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**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

**Issue 36
Summer
2008**

**The newsletter of the Deal Dover Sandwich & District
Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale**

CHANNEL DRAUGHT



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BEER DUTY

**IS IT GETTING TOO HARD TO
SWALLOW?**

Beer Duty & The Budget - See Page 30



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CHANNEL DRAUGHT

ISSUE 36
Summer 2008

Welcome to our Summer 2008 edition of Channel Draught, which at the time of writing seems more like the onset of Autumn than the expected sunny days of June and July – but then the long range forecast did talk of exceptionally warm weather, I seem to recall. Changeable, seems currently to be the favourite word of the weather forecasters, and changeable or varied might be the applicable term for the present state of the country's pubs and real ale. Depending on how you view it, things are either running depressingly downhill or are distinctly on the up.

Firstly, on the downside pubs are closing at a seemingly unequalled rate, and those that remain appear to be increasingly concentrated into the hands of large operators (see Local News and Channel View). Meanwhile, total beer sales in pubs are currently down 8% on a year ago – a fact attributed by many to the introduction of the smoking ban in July 2007. However, on the plus side real ale sales, particularly from the micros, are increasing while lager sales are falling (see National News); those pubs which take an interest in real ale (rather than just having it available) are finding their concern reciprocated by their customers, to whom they are able to offer a wider and more varied choice; while CAMRA membership which passed 90,000 earlier in the year, and has now passed 91,000, is very rapidly heading towards the 100,000 mark.

All in all something of the fabled curate's egg, which we trust will not be your verdict on the ensuing newsletter. As well as local and national news, and reports of the usual assortment of trips and festivals, we include a few salient facts about beer duty, the first part of History of Tower Hamlets pubs and of course the latest expedition of the Beery Boaters.

Martin Atkins (Editor)

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EVENTS DIARY

Wed 30th July – Sun 3rd Aug Beer Festival, Phoenix, Canterbury*

Tues 5th to Sat 9th August Great British Beer Festival, Earls Court, London

Saturday 9th August NW Frontier Walk – marshes & pubs. Meet Canterbury BusStation 11.00

Saturday 16th August Beer Festival, Deal & Betteshanger Rugby Club, Drill Field, Canada Rd, Walmer *

Monday 18th August Branch Meeting, The Crown, Finglesham

Sun 24th & Mon 25th Aug Beer Festival & Charity Fun Day, Three Horseshoes, Mongeham*

Sat 23rd & Sun 24th Aug Beer Festival, Crown, Finglesham*

Fri 29th – Sun 31st Aug Beer & Bands Festival, Louis Armstrong, Dover*

Sat 13th & Sun 14th Sept Beer Festival, Red Lion, Stodmarsh*

Saturday 13th September Ramble – Lydden, Shepherdswell, Barfrestone. Meet Hope 12.00

Monday 15th September Branch Meeting, Cullin's Yard, Dover.

Thursday 18th September NW Frontier mini-bus trip. Meet White Horse, Dover 18.30.

Saturday 27th September Easy Stroll around Staple and Ash. Meet at the Three Tuns at 12.15.

Saturday 11th October Octoberfest Beer Festival, Berry, Walmer*

Monday 20th October Branch Meeting, The Bowling Green, Deal.

Branch Website www.camra-dds.org.uk

Branch meetings are normally held every third Monday of each month and start at 7.30pm.
For full details about pub strolls, please email john.pitcher@ic24.net or call 01304 214153.

Events marked * are not organised by CAMRA

Interested in joining CAMRA? Come along to one of our meetings!

Taxing Times

To no one's surprise the Government has fared badly in recent By-elections, and while the tremendous price hike in beer duty in the budget may not have been a leading issue, it probably resonated with many voters as indicative of the chasm that has developed between our leaders and the daily lives of ordinary people. As we announced in our Spring issue, CAMRA has wholeheartedly condemned the duty rise, 4 pence a pint or 13% this year, to be followed by annual increases of 2% above inflation for the next four years. At a time when pubs are experiencing some of the worst trading conditions ever, with 57 pubs lost permanently every month, and with growing concern over supermarket fuelled binge drinking, the Chancellor's decision can only be interpreted as either complete indifference or a total lack of understanding of the business with which he is dealing.

CAMRA has now launched an all out attack against the Government's tax policy on beer. Charged by our members we will be putting our full weight behind a campaign to force the Government to reverse the budget increase and cancel the duty rises planned for the next four years. We believe the Government's policy on beer duty is both grossly unfair to Britain's fifteen million drinkers and a threat to the livelihood of thousands of publicans. We will also campaign for the extension of small breweries' relief and investigate the possibility of

securing lower VAT on locally brewed beer.

