was, and is, a unique institution. As well as selling beer and other alcoholic drinks, and increasingly food, it offers a home to clubs and local groups, hosts events and other leisure pursuits and, to many villages and localities, is their true community centre – a realisation which, as we report in National News and reference elsewhere in our magazine's pages, is energising communities up and down the country to take control of their own pub.

As well as reporting on a current community pub campaign here in Kent, and reminiscing about an old Dover pub, this edition also takes a brief look at monastic brewing, and features a unique midland canalside pub together with a newly established east Kent micro – plus of course all the usual items.

Martin Atkins



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CAMRA AWARDS

DEAL, DOVER & SANDWICH BRANCH AWARDS

- SPRING PUB OF THE SEASON 2015
- AUTUMN PUB OF THE SEASON 2016
- PUB OF THE YEAR 2017
- PUB OF THE YEAR 2018

REGIONAL AWARDS

- EAST KENT PUB OF THE YEAR 2017
- RUNNER-UP KENT PUB OF THE YEAR 2017
- EAST KENT PUB OF THE YEAR 2018
- KENT PUB OF THE YEAR 2018

DEBBIE & KEITH

LOOK FORWARD

TO WELCOMING YOU TO

THE LANES

PHONE 07504258332 - 01304 213474



KENT PUB OF THE YEAR 2018





LOCAL NEWS

If you have any news about a pub in your area – new beers or different beer range, alterations to the pub, beer festivals or anything that may be of interest to our readers, please email:

channel.draught@camra-dds.org.uk

We are, of course, equally pleased to hear from landlords with news about their pub.

WINTER PUB OF THE SEASON THE CROWN INN FINGLESHAM

When the cold easterlies blow in from the sea, the Crown Inn, Finglesham with its log-burning stove, real ale and the buzz of conversation around the bar, provides a warm refuge on a winter's day. As well as a convivial local, it has a reputation for good dining. Functions are catered for in the Kentish barn and garden, and it is a certified venue for weddings. The pub, which is dog friendly, offers traditional pub games and has a fine garden for the better weather. It is much valued among our Branch's pubs, and is a well-deserved choice for our Winter Pub of the Season. We congratulate owners Tony and Helen on their success.



The Crown Inn, Finglesham - Winter Pub of the Season

DOVER

Lord Nelson, St. James Retail & Leisure Park: At the time of writing, refurbished and revamped by owners Shepherd Neame, the pub is set to reopen at the start of February, as, according to the brewer's spec last year, a café culture bar & restaurant. The ground floor is described as an open plan bar area, snug bar and dining space with wheelchair accessible toilet. Other toilets are on the first floor along with the kitchen. Outside there will be patio seating in front and a stone paved terrace. The newly painted outside includes a mural and the names of ships of line from Nelson's day.

On the other side of the new development the **Castle** remains to the best of our knowledge up for sale and without real ale. Around the corner in Castle Street **Blakes** has acquired a new aspect in red. House ale remains Millis Blakes Bitter, and Adnams brews feature prominently. At the **White**

Horse regular ales remain Timothy Taylor Landlord and Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter, usually supported with a guest - recently including such as St Austell Tribute and Hook Norton Greedy Goose.

In Church Street the **Roman Quay** remains without real ale, as do the **Duchess** and **Funky Monkey** in Bench Street. In King St. the new establishment **Rhino & Bulls**, which occupies what many of us still think of as the Labour Exchange, also offers no real ale, unlike the recently reinstated **Elephant and Hind** in the Market Square with two handpumps and an emphasis on local beers. Meanwhile, back in Bench Street, the former Mash Tun reopened as the **Hoptimist** on the Thursday before Christmas for a very busy afternoon and evening, under the new ownership of Danny and Natalie Graham. Beer, normally four real ales and cider is still served from the cool room, but former owner Peter's pulpit has been replaced (although retained elsewhere in the bar) by a diag-



The Hoptimist, Dover on it's opening afternoon

onal bar servery. With various other alterations, including rearranged seating, visits so far suggest the new regime is proving popular, and the pub well patronised.

And another new licensed establishment is currently planned for the former A C Hughes premises in Cannon Street, next to St. Mary's Church. The planning application, submitted late last year, reads as follows "change of use to (mixed use) wine bar with external seating area, to lower ground and ground floors, and offices to upper floors".

Opposite, the **Eight Bells**, offers one of the widest real ale choices in our branch area. As well as its regular national choices it offers a wide selection from smaller breweries across the country, with a good representation from our own county, Wantsum very much to the fore, but also featuring others such as Whitstable and Westerham.

In Worthington Street at the **Lanes** it is all about Kent, or largely so, with a comparatively small selection from beyond our borders. But with over fifty breweries now established in the county there is no shortage to choose from, or of styles and types of ale, and the pub receives plenty of good reports. One drinker commented that McCanns Troubadour was absolutely glorious, while of Brumaison Bullion: "Hard to imagine a better single hop bitter that is better kept. A credit to the brewer and the pub." At the time of writing plaudits are being handed out to Northdown Hancock Shaker, a 6% ABV New England IPA.

Elsewhere, though, in the adjacent parts of the town centre real ale is disappointingly absent – none now sold at the **Prince Albert**, **Golden Lion** or **Fleur**, and the **Rack of Ale** now gone for a couple of years. However, opposite Priory Station the **Priory Hotel** usually offers one or two real ales, Greene King London Glory being available on a visit late last year.

In Elms Vale we understand the **Crown & Sceptre** is no longer selling real ale, however, at the **Boar's Head**, Eaton Road and excellent pint of Young's **Bitter** is always available. In Tower Hamlets the **Carriers** remains closed, and no sign of real ale reappearing at the **Eagle**, on the London Road junction. However, a KeyKeg ale is always offered at the nearby **Thirsty Scarecrow** in the High Street, along with a wide variety of ciders. Good reports of Pig & Porter Amber Ale just before Christmas.

Also, just before Christmas, the **Admiral Harvey** in Bridge Street eventually reopened. Various alterations, including the bar repositioned against the wall to the left of the entrance, and we hear the removal of the skittle alley – and no real ale. Meanwhile, of late Landlord has featured regularly at the **Red Lion**, Charlton Green. Along the road at the **Louis Armstrong** the recent months have seen a good selection of stouts, porters, and winter ales available, including on draught Gadd's Little Cracker, Westerham Family Stout and Old Dairy Silver Top, and in bottle Gadd's Dogbolter and Black Pearl Oyster Stout, and Westerham Double Stout.

Breakwater Brewery, Lorne Rd: Now without Danny, having of course decamped to his own establishment, the Hoptimist, its popularity continues – both as a supplier of beer to the local area, and, through the taproom as a pub in its own right. Of its recent output particular praise has been heaped on Hand Picked Green and Breakwater Blend (Sapphire Gold & DPA).

One regular outlet for Breakwater beers has been the **Three Cups** on Crabble Hill, which was also selling Laine Doubloon on a visit before Christmas. At the end of London Road the ever changing selection at the **Bull** saw brews from Butcombe and Elgood's available on recent visits.

At Kearsney no further news about the **Railway Bell**. A sign outside announces that it has been sold, but to all observation it remains empty and unused. And in River the **Royal Oak** was selling Ghost Ship, Lighthouse and Broadside from Adnams, plus new regular, Landlord, on a visit in mid-January.

Fox, Temple Ewell: November saw a revival of an old favourite, Marston's Pedigree, evoking memories of Tom and Carol's occupancy in the 1990s. And Breakwater brews have maintained their popularity with Krueger, Blue Ensign and Ewell Tide appearing in the run up to Christmas. Meanwhile the festive period itself saw the usual collec-



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tion of seasonal names – Park Brewery Brew Dolph, Banks's Rudolf, Exmoor Christmas Ale, Butcombe Xmas Ale and Exmoor Exmas. In Whitfield a recent visit to the **Rock Rose** found a selection of Saddle Tank, Hobgoblin, Pedigree and Bombardier.

DEAL

Further development proposed for the northern end of the High Street, with planning permission applied for in November for a new pub or bar at No.146, in the vicinity of The Bar and Bloody Marys. The application involves various alterations, including a single storey rear extension and replacement front elevation. In the **Landmark Bar**, Gadds ales appear popular – No.7 being available in late November and No. 5 a week or two later.

At the **Saracen's Head**, Alfred Square, Master Brew and Whitstable Bay were available in early December, while at the **Ship**, Middle Street Gadds were, as usual, much to the fore, with No.5, No.7 and Dark Conspiracy, alongside Landlord and Hophead.

In Duke Street in December, Master Brew and Spitfire were on the handpumps at the **Deal Hoy**, and in November the choice had included Shep's winter brew, Howling Wolf. Meanwhile, visits to the **Alma** found a selection of Wainwright, Harveys Sussex and Landlord.

Queen Street Tap, Queen St: Continuing its support of Canterbury Ales, November and December found the pub's real ale range including Knight's Ale, Reeves Ale, Merchant's Ale and limited Edition. Along the road at the **Sir Norman Wisdom**, the usual Wetherspoon's mixture of the well-known and rarely known, recent information giving good reports of Bell's Light Hearted Ale, Greene King Abbot Reserve and Daleside Santa's Progress.

On Beach Street at the **Bohemian** local brews such as Musket from Linton outside Maidstone, recently Trigger and Flintlock, and Long Man from the South Downs vie with nationally distributed beers such as Doom Bar and Landlord. A few doors down at the now reconfigured **Clarendon** London Pride is a regular, and at **Dunkerley's** Tribute remains as standard. At the **Taphouse** in South Street at least one real ale is normally available – on a visit in early December, Northdown Merry Margate.

