

The Deal Dover Sandwich & District Branch Magazine

CHANNEL DRAUGHT

Issue 78

Free

Winter 2018/19



Inside:

SAVING YOUR LOCAL

Communities all over the country are working to save their local pubs

RETURN OF THE DARK

Is Stout about to make a comeback?



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

CHANNEL DRAUGHT



Issue 78
Winter 2018/19

Channel Draught
is published and
©2019 by the
**Deal Dover Sandwich
& District Branch**
of the
Campaign for Real Ale
www.camra-dds.org.uk

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**Please note that views
expressed herein are not
necessarily those of this
branch or CAMRA Ltd**

**Please drink
sensibly!**

Cover Photo
Inside the Maison Dieu, Dover
**Venue of the White Cliffs
Festival of Winter Ales**
Photo Jelltex

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BRANCH DIARY

Events shown in blue are not organised by CAMRA

Fri 1 - Sat 2 Feb

**White Cliffs Festival of Winter Ales,
Dover Town Hall**

Fri 13.00 - 23.00 Sat 10.30 - 18.00 or until
the beer runs out

Sun 3 Feb

Beer Festival take-down 09.00 - 13.00,

Dover Town Hall

Fri 15 - Sat 16

Feb Winter Festival, Berry, Walmer

Mon 18 Feb

Branch meeting and Festival Wash-up,

Saracens Head, Deal

Sat 23 Feb

High Street Stroll, Deal. Meet Saracens

Head 12 noon

Thur 7 Mar

Thirst Thursday 2019 GBG Trail (details
to be confirmed)

Mon 18 Mar

Branch meeting, Cricketers, Dover

Thur 4 Apr

Thirst Thursday 2019 GBG Trail (details
to be confirmed)

Mon 15 Apr

Branch meeting, New Inn, Sandwich

Thur 18 - Mon 22 Apr

Beer Festival, Chambers, Folkestone

Fri 19 - Sat 20 Apr

Planet Thanet Beer Festival, Winter

Gardens, Margate

Fri 19 - Mon 22 Apr

Beer Festival, Five Bells, Eastry

Thur 2 May

Thirst Thursday 2019 GBG Trail (details
to be confirmed)

Thur 20 May

**Branch meeting, Carpenters Arms,
Coldred**

Welcome to a new year and the Winter 2018/2019 edition of *Channel Draught*, the magazine of Deal, Dover, Sandwich and District CAMRA, bringing you news, and we hope enlightenment about real ale, brewing and pubs.

No one can argue that we are not living in a changing world, not least for public houses and beer, where the environment is very different from that dominated by national brewers and their huge tied estates which faced CAMRA when it started out in the early 1970s. Two particular phenomena of late have been the appearance of the micropub, and the purchase of “redundant” pubs by local communities, and in this edition we take a look at both, locally and nationally.

Currently in our own branch, the villagers of Ash are pushing ahead with the reopening of the Chequer, while in St Margarets, drinkers’ choice is being enhanced by the establishment of a new micropub which will go some way to ameliorate the recent loss of the Red Lion and Hope. Together with the wealth of small local brewers (currently about fifty in Kent), it would seem evident that for beer a pubs the future will see community focus play an increasingly important role. A direction of movement well illustrated by the success of the Deal Hop Project, which will be open to new members in February (see page 9 for details)

However, we do not neglect the past, and as it is White Cliffs Festival time again, we have looked out some previous articles about the history of Dover Town Hall and its environs which we originally printed about ten years ago. We also question the pub and brewing establishment’s seeming lack of interest in micro brewing, and, thanks to Roger Protz, take a look at the possible revival of interest in dark beer.

Martin Atkins



LOUIS ARMSTRONG

As featured in CAMRA’s “GREAT BRITISH PUBS”

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3 MINUTES FROM PENCESTER ROAD BUS STATION

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

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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.

THE GRIFFINS HEAD, CHILLENDE Branch Pub of the Season for Winter

As our Branch's choice of a cosy refuge on a cold and icy winter's day or a wet and stormy night, or even on one of those balmy January days which at the time of writing are notable by their absence, we decided upon the Griffin's Head at Chillingden. A centuries old



traditional Kent timber framed building with Faversham brewed Shepherd Neame real ales always available, a warm welcome is guaranteed to locals and strangers alike. We wish the Griffin's Head well, and look forward to it continuing to flourish. We hope to shortly present the Pub of the Winter Season Certificate to the Licensees

DOVER

Saturday January 5th saw this year's Branch Christmas Social, moved for a change, from before Christmas to the New Year – and very successful it proved. We met at the **Mash Tun** around midday for a few pints from a selection of Dog Bolter, Hophead, Three Piers West Coast Blonde and Three Piers Little Bastard, a feistily strong winter ale of 7.4% ABV, before moving on to the **White Horse** for food and a choice from Landlord, Harveys and London Pride. There were plans to perhaps continue the afternoon at other establishments in the town, but after a very enjoyable meal we stayed put for some more beer, before all going our separate ways. Later in the month the Mash Tun also provided a fine venue for the January

CAMRA Kent Regional meeting.

Blakes, Castle Street: Always a home to beers otherwise not seen, or only rarely locally, recent choices have included 3D Beers Multi-coloured Hop Shop, Millis Dartford Wobbler and Blakes Bitter, Sambrook's Pumphouse Pale Ale, Adnams Old Ale and Pitchfork Goldbire.

In Russell Street the **Castle** remains up for sale, and as far as we are aware without real ale, while on the other side of the St. James development all reference to Shepherd Neame has disappeared from the exterior of the **Lord Nelson**. Whether the brewery still has an interest in the premises we cannot say but we understand that a few years ago it was let free of tie.

In Church Street there is no sign of any activity at the **Roman Quay**, which remains closed and unused, but in the Market Square, in mid-January, substantial refurbishment was underway at **Burger Bros** (formally Port of Call, Ellie, etc.), which has not been open since Autumn 2017. Apparently the rear part of the premises is to be brought back into use and plans include a central bar servery.

Eight Bells, Cannon Street: Always a broad range of real ales from around the country available. On recent visits these have included Otter Bright, Yeovil Stargazer, Nottingham Extra Pale Ale, Ossett Excelsior and Wantsum 1381. And in late November the appearance of Butcombe Christmas Moose seems to have caused surprised in one of our regular contributors that the Festive Season was upon us once again.

At the **Lanes**, current Kent Pub of the Year, beer, rather appropriately is almost entirely Kent sourced, while cider and wine are exclusively from the county. Recent beers have included those from Hopdaemon, Romney Marsh, Gadds, Hop Fuzz English, Angels and Demons, Iron Pier, Kent, Northdown, Canterbury Ales, Goody, Musket and Tonbridge. However, space is made available for some non-Kentish representation such as the much appreciated Long Man and Downlands from Sussex.

Prince Albert, Biggin Street: Following refurbishment during the Autumn, the pub reopened shortly before Christmas, when a visit found Doom Bar and Landlord on the handpumps. In Priory Place the reappearance of real ale at the **Golden Lion** has continued with Hancock's HB available in mid-December. Meanwhile, in Ladywell it seems that the **Rack of Ale** is possibly gone for good. We understand that the former micropub is currently being used by the property owner as an office, and that future use as a licensed premises is in doubt.

Crown & Sceptre, Elms Vale: Late Red and Whitstable Bay were on the handpumps in mid-December, and in the New Year, Christmas Ale and Whitstable Bay. At the **Boar's Head**, regular real ale is Young's Bitter, which was much enjoyed on a recent quiz night. In search of new licensees the accompanying advertising blurb included the following as an added inducement: "and the presence of one of the area's very few skittle alleys is an extra draw". Maybe one of Kent's very few skittle alleys, but in and around Dover, is one place in the county where they make a notable presence.

Thirsty Scarecrow, High Street: On Boxing Day evening KeyKeg Kent Centennial was available

alongside an extensive range of cider. Also the pub was offering a seasonal and very tasty "hot toddy" creation complete with a shot of rum for those who wanted something more vibrant.

In Bridge Street the **Admiral Harvey** remains boarded up and seemingly untouched after a year since the death of its last owner and landlord Pat Edwards. Although initially believed destined for conversion to flats rumours still maintain that someone with a history in the pub business has taken an interest.

Red Lion, Charlton Green: The very palatable Good Old Boy remains a regular, alongside of late Black Sheep Bitter. And Good Old Boy also recently at the **Louis Armstrong** where it appeared in November as a rare and occasional outsider alongside the pub's normal staunchly Kentish selection. Of late that has included Westerham 1965 and Spirit of Kent, Hopdaemon Skrimshander and Session, Old Dairy Blue Top, Gold Star and Fine Light from Goacher's and from Gadds, Seaside, Nos 5 and 7, and around Christmas Little Cracker, to send us all home warm and happy at the end of the evening.

Breakwater Brewery Taproom: Always a good selection of real ales including of late Breakwater Best, Samphire Gold, On the Hop and Mystify. Meanwhile the brewery's beers are an increasing presence in East Kent, and gained further prominence with its successful operating of the bar for the winter event at the Cruise Terminal.

In River work is well under way to convert the former **Dublin Man O' War** site into a row of houses. At the **Royal Oak** a visit before Christmas found the pub maintaining a selection of three beers from Adnams plus a guest, on this occasion from Range Ales of Lympe. Earlier, in late November, Angels and Demons Bombay Social had been available. At the **Cricketers** mid-December



The former Dublin Man 'o' War (left) being converted into a housing development

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saw a choice of Theakston XB and Brain's Rev. James, while recent visits to the **Three Cups** on Crabble Hill have found Breakwater Dover Pale Ale remaining as the regular choice.

At Kearsney the new year found the **Railway Bell** closed. At the time of writing we do not know whether this was just temporary or more long term, however for some time before Christmas the pub was being advertised as "a fantastic business opportunity", on a board outside, suggesting changes of incumbents was imminent.

Fox, Temple Ewell: Festive brews included 3 Piers Trembling Turkey, Hardy & Hanson's Rocking Rudolph and Exmoor Exmas, while also from the latter Exmoor Fox continues to appear regularly. Also often seen of late, has been Marston's 61 Deep, and from Dover's own Breakwater Brewery, Castle on the Hill. At the start of the year a visit found the much liked Sharp's Sea Fury available.

DEAL

Bohemian, Beach Street: A visit shortly before Christmas found a broad selection of real ale including Harveys Sussex, Musket Ball Puller, Doom Bar and Rocking Rudolph. At nearby **Dunkerley's** the regular offering of St. Austell Tribute was available.

In the High Street **The Bar** was offering Burning Sky Porter and Kent Amarillo, and **Bloody Marys** Gadds Seasider. In the **Salvation** Golden Xmas from Wychwood plus Oakham Citra were on the handpumps. Back in November the pub provided the venue for that month's Branch Meeting on a Monday evening with Gadds No 5 available, and Deal having the full benefit of a gusty east wind straight off the sea.