CAMRA Head of Policy and Public Affairs Jonathan Mail said: "Our new tax policy has three strands:

- CAMRA will step up its work with the brewing and pub industry to reinforce the message that continued tax rises are very bad news for community pubs and local brewers.
- We support the extension of small breweries' relief from 60,000hl of production a year up to the European maximum of 200,000hl. We also believe the Government could be much more generous with the number of breweries who receive the full benefit of small breweries' relief as currently this only applies to those with an annual production of up to 5,000hl.
- We will also be investigating the advantages of tax incentives for locally produced beer.

"Our priority is to target the pre-budget report in November".

Additionally, an emergency motion passed at last month's CAMRA AGM has instructed branches to elect a special committee member to talk to their British and European Parliamentary representatives; while branches will also be encouraged to approach prospective candidates about the vote winning value of the issue.

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The Local News

Contributors - Martin Atkins, Anne McIlroy, Roger Marples,
John Pitcher, Tony Wells, Malcolm Birt and
Di Jones etc.

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

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:

channeldraught.pubnews@virgin.net

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

DOVER

Hare & Hounds, Folkestone Rd: Closed in January, with Shep's reportedly "considering their options" it was no surprise when, in April, they applied to convert the pub to a dwelling and build four houses on the car park. Falling beer sales, they claimed, had left the pub unviable, while its location and lack of facilities precluded investment in catering. While accepting that beer sales are down, the Hare and Hounds is not the only pub to find itself in that position, and being the only remaining pub at that end of Folkestone Rd. the Branch is opposing its loss. We believe that with the right landlord the pub has a good future as a traditional local. At the time of writing the Dover District Council have refused the car park development but have not yet determined the application for conversion. The only pub now currently open in Folkestone Rd. is the **Ren-naissance** – the boarded up **Orange Tree** has had permission for residential development for some years, and the **Engineer** is well on its way to another block of flats.

Eight Bells, Cannon Street: Wetherspoons are currently applying for the installation of two retractable awnings on the front elevation – presumably protection for smokers. A pint of Pedigree recently consumed on the premises was considered, by one of our members, to have reverted to its "old" taste. If so can only be good, of late the beer has seemed a poor imitation of its former excellence. Also with alterations in mind is the **Ellie**, Market Sq. which has permission for the change of use of first floor to a bar, together with an external seating area. As far as we know, however, the pub is without real ale. At the **Britannia**, Townwall St. real ale is intermittent. None when visited in mid April, although they were planning to have Spitfire and Bombardier for St George's Day. Other beers to have appeared of late include Wychwood Hobgoblin, Wadworth 6x and Bass. At the time of writing we hear that this pub is closed.

Prince of Orange, New St: Closed from before Christmas and since February up for sale for £250,000 the pub has been subject to mixed sto-

ries. Apparently, sold to a local pub landlord, by owners Admiral Taverns, with plans to reopen as a pub, in late June a planning application was being publicised for conversion to six flats. We await developments with interest. Meanwhile the **Castle** in Russell St., which we understand to be also owned by Admiral Taverns remains closed although someone has been "keeping an eye on it." While there are currently no signs of it reopening, as far as we know, it hasn't been put on the market.

Falstaff, Ladywell: Also closed since last year the pub reopened in the spring, with new licensees from the Wheelwrights; the proposed, but never implemented, new name of last year, the Finest Hour, having been dropped in favour of retaining the existing. Handpumps have been reinstalled, but no information on ales as yet (see letters and E-mails). Meanwhile new faces just down the road at the **Park Inn**, where Mandy and Pete have taken over from Dave Hicklin (ex Boars Head), who has moved on after managing the pub for the best part of a year. Spitfire and 6X remain the real ales but a third handpump is due to be installed, on which a guest will be carried.

Old Endeavour, London Rd: The pub has been shut since the premises was involved in a police anti-drugs operation in early April, although Shepherd Neame say it will be reopened. Nearby the **Sportsman** appears to have abandoned all attempts to sell real ale, the handpumps having been replaced by enormous lager fonts.

Blakes, Castle St: Friday 30th May was a very special day at Blakes – the anniversary of the death of the very much missed Steve Callacher. Money had been set aside from his estate to support a memorial evening, and it proved a great success. Almost everyone who knew him from Blakes or the White Horse was able to attend, and there was food and drink in plenty. Peter and Kathryn provided an excellent selection of ales, ciders and perries, including, very much to Steve's own taste, Summer Lightning and Goacher's Gold Star. There was also a particular good bitter from Bateman's at about 4.3% ABV. Special thanks, however, must go to Steve's friend and former work colleague Paul Blake for his work and efforts in organising the event. And the **Louis Armstrong** will also be paying tribute to a long standing regular, Mick Fox who died earlier in the year, when the pub hosts a festival of Kentish ales and local bands over the last weekend in August. Mick was a renowned harmonica player who over the years had performed with many bands.