Just Reproach, King Street: Micro brews from far and wide with a good representation from our own county – recently McCanns Troubadour,

Gadds No.5, Kent Session Pale and Mandarin, Romney Marsh Marsh Midnight and Westerham Bonfire, which one drinker described as unusual but very drinkable. Also good to see Goacher's 1066 Old Ale being sold. Seen recently as well have been beers from Tiny Rebel, Leigh on Sea, and Oakham, whose well known JHB drew the comments that while it was perfectly drinkable, it did not taste like JHB.

On the Strand in Walmer, the **Stag** reopened shortly before Christmas after refurbishment, while around the same time a visit to the **Light-house** found the choice including Kent Stout.

Berry, Canada Rd: Vast selection, as always, over the last few months, from near and far and often featuring beers and breweries otherwise little known, or not known at all. As usual the excellent Harveys Old Ale has reappeared for the winter months, each barrel no doubt disappeared with the usual alacrity. And Pig & Porter Blackbird drew the interesting comment that one drinker found it so good that, going back for more the next day, even his lager drinking wife loved it!

In Manor Road, the **Farrier** usually has three or four real ales available. Recent selection has included Tonbridge Countryman, Kent Session Pale, St Austell Proper Job, London Pride and Landlord. And, as far as we are aware, the added bonus for card carrying CAMRA members still sees real ales discounted to £2.50 a pint, or £2.80 for Landlord.

Meanwhile in Mongeham the **Leather Bottle** was selling Romney Session and Canterbury Reeves on visits in November, while in Sholden, to the best of our knowledge, the **Sportsman** remains closed with future unknown and uncertain.

Freed Man, Walmer: An ever changing selection is the policy at the Dover Road micro, often offering beers rarely, or perhaps otherwise not seen at all locally. Recent choices have included Wantsum Dynamo, Manning 12th Man, Breakwater Dover Pale Ale, Gun Best Bitter and Four Candles Hazelnut Porter.

At the **King's Head**, Kingsdown where usually three ales are available, visits during December found Sambrook's Pumphouse Pale Ale, Ramsgate Little Cracker, Hardy & Hanson Rudolph and Castle Rock Snow White on the handpumps. Meanwhile the **Rising Sun** usual offers two real ales with Landlord a regular.

SANDWICH & RURAL

Red Cow, Sandwich: One of our Branch's oldest pubs, it made a fine venue for our December

Branch Meeting/Christmas Social where we enjoyed a very pleasing few hours and Christmas dinner one Saturday lunchtime towards the end of the year. Beers were from a selection including Ossett Nervous Turkey, Gadds' No. 3, Skinner's Lushingtons and Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter. Also available recently has been Timothy Taylor Boltmaker, now being seen more widely around East Kent.

Elsewhere in Sandwich, early December saw the **Fleur de Lis** responding to Time & Tide's return to real ale production, with the brewery's Pale Ale appearing on the handpumps. Meanwhile, a visit to the **Market Inn** over the road offered the choice of Shep's beers, on this occasion Master Brew. At the **Smugglers Beer & Music Café** in early December, Deal Hop Farm Pale Ale was available.

In the High Street the **Admiral Owen**, to the best of our knowledge, remains closed with future uncertain, while opposite, the **Crispin** retains Mad Cat Crispin Ale has house beer, normally with a couple of other real ales – a very pleasing pint of Harveys Sussex being enjoyed shortly before Christmas. At the **George & Dragon**, Fisher Street, which hosted a very convivial November Branch Meeting in the downstairs room, beers on recent visits have included Shepherd Neame Northern Lights and Dark Star Hophead.

At the **New Inn**, corner of Harnet Street and Delph Street, Courage Best Bitter remains as standard, with normally one or two guests, while opposite, the **Mermaid's Locker** offers a selection from the micro world – Canterbury Ales Kazbek Rye Porter and Whitstable Lobster Buoy on recent occasions.

Outside the town, half a dozen pubs remain closed with future somewhat uncertain. The **Charity** in Woodnesborough, with permission already granted for conversion into flats, and briefly put up for auction last June, remains boarded up with seemingly little interest locally in its retention. In Staple, no change, to the best of knowledge, at the closed **Three Tuns** which also has residential conversion granted. In Nonington, the **Royal Oak** closed again earlier last year remains so, a visit in January finding the car park entrance now taped across. No further information at the time of writing.

In Shepherdswell, the **Bricklayers Arms**, also stays closed. Boarded up, consent exists (together with the adjoining cottage) for conversion to two dwellings, plus the erection of a pair of semi-detached houses at the rear. At Waldershare we understand work is currently still underway at the **Green Oak Cider Works**. Severely damaged by fire in spring 2018, local talk suggests that plans are to reopen as a dining & wedding venue. In Tilman-



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stone, activity at the **Plough & Harrow**, under refurbishment since mid-2017 with plans to reinstate as pub with additional retail use and holiday let pods, had seemingly gone very quiet. However, work was recently noted being undertaken in the bar area.

Lastly, in Capel, the **Lighthouse** remains very much shut, the entrance blocked by lumps of concrete or similar. Up for sale for a period, but withdrawn towards the end of the year.

All very different, however, at the **Chequer** in Ash, now in the hands of the local community and, since July, reopened for business. More, though, has yet to be done – including improvement to toilet access, refurbishment of the Victorian Tea Rooms, and work on the garden – and the Chequer Inn Ash Society, having been accepted as a 'good cause' by the Dover Lotto, has now launched a lottery to raise additional funds. Choice of ale reflects a strong association with Gadd's, visits before Christmas, finding Dark Conspiracy, Little Cracker and No.5, while Harvey's Sussex also appears a regular.

Crown, Finglesham: Our Branch's current Pub of the Season for Winter (see page 5), offers a varying selection of ale, often featuring local micros – Cattle Shed Aussie Ref and Canterbury Ales The Host's Ale seen recently – alongside brews from more distant parts, the regularly appearing Hophead, and just before Christmas the seasonal Butcombe Chris Moose. In late November Greene King IPA was on the handpumps at the nearby **Coach & Horses**, Hacklinge. And in Northbourne, in December, visits found the choice at the **Hare & Hounds** included Adnams Sloe Storm and Dark Star Hophead.

In Eastry at the **Five Bells**, usual choice is Greene King IPA plus one or two guests, often local such as Old Dairy Blue Top on a visit before Christmas. In April the pub will be hosting its annual beer festival over the Easter weekend – see pub advert. At the **Griffin's Head**, Chillenden, in mid-November selection was Whitstable Bay, Master Brew and Spitfire, and at the **Fitzwalter Arms**, Goodnestone, in January, Master Brew and Bishop's Finger. In Wingham, Harveys features regularly at the **Anchor**, alongside, on a recent visit, Old Dairy Silver Top and Gadd's Seaside.

Crown, Eythorne: In November real ale choice included Laine Breaker Pale Ale while in Barfrestone various visits to the **Wrong Turn** in November and December found a selection from local breweries – Breakwater Best and Dover Pale Ale, Hop Fuzz Fall Out and from Wantsum, Mont-

gomery and Black Prince. At Woolage Green the **Two Sawyers** was selling Greene King IPA and Hophead in early January.

In Shepherdswell the **Bell** was selling Doom Bar and London Pride in mid-December, while a visit to the **Lydden Bell** in January found a choice of Butcombe Chris Moose and Wantsum 10 Year Anniversary. Also in January choice at the Jackdaw in **Denton** was Tribute, Landlord, Razorback and Incubus and at the **Duke of Cumberland** in Barham London Pride, Greene King IPA and Black Sheep.

At Elham the **Rose & Crown** was selling Master Brew and Rudolph's Revenge, while at the **King's Arms** in the Square there was London Pride, Harveys Sussex and Gadd's No.7. At the **Gatekeeper**, Etchinghill the choice was Old Dairy Red Top, Land Lord and Canterbury Ales Reeve's Ale, and at the **Marquis of Granby**, Alkham, visits over recent months have found Gadd's No. 5, Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter, and Landlord as regular choices.

Meanwhile in mid-December in Capel the **Valiant Sailor** was selling Doom Bar and the **Royal Oak** Moreland Original and Greene King IPA. In Guston a visit to the **Chance** found London Glory, and at the **Plough**, Ripple there was 1824 and Abbot. In St Margaret's Bay at the **Coastguard** the choice was Master Brew and Sheps Winter Ale, Howling Wolf.

CANTERBURY

Driving down Old Dover Road it is hard to miss the currently boarded up state of the **Cross Keys**, apparently, we hear, due to the necessity of making repairs to a large hole which opened up in the floor. However, we also understand that there are plans for the pub to become a pub/restaurant/boutique hotel. Further up the road, a visit in early January found the **Phoenix** maintaining a close association with local brews, four Kentish ales being available – Tonbridge Traditional, Pig & Porter Red Spider, Gadd's No.5 and Canterbury Ales Friars. And in Wincheap at the **King's Head** the choice was Greene King IPA, Old Speckled Hen and Hardy & Hansons.

At the **New Inn**, Havelock Street, we note with interest that pre-Christmas deliveries included a selection of dark beers, "in response to demand", and that a New Year delivery included Wantsum Black Prince Mild – is a trend developing? (see National News). Among the selection of old favourites and 'new' ales one's never heard of, we also note a place reserved for that very special

brew, Jaipur.