Just Reproach, King Street: Continuing with its broad selection from around the country, recent months have seen the usual variety of styles and flavours, with of course particular emphasis on dark and seasonal ales. Bristol Beer Factory Milk Stout, Four Candles Goldings Porter, Goacher's Crown Imperial Stout, Titanic Cappuccino Stout and Plum Porter, and Harveys Old Ale have all appeared, while from Kent Brewery came the low gravity Driving home for Christmas, much applauded by one drinker who commented very favourably on the quality and flavour of a beer that was only 1.8%.

At the **Ship**, Middle Street pre-Christmas Saturday found a choice of Landlord and Hophead together with three from Gadds – No 5, No 7 and Little Cracker, while at the **Saracens Head**, Alfred

Square Whitstable Bay and Master Brew were available. Master Brew also in Duke Street at the **Deal Hoy**, along with Spitfire Gold and Sheps Christmas Ale, while choice at the **Alma** was between Harveys, Wainwright and Landlord. And in Queen Street at the **Queen Street Tap**, the selection was two from Mad Cat – Santa Paws and Educated Guess – plus from Wantsum Five Golden Grains.

Bowling Green Tavern, Bowling Green Lane: Following refurbishment during the Autumn the



pub was open again for the Festive Season where a visit just before Christmas enjoyed the appropriately seasonal Wychwood Bah Humbug. At around the same time at the **Leather Bottle**, Mongeham Romney Marsh American Pale was available. In Mill Hill London pride was on the handpumps at the **Mill Inn** in mid-December, while in Sholden the **Sportsman** remains closed, with as yet no indication of any future plans.

Lighthouse, Walmer: A visit in mid-December found Ripple Steam Farmhouse Pale Ale and Whitstable East India Pale Ale. In the **Berry** Canada Rd, as always a vast and eclectic range of ale drawing the usual highly appreciate comments: Harvey's Old Ale – "smooth and easy-going", Fyne Ales Jarl – "amazing aroma and taste", and Angels and Demons Black Taxi To The Moon – "Top form for this 5.4% smoked porter ideal for a cold wet winter's day. And particular praise went to Time and Tide New England IPA: "Really hope Time and Tide do more real ales as the beer is super". Perhaps all best summed up by someone enjoying Thornbridge Jaipur IPA just before Christmas, who as well as voting it as absolutely superb, applauded the pub's sourcing of beers from all over the country: "This is what makes the Berry such a great pub".

Thompson's Bell, Walmer: In the new year an application was submitted for a planned refurbish-

ment of the pub. At the nearby **Freed Man** the autumn saw a wide selection of green hopped beers available, including Gadds Green Hop, Deal's own Hopping Mad, Whitstable and two from Old Dairy, whose Green Hop Black Session IPA drew excellent reports, "Stunning ale, good price and served to perfection". Among an ever changing range notable reports were also made about Long Man Gunpowder Stout and 3 Piers Uncle Fester.

In Kingsdown, visits to the **King's Head** late last year found, among other ales, Adnams Old Ale and Hancock's HB both in excellent condition. At the **Rising Sun** Landlord remains a regular, together with a changing choice of guests.

Deal Hop Project The project is open to new members in February 2019. Full details on their Facebook page @DealHopFarm or at info@dealhopfarm.org.uk and more information is available at transitiondeal.blogspot.com, or by phone 01304 372673.

SANDWICH & RURAL

Admiral Owen: Recent visits have found heavy emphasis on local brews – including Wantsum Black Prince, Green and Gold and Knight's Ale from Canterbury Ales, and, on New Year's Eve, Angels and Demons Hockley Soul. Opposite at the

Crispin Inn, the end of the year saw Adnams Jack Brand Mosaic Pale Ale alongside regular beers Mad Cat Crispin Ale and Harveys Sussex. In Fisher Street we understand that the **George and Dragon** is currently closed and in the process of changing hands.

New Inn: Courage Best remains a regular alongside various guests. Over Christmas these included Greene King Rocking Rudolph, which we assume is distinct from Rock On with Rudolph which appeared at the start of the New Year. Opposite at the **Mermaid's Locker,** A visit in early December found Canterbury Ales Simcoe Red was available.

Fleur de Lis, Sandwich: Just before Christmas Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter was available, while at the **Red Cow** we enjoyed Dark Star Hophead, Fuller's London Pride and Gadds' No. 3 when the pub hosted our December Branch Meeting. And in Strand Street a New Year's Eve visit to the **Kings Arms** was made particularly welcome with more Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter.

Charity Inn, Woodnesborough: Having seen an application for conversion to residential use withdrawn earlier last year, developers returned for a second go in December. The current proposal requests change of use and conversion to four self-



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contained flats with two storey side extension, plus erection of a detached building containing two self-contained flats. The pub is the only one remaining in the village and is listed as an asset of community value.

Chequer, Ash: Currently no further news has come our way since our autumn edition and we assume re-opening is still scheduled for the spring.

Five Bells, Eastry: Good to see the pub continuing with Black Prince Mild alongside Greene King IPA and an ever changing selection of guests, including of late Courage Best and Directors, Old Dairy Blue Top and Wells and Young's Wells Eagle IPA.

Plough, Ripple: A visit shortly before Christmas found regulars Fullers ESB and Ripple Best available, plus Gales HSB.

In St Margarets, at the time of writing, plans are moving ahead for the proposed micropub reported in our Autumn edition. The initiative of a former landlady of the Hope, it is situated at No 1 The Droveaway, a shop unit near the bus turnaround, and is to be known as **Sandra's**. Planning consent has been granted, but a premises licence is still a few weeks off. At the moment it is hoped to be up and running as a pub in February, but for the moment is offering tea, coffee and cakes. Open days

were held over the first weekend of the new year to explain how the project is intended to develop.

Meanwhile, back in the main village a Boxing Day visit to the **White Cliffs Hotel** found Ramsgate Little Cracker available in top class condition. In Guston at the **Chance** mid-December found Bass on the handpumps.

Crown, Finglesham: Mid-December saw the pub make an attempt on the World Sprout Eating Record, currently standing at 31 in 60 seconds. However, despite many gallant endeavours no one managed to break it, landlord Tony Humphries ending up as the day's winner with a total of 26 consumed. Donations were asked for from those entering, which went to help the homeless in Deal over Christmas. At Hacklinge visits to the **Coach & Horses** in December found Greene King IPA available.

Royal Oak, Nonington: A visit in early January found Doom Bar and Spitfire on the handpumps, with more Spitfire at the **Fitzwalter Arms**, Goodnestone alongside Master Brew. In Wingham at the **Anchor** the choice was Doom Bar, Ghost Ship and Gadds No 5.

Wrong Turn, Barfrestone: Still heavily devoted to local brews visits in November and December



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found a selection including Hop Fuzz Goldsmith, Angels and Demons Racing Tiger and Gadd's Seaside. A regular quiz night is held on the last Friday of the month. Meanwhile at the **Two Sawyers**, Woolage Green the choice a week before Christmas was Canterbury Reeves Ale along with Doom Bar.

In Shepherdswell the future of the boarded up **Bricklayers** remains uncertain. As far as we are aware the current owners are still seeking to let it as a pub. At the **Bell** regular beers remain Directors and Doom Bar while on Christmas Day a visit to the **Tipsy Gardener** found Canterbury Ales Strong Pale in excellent condition.

Bell, Lydden: In mid-December locals Breakwater Hellfire Corner and Wantsum Thunderbolt were on the handpumps, alongside Brew XI. And at the **Jackdaw**, Denton, a visit in late December found a choice of Ringwood Razorback, Tribute, Gadd's No 5 and Greedy Goose. Earlier in the month it was pleasing to see the excellent Harveys Old Ale available.

At Capel just before Christmas the **Valiant Sailor** was selling Doom Bar, with more Doom Bar at the **Lighthouse**, which regularly also sells Grahams and Harr Hop from the local Angels and Demons Brewery. At the **Royal Oak** the choice was Master Brew and Hancock's HB.

CANTERBURY

New Inn, Havelock Street: Christmas and New Year saw a fine and varied ale selection to see out the last weeks of 2018 and start of 2019. Among the more feisty brews could be found Crackendale, Bishops Farewell, Dark Star Revelation, Kent Prohibition, Gadd's Little Cracker, Irving Iron Duke and of course the redoubtable Thornbridge Jaipur. And for the future, to satisfy the increasing call for Vegan and Gluten Free beers, the pub will be endeavouring to have at least a cask or keg on at all times that suits both diets.

King's Head, Wincheap: In January there was a choice of Green King IPA and Mild, Rocking Rudolph and Hardy and Hansons on the handpumps. Meanwhile a visit to the **Phoenix** in mid-November found a selection including Hop Fuzz Bullion Hop and Whitstable Pale Ale.

At Bramling in early January there was London Pride, Bombardier and Gadd's No 7 available at the **Haywain**, and at the **Duke William**, Ickham Kentish brews Romney Best Bitter and Pig and Porter Fatal Flaw, together with Timothy Taylor

Landlord. At Wickhambreaux Gadd's No 5, Greene King IPA and Tribute were on sale at the **Rose**.

In Littlebourne, the **Anchor** remains closed and boarded up with an application for conversion to two dwellings hanging over its head. If granted and implemented it would leave just the **Evenhill** as the village's only pub, an inconvenient quarter of a mile or so up the hill and away from the village centre.

In Bridge a visit to the **Plough and Harrow** just after New Year found Master Brew was on the handpumps, and Master Brew also available at the **Mermaid** in Bishopsbourne,

Black Robin, Kingston: Just before Christmas the choice was Doom Bar, Incubus and Gadd's She Sells Sea Shells, while at the **Duke of Cumberland** in Barham Green King IPA, Harveys Sussex and Exmoor Mild were available.

Rose & Crown, Stelling Minnis: Normally three ales available with Youngs Bitter a regular. Recent visits have included also Doom Bar, Canterbury Wife of Bath, Directors and Goachers. At the **Hop Pocket**, Bossingham early January found Westersham Gods Wallop, Northdown and Adnams Ghost Ship.

FOLKESTONE

In mid-January the **Bouverie**, Bouverie Road West was continuing with its emphasis on local beers, offering a choice of Romney Marsh Gold, Old Dairy Uber Brew and Tonbridge American Pale, along with an Elderflower cider. And more Tonbridge around the corner in Christchurch Road where the brewery provides the regular choice of Hookers Hooch (dark) and Lookers Liquor (light) at the **Radnor Arms** (former Happy Frenchman), together with a guest. There are also available a selection of craft and keg ales, and other beverages.