White Horse, St James St: The pub offers a fine example of real ale's current revival (see National News), often having problems keeping up with demand: three barrels of Landlord can disappear over a weekend, while the old big seller, Stella Artois, sells a quarter of what it used to. Except for its regular, Landlord, the pub concentrates on micros, with a handful of breweries prominent – Acorn, Titanic, Dark Star, RCH, etc. In May a variety of milds appeared including a very

good example from Dark Star, and a more challenging brew from Acorn. Also from Acorn in May we enjoyed the excellent Palisade, which was drunk all too quickly, while in early July a special mention must be made of Moorhouses appropriately moreish 4.1% Pride of Pendle best bitter.

Fox, Temple Ewell: St George's Day evening found an excellent pint of Manns St George's Ale among the selection on the handpumps, and the pub crowded with St George's Day diners, including, we understand, a contingent from Dover. Towards 11.00 pm the assembled company broke into a rendering of 'Always be an England', although if the Dover element comprised who we think it did we would be surprised if the singing stopped there. At the nearby **Railway Bell**, Kearsney there have been new additions to the ale range, a visit in mid June finding Gadd's No 3, Harvey's Sussex and Tring Jack O'Legs.

DEAL

Smith & Jones, Queen St: Work to transform Deal's former Jobcentre into an outlet for the Barracuda Group, including an external seating area at the back of the building, is due to start shortly, following approval by Dover District Council. Deal Town Council had opposed the plans, fearing it would have a negative effect on residents. However, the developers claimed they were family-orientated and wanted to integrate with the community, while somewhat conversely maintaining that they hoped to create an increased vi-

brancy and vitality in that part of the town.

Saracen's Head, Alfred Sq: Starting on Thursday May 8th the pub now offers a weekly open-mic night at 8.30pm. with local duo Carey and Rathbone as hosts. Despite rumours of a fourth hand pump being installed at the **Prince Albert** opposite, it currently continues with just three. Real ales regularly include locals Gadds and Nelson and from further away Cottage, whose dark Somerset and Dorset ale (in memory of the railway line), was thoroughly enjoyed in late June.

Ship, Middle St: Whether or not there exists some affinity between the pub's cellar and dark beer must be a matter of speculation, but last year it produced one of the best pint's of Dogbolter this correspondent had ever tasted, and this year repeated the achievement with Dark Star Original. Of late, in addition to the latter the Ship's beer range has included Gadds No. 7 and Seasider, Deuchars and Dark Star Hophead.

Three Horse Shoes, Great Mongeham: Sadly, Alison and Graham, who celebrated their first anniversary at the pub on May 15th, left the pub at the start of July. At the time of writing we have no further information about their decision but we wish them well. During their spell at the pub they had established a reputation for an ever changing selection of real ales, together with real cider, and from May, had introduced mild as regular. During the winter and spring their charity bottle collected £665 which was used

to provide new kit for St Margaret's Disability Football Club and to support 4 Pawz & More Dog Rescue for whom the pub hosted a fund raising day on Saturday 31st May. We understand the pub has re-opened under new management from mid-July.

Bohemian, Beach St: We understand the pub has been sold to Enterprise (see Tony's Tappings). Elsewhere on the seafront in early July the **Port Arms** was selling Greene King beers; the **King's Head**, London Pride, Master Brew, Harveys Sussex and Bass; while at Dunkerleys the single hand pump had its clip turned round. In the High St. real ale was Spitfire and Directors at the New Inn, and just Bass at the **Strand**.

New Plough, Middle Deal Rd: As reported in our Spring issue with permission applied for to convert the pub to residential and build new houses in the grounds, its future as a licensed premises seem fairly bleak. Meanwhile it stays boarded up and looking forlorn. One unusual feature remains the pub's sign. A kind of shield shape, but with concave sides and chamfered corners, perhaps like a section through a bell. The only other we know of is that at the Arlington, Snargate St., Dover, which is now a bistro.

SANDWICH & RURAL

Chequers, West Hougham: The village is now without a pub, Dover District Council having granted permission in June for the demolition of the Chequers and replacement with five houses.

However, the lack of local support for its retention, suggests that perhaps the community deserve no better. Of late, too, its owners appear to have shown no great enthusiasm for maintaining it as a viable operation, although admittedly they did try to keep it going for five or six years after Stephanie Phillips' departure. Our own feeling was that there was potential, perhaps as a combined pub and shop, West Hougham having lost its only shop some years ago.

Also still without a pub is Ashley where the **Butcher's Arms** remains closed, but unlike Hougham there is serious local interest in seeing it re-open. We understand that its owner and former landlord, Doug Vickers, is currently looking after the newly opened **Kentish Quarryman** at Dutton. At Martin Mill we hear the **Ugly Duckling** is closed with talk of a change of hands, or least a new landlord, while local rumour sees it as another pub/dwelling conversion. At Whitfield we hear that the **Royal Oak** is closed again and at Eythorne the **White Horse**, closed for several years, is being advertised for sale at £350,000. No further news on the **Way Out Inn**, Westmarsh or the **Endeavour** at Wootton – both, as far as we are aware, still closed.