Outside the City, at Bramling the **Haywain** was selling Skinner's Betty Stogs, London Pride and Northdown Merry Margate on a visit in early January, while at Ickham there was Seasons Greetings, Angels & Demons Bombay Social and Wantsum 1381 at the **Duke William**. And Betty Stogs again at the **Rose**, Wickhambreaux alongside Adnams Ghost Ship and Timothy Taylor Boltmaker. In Littlebourne the **Anchor** remains closed, as it has been for some years now, with all indications suggesting it is unlikely to reopen

In Kingston, Gadds No.5, Purity Mad Goose and Doom Bar were available at the **Black Robin** in mid-January, and Master Brew at the **Mermaid**, Bishopsbourne. In Pet Bottom there was Red Top at the **Duck**, while the **Hop Pocket** at Bossingham was closed again with more building work going on – but, according to one of the workman, to remain as a pub. Not so optimistic, however, at the **Chequers**, Petham. Having changed hands some years ago, an application has now been submitted for residential use. Meanwhile, at Stelling Minnis in January the **Rose & Crown** was selling Youngs Bitter, Canterbury Ales Wife of Bath and Goacher's Maidstone Dark.

FOLKESTONE

Local brews continue to have prominence at the **Bouverie** in Bouverie Road West. A visit just after New Year found Hop Fuzz Blacksmith and American Pale alongside Breakwater Best. In **Harveys** the choice remained national with London Pride and Courage Best. At **The Chambers** in Chertiton Place more locals with Knights Ale and Limited Edition from Canterbury Ales, together with Adnams Lighthouse and Ghost Ship. Along the road at the **Firkin** choice was heavily local as well with Iron Pier Session IPA and, reflecting the season, Little Cracker and Dogbolter from Gadds. Burning Sky Plateau completed the selection.

In the Bayle the **Guildhall** was selling London Glory, Greene King IPA, Abbot Reserve and Sharp's Atlantic, and the **British Lion** Mansfield Cask, Directors and Young's Special. At the top of the High Street there was Dark Star Hop Head, High Weald Charcoal Burner and Adnams Mosaic at **Kipps**.

At the **Home Taproom**, Angels & Demons brewery tap in Tontine Street, McCanns Best and Hockley Soul were on the handpumps earlier in the year, while in a visit to the **Ship** in the Stade real ale selection consisted of London Pride,



THANET EASTER BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL 2020

Good Friday 10th April

12 Noon to 10pm

Saturday 11th April

12 Noon to 7pm

Winter Gardens, Margate
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– with 11.00 early entry Friday ONLY)

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<http://www.easterbeerfestival.org.uk>

Due to increased venue security please be prepared for bag searches.

Only food purchased on site may be consumed at the festival – please do not bring picnics

Greene King IPA, Doom Bar and Bombardier. Further along at the **Mariner** it was good to see Harveys Old alongside the regular Harveys Sussex, as well as Doom Bar, Tribute and Ghost Ship. At the nearby **Lifeboat** Greene King IPA and London Pride were available, and at the **East Cliff** Burning Sky Plateau and Kent Brewers Reserve.

In Sandgate, in mid-January choice at the **Ship**, comprised Hop Head, Summer Lightning, Greene King IPA and a beer called Fireside. Continuing to Hythe Old Hoppy Hen could be found at the **Car-ousel**, and Gadds No 5, Hop Fuzz Blacksmith and Long Man Long Blonde, around the corner at the **Potting Shed**. Greene King IPA and Abbot were available in the **White Hart** and Old Dairy Red Top and Young's Bitter at the **Red Lion**. More Young's at the **Three Mariners**, where also on the handpumps were local brews Whitstable Pearl of Kent, Range Rifleman, Romney Best and Bru-maison Beulter.

HYTHE HOPS – UPDATE

In our autumn edition we reported on the hop growing project in Hythe, with, at the time we went to print, the results of the first tastings from the first year's brew eagerly awaited. Here then we can continue.

Planting having taken place in late winter/early spring, harvesting was ready by September, and planned to be all completed on a single day. To allow for the vagaries of English weather two Saturdays, the 21st and the 28th, were set aside – the second a fall back if the first proved inclement. However, the sun shone on the 21st, and by midday 31.5 Kg of hops had been picked and delivered to the two brewers – Hop Fuzz and Range Ales – for immediate use, as is necessary with green hops.

Two beers were produced, respectively Hop Buzz and Hythe Green, and by all accounts were rapidly disposed of, with the two brewers contributing towards the local charity, the Short Haired Bumble Bee Project, from the profits. Chosen for donation by Hythe Hops, and working closely with Hythe Environmental Community Group, of which Hythe Hops is part, this project by monitoring and improving the local bumble bee environment has seen, over the past ten years, a three fold to eight fold increase in three rare bumble bee species. Together with support from local publicans, and money from the Hythe Hops Beer Fest, a total of £1,300 was raised.

Please note that any views expressed herein are those of the contributors and are not necessarily those of this branch or CAMRA Ltd





The National News

By Martin Atkins

Future of Greene King Mild Rumours on social media that Greene King is going to drop mild from its all-year round portfolio of beers have been denied by the brewer. While stating that XX Mild remains a permanent beer in its portfolio a spokesperson commented, somewhat confusingly, that it was being brewed twice a week, but on a less frequent brewing schedule than some of its more popular beers; adding, that the development and introduction of new beers sometimes requires the rotation of the brewing schedule, resulting in a low demand beer sometimes being put on a reduced schedule and being in limited stock at certain times of the year. "In the case of XX Mild it remains a permanent beer in our portfolio, but is brewed less frequently than our core beers such as IPA, Abbot or Old Speckled Hen.

Greene King's takeover by CK Assets of Hong Kong last year raised concerns with CAMRA, leading national chairman Nik Antona to say, "We are always wary of one company controlling a large share of the market, which is seldom beneficial for consumers. We hope Greene King will continue its operations as normal without any disappointing changes." (See Last Knockings)

Concerns over Stonegate/Ei Merger Last July's proposed £3bn takeover of Ei group by smaller rival Stonegate has raised concerns with the Competition and Markets Authority. Investigating the potential impact across the country it found 51 areas where the merger could see pub goers facing higher prices and lower quality, although on a UK-wide basis it did not raise competition concerns. While, with over 5,000 pubs, it would be the country's largest pub group, nationally it would be competing with several other large pub groups. However, the companies now need to find ways of addressing the 51 local concerns if the whole merger is not to be referred to an in depth investigation.

Top Prize for Stout Lovers of Stout, porter and other dark beers, will be gladdened by the results of CAMRA's Bottled Beer of Britain competition, which saw Thornbridge Saint Petersburg Imperial Russian Stout (7.4% ABV) win gold. It is described as rich and full bodied, with black treacle and dark notes, while its robust, bitter finish gives it great balance, and makes it the perfect brew to pair with a fruity cake.

Second and third places both went to St Austell – the brewery's golden ale Proper Job (5.5% ABV) taking second place, and its Big Job IPA (7.2% ABV) taking third. The results were announced at the BBC Good Food Show in Birmingham, on its opening day.

And imperial stout is making news elsewhere with Marston's having brewed No 2 Horninglow, its first bottle-conditioned beer of the style using its Burton union system. The brew uses five English roasted grains, water from Marston's own well and English Challenger hops.

More Dark Winter Ales It is not just imperial stout that has been making a stir this winter. As part of its range of experimental ales Shepherd Neame joined forces with Mallaskoski of Finland to produce a dark, full bodied winter ale called Howling Wolf (4.5% ABV). With hints of vanilla and citrus, and a bold smoky finish, the beer uses a combination of American, English and German hops, along with Viking Red malt imported from Scandinavia.

Meanwhile Molson-Coors owned Sharp's has come up with a full bodied milk stout called Cornish Winter (4% ABV). It is the first of five limited-release brews, and is brewed with, according to Aaron McClure, Sharp's head brewer, "A careful balance of flaked oats and lactose.....selected to create the smooth and sweet mouthfeel, which, along with chocolate and crystal malts, provide the dark character we love in stouts. Our Sharp's ale yeast gives a clean aroma profile, and warming finish."

Wadworth to Relocate In a continuation of a trend which has been evident for some years among the country's more established brewers, Wadworth is to relocate its brewery to a new brown or green field site. Plans are for the company, which operates over 200 pubs, to stay in Devizes, and currently various options are being considered. One option would see just the brewery itself move, with the offices and visitor centre remaining on its present site, while another would see the whole business relocating to the outskirts of the town.

Chief executive Chris Welham said, "After a thorough review of our 1885 brewery and our plant and equipment we have determined that it is

coming to the end of its useful life. The building itself poses a number of challenges and we need our plant to be set up to be more agile to brew beer in a variety of production sizes." Wadworth hopes to identify a new site within the next few months.

Community Pubs Thrive Elsewhere we report on the campaign to save the Swan at Wittersham, and for those dedicated villagers looking to take over and run the pub, a recent report by the Plunkett Foundation is nothing but good news. The foundation's executive director, James Alcock said in the report's introduction: "Looking at the report, it is heart-warming to note that not a single community pub has ceased trading since records began." And he went on to say that very often they are much more than just a pub, offering such services as tourist information, parcel collection, computer access and post office.

According to the foundation there were 95 known community pubs at the end of 2018 with 148 new enquiries to the group from communities exploring new pub ownership, all suggesting a bright future and indicating the very healthy state of community businesses across the UK.