In Cheriton Place the **Firkin** was offering a selection of Oakham Citra, 360 Session IPA, Electric Bear Inspector Remorse porter and Kent Brewers Reserve. And at **Chambers** the choice on the handpumps was two from Hop Fuzz – Bullion and the seasonal Advent, two from Adnams – Ghost Ship and Lighthouse, and two ciders from Bidenden.

Moving to the Bayle, at the **British Lion** Marston's Pedigree, Ringwood Fortyniner and Hobgoblin were available while a choice of London Glory, Greene King IPA, Old Speckled Hen and Belhaven

Smoke Stack Stout could be found at the **Guild-hall**. At **Kipps** it was all Kent again with Gadds No 5, Whitstable Bay Kent Coast and Northdown He-Bru IPA.

In Tontine Street the **Troubadour** was closed, undergoing refurbishment with reopening due shortly, while at the **Ship** in the Stade a choice or four real ales included Fullers London Pride, Doom Bar, Old Golden Hen and Bombardier. And along the road at the **Mariner** a selection of five was available – Adnams Ghost Ship, Doom Bar, St Austell Proper Job, London Pride and Harveys

In Elham in mid-December there was Master Brew and Spitfire Gold at the **Rose and Crown**, and London Pride, Golden Braid and Harveys Sussex at the **Kings Arms**. At Etchinghill the **Gatekeeper** was selling three local brews – Romney Cinque Porter, and Knights Ale and Parsons Ale from Canterbury Ales – along with Timothy Taylor Boltmaker. And on Christmas Day at the **Cat and Custard Pot**, Paddlesworth the choice was Gadds No 5 and Master Brew.

SANDGATE AND HYTHE

In Sandgate a visit one Friday in January to the **Ship** found Greene King IPA and Abbot, Hop

Head, Summer Lightning and Amazing Cotter VC, while across the road **Inn Doors** was selling Hurricane and Imperium from Wantsum, and Gyn Dodger from Box Steam. Also available were Wantsum Sandgate, a Pilsner lager and vegan and gluten free Following the Herd from Cattle Shed.

At the **Potting Shed** in Hythe Oakham Citra and Long Man Best Bitter vied alongside local Hop Fuzz Blacksmith, while at the **Carousel** Doom Bar was on the handpumps. The **White Hart** was offering Old Hoppy Hen, Greene King IPA and Ruddles County, and the **Red Lion** Harveys Sussex and Youngs Bitter. More Youngs at the **Three Mariners** along with Box Steam Tunnel Vision and locals Gadds No 5 and Breakwater Cow Juice.

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



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CANTERBURY AND DISTRICT CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR 2017 & 2018

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For more information on forthcoming events and live music visit:

www.theanchoratwingham.com

CAMRA KENT REGION: The Kent Regional Committee currently has these volunteer positions to fill. If you want to forward a name, please do so to rd.kent@camra.org.uk, or at the next advertised Kent Regional Meeting (Details in What's Brewing)

- **Regional Director:** our long-standing RD ends her term at end March 2019. Candidates are thus being sought for this comprehensive role, covering oversight of activities such as the Regional festival, scrutiny and approval of requests from client Branches in the Region and of their finances, liaison with CAMRA (national) Branches Committee and with the Region's branches at bi-monthly meetings, usually as Chair, and at Branch AGMs, and to manage appointments of other senior Regional Committee roles; the aim being to ensure all Branches act in accordance with policy and are represented "up the chain" to the Branches Committee and NE. As such it requires a candidate happy to travel across Kent and communicate in diverse fields (and pubs). This is also a senior role in coordinating the Region's Good Beer Guide allocations.

- **Regional Secretary:** we are also looking for candidates to this key post supporting the RD for sundry administrative functions. The Secretary collates the reporting to the Regional Meeting across a range of topics including Breweries, Branch local news about pubs etc, meeting schedules.

- **Regional Finance Officer:** a Finance Officer is sought to assist (by agreement as to demarcation of responsibilities with the RD), in interpreting and communicating CAMRA's Financial policies and practices to Branch and Beer Festival Treasurers, determining what level of approval is due for funds requests from them, receiving completed end-of year statements and accounts, returning surpluses to HQ and monitoring Branches' good financial practice. This role is effectively a deputy to the Directors and will involve communication with the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

- **Regional Treasurer:** a Treasurer is also being sought to manage the Region's own account, in conjunction with the officers above.

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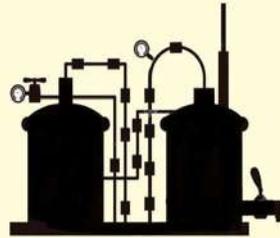
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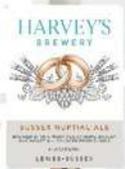
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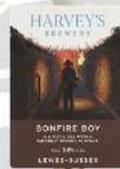
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THE HOME OF THE MICRO PUB

Exploring a pub revival movement that started in Kent.

The first micro pub was established by Martyn Hillier in 2005 when he converted his beer shop (and former Butcher's shop) in Herne, into the Butcher's Arms. For a while Martyn's was the sole example, but following an address on the subject, that he gave at a CAMRA's Members Weekend a few years later micro pubs began to appear elsewhere. And the successful evolution of the phenomenon was illustrated last year, when four of the sixteen regional finalists for CAMRA's National Pub of the Year were micro pubs.

As well as creating the micro pub concept and opening the first, Martyn Hillier also co-founded the Micro pub Association (micropubassociation.co.uk), which defines a micro as: "A small freehouse that listens to its customers, mainly serves cask ales, promotes conversation and shuns all forms of electronic entertainment." Over the last decade about 600 have opened, somewhat offsetting the disappearance of traditional pubs (currently closing at the rate of 18 a week), and recent figures suggest that it is a developing trend – fourteen micro pubs opened in September 2018, compared with just four in September 2017.

Martyn identifies the origins of the movement as starting with a change in the licensing laws which dropped the requirement for prospective landlords to advertise their application in advance and enabled "the big boys....to step in and object". Now there are micro pubs right across the country, but nowhere in such thick proliferation as in their birthplace, Kent, a fact not unnoticed by the national media and other CAMRA branches. Recently Andrew Eames in *The Times* and David Finn from Hinckley and Bosworth visited our county and some of its micro pubs.

Andrew Eames started his tour at the **Butcher's Arms** which he describes with clerical allusions as, "a small, pew-lined salon across the road from St Martin's Church, and it could feel ecclesiastical, too — if it weren't for the rubber chickens hanging from the roof. Hillier says its size is suited to a maximum congregation of 18; he conducts the service with both conversation and fine ale, the latter tapped from casks in a vestry out back."

Next it is to Broadstairs and the **Four Candles** – "dinky and filled with mostly middle-aged men, united by their appreciation of genial company and good beer" – occupying a former hardware store and bearing a name referencing the famous *Two Ronnies* sketch set in another hardware store. Owner Mike Beaumont supplies the pub with beer brewed in the basement, making it the smallest brewpub in Britain, and in response to comparisons with inviting people into one's own front room replies, "A public house used to be exactly that – a normal house open to the public."

His last stop of the day took him to Margate and the



Fez, “a magician’s parlour of a micropub, its walls covered with a charivari of kitsch”, or as described by David Finn, “an eccentric’s paradise”. More resembling the traditional pub it features a bar, cash register and an extensive range of drinks, and there is a more mixed and younger clientele.

The following day finds Andrew in Whitstable High Street at the **Black Dog**, where he gets into a conversation about archery with a fellow drinker, before taking the train to Rochester, “a kingly place of cathedral and castle”. **Rams 12Degrees** in the High Street is one of the county’s newest micropubs (open just five weeks at the time), and, occupying a former beauty salon, acquiring permission apparently proved particularly challenging for owner Richard Collins.

A few doors along the French run **Flippin’ Frog**, is that micro rarity, one that also serves food. However, there is no ready prepared out of the freezer or elaborate gastropub concoctions, the choice is just whatever Melanie chooses to cook, which on the Friday night of Andrew’s visit was one dish, moules marinière, which he enjoyed with a stilton sauce.

Meanwhile, David Finn, who has a sister and brother-in-law living in Dumpton Gap between Broadstairs and Ramsgate knows East Kent and its micropubs rather well. Of late in Thanet he has visited the **Conqueror**, **Hovelling Boat** and **NauticAles** in Ramsgate; the **Four Candles**, **Yard of Ale** and **Mind the Gap** in Broadstairs; and the **Fez**, **Two Halves**, **Little Prince**, **Ales of the Unexpected** and **Tap Room** in Margate. He also went to the **Harbour Arms**, apparently combined with a visit to the Turner Gallery, and particularly advised for those who “love art and a salty sea breeze” – a meteorological state with which East Kent CAMRA members became well acquainted one November Saturday a few years ago, when it involved being soaked by a turbulent Channel sea.

Also going to the **Potting Shed** in Hythe and our Branch’s very own **Freed Man** and **Just Reproach**, David describes the micropub as perhaps the light at the end of the tunnel, after all the pub closures of recent years. Those who visit our micropubs, he says, “will have discovered a coastal network of pubs that all vary in their interior design and entity, but have in common cask ales and cider. The ‘music’ is conversation and you are treated as an individual customer by the landlord or staff, a relationship that has long disappeared from the larger, managed public houses”.



The Conqueror Alehouse, Ramsgate



The Hovelling Boat Inn, Ramsgate



A branch visit to the Harbour Arms, Margate



THE MAISON DIEU & THE PUBS OF LADYWELL AND BIGGIN STREET Dover's Town Hall and its surrounding pubs

With the White Cliffs Festival of Winter Ales once more upon us we take the opportunity to revive some of the history of its venue, Maison Dieu, and of the adjoining streets as related (with some additions) by Paul Skelton.



The Maison Dieu

The magnificent building that now hosts the Dover Winter Beer Festival was founded by Hubert de Burgh in the 13th century to welcome pilgrims on their trip to Canterbury. From Henry VIII's reign in the early 1500s to 1830 the building was used as the Crown's Victualling Office, and the picture shown here, with its pastoral surroundings, probably dates from years towards the end of that period.

Shortly after the breaking up of the Victualling Offices here, the building was earmarked for demolition, but fortunately a representative of the Duke of Wellington saw the importance of the building and the Board of Ordnance purchased it for use as stores – it is sited in a central position

between the Castle and Western Heights. The tower, occupying a commanding position over every road into the town, was pronounced as being in the finest position for defence against inland attack. However, 1831 did see a large section containing the grand entrance taken down. Maison Dieu, as we know it now, dates from the Victorian rebuilding which was opened in 1883.

Just around the corner in Ladywell and almost adjoining the building we see today, used to stand the **Wheatsheaf**. The earliest references so far come across for this public house are in 1858 from Melville's Directory, and in 1864 when John Thomas East was summonsed to court for threatening the life of his father, the landlord, William East. However, his father decided not to turn up against him in court and the case was dismissed. The house was compulsory purchased by the Dover Corporation in 1938 for the building of the new police station and it was demolished in February 1939. At its end it was said to be taking over £30 a week in trade.