Jackdaw, Denton: A visit in mid April found Hart's Ice Maiden in good nick and a particularly good pint of Dark Star Spring Equinox. Our reporter was very impressed by the latter's tangy lemony taste, only to find a lemon pip at the bottom of the glass! Also available were long time regulars Ringwood bitter and Spitfire. Al-

though in early May the former was apparently replaced by Master Brew – many would hope that this is of no particular significance. Prices at the pub remain at the top end for our Branch area at a West End style £3-20 a pint.

Yew Tree, Barfreestone: As reported in our Spring issue the pub is now seriously food orientated, with the distinct feel of a move upmarket. Drinkers are mainly catered for by the small rear bar, where three hand-pumps have now been installed, and general opinion seems to feel this works quite well. Both food and beer display strong local representation, Hopdaemon and Gadds being particularly prominent, although ales from further afield appear regularly as well. In May mild was back on tap

from Goachers, the Yew Tree being of course one of our most consistently regular outlets for real mild, and it is hoped to retain it as standard. There are also plans to add a Kentish cider to the selection.

Royal Oak, Nonington: A visit in mid April found a good pint of Harvey's Sussex, and the news that the pub was due to change hands in about three weeks time. Whether or not related, the pub was closed Sunday afternoon about a month later and has seemingly remained closed throughout the rest of May and June. In late June serious decoration was under way with the pub due to re-open in early July.

Greyhound, Aylesham: Having been refused conversion to a day nursery



LOUIS ARMSTRONG

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Selection of Real Ales

Friday, Saturday & Sunday 29th, 30th & 31st August

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Sat 3pm - 5pm - *Joe Jones*

Sat Evening - *Tribute to Mick Fox* - *Open Mike* - *Tosh & Friends*

Sun Afternoon - *Burt Osbourne*

Sun Evening - *Sheila Collier's Southern Serenaders*
with Trefor Williams

BAR-B-Q

permission has now been applied to convert part of ground floor and first floor to offices and part of ground floor to pub/restaurant.

Black Pig, Staple: Now owned by Punch. Sheps Beers appeared to have dropped from the selection. A visit in early May found Fuller's ESB and Woodforde's Wherry. At nearby Gilton the **Volunteer Inn** continues to offer an expanded range of real ales. The regular Flower's IPA being joined by Sharp's Cornish Coaster and Harvey's Sussex recently.

Fitzwalter Arms, Goodnestone: Current proprietors, David Hart and Claire Gutteridge, took over the pub in late 2006. Their food quality, utilising a fairly simple menu and concentrating on local produce, has earned them a reference in several eating out guides, while the atmosphere is welcoming and beer well kept beer, as discovered recently by a rambling group. "Master Brew was in excellent form, and though only three or four had lunches, the lone landlord coped well with selling snacks, coffees, etc." Also rambler friendly is the **Anchor Inn**, Wingham, although a group in late March were "forced" to drink 8% Biddenden Dry – apparently all the real ale having been drunk the day before.

Also on the ramblers' recent itinerary have been the **Two Sawyers**, Woolage Green, and the **Bell**, Shepherdsdown. A stop at the former found Hopdaemon Skrimshander and Adnams bitter in mid April, a welcome respite from cold winds, and a good reception from a very pleasant bar-

maid. The Bell was besieged by a 30 plus group on St George's day, but the pub, with the help of a passing off-duty member of staff, coped excellently, with many requests for coffees and soft drinks, as well as some very fine Adnams bitter.

Five Bells, Eastry: Now with new proprietors, selection appears to be Greene King IPA plus guests – in recent months including Hook Norton Old Hooky, Adnam's Broadside and Fuller's London Pride. A visit in mid-May found a particularly good pint of Greene King IPA. At Woodnesborough **Turners Inn**, is not a new pub, but, as we reported last issue, the renamed and re-opened Charity (what was the last incarnation, the Poacher?). Visits so far have found two real ales available – Spitfire/Harvey's Sussex and Spitfire/Old Speckled Hen. We gather, that following the current trend, food is much in evidence.

Plough, Ripple: Henry IPA also here in mid April. The pub regularly offers six real ales now and appears less reliant on Sheps, who had one time seemed to be its principal supplier with two or three ales on the pumps. Alongside the Wadworth brew were Harvey's Best, Bass, Broadside, Master Brew and Fullers ESB for which, to our knowledge, the pub remains our Branch's only regular outlet. Nearby at Ringwould the **Five Bells** is up for sale.