Interestingly the Plunkett Foundation's might well be an underestimate. CAMRA Pub Campaigns Committee chair Paul Ainsworth, speaking towards

the end of last year, said: In the past year, the number of community-owned pubs that we know about has risen from 119 to 143". And, he added, there could well be others of which CAMRA was not aware. The Campaign is seeking to compile a definitive list of all community-owned pubs, and would appreciate any fresh information. CAMRA's current list is available at www.camra.org.uk/pubs/campaigns.

Business Rates Reform Described as broken by the Treasury Select Committee, MPs said that tweaking the system through reliefs does little to address business rates' negative aspects, and "simply demonstrates how broken the system is". Alternatives should be considered in time for the Spring Statement. CAMRA national chairman Nik Antona said business rates place greater costs on businesses dependent on bricks and mortar than those operating mainly online. We cannot take our pubs online.

Last of the Summer Wine Goes Magic The village of Holmfirth, which formed the backdrop for the seemingly everlasting sitcom, is the location for the second taproom of Huddersfield brewer Magic Rock. Sited in a former bank it will offer four cask ales and eight key keg lines. Additionally at weekends the basement kitchen will be taken over by "a weekly rotating selection of some of the best street-food providers".

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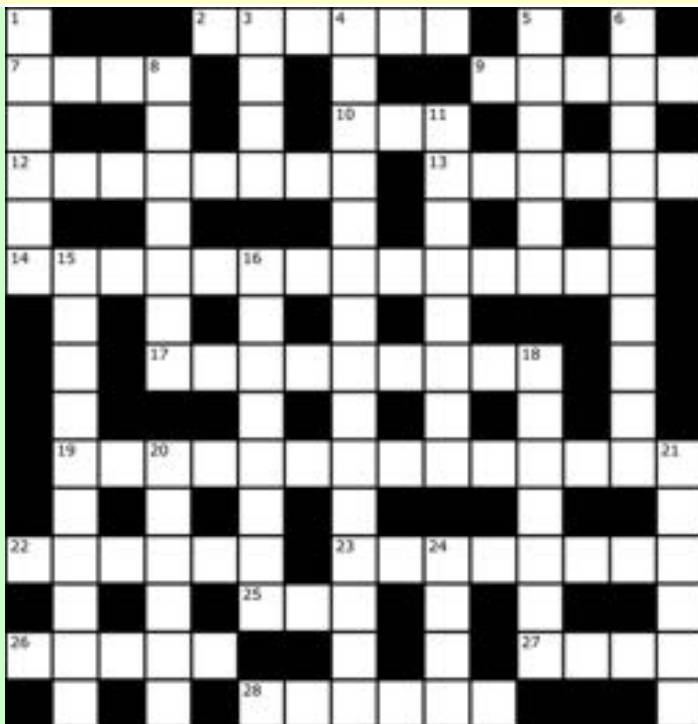
By TRISHA WELLS

Across

2. Admiral, the pub run by Jim Hawkins' family in *Treasure Island* (6)
7. Very eager to see something (4)
9. Sussex home of the Harvey's Brewery (5)
10. Stick used in Billiards (3)
12. North American war axe (8)
13. Inn, Sandwich pub opposite the Guildhall (6)
14. Gin-based drink developed in Raffles Hotel (9,5)
17. Former country pub in Westmarsh, north of Ash (3,3,3)
19. Real ale bar and hostelry on Deal Seafront (9,5)
22. Passionate – red ant (anag.)
23. Like Lurpak with a red stripe (8)
25. *The British ...*, or *MI6* (3)
26. Strong, dark beer (5)
27. Spirit made from fermented rice (4)
28. Pub in Wingham, built in 1645 (6)

Down

1. Tiny sips, of a beer, perhaps (6)
3. Sicilian volcano (4)
4. In the *Good Beer Guide*, a 'quiet' pub won't have this (10,5)
5. Youngest son of William the Conqueror, king of England 1100-1135 (5,1)
6. Brightest star in the constellation Orion, home to Ford Prefect in *The Hitch-hikers' Guide to the Galaxy* (10)
8. Largest city in Scotland (7)



11. Discharge or outpouring (8)
15. Not quite right (10)
16. Disbursements – many pets (anag.) (8)
18. Pasta strips (7)
20. Broad road lined with trees (6)
21. Village near Dover, home to *The Bell* and formerly *The Hope* (6)
24. London's China town (4)

**Crossword
Answers
on Page 45**



MONASTIC BEERS

A look at the history and tradition of Trappist brewing

In our Autumn 2018 edition of Channel Draught we reported on the revival of brewing in the Trappist Mount St Bernard Abbey in Leicestershire. With the advice and support of other Trappist brewers they created a true Trappist beer, Tynt Meadow. In the following article, with the help of Steve James in the winter 2018 edition of Ales & Tales, the magazine of the Stourbridge & Halesowen and Dudley & South Staffordshire CAMRA branches, we take a broader look at the history and tradition of Trappist brewing.

For beer lovers Belgian beer has a very special place, rivalling or perhaps exceeding that of traditional British cask, and very often it is its bottled beers that are responsible for that reputation. Among the various styles and brewers, monastery brewed Trappist beers are one of the best known, although the monks themselves strongly reject the use of the term style when applied to their beers. While all Trappist beers are top fermented and bottle conditioned, each monastery has developed beers with their own particular style and character. What the term Trappist indicates and offers, is what beer writer Roger Protz describes as 'an appellation contrôlée', a guarantee of origin.

Monastic brews have a long history, dating back at least to the 6th century when St. Benedict's Rule, relating to the ordering of monastic society, included considerations of charity and hospitality. Among its requirements were the brewing of beer and production of wine, and through the middle ages, and into more recent times, both were a staple activity of monastic life.

The term Trappist comes from an abbey that was founded at La Trappe in Normandy in 1664. The French Revolution, a hundred or so years later, saw many abbeys destroyed and their monks leaving France and resettling in the Low Countries, where, during the 19th century the modern tradition of Trappist brewing was established – first just for themselves and their guests, but later commercially.

Westmalle, near Antwerp



The abbey at Scourmont,
home of Chimay beers



Over the years brewing became their speciality and their growing reputation saw other brewers adopting the name and claiming to produce 'Trappist' beers. This ended in 1962 when a new law specified that Trappist beer must be brewed within a Trappist monastery. By then there were five true Trappist breweries in Belgium:

Westmalle in northern Antwerp – brewing commercially from 1856

St Sixtus near Westvleteren – brewing from 1839 but only commercially from 1946

Chimay – strictly speaking the nearby abbey at Scourmont founded by monks from St Sixtus with a brewery dating from 1862

Rocheport at the nearby abbey of St Rémy – brewing from 1899

Orval, at the 1926 commissioned abbey at Villers-devant-Orval – brewing starting in 1931

To these should be correctly added:-

Schaapskooi in Brabant, just over the border in the Netherlands at the abbey of Koningshoeven – the brewery dating from 1884-5.

Despite the 1962 law, the Trappist Abbeys remained



The brewhouse at Rochefort

troubled about the association of their beers with non-monastic life. A worry exacerbated by other religious brewing orders, of which there are at least a dozen or more in Belgium, largely, if not entirely, contracting out all their brewing to normal commercial brewers.

The problem is well illustrated by St Sixtus, which in 1946 had licenced the neighbouring St Bernardus brewery to brew its beer. The licence expired in 1992 and Sixtus was removed from St Bernardus labels, but they still retained an image of a monk. Feeling that this still suggested a link with the Trappist tradition, in 1997 St Sixtus further requested that this be removed as well. However, things were moving on, and in the same year all six Trappist brewers formed the International Trappist Association. In

future all Trappist beers would carry the words 'Authentic Trappist Product'.

As stated above, no single description of what constitutes a Trappist beer exists, each monastery having developed its own tradition and its own styles. However, the *Ales & Tales* summary is probably as good as any:

"There is no specific definition of Trappist beer; it could be a cheap tinned pils, but it does imply quality. An old Belgian Trappist saying states that 'beer should be liquid bread, not coloured water.' They are top fermented beers, with the emphasis towards estery, fruity flavours from unique yeast strains, generally of high strength, low on hop impact and utilising specialist malts and candi sugars to give warm, spicy flavours of great complexity. With their high ABV and malt characteristics, they are excellent for long-term keeping and improve with age when kept in a cool dark place."



Brewing at St Sixtus, Westvleteren

The article goes on to divide Trappist beers into five basic styles

Patersbier: generally low strength 'table' beers, often available just for a monastery's monks

Enkel: the single standard beer from which the scale grows

Dubbel: with double the raw materials – (6-7%), dark, low bitterness, heavy and fruity flavours

Tripel: even more raw materials – stronger (7-11%) and golden beers

Quadrupel: the strongest (8-12%) – dark, and to be drunk slowly

However, such definitions are very much generalisations, and individual breweries veer away from these criteria. There are blonde or bruin beers and a few examples of lagers, bock beer, Imperial stout and wheat beer. The sole English Trappist brewer, Mount St Bernard, brews the 7.4% Tynt Meadow with aromas/flavours containing chocolate, liquorice, rich fruit, pepper and fig.

To savour Trappist beer at its best the correct glass is a necessity – a goblet or chalice style is recommended, to enhance the aromas and flavours – and with bottle conditioning a standard feature, careful pouring is required. And many are not cheap.

Trappist beers are now a growing presence in world brewing. While for many years, the growth of Trappist brewing was steady but slow, the first two decades of the 21st century has seen the half dozen that formed the International Trappist Association in 1997 double to a full dozen. As well as their original home in the Low Countries, there are now also Trappist breweries in Austria, Italy, the USA and England. And while there would appear to be no reason why this expansion should not continue, we very much hope that the association maintains the principles and standards with which it was founded.