The Wheatsheaf, Ladywell

Other public houses existed in Ladywell. The **Maison Dieu Arms**, kept by Thomas Robert Bourner, and the **Queen of England**, kept by John Collis, have only been traced to 1854, but unfortunately no addresses are known and no further information either side of that year.

However, the pub known for many years as the **Sir John Falstaff** was, and still is, situated opposite the site of the Wheatsheaf, but, dating back to at least 1871, it was not then the same building we see today.



The original Sir John Falstaff, Ladywell

In the mid-19th century Ladywell was only 14 feet wide, and the lane was considered to be one of the boundaries to the town, beyond which were the villages of Buckland, River and Temple Ewell, with almost nothing but fields between. 1867 saw the lane widened to 20 feet at the point shown in the picture

of the Sir John Falstaff, and in 1893 it was found necessary to widen the lane yet again, with the pub and adjoining properties required to be demolished. The Sir John Falstaff was rebuilt in its present form, finally being erected in 1903.

In 1934 the Council were looking for housing for the police and tried to purchase the pub for that purpose – being right next door to the fire station the premises would have been ideal, but it survived to tell the tale. However, it seems the pub did close for a short time during the war.

2001 saw a fire in the building when the owner was awakened by the sound of crashing glass as fire-fighters broke into the pub with the aid of a sledgehammer to extinguish the flames. Luckily, only a small area of carpet was damaged. In 2007 Sarah Webb from the Britannia, took over the pub and promised to change its name to the Finest Hour. However, this never took place, and the pub subsequently changed hands again is now open and serving beers as **Les Fleurs**.

Ladywell proper stops at the River Dour, after which it technically becomes Park Place, although colloquially the whole road, right up to Five Ways Junction with Maison Dieu Road is referred to as Ladywell. For many years the first property in Park Place, overlooking (and to an extent overhanging) the Dour, was the **Park Inn**, a freehouse when freehouses were a rarity. Recently, however, it has been operating as an Indian Restaurant, although with the existing bar retained and which at last visit was still selling real ale.

And for four years from 2013, a few doors further along, could be found the **Rack of Ale**, Dover's first true micropub and now sadly missed following its closure in December 2017.

Returning to the main street there must be some doubt as to exactly in which street Maison Dieu is located. Generally speaking it is referred to as being in Biggin Street, but the terrace immediately opposite is numbered 1-19 High Street. However, those properties include no pubs (and from our recollection never have) so we will continue our perambulation in the direction of the Market Square, and initially into Biggin Street proper.

Here we come across the **Prince Albert**, the sole remaining pub in a street which over the centuries has featured dozens. A public house of some sort is reputed to have been there in 1764, (although obviously not under that name) and the present building may well be a rebuilding, and the frontage does suggest the second half of the 19th century. It was certainly there in 1847, and there is rumour that it was renamed to honour a visit by the Prince Consort in November 1842. On 2nd September 1889 the bar was wrecked by an explosion in the cellar, but the extent of any damage is unknown.

The Wellington Hotel,
Biggin Street, late 19th Century



Civic procession outside the
Salutation, Biggin Street.



Picture- Dover Express

In living memory there were a further half dozen pubs in the street, if we include at the far end the **Rose**, now Santander and actually in Cannon Street on the other side of the New Street junction. Opposite the Rose was the **Wellington Hotel**, a pleasant establishment with public and saloon bars and a back room with a serving hatch and bar billiard table, and very different from the Rose which during the early/mid-sixties had a very

bad reputation. Both disappeared in the early 1970s – the Rose converted to Abbey National and the Wellington demolished to allow for the extension of the adjoining Tesco, when supermarkets still had major premises on main streets.

Returning towards Maison Dieu the imposing **Queen's Head**, a somewhat cavernous building with high backed settles, stood next to the Baptist Church before they were both demolished in 1975 to make way for a new store for Boots, a building of substantially less architectural merit than what it replaced. A fate which also overtook the original **Salutation**, one of a row of old properties opposite the Prince Albert that were demolished in the mid-1960s to make way for a block of shops. Photographs are few but it was of substantial age with an odd arrangement of bars on two levels. A rather sterile replacement was constructed at the end of the new block but after some twenty years it was converted to a Pizza Hut and subsequently taken over by Bradford and Bingley Building Society. It is now occupied by Palace Amusements.



The British Queen, Biggin Street

Lastly, a few doors along from the Prince Albert, could be found the **British Queen** and the “**King Billy**” (William IV). Micropubs before micropubs existed, both were much the size of shop units, and both retained an individuality and character. Along with several adjacent properties they were replaced in the 1970s by new shops and offices.

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The National News

By Martin Atkins

Quarter of Pubs Closed More than a quarter of Britain's pubs have closed since the turn of the century, according to figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) which said the number of pubs had fallen from 52,500 in 2001 to currently 38,815. Those on the outskirts of major cities have proved the most vulnerable with small locals often the worst affected as they bear the brunt of rising beer duty and business rates. At the same time the big pub chains are concentrating on bigger bars, while disposing of smaller pubs. CAMRA's chief campaigns and communications officer Tom Stainer said: "These shocking new figures show the huge loss that has been felt by communities as beloved locals have closed."

However, these depressing figures are rather disguised by the report's findings that total industry turnover has remained fairly constant since 2008, with employment actually up by 6%, suggesting a trend of fewer, bigger pubs, increased emphasis on food and a declining community role. "By focussing on the stability of turnover from pubs and bars since the recession," Tom added, "this study fails to measure the loss of the benefits local pubs bring to their communities". Pubs offer an environment to enjoy a drink with friends, help combat isolation and loneliness and encourage people to feel connected to their community.

And significantly, where pub numbers have held up, and sometimes increased, often seems to be in those areas where they will be ancillary to leisure activities – popular tourist areas and seaside towns – rather than just providing a local function.

The report illustrates the need for CAMRA's three-point plan to save the great British pub, calling for urgent reform to business rates, a full review of the Pubs Code, and a lower rate of duty for beer sold in pubs. "We need the Government to act now to save our pubs from extinction", said Tom Stainer.

Champion Bottled Beer First brewed in 1995 to celebrate 150 years of brewing, Fuller's 1845 has been voted CAMRA's Champion Bottled Beer of Britain. The 6.3% ABV strong ale was described by judges as rich and fruity, and matured to perfection. Durham brewery's Temptation Imperial was runner-up and St Austell's Big Job took bronze. The judging and announcement took place at the BBC Good Food Show, at Birmingham's NEC,

following a series of member voting rounds and regional judging competitions throughout the year.

The beer was the brainchild of the brewery's former head brewer, Reg Drury, and caused the now widely used amber malt to be reintroduced to British brewing. The original beer in 1995 was notable for the involvement of the Prince of Wales who visited the Fuller's brewery and threw a handful of hops into a copper, as his contribution to the brewery's 150th anniversary brew.

Beer Sales Up Beer sales in the third quarter of 2018 were up 4.4 per cent on the same period in 2017, according to the latest data from the British Beer & Pub Association. Pubs in particular benefited from the much needed boost, enjoying their first third quarter growth in more than 15 years, with sales increasing by 0.9 per cent. The success of England at the World Cup, and the good summer weather are seen as the causes of the increase.

Community Ale The eight community owned pubs in Oxfordshire have launched their own exclusive beer, Community Endeavour. Produced by Oxbrew, a small brewery based at Enstone, it is a hoppy, slightly malty, amber beer, at 3.9% ABV, and is believed to be the first example of a collaborative community brew. Oxfordshire Community Owned Pubs Network spokesman Graham Shelton, who led the community buy-out of the Red Lion in Northmoor said, "The alliance between community-owned pubs and small local breweries like Oxbrew is a natural fit. It shows that when people come together, they can resist the march of big business. With 15 pubs a week still closing around the UK, this is a critical time for people to pitch in and support their pubs. So don't just talk about it, go in and buy something."

Breakfast Beer? Rather than consigning unused product to waste, Kelloggs will instead be sending it to brew beer, Throw Away IPA (5% ABV). An arrangement with Salford brewery Seven Bro7hers, swapped part of the usual mash for cornflakes too big, small or overcooked to go in a box of breakfast cereal. The grain content of the resulting brew comprises 30% cornflakes, with the remaining 70% wheat.

Tax Burden While UK brewers are among the biggest and best in Europe, the tax burden they

face compared to their European counterparts is holding them back, argues new research, released by the Brewers of Europe. The UK is one of the biggest producers of beer in Europe, brewing four billion litres of beer, 10% of the continent's total, and second only to Germany, which produces 9.3 billion litres. Commenting on the figures British Beer and Pub Association chief executive Brigid Simmonds said: "The beer tax burden is harming UK brewers and holding back growth, as shown by the gap between the UK and Germany. Germany's beer tax is approximately twelve times less than that of the UK and as a result, it brews over twice as much beer as us."

Good Times for Larger Brewers Recent results from four of the UK's larger brewers record increasing turnover and profits. Greene King's six monthly figures to October, show revenue up at £1,051.2m, a 1.9% increase year on year, with Pub Company sales increasing by 2.7% and Brewing and Brands by 7.5%. In Lancashire north-west brewer and retailer Daniel Thwaites has reported turnover up 4% to £49.9m for the six months ending 30 September, compared with £48m the previous year. Operating profit was up 4% to £8m, compared with £7.7m the year before. Meanwhile Fuller's sales in the six months to September rose 6% to £222m, up from £209m year-on-year, with earnings before tax showing a 2% rise compared to last year, at £38m. And at Marston's the latest financial year has seen both revenue and profits rise. Results for the year to 29 September show revenue up 15% to £1.14bn while underlying pre-tax profits rose to £104m.

"Sell Pubs as Going Concerns" Following Ei Group's announcement to sell off commercial properties worth £350 million CAMRA is urging Ei not to sell the pubs to property developers but as going concerns. The group is one of the UK's largest pubcos with more than 4,500 pubs and says that the sale would allow it to concentrate on its core estate. CAMRA national director, Ben Wilkinson said: "...if a number of pubs are to be put on the market, it's essential other operators are given the opportunity to acquire these as going concerns. Too many times we've seen owners dispose of pubs directly to developers, robbing communities of their locals and licensees of their livelihoods. We call on Ei to do the morally decent thing and sell these sites as licensed premises."

Beer Tourism A forum towards the end of last year brought together cities and towns across the country to look at how to promote beer tourism. Among those represented were Norwich, York,

Oxford, Cardiff, Lancaster and Exeter. British Guild of Beer Writers chairman Pete Brown giving the keynote address said: "There's a huge growth in the experience economy and the opportunities associated with it. The more time we spend on screens and in virtual space, the more we need to reconnect with the world. The search for the authentic is on. Beer weeks play into this. They are grass root-organised, region specific, collaborative and inventive. They provide reasons for people to explore, things for them to learn and a rich array of tastes for them to discover." And CAMRA's chief of campaigns and communications Tom Stainer paid tribute to the CAMRA members who had set up beer weeks. "Our Campaign is all about keeping pubs open and promoting beer, and beer cities are all about driving footfall into pubs and sampling different and local beers." Beer cities initiatives were just the kind of activity branches should be supporting.