CANTERBURY

Leopard's Head, Military Rd: Canterbury Branch have now given up try-

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ing to get clarification from Canterbury City Council about their planning policy regarding change of use from "Public House, Wine Bar or other drinking establishment" to "Hot food takeaway". The recent conversion of the Leopard's Head, a former Tomson Wotton, and subsequently Whitbread pub, to a take-away pizza outfit, is a case in point. No planning consent appears to have been obtained for the change of use, and the understanding of the branch is that in these circumstances planning consent is required. However despite several attempts to establish the facts of the matter, even utilising the assistance of Canterbury MP Julian Brazier, who was particularly supportive, no satisfactory response was forthcoming. In fact the Branch were left with the distinct feeling that the

City Council had not even bothered to ascertain exactly the nature of their enquiry, but had assumed that the correspondence was simply CAMRA focussing on the single issue of Real Ale, and not the broader picture of pub-closures. The relevant statutory provisions would seem to clearly distinguish between the two types of enterprises and are laid down by the **Town and Country Planning (Use Classes)**

(Amendment) (England) Order 2005 as follows:-

Class A4. Drinking establishments
– use as a public house, wine-bar or other drinking establishment

Class A5. Hot food takeaways – use for the sale of hot food for consumption off the premises

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Phoenix, Old Dover Rd. The pub's bar now sports seven handpumps, offering regular ales Bombardier and Young's Bitter, plus five guests, including always a mild – in late June this was a very palatable 3.5% brew from Theakston. Earlier, the Spring Bank Holiday weekend, had seen a fine selection of local beers including Skrimshander and two from Nelson. A summer beer festival, featuring twenty to thirty real ales, is scheduled for Wednesday July 30th to Sunday Aug 3rd to coincide with Canterbury Cricket Week.

Skippers, Bridge: Briefly re-incarnated as Malkins, a wine bar/bistro style establishment last year, the property, as we reported in our Spring issue, has now reverted to its old name – and at the time of writing is closed. During the period of its temporary makeover it was offering real ale, Master Brew; though we understand at about £3.25 a pint, and that was before this year's budget increases.

Old Brewery Tavern, Stour St: Our comments in the last issue contained a certain factual inaccuracy – see Letters and E-Mails. However this does nothing to detract from the excellence of the venue which is well worth a visit. Meanwhile on the other side of the town centre **Simple Simon's** has been bought by Young's, who will be renaming it the Parrot, or some such name.

New Inn, Havelock St: At the time of writing the change of hands, due to have been completed some months

ago, still hadn't taken place, but, we understand, was set for July – the present licensees having been behind the New Inn bar for 26 years. However, despite uncertainty over the transfer, the Spring Bank Holiday Beer Festival went ahead as normal, and the new owner plans to keep things much as they are – a traditional talking and drinking pub.

Red Lion, Stodmarsh: Robert Wigham's annual festival is put back this year from July to mid September, Sat 13th / Sun 14th. As well as the usual variety of ales, BBQ, live music, etc., we hear that a helicopter pub crawl is planned – that sounds like a first, at least in this neck of the woods.

Rose, Wickhambreaux: Also joining the beer festival set, the pub held its First Annual Beer Festival over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend from Friday to Monday. In addition to the pub's normal range a stillage was set up at the rear, offering, at any one time, eight beers from a total selection of fifteen. Among better known beers there were some complete rarities, such as from Norfolk Buffy's Mucky Duck porter, and Humpty Dumpty's Humpty Ale. There were several golden ales, old festival favourites such as Orkney Dark Island and Dark Star Festival and several milds. Accompanying events included a BBQ and Hog Roast, Morris Dancers and a Jazz Band. Certainly late Sunday afternoon a happy and satisfied looking throng were to be found drinking and relaxing in and around the pub.

William IV, Littlebourne: latest reports suggest that the pub, closed now for some time is being lined up for use as a residential home.

FOLKESTONE

Following the general trend Folkestone is displaying its share of pub closures. The longer term casualties, **Martello** and **Two Bells** – future uncertain but looking increasingly unpromising, **White Lion** – allegedly waiting for conversion to flats, and the **Brewery Tap** – rumours of its re-opening seem almost as prominent as the “open as usual” scrawled on one of its boarded up windows, are now joined by the **Pullman**, **Three Mackerel** and the **Shamrock and Thistle**. The latter appears gone for good, an application having been submitted last year for conversion to a variety of uses, not including public house. At the moment the building (aka, over the years, as the **George** or the **Chequer**) stands at the corner of George Lane undertaking no obvious use, unless it be conversion to flats; and no indication of its former use, except the inscription, “Folkestone's oldest alehouse, est. 1525,” left, with rather cynical irony, over the door. Of the Pullman, recently subject to substantial renovation, and the Three Mackerel we have no further information, except a note in the Pullman's window stating closed until further notice (or similar).

Lifeboat: With seven handpumps the pub now regularly offers half a dozen real ales. Sharps ales now appear to have joined the more widely seen London Pride, Bombardier and Har-

veys Sussex as a regular on the bar – Doom bar, Eden Ale and IPA all having been noted. One Thursday at the start of July the pub displayed all the atmosphere so often absent from pubs today, a crib match in progress and lots of people chatting and drinking. Sharps beer, also, at the equally traditional, and nearby, **East Cliff Tavern**, where Eden Ale along with Hop back Odyssey was available in late May. The start of July found Skrimshander and an excellent pint of Dark Star Original.