DOPPELBOCK Among the great variety of monastic brews is one especially designed for drinking during Lent. This is Doppelbock, and a few years ago Hertfordshire CAMRA's magazine Pints of View printed the following on a recent revival of the beer from across the Atlantic.

J. Wilson a 38 year-old from Iowa decided to abstain from solids for the whole 46 days of Lent drinking only beer and occasionally water. Wilson was emulating 16th century German monks who lived on Doppelbock "liquid bread" during Lent.

A special beer was brewed to be as near to the original Doppelbock as possible which meant that it was completely unfiltered and contained plenty of yeast and B complex vitamins. It turned out to be quite a hefty brew – Budweiser has 100 calories per pint where Doppelbock has 288, with Wilson drinking at least four pints every day and five at weekends.

A lot of research into fasting took place before the experiment and one of the bonuses was a detoxing element which meant that all food left in the stomach and bowels was cleaned out. During the fast Wilson lost twenty-five pounds in weight and says that he never craved after anything sweet but missed goat cheese, olives and Mexican food. Apparently the water was to help flush out the kidneys.

A separate description of the style is as follows:-

Doppelbocks are extra strong, rich and weighty lagers characterized by an intense malty sweetness with a note of hop bitterness to balance the sweetness. Colour can vary from full amber to dark brown and alcohol levels are potentially high, typically 7-8 percent ABV.

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NATIONAL PUB OF THE YEAR

The field down to the final four

The final four contestants for this year's National Pub of the year include three former winners, two from the north, on either side of the Pennines – the George and Dragon, Hudswell, North Yorkshire and the Swan with Two Necks, Pendleton, Lancashire, respectively winners in 2016 and 2014 – and one from the home counties – the Bell at Aldworth, Berkshire which won in 1990. The remaining place goes to another from the south east – the Red Lion, Preston, Hertfordshire.

George and Dragon, Hudswell: Just outside Richmond with fine panoramic views over Swaledale, it was rescued by the community in 2010. It comprises two rooms, and offers a selection of Yorkshire beers and almost seventy whiskies. In addition to its normal pub trade supports a library, shop, allotments and other community facilities.

Swan with Two Necks, Pendleton: Traditional and recently refurbished, and run by the same owners for over thirty years, the pub offers five changing ales, including always a dark mild or stout, and a real cider. Food is home cooked, and for good weather plenty of outside seating, or for less clement seasons open fires. Popular with locals and visitors.

Bell, Aldworth: A couple of miles west of Goring on the Thames, it has been described as a perennial gem and has been in the ownership of the same family for more than 130 years. The name comes from the bells that featured on the coat of arms of the historic local landowners, and it is the only Berkshire pub with a national heritage interior.

Red Lion, Preston: Standing on the village green a mile or so south of Hitchin, and dating from 1844, the Red Lion is the first community owned pub in Britain. There is an ever changing list of beers including many from small breweries, and the current licensees endeavour to source food ingredients locally. It hosts the local cricket team and fundraises for charity.

It is perhaps significant that two of the four are community owned, while the other two are a good arms-length from the large Pubco or brewery tied estates.

The final winner will be announced in February, and all four, are now at the final stage of a competition which kicked off with CAMRA branches across the country choosing their own Branch Pub of the Year, in the early months of 2019. Selection is down to CAMRA volunteers who judge all pubs by atmosphere, décor, welcome, service, value for money, customer mix and beer quality.



The George & Dragon, Hudswell



The Swan with Two Necks, Pendleton



The Bell, Aldworth, near Goring



The Red Lion, Preston, Hitchin



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FROM ACROSS THE BORDER

Two developments from our neighbouring branch

Two current developments in our neighbouring branch, Ashford, Folkestone and Romney Marsh, have recently caught our attention.

SAVE THE SWAN Following the recent success of the Ash community in saving the Chequer, and the village takeover of the Farriers at Mersham some ten years ago, news comes to us from Ashford, Folkestone and Romney Marsh CAMRA of another such venture in their branch, this time on the Kent/Sussex border.

The Swan at Wittersham, has been closed since September 2018. Having undergone over the years a variety of incarnations, most recently as the Oxney Gourmet Pie and Burger Bar, its owner came to the conclusion that it had no future as a trading pub and put it up for sale. However, like their counterparts in Ash and Mersham the locals believe differently, and are not prepared to see the village's sole remaining pub disappear, at least not without a determined effort to keep it going.

The Swan, Wittersham



After its closure the Parish Council initiated a publicity campaign aimed at generating support among interested residents to buy the Swan and run it as their own village pub. Starting point was for the creation of a community interest company which would seek money locally for the purchase.

Subsequently the 'Save the Swan' campaign was established. Reporting a year later in August 2019 it was able to announce that it has qualified for support from the Plunkett Foundation, and was pursuing the creation of a Community Benefit Society, to enable locals to share in the purchase and ownership if successful. Professional valuation was planned for September and local support continued to grow.

By October a bank account had been set up, and, with the results of the valuer's report, consideration was being given to making an offer. Thoughts were also turning to what kind of pub a community owned Swan should be and locals' views were to be sought at a progress report meeting set for early November. Meanwhile funds to support the progress of the project so far have had the benefit of pop-up pub events at the village hall.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE "You could be drinking Martello within a few feet of a Martello Tower", remarked *Marsh Mash* the magazine of the Ashford, Folkestone and Romney Marsh CAMRA. It was reporting on the Branch's newest micropub, the Hidden Treasure in Dymchurch, which opened in August, and in whose garden, which backs onto one of the coast's Napoleonic fortifications, one could indeed by drinking Hop Fuzz's eponymous brew.

Situated in Dymchurch High Street between a butchers and a café it was formerly an electrical contractor's office and store, and needed substantial refurbishment before opening. The frontage is quite narrow, but going back a fair distance, it is actually rather larger in area than some other micropubs and additionally, as mentioned above, has a garden.

Real ale and polypins of cider are kept in a cooled cabinet, the ale casks, for reasons of space, kept on end, with beer drawn by a syphon to handpumps on the bar. Early visits found brews from Gadds, Romney Marsh and Hop Fuzz. There is also a selection of gin and other spirits, and wine. Food is restricted to bar snacks but the pub allows customers to bring in food from the Spitfire Café next door or fish and chips from other local establishments.



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CHANNEL VIEW

Where We Came In? In last December's issue of CAMRA newspaper *What's Brewing* Myles Pinfold, founder of brand design consultancy WPA Pinfold offered his views on the current state of real ale.

Myles began his piece by outlining the state of brewing in Britain when CAMRA was founded in 1971: an industry he describes as producing largely filtered, pasteurised and artificially carbonated keg, dispensed with carbon dioxide. Mass production led to a market dominated by monolithic, bland brands while regional breweries declined – the number of brewers falling by over 50% in ten years to around 150. CAMRA set about challenging the big brewers and their big volume production, homogenising of the country's beer and putting profit before quality.

The Campaign has of course had a considerable measure of success, and while keg, particularly lager, maybe seen by many in the industry as the standard, real ale or cask is now widely available, and most brewers see it as important to their business. Myles, however, feels that it has been underselling itself, especially when compared with the success and prominence currently enjoyed by craft.

Through innovation, branding and presentation, he says, craft ale, predominantly keg, now has over 13% of the USA beer market by volume and a 25% share by value. And while its market share in Britain is significantly less it has acquired conspicuous prominence. There are currently 2500 brewers in Britain and the majority view craft as of actual, or potential, interest to their operation.

Contrastingly cask ale has "failed to capitalise on the universal acclaim that beer is experiencing." Particularly ironic he says, because craft ale was pioneered in America out of similar frustrations that saw the creation of CAMRA, and by enthusiasts who set out to emulate British and European brewers: Steve Hindy who founded Brooklyn Brewery said, "Cask ales are outrageously good and a delight. The English manage to put so much flavour in their delicious, lower-ABV regional ales."

So far so good, all fairly accurate and true. However, Myles then considers the reasons and solutions to what he sees as cask's problems. And here he falls back on that traditional concern, not only of real ale lovers, but also of broadcasters, music lovers, language buffs and anyone else who feels

that their culture is being neglected by the passions and interests of modern life and times. "A major factor", he says, "is an inability to win over the hearts and minds of a new generation of consumers".

He suspects that a large proportion of beer drinkers under 40 do not know, and probably do not care about the difference between cask and keg, and suggests that all they want "is a great tasting and stylish beer that suits the occasion, with a significant number willing to pay a premium for it too. They do not fully appreciate cask is a fresher and more natural product."

To be frank, it is probably likely that most drinkers of any age could not explain the exact differences between cask and keg, and do many in fact care if a product is fresher and more natural? Perhaps the more environmentally conscious, but younger drinkers today in the exuberance of a heady night out, when most of their alcohol consumption will take place, seem just as happy to drink spirits or various other processed concoctions.

However, Myles sees the solution as innovation, branding and presentation, not perhaps surprising for someone whose business it is, learning from craft's "exciting beer styles, recipes and narratives". Start with cask's solid and authentic foundations, add passion and vision and there is "a unique, engaging and compelling story to tell". Meanwhile don't the traditional handpulls lose out to shiny new keg fonts? Could not the pump handles be branded, and drama and theatre added to pulling the perfect pint, à la Guinness, into the perfect branded glass?