National Pub of the Year CAMRA's annual search to find the pub with the best atmosphere, welcome and beer is now down to the final four:-

Chequers, Little Gransden, East Anglia: Multi-award winning village pub owned and run by the same family for over 60 years. Good Beer Guide for 24 year, plus in house brewery.

Cricketers Arms, St Helens, Merseyside & Cheshire: CAMRA's current National Pub of the Year. With 13 handpumps beers come from newer regional brewers and local microbreweries, and there is also an excellent selection of real ciders.

Volunteer Arms, Musselburgh, Scotland & NI: Run by the same family since 1858, the bar and snug are traditional with wooden floors and panelling. A more modern lounge opens at the weekend. Regularly changing beer range tends to be hoppy and pale.

Wonston Arms, Wonston Wessex: Community pub in the heart of the village, it serves four real ales from local breweries plus 160 gins.

The winning finalist is expected to be announced in February.

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CHANNEL VIEW

As Dr Johnson, the 18th century writer, critic and lexicographer, once famously observed: “There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn”. A sentiment, with which many of us would heartily agree, and which ironically has recently received support from a source which might be assumed to be critical. The following appeared in the December 2018 edition CAMRA’s newspaper *What’s Brewing*.

Researchers from the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) found towns and cities hosting too many “unhealthy” businesses like betting shops, fast-food outlets and off-licences could be shortening the lives of residents. But places with a higher number of pubs, pharmacies and museums were associated with healthier residents.

The report Health on the High Street highlights the importance of pubs for mental health and wellbeing. Pubs were also deducted for pay-day lenders, tanning salons and empty shops. Outside London, the researchers ranked 70 high streets giving points for pubs and bars, dentists, opticians, libraries, leisure centres, museums and galleries, pharmacies, and coffee shops.

The report names Edinburgh top in the healthy stakes, followed by Canterbury and Taunton. Grimsby was rated as having the unhealthiest high street. The rankings excluded London high streets, which were ranked separately. Outside London, the report finds the average life expectancy for people living in areas with the top 10 healthiest high streets is two and a half years longer than for those in the 10 unhealthiest ranked areas.

In London, the average life expectancy for people living in Muswell Hill, the area with the healthiest ranked high street, is approximately four and a half years longer than for those in Tottenham Green, where last-placed West Green Road is located. RSPH is now calling for a range of measures to make British high streets more health-promoting, including asking the Treasury to review how businesses taxes are determined to ensure high street shops are not put at an unfair disadvantage compared to online retailers and for local authorities to keep better lists of vacant properties.

Society chief executive Shirley Cramer said: “While the face of the British high street continues to change, the environmental and economic factors that influence

inequalities in health outcomes across the country remain stubbornly intractable. Our Health on the High Street rankings illustrate how unhealthy businesses concentrate in areas which already experience higher levels of deprivation, obesity and lower life expectancy. Reshaping these high streets to be more health-promoting could serve as a tool to help redress this imbalance.”

So there you have it, pubs are intrinsic to the wellbeing and general happiness of the nation and its people. A finding which will come as no surprise to readers of this magazine, but apparently is at odds with the advice coming from Government, where we are restricted to just fourteen units of alcohol per person per week. However, fourteen units of alcohol is approximately equivalent to just seven pints of 3.6% ABV bitter, and if your taste is for something stronger, then keeping within the Government guidelines would allow you even fewer drinks.

A fairly bleak prospect for many, and seemingly at odds with this report. One pint in the pub and no glass of wine with your dinner or gin and tonic later in the evening? Or do give the pub a miss and enjoy a drink or two at home, or save up your pub visits for several days to allow for several pints? – but then of course nothing at home as well. Depressing, sanitised and totally unrealistic, and, on the basis that a great many people rarely drink or go the pub, hardly capable of sustaining those high street pubs that still survive.

And now the Government’s safe level is surpassed by another study suggesting that there is actually no safe level. It would seem that we are here entering the realms of irrelevancy. What human activity exists with absolutely no risk? When the fourteen units a week guidelines were issued one of the strangest statistics to emerge was that that was equivalent to watching a few hours TV a night. Is it? – if so no one seems to worry about TV use. There are no campaigns to cut our viewing.

This study backs up the intelligent and responsible approach to pubs and alcohol, traditionally promoted by CAMRA. It should be applauded and widely endorsed, and everyone should hear about it.



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Friday 19th April to Monday 22nd April



THE TOP TEN REAL ALES (OR PERHAPS, NOT SO TOP TEN) Are the statistics really reflecting reality

November saw the publication by trade newspaper The Morning Advertiser of its annual Drinks List, an analysis of the current state of the UK drinks market, and which although it covered all sectors, was obviously of particular interest to us with regard to cask ale. And very revealing it proved – not so much in what it showed, but in what it did not show.

Firstly, although the accompanying article covered lager, craft ale, soft drinks, wine, spirits and cider, real ale got not a single mention, and only appeared at all by virtue of the report including a list of the ten top selling real ale brands; and secondly no reference at all to micro brewing, which, while in terms of volume of beer brewed might be comparatively small, would, in any list of UK ales, comprise well over 90% of the total.

TOP TEN REAL ALES

1. *Sharp's Doom Bar*
2. *Greene King IPA*
3. *Fuller's London Pride*
4. *Greene King Abbot*
5. *Caledonian Deuchars IPA*
6. *Wainwright*
7. *Marston's Pedigree*
8. *St Austell Tribute*
9. *Timothy Taylor Landlord*
10. *Ruddles Best*

All the usual suspects, some might say, and six of which saw sales decline over the past year. Those currently on the up are Ruddles Best, St. Austell Tribute, Wainwright and well in the lead Molson Coors owned Doom Bar, whose annual quarter million hectolitre output dwarfs the rest of the top ten and is well over half as large again as the next biggest seller, Greene King IPA.

But how many of these ten would be first choice for real drinkers when placed alongside a selection of local microbrews? None of these are bad beers, but the list probably says more about big business marketing, availability and the beer drinker as consumer. An uninformed reader of the report would not know that microbrewing exists even though many pubs' ale sales comprise nothing else, many rarely drink anything else, and in many pubs and bars microbrews sit happily beside the big national products.

Worryingly, also, we hear that Molson Coors is to trial an extra chilled variant of Doom Bar in selected pubs, in an attempt to counter consumer criticism that cask ale is too warm. The temperature planned for Doom Bar Extra Chilled will be 8 centigrade, the same as the average for premium lager. It also echoes findings in last year's Cask Report that many drinkers find real ale too warm.

Obviously the temperature of beer, just like an individual's choice of beer style, is a matter of personal choice, but while most might agree that chilling lager is reasonably appropriate, for many, flavour and taste of real ale is impaired if served below the recommended 11 - 13 centigrade. It suggests that those who would seek real ale reduced to the temperature of lager might not really appreciate the subtleties of real ale.

However, the absence of any reference to micro brewing, and the argument about temperature, should not surprise real ale drinkers. The Morning Advertiser's report is all about trade and trends: it says "In the Drinks List this year, the truth about trends is exposed, with the facts spread out across the pages dedicated to showing operators what to stock in the coming months". In terms of beer that means navigating a way through an industry where power and influence often rests with the global lager brands.

Britain now has around 2,000 breweries and while some of these will be solely or largely producing keg, often on an industrial scale, the majority are quite small and devoted to traditional cask conditioned real ale. They are one of the great success stories of recent years, and for it to continue, rely on the quality of their beers, not on advertising, trends and fashion. They will not feature on anyone's list of major brands but regularly scoop up prizes in competitions, and offer us a range of choice and styles unimaginable a few decades ago. A beer might come in several hundred thousand hectolitres per year, but for many it is now the microbrewers that lie at the heart of real ale.



SAVING YOUR LOCAL Communities all over the country are working to save their local pubs

As the village of Ash anticipates the reopening of the Chequer, we take a look at several other communities who have saved their pub from the clutches of “development”.

In its recent November/December edition *Tyke Taverner*, the magazine of Bradford CAMRA, reported on Calderdale Council’s purchase of the **Holywell Inn** at Holywell Green. At a meeting earlier in the Autumn the council’s Cabinet agreed to compulsory purchase the pub with the intention of transferring the freehold to Holywell Community Pub Ltd. so that it may be used as a community pub and wider social hub for the village. The decision followed the failure of negotiations between the group, which had support from the Plunkett Foundation, and the building’s owner, and in the full knowledge that further costs could be incurred if the owner objected to the CPO. In March the Cabinet had already agreed to loans totalling £105,000 towards the purchase of the pub by HCPL.



Holywell Inn, Holywell Green, Halifax

Support came from both Labour and Conservative councillors who saw the decision as courageous backing for the community and the pub as a social hub. And HCPL chairman John Walsh added, “This isn’t about a pub – it’s about a community”. He said the initial idea went back six years as an idea to reduce social isolation in the village. The group had secured £100,000 from the Plunkett Foundation’s More Than A Pub programme, although that could not be used for the pub’s purchase, while a community share scheme was currently bringing in £700 a month.

Similar stories come from across the country. Recent editions of CAMRA’s newspaper *What’s Brewing* have highlighted current examples.

In Herefordshire, the 17th century grade II listed **Boot Inn** at Orleton, closed in June 2017 when the company which ran it was put into liquidation. However, the parish council listed it as a community asset, and the Orleton Community Benefit Society, set up to save the pub, subsequently agreed with liquidators to take it over. Society chairman John Alderman said: “Our vision to put the Boot back at the heart of our community is just a few steps away.” Once the sale has been completed they will undertake repairs and refurbishment and seek “an experienced and proactive licensee to run the business.”



Boot Inn, Orleton, Ludlow, Herefordshire

At Guilden Morden in Hertfordshire the **Three Tuns** is now officially community owned, following a five-year battle, and more than £250,000 raised in share capital by villagers to buy and renovate the pub. Over £100,000 in grants and loans was awarded under the More Than A Pub programme administered by the Plunkett Foundation, and a mortgage from Co-operative and Community Finance was also secured to cover refurbishment costs. Guilden Morden Community Pub management committee member John Harrison said: “It has been a long and arduous journey

to save the Three Tuns. We are hoping to be in a position to open the pub again next Easter and serve our first pint of beer.”