Elsewhere in late May **Chambers** were selling Westerham Black Eagle as their standard bitter, in place of Adnams, their range otherwise unchanged, while **Harveys** were still maintaining Bombardier, alongside Courage. At the **Happy Frenchman** one real ale from one of the nationals still seems to be the philosophy. And Bombardier now seemingly established as a regular companion for Greene King IPA at the **Park Inn**, where the Kent Branches enjoyed a very successful regional meeting at the start of July.

In the Bayle the **British Lion** and **Guildhall** continue to offer an interesting range of guests alongside their regular beers. Towards the end of May the former seemed to be following a north west theme with Jennings Cumberland and Hurricane from Bryson's of Morecambe. At the Guildhall real ale lovers were able to enjoy Otter, Mordue Radgie Gadgie, Harviestoun Bitter & Twisted and Skinners Cornish Knocker, among others including at the start of July an excellent pint of Wadworth 6X.

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TONY'S TAPPINGS

The perambulations and musings
of our Pubs Officer, Tony Wells

QUOTE

*He that buys land buys many stones,
He that buys flesh buys many bones,
He that buys eggs buys many shells,
But he that buys beer buys nothing else*

John Ray

WHO WOULD WANT TO BE A LANDLORD?

There has been the odd time or two when I have considered running a pub. After all it can't be too hard: buy in some beer, stand on one side and chat to the customers while you sell it. However, this is far from the truth, as any landlord will tell you. One of the previous landlords of my local was heard to say that "running a pub is like looking after a child. It needs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, care and attention".

Occasionally, I do wonder what it does take to be a good landlord. Ian Marchant's book, "The Longest Crawl" contains a quote from "An Innkeepers Diary", written by John Fothergill and published in 1931. John was the landlord of the Spread Eagle in Thame, Oxfordshire, in 1922, and in his diary, he lists the seven requirements to be good innkeeper:

1. *14-16 hours a day and few even half days off*
2. *some capital with which to have good food ready and to waste*
3. *a mind for the tiniest of details*
4. *an all-round outlook*
5. *an ability to formulate a policy and courage to carry it out*
6. *to have had first a good time in life oneself*
7. *a natural, not enforced, love of the job.*

So, the next time you visit a pub and talk to the landlord, keep in mind the requirements he has had to meet, and that's before all modern day problems that he has to face.

PUB OF THE YEAR

As we reported in the last issue of Channel Draught, The Berry on Canada Road, Walmer, won Pub of the Year 2008, in a very closely fought competition. An awards presentation night was held at the Berry, on Monday, 2nd May, and a very good night it was as well.

It was well attended by locals, CAMRA members and other landlords. On tap was a beer from Harvey's, which Chris had got in especially for the occasion: Copper Wheat Ale. As well as being in great condition, you had your first pint

on the house. To help absorb the beer, Chris laid on one of the best buffets I've seen in a very long time. Of particular note was the cheese board, fresh strawberries and biscuits. A great event and a well deserved award.

POTY 2008 runners up were: Crown Inn, Finglesham; The Coastguard, St Margaret's Bay, Fleur de Lis, Sandwich and The White Horse, Dover.

Other pictures of the event are available on our web site at www.camrads.org.uk



PUB NEWS

Roger Morris, landlord of the **Chance Inn** celebrated 33 years at the Chance on 2nd June 2008. He normally offers one real ale from a rotated selection – at the moment this comprises Bass, Bombardier, Wadworth Henry IPA and Sharp's Doombar.

The **Place Brasserie**, Sandwich, is now serving Gadds #7 alongside Shepherd Neame Spitfire

The **Bohemian**, on Deal seafront, has been sold, reportedly to Enterprise Inns, and has gone through a refurbishment, which apparently involves a lot of white paint. However, it is still selling the range of beers and ciders it did before, and we understand that former owner John will be staying on for a while as manager.

As well as being chosen as our pub of the year the **Berry**, has moved into the technological age, and is now offering WiFi access in the pub.

The **Telegraph** has a new landlord. Robert Hutson, took over the pub in April, as a change from his self-employed job as an electrician and first aim is to attract more people who live locally back into the pub. The regular beers are Shepherd Neame Master Brew and Spitfire and their recent seasonal beer was Bishop's Finger. They run a regular crib night and a Thai night, and at the bar they serve filled rolls for £1.00.

A TRIP UP NORTH

According to Google Maps, 258 miles north of Dover, or a 4 hours and 29 minutes drive, is the Yorkshire town of Barnsley; and at the beginning of May you would have found us heading northwards on such a journey. The main aim being to present the Winter Ales Beer of the Festival award to Dave Hughes, the head brewer at the Acorn Brewery, for their Target IPA, but as our visit coincided with a mild pub crawl by the Barnsley branch of CAMRA, we had a second objective of tagging along with them for a couple of pints.