All fine and dandy, but are we drinking a beer or an image? Image and its inferences and associations can change with fashion.....or without fashion. Most real ale drinkers drink for taste and flavour. That should be our simple message. Meanwhile, the exotic flavours and recipes of craft are just as available in cask. Anything craft can do, real ale can do, and, with cask conditioning, probably better, and very likely sold considerably cheaper.

With due respect to Myles, his case is not unreminiscent of where we came in – heavily promoted beers, shiny and slick, targeting particularly the young, and with a price premium. With such an emphasis on image is not quality at risk?



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Friday 10th April to Monday 13th April





MARKET SQUARE PUBS

In the third in series about the now disappeared pubs around Dover's Market Square we look at the Criterion

In our continuing series on pubs in and around Dover's Market Square we now take a look at the Criterion.

Unlike some of the other pubs in or near the Market Square, such as the Prince Regent or the Cause is Altered the Criterion never had particular prominence, and is probably now remembered by very few. It does however hold a particular place in my memories for being, at the tender age of ten or thereabouts, the first pub I ever went into, and subsequently, in the year or so before its closure, one of my regular haunts.

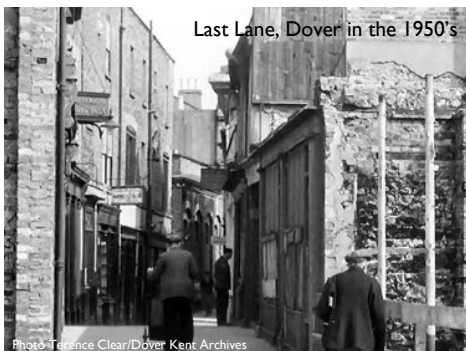
It was situated, or perhaps more accurately tucked away, in the 60 to 70 yard long pedestrian only Last Lane which ran between Queen Street and Chapel Lane, more or less parallel to Bench Street. As well as the pub, there were, among a variety of other businesses and properties, a barber, a fish and chip shop, and a second hand book shop, and all situated, in the decades after World War II, at the Queen Street end – the Chapel Lane end having been reduced to bomb sites. It remained as such, until the late 1960s when the whole street was demolished, another casualty of the construction of the York Street dual carriageway.

My early, if brief introduction to pub life, was due to our school playground, St Mary's Junior, adjoining the Criterion, whose back yard we looked down into, and where, despite high chain link fencing, our ball would occasionally end up, as it did one Friday lunchtime. A friend and I scampered round to the pub to ask for our ball back. In those days when all pub windows were frosted glass to a height well above eye level, the interiors of our locals were something of a mystery, our knowledge limited to what might be glimpsed through the occasional open door. In this instance, I recall, we looked into a virtually empty public bar, save for three 'old boys' sitting on a bench along the wall, one of whom, in response to our request, told us "to come back next Tuesday week". Suitably rebuffed we returned to our playground, where of course, the ball had been thrown back.

The exact age of the Criterion is uncertain. The whole area included properties of many ages, and being very much at the heart of the town, no doubt there had been many demolitions and rebuildings of the years. The few photos that exist suggest a building of late Georgian/early Victorian age with a ground floor frontage typical of many a 19th century pub. However frontages could be, and were, altered and changed



The Criterion, Last Lane, Dover



Last Lane, Dover in the 1950's

Photo-Terence Clear/Dover Kent Archives

over the years, and there is no reason to think that the pub did not have older origins.

Of course pub names also changed, and before becoming the Criterion, it had traded under a variety of names. Licensing records show it as the American Stores in 1864, the Who'd a' Thought It shortly afterwards, and from 1867, until the 1880s, the Oxford Music Hall. Also present in Last Lane in 1776, and possibly the same site or building was The Lass.

The 1860s and 1870s would appear to have been somewhat turbulent. Between 1864 and 1880 sixteen licensees are recorded, although at least one had his application turned down on police objections that in

another licensed premises he had been found to be “harbouring improper characters in his house”. A reflection perhaps, on the nature of the landlords that the pub attracted, and thereby the nature of the pub itself. Certainly, newspaper reports in this period, show a regular involvement with the police over drunkenness, violence and disturbance, including, on one occasion, a threat to cut the landlord’s throat. Meanwhile, they also indicate that “Music Hall” was more than just an affectation, as in one there is reference to the existence in the pub of a stage.

The sign, Criterion, eventually appeared between 1880 and 1882, and there followed, it would seem, a more settled (and perhaps respectable) existence, with only four licensees being recorded until the end of the century. In 1895 a prosecution for that then not uncommon offence, after-hours drinking was dismissed, while in 1926, another not uncommon occurrence in old pubs, a fire, was easily dealt with and no great damage done. More worryingly though were the licensing Brewster sessions of 1933. At a time when the authorities were concerned that there might be too many pubs, the police challenged its viability, citing a recent fall off in beer sales, several changes of licensee, and low customer numbers. The magistrates’ decision was for referral, but the Criterion evidently survived.

Mid - 19th century ownership is uncertain, and absence of brewery references in press reports of the period suggest it might have been a free house. However, by the time of the old undated photograph of the frontage, the name of brewers George Beer & Co. is prominent, and suggests that the Criterion was then part of its tied estate. This firm subsequently merged with Rigdens to become George Beer and Rigden, and survived as an independent entity until after World War II, when it was acquired by Fremfils to give the Maidstone brewer around 80% of the town’s pubs. At the very end its ownership probably rested with Whitbread who bought Fremfils, with which it already had links, at about the same time.



My re-acquaintance with the pub dates from about 1967, the last year of its life. At the time it was run by Tom Byrne, and was just one of the very many quite basic pubs which could be found in almost any town across the country. Old photographs of boxers and race horses adorned the walls of the public bar, and the selection on the juke box appeared predominantly of the ballad variety – Engelbert Humperdinck’s *The Last Waltz* and a version of *Danny Boy* seemed to get a lot of playing. Draught beer was restricted to mild, bitter and Whitbread’s national keg, Tankard.

Tom was very much the landlord of popular imagination, ready for a chat about the failings of the world before closing the pub for the night, 10.30 in those days. At a time when pubs such as the Criterion were almost exclusively wet led – perhaps more accurately just exclusively wet, the one concession to anything non liquid being possibly crisps – he ran his pub as a place

for drinking and entertainment. I recall on one occasion him organising some kind of darts competition for a group of foreign seamen who had wandered in.

There was also, as in many pubs of the era, a pinball machine, for which Tom used to offer £1 for the highest score of the week. At a time when beer was 1s.7d or 1s.8d a pint (about 8p in our current metric system) £1 was a prize worth having. Achieving highest score, however did not necessarily require any skill. The pinball contained a glitch whereby the ball could get stuck, bouncing back and forth against one of the scoring sensors, and clocking up a phenomenal score.

The Criterion eventually closed in October 1968 and Tom and his family moved to take on the tenancy of the Invicta in Snargate Street, a former Tomson Wotton house acquired by Whitbread earlier that year along with the Tomson Wotton brewery and the rest of the estate.

The incumbency was, however, short lived. A few years later the Invicta was closed as well.

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THE ANCHOR AT HIGH OFFLEY

This Staffordshire gem and Beery Boaters favourite is truly a pub that time forgot

The Anchor at High Offley, Staffordshire, at one time known as the Sebastopol, is a one-off. I know that this a sobriquet attached to many a watering hole, but in this case, what is probably best described as 'still the old boatman's pub that it once was', on a lonely stretch of the Shropshire Union Canal is most definitely unique.

And lonely it is. Except for the adjacent canal bridge and some farm buildings there appear to be few other buildings or structures in the immediate vicinity, while the village of High Offley itself lies some half mile away to the east. It has been stopping point for the Beery Boaters on several occasions, most lately last September on 2019 End of the Year Trip, which is written up on page 35 of this issue.

The lonely Anchor Inn at High Offley



The 2020 Good Beer Guide description reads as follows:-

An unspoilt example of a 19th century canalside pub, built around 1830 on the Shropshire Union Canal, England's last narrow trunk canal. It has been run by the same family since 1870. The right hand room has a quarry tile floor, two high backed settles, a window seat, and scrubbed tables, all of which create a timeless atmosphere. Winter opening hours are shorter so check before travelling.

To the above, should be added, that the same room also possesses a grandfather clock, and an open fire, which was much enjoyed by the Beery Boaters on various visits. While above the fire, over the mantelpiece, there are photos and certificates relating to the pub.

A more lengthy description and history appeared in the Spring 2012 edition of *Beer at Heart*, the magazine of the Heart of Staffordshire CAMRA. The writer says that they first came across the pub in 1977 when a group of eight had hired a narrowboat and were boating up the Shropshire Union. They moored outside the pub and found the door locked, but when a second boat turned up, a knock on the door, saw the landlord open up and let them in. They enjoyed beer and sandwiches, and continued their journey, "but have never



Olive Cliff behind the bar at the Anchor



The Beery Boaters being entertained at the Anchor

needed an excuse to find our way back”.

The landlord at the time was Graham Cliff, who died in 1986, but his wife Olive still runs the pub, continuing a family tradition that started in 1870. Graham's great grandmother, Lily Pascal was running the pub by 1903, and it is intended that Olive's daughter Elaine will in due course take over.

The writer says that the pub is little changed from that first visit, and had remained much the same for many years before that. The front door opens onto the room described above, with a bar counter at the back, across the door-

way into a rear room, while to the left as you enter, is a second room, equally basic and unspoilt with more tables and wooden benches.

Outside a path leads down to a gate onto the canal towpath, with neat lawns either side and plants and shrubs in tubs. Benches and tables and chairs offer seating when the weather is sufficiently good. Behind the pub is a caravan and camping site and the pub has been the Caravan Club pub of the year.