Meanwhile at Cawsand in Cornwall the **Old Ship** which suffered severe fire damage in 2013 has been bought by Peninsular Trust, a community benefit society, with help from Co-operative & Community Finance, Plunkett Foundation, and the More Than a Pub programme. The trust raised more than £135,000 from its initial share offer, and now plans to reopen the pub retaining as much of the original fabric as possible. If successful it will see the creation of new community facilities and also provide much-needed affordable, rented accommodation.



In the New Forest, the community of Woodgreen is hoping to buy the **Horse and Groom** pub, put up for sale by Dorset brewers Hall and Woodhouse brewery. The village already has a community shop which reopened after a long fight and is now seeking to raise up to £700,000 to purchase the pub. Hall and Woodhouse say it was always their intention for it to remain a pub after sale, and that they have received strong interest from an experienced publican who wishes to run it as a successful village pub, as well as the bid from the local community group.

Going a little further back in time, the following are some more successes.



The Raven, Llanarman-yn-Ial, Denbighshire

Raven Inn, Llanarman-yn-Ial, Denbighshire: Closed in 2009 and destined for conversion into a housing estate the Raven failed to reach its reserve price at auction. Instead, the local community, aided by TV programme “Save our Boozer”, bought it back, setting up Raven Mad Ltd (a company limited by guarantee). Today staffed by volunteers, it serves three changing and locally sourced real ales, and locally sourced home cooked food Thursday to Sunday. In 2011 it won local CAMRA Pub of the Year.

villagers who had set up the Hudswell Community Pub Initiative to raise funds to buy it back through grants and award schemes. Officially re-opened by local MP William Hague in June 2010, in 2017 it was named CAMRA National Pub of the Year. Today it offers Yorkshire Real Ales and an extensive range of whiskies, features its own library, shop and allotments, and is used by a number of social groups.

Pineapple, Kentish Town, London: Closed in 2001 with the lease assigned to a property company, initial hopes of retaining it as a pub disappeared with an application for conversion to flats. Regulars set up an action group, and after getting the pub listed in just eight days drummed up support from leading public figures. After hundreds of objections the planning application was refused. The pub now offers Marston’s Pedigree and four changing ales together with Thai food.



The Pineapple, Kentish Town, London

King’s Arms, Shouldham, Norfolk: When the Kings Arms closed in 2012, it was the sixth pub to close in the village. Backed by the local CAMRA



Save the King's Arms, Shouldham

branch, the Eastern Daily Press and from further afield, by such as Stephen Fry, locals raised £150,000, and along with grants from the Department of Communities and Local Government, Pub is the Hub, and the Geoffrey Watling Charity, were able to purchase the pub. It re-opened in September 2012, and now hosts various community activities, including, live music, poetry evenings and quiz nights along with a café. Two or three real ales are usually available, served direct from the cask, and it was local CAMRA Pub of the Year in 2018.

year after five months of hard work and considerable investment. Subsequently a five barrel brewery was installed using equipment from the defunct Black Dog Brewery of Whitby, with the first brew, 1606 (a 3.7% bitter, named after the pub's date of construction) appearing in November 2010. Subsequently the range was expanded, and today the Farrier's Arms regularly features a couple of home brewed ales alongside a bought in choice. Hosted events include live music, car rallies, beer festivals and a much applauded bonfire night.

And as we go to print comes news of recent local buy outs in Scotland and Wales. In Dunlop, Ayrshire a group of friends initiated a campaign which saw the **Merito** reopened as Scotland's first community-owned pub. While in Nefyn the **Sportsman** is set to reopen for the first time since 2009.

Farriers Arms, Mersham, Kent: Bought in 2009 by a group of some eighty villagers, it re-opened later that



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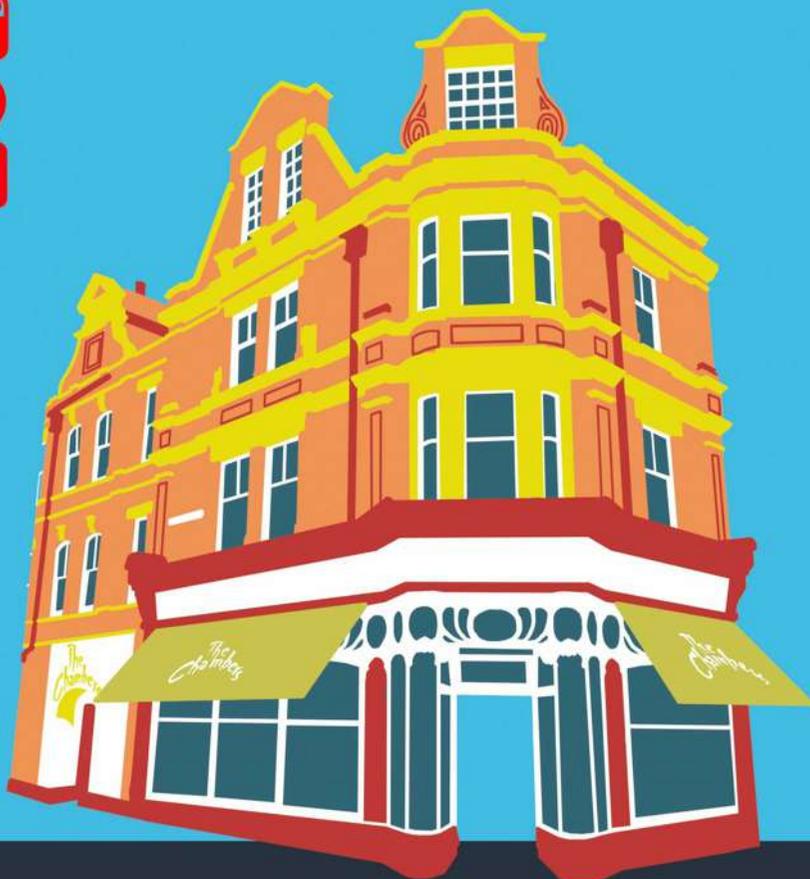


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RETURN OF THE DARK

Stout to make a comeback

At one time to ask for a pint of beer in a pub would land you with a pint of mild, which, although there are pale variants, usually meant dark. There was also in every pub bottled Guinness. For whatever reason, maybe the sudden popularity of lager, from the late 1960s/early 1970s sales of mild nose-dived, while bottled Guinness has been replaced by draught Guinness, to many a very different drink, and of course in no way real ale. Today mild remains a rarity, and although micro brewing has seen a revival of stouts and porters they have often had to play second fiddle to golden ales and various citrus flavoured creations. However, as **Roger Protz** writes in the January edition of CAMRA's What's Brewing things might be about to change.

Are you bored of going into pubs and finding only three or more pale beers on the bar? Help is at hand as a report says 2019 will be the year when stout makes a comeback. Stout and its near neighbour porter have never gone away but they have been sidelined in recent years as a result of the frenzy surrounding India Pale Ale. It's good to see IPA, with its historic associations with Burton-upon-Trent in the 19th century, restored to glory – but porter and stout also deserve a key place in the pantheon of great beer styles.

It was the insatiable demand for porter from the new industrial working class in London in the early 18th century that created the first big commercial brewers. Publican brewers couldn't keep pace with the clamour for porter and new entrepreneurs quickly came to dominate the market. Samuel Whitbread's brewery in the Barbican was declared one of the wonders of the age. The reigning monarch came to see James Watt's steam engine that provided power for the brewing process while enormous cisterns stored and aged nothing but porter and stout.

You can visit the Whitbread site, used today for conferences, but no beer has been brewed there for a long time. But there's no shortage of modern interpretations of the style. I will test your patience by mentioning one beer that's not available at present. Every autumn the Goose Island brewery in the US launches a new vintage of its Bourbon County Stout. When the beer is made available here, the small batch sells out within 24 hours. Those lucky enough to grab a bottle of the 2019 vintage – it was launched with neat timing on Black Friday – can marvel at the complexity of the 15.2 per cent beer, rich in dark fruits, caramel, vanilla and coconut notes that come from the whiskey barrels in which it's aged.



Goose Eye,
Bourbon County

At St Austell's annual Celtic Beer Festival in late November, there was a fine array of ales from all over Cornwall. The standout beer for me was St Austell's own Black Square Imperial Stout (10.4%), which head brewer Roger Ryman ages in oak for several months every year before it's released for public consumption. It has a big hit of warming alcohol with coffee, chocolate and vanilla notes balancing woody and spicy hops.



Imperial or Russian stouts are an important part of the breed. In the 18th and 19th centuries London brewers exported strong versions of stout to Russia and the Baltic States. The beers were so keenly appreciated there that the Russian court gave them a warrant, which explains the "royal" in their title.

One fascinating example of the style is brewed by Harvey's in Lewes in Sussex. Director of brewing Miles Jenner was able to get permission to recreate an Imperial Extra Double Stout (9%) from the descendants of a Belgian exporter named Albert Le Coq. He sold so much of the beer to Russia in the 19th century that his company opened a brewery in



Harvey's Imperial Double Extra Stout

Tartu, now in modern Estonia, in the early 20th century to cut out the long sea journey from London. This worked well until the Russian Revolution in 1917 when the brewery was nationalised and switched to producing lager. But now the original beer has been restored and you can revel in the dark fruits, roasted malts and pungent hops on offer.

Thornbridge brewery in Derbyshire brews an excellent Saint Petersburg Imperial Russian Stout (7.4 per cent). I was present at the brewery a few years ago when batches of the beer were tasted that had been aged in whisky, wine and Cognac



Thornbridge
St Petersburg

barrels, with stunning new layers of aroma and flavour provided by the oak and its previous contents. At the Chiltern brewery in Buckinghamshire, head brewer Tom Jenkinson makes a rich and complex Imperial Export Stout (9 per cent), with such variants as Tudor Spice and Oak Aged. It's worth visiting the brewery shop to pick up some samples – www.chilternbrewery.co.uk.

A Happy Dark New Year!