Trisha & Tony Wells present the Beer of the Festival 2008 Certificate to Dave Hughes, Acorn Brewery

We arrived at The Gatehouse, Barnsley, in plenty of time and my first pint was Acorn Barnsley Bitter – it wouldn't have been appropriate to be drinking anything else. And what a pint – I just wish we had had more time as I could have spent the whole afternoon on this beer. Having met up with Dave Hughes and the members of the Barnsley branch we presented the award, and Dave told us a bit about his brewery, and future plans. He set up the Acorn

Brewery in 2003 with a 10 barrel plant from the Forest & Firkin in Stafford, after the brewery he used to work for, the Barnsley Brewery based at Elsecar, went into liquidation. Since then the brewery, all of whose beers use yeast strains from the original Barnsley Brewery dating back to the 1850's, has gone from strength to strength, including a Silver Award in its class at the GBBF in 2006. Two years ago he acquired a larger plant from the Blackpool Brewery, which was mothballed for a year while



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time was spent looking for a suitable site. Finally, one having been found the move to the new site and commissioning of the new brewery took place from Feb 2007 to Aug 2007 and was achieved without interrupting production. Dave's next aim is to buy a pub as a showcase for the beers from the brewery.



it was Mild day, followed by a very good pint of Jennings Yan Tyan Tethera, which I ordered by asking for a "pint of Jennings". After a suitably appropriate amount of time it was on to the next pub: the Ring O' bells at Silkstone. This is a smaller, cosier pub, with a welcome just as friendly as the Wentworth Arms. Of the four beers on offer I had a reasonable pint of Greene King Mild which was followed by a very good pint of Morland Original Bitter – a beer I have never drank before.

One thing I need to mention at this point are pork pies. Behind the bar there were pork pies for sale, and Trisha and I, feeling a little hungry, purchased a couple – and magnificent they were, totally unlike the ones you get from the supermarket down here. They had a moist light feel and weren't as solid as the pies I usually come across; and they went down a treat with real ale. They came from Brian the Butchers in Barnsley, who unsurprisingly had just won an award for his pork pies. As we prepared to leave the Barnsley branch to their pub crawl and travel onwards the landlord presented us all with slices of his last two pork pies to see us on our way.

So, if you are in Barnsley, visit the Gatehouse in Barnsley, drink Acorn beer and eat Brian's pork pies. If you are out and about any where in the country and are looking for something to do, why not look in on the local branch of CAMRA. You never know, they may have an event on to which I am sure you will be very welcome.

So, our first objective having been achieved, it was now on to objective number two. As we were travelling by car, we borrowed one of Barnsley's branch members to act as a local guide and get us from one pub to the next. Our first stop was the Wentworth Arms, Penistone, and a warm welcome from the landlord. This is a large multi-roomed pub, near the station, with plenty of room to sit and chat. I had a good pint of Marston's Merrie Monk, as



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The National News

By Martin Atkins

Ale Sales Increase

From pubs, supermarkets and off licences, the story is the same, ale sales increasing at the expense of lager. For the first time ever, the year to May 18 saw lager sales in supermarkets and off licences fall while ale increased – 5.7% down compared to a rise of 3.3 % – and similar changes in consumption have been reported for the draught market in the pub, particularly with respect to the smaller producers. In January Wetherspoon, announced that while there had been a drop in demand for spirits and premium lagers, real ale, coffee and food had all increased, and their winter beer festival had seen a 25% increase over last year's, with the principal beneficiaries the micros. Elsewhere one supplier to a local real ale pub said that while lager and national cask ales were also down micro brews were up 4-5%. The White Horse, Dover often has problems keeping up with the demand for real ale, and at the Louis Armstrong Skrimshander and the regular micro guest now outsell the traditional stalwart, Carling Black Label. In Walmer during the winter, the Berry found that a barrel of Harvey's 4X Old Ale, put on at the start of Friday evening, might with luck just see out Saturday, and on Deal seafront at the Bohemian has had to double the number of handpumps. Meanwhile most of local micros have more trade than they can handle.

CAMRA Passes 90,000

CAMRA's membership is now permanently over 90,000 and heading towards 100,000. CAMRA Press Officer Tony Jerome said: "We hope more consumers will join us to make sure drinkers of real ale will always have a powerful voice to speak on their behalf. Our next aim is to reach the 100,000 mark and we hope that 10% of our membership will be less than 30 years old by the time we hit this landmark." Among recent new members has been actor Neil Morrissey who joined at the Bradford Beer Festival. With his business partner TV chef Richard Fox he has just bought Ye Olde Punch Bowl Inn in Marton cum Grafton, North Yorkshire, and plans to brew his own beer.