Regular beer is Wadworth 6X, although when the Beery Boaters visited the Anchor in the spring of 1997

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there was also Marston's Pedigree. And until about ten years ago beer was fetched from the cellar in jugs, but is now pulled up by handpump, saving a trip down narrow cellar steps. Cider is also available, although according to the *Beer at Heart* article in summer only, and food is limited to sandwiches made to order.

There are no fruit machines, or other modern entertainments, while the pub's approach to music typifies the Anchor's traditional character. Without a juke box or other source of recorded music reliance is placed upon unamplified voices and instruments – regularly the guitar – as the Beery Boaters enjoyed on their last visit.



The Beery Boaters at the Anchor during their visit in April 2017

Very much a 'Divisional' pub, it should be a must for any lover of real ale and traditional pubs travelling on the Shropshire Union or visiting the area. Summer opening (from the 2020 GBG) is 12-2.30 and 7-11 with Sunday 12-3 and 7-10. However, winter hours are considerably restricted, and as the GBG comments it is advisable to check – telephone 01785 284569.



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AROUND THE CURLY WRYLEY

**The Beery Boaters Autumn trip to
Birmingham and Wolverhampton**

For the second September running, the Beery Boaters returned to the Birmingham Canal Navigations (BCN), but from a new hire base, Norbury Junction, on the Shropshire Union Canal. Having experienced some delays en route, Peter Sweeney and I arrived with Martin Atkins in his car, to find just about everyone else already there, mostly in the nearby Junction Inn. The rest of our crew, on the 69ft Pearl, were John and Dave Underdown, Peter Broberg and Paul Rhoods, while Shep and his crew were to occupy the similar length boat Pacific.



The Junction Inn, Norbury Junction.

Baggage loaded, cars parked, and those in the pub finishing off their drinks we were ready to be off mid-afternoon. A brief tour over the boat with a fitter who mainly seemed to want to know how experienced we were at narrow boating, and we were away. Pacific, ahead of us pulled in at Gnosall for a quick pint at the Navigation, although our opinion was that they'd stay there for the evening, while we carried on to the planned evening stop at Wheaton Aston. So far, the weather had been fine, but a week of showers was forecast.

We arrived around dusk and opposite the Hartley Arms, a pleasant Marston's house, and new to all of us. The food and beer were good, and it was quite crowded to start

with; there had been some sort of WWI military re-enactment in the village, and several of the customers were attired as period 'pongoes' (Royal Naval parlance for soldiers). Contrary to expectations, the crew of Pacific eventually arrived, having navigated from Gnosall as darkness fell. And we got chatting to a couple on a neighbouring table, who, it turned out, came from mid Kent.

Sunday morning and ten miles to do, reasonable enough except that there were 23 locks in the way, 21 of them the stiff climb to our lunchtime stop at Wolverhampton. At least the weather was fine when we started off, up Wheaton Aston lock and on past Brewood, following Pacific, with Peter Sweeney preparing breakfast. Without our usual chefs de cuisine, Peter volunteered, and an excellent job he did. The boat was very easy to steer and to handle, very responsive, and one of the best we have ever had. The only problem so far was that the heater would not stay on, so the radiators were cold most of the time, but it seemed that the engine provided hot water for the taps, etc.

We arrived at Autherley Junction and its 6 inch rise stop-lock where the Shropshire Union Canal joins the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal. Overtaking Pacific who had stopped for the shop, we turned right for the quarter mile to Aldersley Junction and the bottom of the Wolverhampton flight, where the BCN starts. It was mid-morning and the weekly forecast now asserted itself with persistent rain all the way until we got to the top when, of course, it stopped. We tied up in the basin above the top lock and headed for the Great Western.

Unlike our visit the previous autumn, the pub seemed almost empty, but then we had arrived on the Saturday of a Wolves home match with Southampton. We didn't arrive until after one o'clock, but as we only had about three miles to do in the afternoon to the Vine at Wednesbury, we had plenty of time to enjoy the pub and the excellent beer. And while they had run out of Bathams, as usual Holden's was on sale, and Golden

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Glow proved most acceptable. Also, being Sunday, food was limited to rolls (cobs up here) and substantial pork pies.



Pearl and Pacific now went their own ways for a while. Shep & co. wanted to head for Birmingham centre via Tipton, but our route was going to be round the Wyreley & Essington Canal and a visit to the Manor Arms at Daw End. As their evening stop was further away than ours, the Pearls of the Canal were able to enjoy the Great Western longer before setting off again.

The Wyreley & Essington Canal loops around the top of the BCN, and is not known as the 'Curly Wyreley' for nothing as it is very twisty. It starts at Horsley Fields Junction, a few hundred yards from where we were tied up, and ends at Catshill Junction at Brownhills where it joins the Daw End Canal. Being little used it

tends to have quite a lot of debris in it, and at the end of the year masses of floating duckweed cover the surface in places. However, Pearl seemed to cope well with the twists and turns and rubbish on the prop. Despite the debris, the water quality is remarkably good, as evidenced by white water lilies growing in the canal. I only know of a few other canals in which they thrive, and they are all in the Black Country. They were just coming into flower on this occasion.

We arrived at the excellent moorings by Pinfold Bridge in Wednesfield before dark, tied up, and headed for the Vine, only some 50 yards away across the bridge on Lichfield Road, and a pub we had only discovered on the 2018 September Canal Trip. It is an excellent community pub and a well-deserved entry in CAMRA's National Inventory of Unspoilt Pubs. Beer is largely the Black Country Brewery, and once again, solid sustenance consisted only of filled cobs, but typical of the area very reasonably priced. Another enjoyable session and the first of several games of dominoes.

The weather was still fine on Monday as we set off, and the boat was still going well, but the excess wash and heaviness of steering indicated rubbish on the propeller. We stopped to clear at Sneyd Junction, where can be seen the remains of a lock which once led to collieries on the former Essington Branch, at 533ft above sea level, then the highest part of the BCN.

Quite a lot of debris, mostly plastic, was removed from the prop. I suggested that, after the weed-hatch cover was replaced we tried the engine forward and reverse to check for a good seal, before replacing the deck panel. I recalled that once neglecting to do this after de-toxifying a prop at Windmill End, we emerged from Netherton Tunnel with an engine compartment half-full of water. And sure enough, we found the weed-hatch seal was leaking, and even after it was adjusted, and the lump hammer employed on the clamp, a drip continued for the rest of the trip. Fortunately the bilge pump worked well.

Next we needed to find a pub for our lunchtime ale and food, as we did not expect get much in the way of solid sustenance at the Manor Arms. The obvious one was the Fingerpost at Pelsall but WhatPub details were extremely vague – 'possibly one real ale', and had not been updated since 2016. The nearby Free Trade Inn, an excellent pub across Pelsall Common, had closed, while the Saddlers, about a mile earlier, and once visible set back from the canal, could not be seen; either it has been obscured by new buildings or demolished, so rather than stop and look for it (or where it had been) the Fingerpost it had to be.

Hereabouts the canal takes on a new appearance, covered with some form of weedy growth it could almost be mistaken for grey/brown tarmac – in fact so deceptive that the unwary could be deceived into thinking it was a solid surface. The last time I had been to the Fingerpost it was called the Royal Oak and sold Ansell's beer, so that shows how long ago it was. We pulled in and

The grey/brown weedy water on the Wyreley & Essington Canal



moored just past a cheerful fisherman; Black Country anglers do seem to be more convivial than some of their counterparts elsewhere; and headed for the pub.

We had struck lucky! A new landlord had recently taken over and there was a trio of Real Ales – Landlord, St Austell Tribute and Doom Bar, and the St Austell was certainly in good condition. The food was good as well, so unfortunately, we stayed a little longer than we should have done before setting off again. At Brownhills we replenished our fresh water tank, and acquired further supplies from the handy nearby Tesco. Off again, we shortly turned right onto the Daw End Branch, as usual very weedy. With darkness falling Cherub, on the tiller, complained that it was like navigating a twisting, muddy, ditch. Eventually, we found the gate in the fence for the Manor Arms, tied up and headed for the pub.

The Manor Arms is another CAMRA National Inventory pub, and is known locally as ‘the pub with no bar’. A Marston’s pub, it has a bar, of course, but no bar counter and the handpumps are attached to the wall. Another enjoyable evening ensued, with not a few locals turning up as the evening progressed. Official closing time was 11pm but that appears somewhat at the discretion of the licensees. Whether or not it was the presence of locals, beer continued to be sold and we eventually left nearer midnight.

Tuesday morning and rain thudding on the roof and leaking in through any available crevice around the windows. Luckily it had slackened off (for the time being) when we got going, our plan being to continue down the Daw End Branch into the ruler-straight Rushall Canal with its nine locks, turn right along the Tame Valley Canal at the bottom to the Walsall Canal, and stop at Great Bridge and the Tamebridge Inn for lunchtime beer. The first part of the plan went well enough, and we reached the Rushall Canal and descended the first four locks. Consternation! The pound after lock five, was bone dry save for a couple of foot wide trickle of water down the middle engaging the interest of a solitary heron.

Martin trudged up to above lock three to start letting down water. Meanwhile, the weather, which had been steadily deteriorating suddenly got worse. For 20 mins or so we enjoyed the kind of downpour that can end up as flash flooding – perhaps it was trying to help us. Anyway the pound eventually filled and a lock keeper turned up to assist. He approved of what we were doing, and told us he had already adjusted levels in pounds lower down which had also been low. Apparently the flight had a known problem with leakage, and we suspected that, as this canal is so little used, if we had not been there he might have left things as they were. Anyway, he said he would continue back up the locks and close down the paddles we had opened, saving us the trouble.