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UNCRYPTIC CROSSWORD

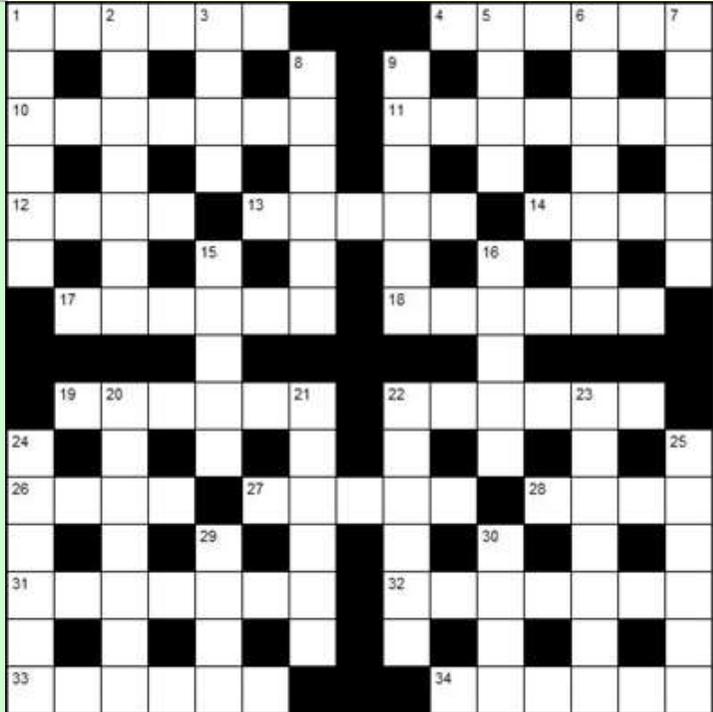
BY JULIAN MCILROY

ACROSS

- 1 Elegant (6)
- 4 Nine counties in the north of Ireland (6)
- 10 Tell a story (7)
- 11 Rearranged letters (7)
- 12 The top of [a mountain, for example] (4)
- 13 Herb used to make pesto (5)
- 14 Invoice (4)
- 17 The Upper House of some parliaments (6)
- 18 A Thatcher, for example (6)
- 19 Get rid of, especially on a computer (6)
- 22 Two-masted boat (6)
- 26 One who fibs (4)
- 27 Type of cook (5)
- 28 Wire enclosure (4)
- 31 Perfect example (7)
- 32 Feeling (7)
- 33 Bicycle made for two (6)
- 34 Suffering unrequited love (6)

DOWN

- 1 Appetiser (6)
- 2 Cost of flight in aeroplane (7)
- 3 Quickly look (4)
- 5 Hole that allows fluid to escape (4)
- 6 White ant (7)
- 7 Walk aimlessly (6)
- 8 Woman (6)
- 9 Sturgeon eggs (6)
- 15 The Universal Solvent (5)



- 16 Dog breed (5)
- 20 Escape from (7)
- 21 Compound that coats the teeth (6)
- 22 Northern European country (6)
- 23 Poison containing carbon and nitrogen (7)
- 24 Customer (6)
- 25 Leguminous plant *Arachis hypogaea* (6)
- 29 Idiot, dull witted person (4)
- 30 Part of the skeleton (4)

**Crossword Answers
on Page 45**



BLACK COUNTRY BLUES

The Beery Boaters tackle rubbish filled canals and the Conservative Party Conference to cruise around Birmingham's canals

Tuesday 25th September 2018 (Our first Tuesday start ever). The old boiler, as its previous owner called it (AKA Martin Atkins' car), arrived at the Cross Inn at Finstall without any problems en route. This is now normally our first stop as the Anglo Welsh hire base at Tardebigge being notoriously difficult to find by road, we have learned that if we locate the Cross then it's not too bad from there. With Martin were Hon. Commodore (Unelected) Jim Green and new recruit, Peter Sweeney, at 45 by far the youngest of us – recalling one of Bernard Miles' rustic monologues about an archaeologist having some 'young students aged 45'. Martin and I were somewhat perturbed to find that the pub had been refurbished since our previous visit, until we found out that the new owners were the Black Country Brewery, always a good bet for decent pubs and good beer.

So after a couple of pints of Black Country beer and some rolls, we proceeded to Tardebigge to find Alan Hodges and Dave Underdown already there. Peter Broberg (Cherub) and Paul Rhoods arrived by taxi shortly afterwards, and after the usual tour of inspection and instruction by a fitter, our boat, Hanbury, set off up the Worcester and Birmingham Canal at about half past two.

We didn't press on all the way to Birmingham in the first afternoon as we might have done in our more youthful and impetuous days, neither did we only go as far as the Weighbridge at Alvechurch as it didn't open until seven, but went about four miles to the canalside Hopwood House. Although an unexceptional Marston's pub, I've never had a bad pint there, so beer and food were partaken of, and the first of several matches of nine-spot dominoes during the week played.



Hopwood House, Hopwood

Wednesday 26th September Ready to set off at ten to eight and half an hour later we entered Wast Hill Tunnel, at 2726 yds the 6th longest currently navigable canal tunnel in the country, with Paul on the tiller (he seems to like steering through tunnels). Out into bright sunshine again just after nine o'clock and, passing Kings Norton Junction with the Stratford-on-Avon Canal less than a mile later, we entered the Birmingham suburbs, passing Bourneville and the Cadbury's Chocolate works, Selly Oak, and finally Edgbaston with its short 105 yard tunnel, the Birmingham to Redditch railway accompanying the canal much of the way. We tied up just before Sheepecote Street Bridge in the centre of Birmingham at half past eleven.



Peter Broberg and Jim Green in the Malt House, Birmingham

For a short session in Birmingham we would normally have patronised the Prince of Wales, but as this was closed (not permanently, I trust), we drank in the Malt House, a large modern pub, canalside at Old Turn Junction, where many of the Real Ales were from the Silhill Brewery at Solihull, and which offered a CAMRA discount – a process for which the till appeared still unprepared, just as it had when we last stopped at the pub six years ago.

The afternoon's cruise went without problem. Setting off around 4pm towards Wolverhampton we turned right at

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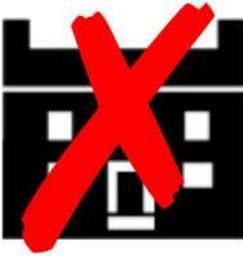
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See <http://www.camra-dds.org.uk/nbss.pdf>

Smethwick Junction and went up the three Smethwick locks to the Old Main Line. From there it was an easy cruise to Tipton along the winding Brindley course, under the steel piles of the M5 motorway, and then past pleasant-enough suburbia to Coronation Park where we tied up as usual under the pugilistic posture of the Tipton Slasher, otherwise statue of William Perry, canal boatman and bare-knuckle prize-fighting champion of England from 1850 to 1857.



The Tipton Slasher

The Fountain Inn, opposite in Owen Street, was his headquarters, and has many GBG entries to its credit, including the current edition, and following tradition we went there first. The pub is a real community local, and although carrying Banks' signage, many other real ales were on offer; I chose Holden's Golden Ale. We discovered subsequently that the pub is now owned by Heineken. The pub does not provide evening food (but very good rolls, or baps as they are known in the Black Country), so Paul phoned the Pie Factory and made a booking for meals for later in the evening. The Pie Factory was one of the now defunct M.A.D O'Rourke's Little Pub Group, and is, I think, the only one which remains in the same condition, i.e., full of peculiar memorabilia and specialising in substantial food. It also still sells Lumphammer beer, although where that is brewed now is anyone's guess. But it's still nice, and there we stayed, and, taking advantage of its Wednesday night 2 meals for 1 offer, ate and drank until closing time forced us out into the street.

Thursday 27th September Weather still sunny, we set off sometime after eight, once Martin had returned with his paper. Hanbury always seemed reluctant to start but never failed to do so. We suspected that the starter batteries were getting past their best. Our plan was to go the few hundred yards ahead to where the Old and New Main Lines are reunited, turn sharp right down the three Factory Locks onto the New Line, and proceed a mile or so to Dudley Port Junction and a second right turn, to go through Netherton Tunnel and head for Brierley Hill and the Bull & Bladder for lunch.

That was the idea! At around about half past nine, while negotiating the deceptively awkward turn into the Netherton Tunnel Branch, the engine suddenly slowed almost to a stop. Obviously, something had attacked Hanbury's propeller! I managed to get it to the towpath opposite the junction before the system seized completely. Working in relays, it took over two and a half hours for Martin and Cherub to get all the rubbish from the propeller, most of which appeared to come from a discarded sofa cover, or similar – lots of spongy padding inside a very tough leatherette type cover!

While we were there, several boats arrived and turned into the Netherton Tunnel Branch, including Hadar, a working boat currently engaged in selling bagged coal to boaters, and which has featured on TV and which we met in 2009 at Mountsorrel on the Leicester section of the Grand Union. Her steerer told me that there was a rally of boats that weekend at Blower's Green and that they were bound for their lunch at the Bull & Bladder. Fat chance of that for us, now!



At the top of Delph Locks

Prop eventually detoxified, we set off again, at 1220, to blast through Netherton Tunnel, and continue past Windmill End towards Blowers Green. Being now several hours late we decided not to take on water here as planned, but probably do so on our way back.

Dudley No. 2 Canal, where it curves round behind Dudley Hill for a couple of miles between Netherton and Blower's Green, is very twisty and shallow in places, and several anglers that we encountered did not seem best pleased that their worm-drowning, on a normally little used bit of water, was being disturbed by boats heading for the Blower's Green rally, and led to the usual exchange of confrontational pleasantries. At Blower's Green Dudley No.2 Canal joins Dudley No.1 above

the bottom lock of the Blowers Green flight which continues up to Dudley Tunnel. It is deep because, for reason of subsidence, always a problem around here, it replaced the two original locks, and we turned left to go down it and on past light industry, towards and through the vast Merry Hill shopping centre.

Apparently, there is a water point hereabouts, but we could not find it. Beyond we passed Hadar and several other boats tied up, their crews no doubt in the Bull & Bladder, before arriving at the top of Black Delph Locks, still known as the 'Delph Nine', even though they had been realigned and their numbers reduced to eight in 1858. Having previously learned the folly of trying to turn in what looks like a winding hole above the locks and getting a boat jammed across the canal as a consequence, we took Hanbury down two locks to where we could turn using a side pound, returned and tied up outside a factory with a noisy extractor fan. Thereafter we retired to the Vine, more popularly known as the Bull & Bladder, Batham's brewery tap, for what would now be our evening session and to discuss what would have to be a revised itinerary to the journey.



The Fountain Inn, Tipton

Meals are only served at lunchtime in the Bull & Bladder, substantial meals and at a very reasonable price, but the baps served at other times were also good value and filling, so we enjoyed what was our only evening session at the pub so far, and the beer, as usual, was very good. As regards the itinerary, we decided to go to Ma Pardoe's at Netherton the following lunchtime, and not fancying mooring overnight in Wolverhampton, where we have previously been set adrift, decided to make that our Saturday lunchtime stop and go back to Tipton for Friday evening. We would be unable to go all the way round the Wyreley & Essington Canal as originally planned, but after Wednesfield on Saturday evening we could take a short cut back to Birmingham by way of the Walsall Canal.

The dominoes reappeared and halfway through the evening Alan and Paul went off to look at other pubs in the area, while those of us remaining were joined at an adjacent table by some of the rally boaters we had come across earlier.

Friday 28th September Back to Netherton, starting at half past eight. Most of us appeared to have been undisturbed by the noisy factory exhaust (perhaps lulled into our slumbers by the beer and whatever rum we had consumed on our return to the boat), however Alan reckoned it had started up again at 6am. Once again failing to find a water point at Merry Hill we replenished our tank at the very quick (but leaky) tap by the Blower's Green pumphouse, and tied up at Netherton at 11.40, to spend the next few hours at the Old Swan (aka Ma Pardoe's, or, as some pretentious type has labelled it the Olde Swan) and a session on their beers. Brewed on the premises, I chose the Old Swan Entire.