However, we were now over an hour behind schedule and we decided to forego our stop at the Tame Bridge Inn. We completed the flight and turned into the Tame Valley Canal, almost dead straight for about three miles, and now much cleaner, no longer requiring at least one stop to remove major rubbish from the prop. We turned left at the Walsall Canal and continued up the eight Ryders Green Locks onto the Birmingham New Main Line, where, as we emerged, a boat about a hundred yards back, was coming towards us from the Birmingham direction. I wondered if this could possibly be Shep’s boat, Pacific. We turned off onto the Netherton Tunnel Branch and, looking back, I could see that this was indeed so. Later, it emerged that they also had had problems, including needing a pump-out, thus truncating their programme as well.

At 3027 yards long the Netherton Tunnel, was the last ‘proper’ canal tunnel to be built in the country, and one of the widest, allowing two craft to pass. It also can be very damp (and was), with water cascading down the ventilation shafts. After the tunnel, both boats moored at Windmill end, and the crews departed to the Old(e) Swan, better known as Ma Pardoe’s, our third CAMRA National Inventory Pub in three evenings in succession, where we ate substantial meals and drank beer brewed on the premises.

Wednesday morning and the week over half-way through already. Pearl was away from Windmill End before Pacific, heading towards Blowers



Sampling the delights of the Bull & Bladder, Brierley Hill

Green Junction. On the way we passed a heron, which instead of flying off ahead as we drew level, which they often do, jumped into the water and then back onto the bank with quite a large fish wriggling in its beak – breakfast.

At Blowers Green we tied up by the former pump-house to replenish the water tank and take advantage of the luxurious (by canal standards) toilets in the sanitary station. While there Pacific turned up, passed us and, heading for the Delph, descended Blowers Green bottom lock, the deepest lock on the BCN, having replaced two of the original locks: the remaining Blowers Green locks leading up to the now largely unusable (for most craft) Dudley Tunnel.

In due course, tank full and sanitary arrangements concluded, we followed them, for the couple of miles to the Delph flight, passing on the way, through the canalside Merry Hill shopping centre. There's nowhere to turn round above the locks; what looks like a winding hole being too short for boats of the size we normally hire, as I found to my cost a few years ago. Usual procedure, requires going down two locks, using the side-pound below the second to turn, and coming back up – which as we arrived, Pacific was just completing.

We followed suit. I don't think that the angler, drowning his worms in the pound where we turned, appreciated our manoeuvrings; he didn't say anything but eventually moved off to angle elsewhere. Back at the top, we tied up alongside Pacific and followed her crew to the Vine, better known as the Bull & Bladder, the Batham's brewery tap, in Delph Rd, where we enjoyed substantial and reasonably-priced meals, as well as the excellent beer from the brewery behind the pub.



The Wolverhampton Flight of locks

We didn't spend too long in the Bull & Bladder as we wanted to get to Tipton for the evening. As Pearl was tied up outside Pacific, we got away first. Later, in Netherton Tunnel, and with Hon. Commodore (Unelected) below, keeping out of the deluges of water from the ventilation shafts, I became aware of a strange noise from outside the boat. Looking out of a window, I first thought, "Ah, a boat passing us", then realised that it was a boat *overtaking* us! It was, of course, Pacific. They wanted to get to Tipton as early as possible to catch a bus for Sedgley and the Beacon Hotel, brewery tap for Sarah Hughes.

In less of a hurry, we maintained a leisurely pace, turning left onto the New Main Line, towards and then up, the three Factory Locks. Turning sharp left onto the Old Main Line, we passed Pacific tied up just after the junction, their crew already off to catch their bus, and carried on to Coronation Park, to moor, as darkness was falling, just below the plinth where the Tipton Slasher maintains his pugilistic pose. Crossing the bridge to the Fountain Inn, the Slasher's former H.Q., we spent a pleasant evening in one of the best community pubs around, drinking Wye Valley (and other) beers. Later we were joined by some of Pacific's crew, on their return from Sedgley.

Thursday. We turned at the junction by the Black Country Museum and cruised back to Wolverhampton noting that Pacific had already left her moorings, but when we tied up in Wolverhampton there was no sign of her. Her crew had seen us though – they were taking on water in the CRT basin when we passed them – and later some of them joined us in the Great Western, where of course we had gone again.

For the afternoon it was back down the Wolverhampton flight and return to the Shropshire Union. Pacific off first and we followed sometime later, in a very creditable two hours – always faster going down this flight than coming up. A quarter of a mile on the Staffs & Worcester up to Autherley Junction, and through the stop lock onto the Shropshire Union Canal. Five more miles, and we tied up a couple of boats behind Pacific by Bridge 14 at Brewood, and walked up to the Bridge Inn above. More Marston's beer



Paul & John at Wheaton Aston



Mal Edwards performing
In the Anchor, High Offley

and more dominoes.

The last full day, Friday. Our final evening was set for the Anchor at High Offley (see page 30) a couple of miles past Norbury Junction, although we would have to go a mile further on to turn. For our lunchtime beer we stopped at the Boat Inn, Gnosall. Arriving just before 2 o'clock, to our dismay, it advertised closing at two-thirty. However, they continued serving beer until three.

We continued, past Norbury Junction, the Anchor and a mile of moored boats to the winding hole before Shebdon Aqueduct, Pacific just turning as we came up to it. On the way back a kingfisher (the only one of the trip) kept dart-

ing ahead of us, finally perching on the tiller of a moored boat to watch us go by. We passed Pacific moored before Bridge 42 and tied up almost outside the Anchor.

The Anchor is very small and is in the CAMRA National Inventory, which made four that the Pearl had visited that week. We settled in, and later, once the pub had cleared a bit, we enjoyed a bonus. Two not so young gentlemen (about the same age as some of us) fished out their guitars and started to serenade us. One came from Northumberland but the other obviously hailed from the West Midlands. In fact it was Mal Edwards, who was born on a working narrowboat, became a working boatman himself, and then a writer and performer of canal songs. I was lucky enough to be able to purchase one of a couple of CDs of him, recorded in 2001. We left the Anchor at about midnight after a superb finale to a superb week.

Then, on Saturday the 28th, just a couple of miles back to Norbury Junction to return the boats and unload our baggage before setting off homeward.

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LAST KNOCKINGS

Old Wort

The Slow Death of Mild In the mid-1960s if you asked for a pint of beer, you would likely have been given a pint of mild without further ado. It accounted for two thirds of beer production. Since then it has enjoyed a seemingly unstoppable decline. Recently Greene King was forced to deny rumours that XX Mild was being removed from its all-year round portfolio, while we hear that in the former mild stronghold of the Black Country mild accounts for just 2% of Bathams output.

Whether changing fashions and tastes towards paler, more hoppy beers combined with greater affluence (mild was usually dark and also the cheapest beer), or simply the post war generation kicking over the traces, no satisfactory explanation as emerged. But perhaps an underlying current had been picked up already by the big brewers – all the highly advertised 1960/70s keg brands (Guinness aside) were pale bitter style. Personally, however, one mild still retains favour – Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby, but that is 6% ABV. Perhaps he lies the answer: the long term survival of mild, with its low ABV and lacking the more hoppy bite of bitter, was doomed once beers' strengths were reduced for the war effort during World War I.



Dark Revival However dark beers do not stop with mild. As we report in National News Thornbridge Saint Petersburg Imperial Russian Stout was voted CAMRA's top bottled beer, and Marston's and Sharp's have both recently launched new stouts. Meanwhile Sheps have joined forces with a Finnish brewer to produce a dark winter brew. Hope yet for dark beer lovers.

Dry January Whether or not our readers embrace the philosophy of "Dry January", and we suspect that mostly they do not, its advocates could perhaps have chosen a less trade sensitive time of year. January is notoriously bad for pubs, and perhaps a more clement month away from the bills and bad weather of the festive season hangover would better suit the licensed trade – that is of course assuming that the Dry January movement has concern for the licensed trade.

A Broken System When a Parliamentary committee, the very committee set up to oversee and review the operation of a specific government department, decides that some aspect of that department is not working and describes it as broken, it is reasonable to assume that something needs to change. Business Rates is of course, the subject of such damning criticism (see National News), a tax system dating from 200 years or more ago when we used to send children down mines and up chimneys, operate slave worked plantations in the West Indies, and transport around the country was by horse and cart or canal barge. Well things have changed. The great attraction of rates was that they were easily collectable, convenient and fairly equitable, and while ease of collection and convenience might still apply today they are certainly not equitable. Rates bite particularly hard on small businesses and especially on pubs who have a great many other problems to contend with. This should have been sorted years ago, but if this new government is as reformist as it maintains, then perhaps we can hope that some change is imminent. It cannot wait much longer.

Batham's Bitter In Channel View we report recent criticism of the current state of real ale, which sees lack of appeal to younger drinkers as a serious failing. Perhaps the writer should visit the West Midlands and in particular the Great Western in Wolverhampton at Saturday lunchtime when Wolves are playing at home. He would find a crowded bar and see pints of Bathams bitter being sold by the tray-full and drunk by young and old alike. And in general Bathams bitter is so popular that in not a few of its outlets are supplied in 36 gallon barrels or 54 gallon hogsheads. No demand for real ale?

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See <http://www.camra-dds.org.uk/nbss.pdf>

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