Replete with beer and food, we set off once more at four, retracing Thursday's route to Tipton, including having to "rescue" a mud barge which had come loose and was blocking the canal. We moored once again at Coronation Park, returning to the Fountain where this time we stayed all evening, sustained by the excellent beer, substantial rolls and a most appealing barmaid.

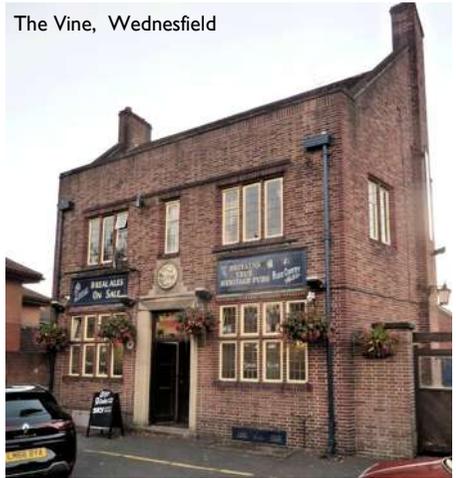
Saturday 29th September Weather still fine. We set off, turning at the junction with the Dudley Tunnel Branch and headed for Wolverhampton, to turn again at the CRT Basin and reversing back to tie up above Wolverhampton Locks at 11.30. Then off to the Great Western Arms to find it absolutely jam-packed. Of course, Wolverhampton Wanderers were at home, to Southampton it transpired. Never mind, the beer, Holden's and Batham's, was good and we managed to cram ourselves in, and got chatting to a couple of Southampton fans. After they had departed, we had a couple more hours of quieter drinking before going back to the boat and setting off just after five.

We turned left onto the Wyreley & Essington Canal at Horsley Fields Junction, and were moored with

proper mooring rings at Pinfold Bridge, Wednesfield, less than two miles away at about quarter past six. Then we looked for the Vine, a CAMRA National Inventory pub, and one which none of us had visited before. It was easily found, only about 50yds away on the non-towpath side along Lichfield Road. So there we went, and found a superb watering hole, owned by the Black Country Brewery and with beers in excellent condition.

There was some discussion as to whether we should continue to the Walsall Canal and Great Bridge for Sunday lunchtime, as we were picking up a lot of rubbish on the propeller. Martin suggested turning and going back to Wolverhampton and Tipton the next day, but the nearest winding hole was about two miles further on. In the end, we decided to play things by ear.

Sunday 30th September Sky clear with some light cloud. In the event, we carried on to the Walsall Canal, making an early start from Wednesfield at just after seven, and having to stop at eight for another clear of the prop, this time we'd collected a sleeping bag, as well as the usual array of plastic bags. We reached Birchills Junction at ten o'clock, and turned right onto the Walsall Canal. More debris on the propeller required another stop just above the eight Birchills Locks. The New Navigation pub above the locks seemed to be closed, permanently or temporarily we did not know.



The locks seemed in better condition than on some occasions (perhaps the result of maintenance being undertaken last time we were here), but from the bottom it was a slow, steady trudge, stopping frequently to clear the prop and sometimes sludging through bits of very shallow canal. At Porkett's Bridge, Alan and Cherub took the opportunity to clear a graveyard of shopping trolleys from the cut while Martin was clearing the prop of plastic bags and what appeared to be the remains of an anorak. We thought that we might look in at the Bush, canal-side at Leabrook Road, before we got to Great Bridge, but on arrival at two o'clock we found a demolition site and access to Leabrook Road blocked off.

Further disruption of our 'best laid plans' as we passed the junctions with the Tame Valley Canal and the Ocker Hill Tunnel Branch. Hereabouts Paul learned from his phone that Ryders Green Locks were closed from 4pm to 8am 'because of vandalism'. I've never yet encountered vandalism at Great Bridge, and I've moored there overnight several times, but, we thought, discretion the better part of valour, and decided to give it a miss and carry on to Birmingham centre.

Ryders Green Locks didn't seem in as good a condition as on previous occasions. Some gates were quite new, others decidedly past their best, and the sides of several locks covered in foliage. The pub sign was still swinging on the Eight Locks pub at the top of the flight, but the front showed it divided into a builder's merchants and beauticians or similar. Another one gone!

Padding Green Junction at 3.40, and left onto the New Main Line, and an hour and a half later we tied up in the same place as the previous Wednesday lunchtime. We decided to start off at Wetherspoons – some of us initially going to the Figure of Eight in Broad Street and the others to the Solomon Cutler at Regency Wharf, both Wetherspoon pubs. Eventually we all assembled at the Figure of Eight by which time it was raining. Later Dave, Alan and Paul went to the Yardbird for some jazz, only to return, finding it closed. Meanwhile, some kind person, discerning that we were CAMRA types, offloaded a wedge of Wetherspoon vouchers on us, being the last day they could be used. So there we stayed for the remainder of the evening. Lots of suits and blue ties milling around – evidence of the Conservative Party Conference in full swing at the NCC. The rain conveniently stopped just before we left at closing time.

Monday 1st October White Rabbits! No early start, but we thought we'd better take on water as we'd only done so once during the week and the tank must have been getting quite low. Alan started cooking breakfast and we set off, only to find a small queue of boats at Old Turn Junction awaiting police checks.

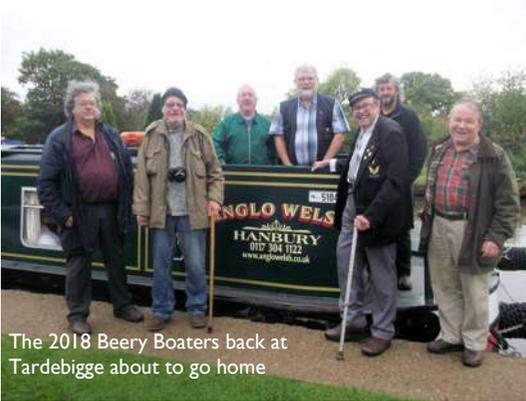
The National Conference Centre backs onto the canal here, and we were only allowed past after we'd been searched by a policeman and his sniffer dog (apparently unperturbed by the sizzling smells of sausages and bacon), and then only with another policeman on board.

Leaving the NCC and the Conservative Conference behind we proceeded to the water point just past the sharp right-hander where Davenport's Brewery used to be and watered-up at a very slow tap. Then an incident-free cruise back to the Hopwood House for beer and dominoes, and with meals booked for the last evening at the Weighbridge at Alvechurch, just a couple of miles away and which didn't open until seven, there was no good rush.

So the last evening. The Weighbridge is always a good pub and I think that it's been in the GBG ever since it opened in 2003. I feasted on Black Country faggots of gargantuan proportions and regaled myself with Enville Tillerman's Tipple beer. We finished with our last game of dominoes. Outside, it was raining, but inside, who cared. It was still raining, almost sleeting, when we left to go back to Hanbury.

Tuesday 2nd October Back to the Anglo Welsh base at Tardebigge in sunshine, to offload and depart in homeward directions after another enjoyable week in the Black Country.

Jim Green



The 2018 Beery Boaters back at Tardebigge about to go home

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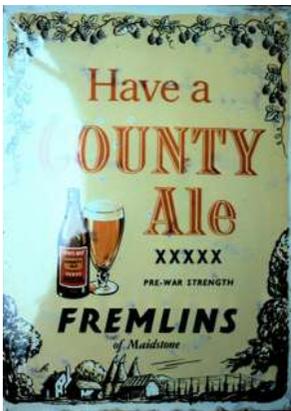


LAST KNOCKINGS

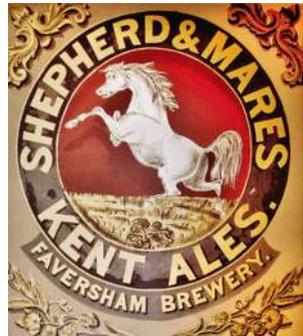
Old Wort

Should Beer Pay Tax? Despite there being no duty increase in last autumn's budget, the UK still pays one of the highest levels of tax on beer in Europe. Including duty, VAT and business rates, tax accounts for a third of the price of your pint in the pub, and except for Scandinavia, sunk in gloomy noir, we pay far more than anyone else. But should we pay tax on beer at all? At one time tea was taxed. Suggest that today and there would be uproar, if not an uprising – tea tax was, after all, a prime element in the American War of Independence. No-one now would suggest that tea was any kind of luxury, but apart from providing a refreshing and tasty drink, it adds very little to our daily nutrition. Both of course have serious cultural significance, with beer, made from wholesome ingredients (at least if it is real ale) – malt, hops, yeast and water – additionally providing nourishment and sustenance. Is it not therefore reasonable, to consider beer a food rather than a luxury, and tax it as such? And if that it is too much for the Treasury to swallow many of us would be quite happy for tax free status to apply only to real ale.

Cold Shoulder Changes of pub name are not unusual, and mostly go unremarked, except for the coverage by the local press. However in York serious passions have been stirred following the renaming of the Shoulder of Mutton pub to the Heworth Inn. New landlady Leah Stannard felt that the old name was inappropriate when a third of her menu was veggie or vegan, and was not perceived well when trying to market the pub as a tourist hotel. But perhaps most critical were the plans to apply for use as a licensed wedding venue from 2019, mutton being a word not best associated with the marriage ceremony, and with brides perhaps not in the first flush of youth. Critical locals went online and an extensive and lively debate ensued, though not without a degree of humour. Someone suggested that Uniquorn might be more applicable, while another's reference to objectors as "sticks in mud", prompted the response that sticks in mud was of course a vegan recipe, and drew speculation on what should be served with it.



Days Gone By Exactly which we cannot be certain, although on the Fremlins poster the style of lettering and reference to "pre-war strength" suggests late 1940s or early 1950s. The other would seem a lot older, perhaps Victorian, and would appear to indicate an earlier incarnation of Shepherd Neame. Any further comments or information gratefully received.



20% Increased Risk A recent study looking at heart disease and cancer found that those who drank one or two drinks four or more times a week were 20% more likely to die prematurely. Leaving aside how much alcohol is involved in one or two drinks, does dying prematurely involve all premature deaths from all causes, or just those deriving from heart disease or cancer? Whichever it is, the report of the study that I read did not say, although it is obviously critical. However, assuming it relates just to the latter, that in itself is critical – 20% of not very much is very different from 20% of a lot – but as is so often the case with these surveys/analyses/studies, the exact critical detail seems reluctant to emerge. But then why spoil a good headline.

Those Kent Bitters A story from some years back related how an injured Londoner with a broken hip, drank his own urine to stay alive, while stuck for six days in minus 10C temperatures on a Spanish mountain side. As for the taste of his urine: "It wasn't very nice....a bit like one of those Kent bitters".

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