S&N Buys Caledonian

In a final act before being partitioned by Carlsberg and Heineken, Scottish and Newcastle has purchased the 70% of the Caledonian Brewery that it does not already own. It already owned the site of the brewery in Slateford Rd., Edinburgh, having purchased it at the same time as it bought the 30% stake in the brewing business in 2004. Caledonian has had tremendous success in recent years with Deuchars IPA, CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain in 2002, and now an established national brand. However the Harviestoun Brewery in Alva, purchased by Caledonian in 2006, has been

returned to independence, having been bought by the former shareholders of Caledonian's non-S&N 70%.

Understandably CAMRA has concern over the future of the Slateford Rd. brewery, and Chief Executive Mike Benner commented: "The onus is now on Heineken, when it takes over S&N's UK interests, to act as a good steward for this award winning brewery and CAMRA will be urging it not to alter what has been a winning formula." CAMRA will be seeking assurances over the future of Caledonian's brands and the brewery, particularly as part of Deuchar's success is due to its provenance as an Edinburgh beer. However S&N states that it has invested £4 million in the site, and more is planned. Caledonian will now be able to concentrate on its role as a producer of high quality and specialist traditional ales. "The overall Caledonian operation, including the sales and marketing functions, will continue to trade as a stand-alone business under the leadership of Stephen Crawley, who will remain as managing director."

Mixed Fortunes from Regional Brewers

Charles Wells, the Bedford brewer, saw profits rise by 30% over the last year, while at Chiswick Fullers has also seen its profits increase, with, for the first time in ten years, its cask ale sales taking a larger share of the market. On a smaller scale, Norfolk brewer Woodforde's has revealed a 34% rise in turnover to £3.6m, £1.5m having been invested over the last four years to increase capacity, while

feedback from the 11,000 strong Woodforde's Club has been critical to their selection and development of beers. In Leicestershire, Everards saw profits up a third to £4.58m, for the year to 2007, but anticipated that this year would be altogether tougher, owing to the general economic uncertainty and the smoking ban. However conversely and perhaps reflecting Everards' fears, our own regional, Shepherd Neame saw profits fall by 2.3% to £4.7 million for the half year to 29th Dec 2007. It blamed the smoking ban, poor summer weather, slow consumer spending and higher input costs plus tougher winter trading conditions. Total beer volumes were marginally down and the brewery warned that the current difficulties would last throughout the year.

Results also mixed from our two super regionals Greene King and Marston's, and for those whose interest is more than just the bottom line, perhaps somewhat worrying. Greene King, whose record on brewery closures, brand manipulation and beer quality is less than appreciated by many a real ale drinker – profits up 2%; Marston's, who bravely wish to keep their half dozen breweries operating, along with the rich variety of beers they produce – profits down 18%. How soon before they bow to "economic reality" and concentrate activities at Wolverhampton or Burton? Particularly dispiriting is media ignorance about the current nature of British brewing. Interviewed on Radio Four's Today programme Greene King chief executive Rooney Anand, was given free rein to celebrate and

publicise his firm's increasingly influential market presence, without any mention of Hardy and Hanson, the Lewes Arms, downgrading of Ruddles and Old Speckled Hen, or any of the other understandable criticisms which many a real ale drinker might wish to level at him.

Micros in Trouble

Despite sales of ale booming and the popularity of micro brews, not all the micro industry is finding the going easy. The award winning Mordue Brewery in North Tyneside founded in 1995 has been placed in administration following non-payment of tax, while further north the Arran Brewery in Scotland, established in 2000, has also gone into administration; poor cash flow as a result of difficulties getting the product to market are blamed. Mordue, whose sales amount to £700,000 a year, is noted for giving its beers distinctive North East names, such as Geordie Pride, Radgie Gadgie and Workie Ticket – the latter winning Champion Beer of Britain in 1997. It employs ten people at its base in North Shields and was hoping to be able to make a statement about the future during June. The Arran brewery sited at Cladach, Isle of Arran is famous for Arran Blonde pale golden beer and Isle of Arran Dark Ale. It is hoped that the business, whose turnover is in the region of £1m, can be saved, but redundancies amongst its eleven staff are expected.

LocAle Initiative

An initiative from Nottingham branch, to support locally brewed beers, has

won its creator, Steve Westby the award of CAMRA's first Real Ale Campaigner of the Year. LocAle is a scheme which encourages pubs to serve at least one real ale brewed within twenty miles, and so far seventy Nottingham pubs have been persuaded to sign up. Interest has been shown by other branches across the country and similar initiatives have been set up in York, Sheffield and the Isle of Wight.

The idea emerged following Greene King's takeover and closure of Hardy and Hanson's in 2006.

As well as backing local breweries LocAle also supports the current emphasis for using locally sourced goods and products and CAMRA will be encouraging all branches to implement similar campaigns.

Bass Museum Latest

The campaign to save the former Bass Museum in Burton (now known as the Coors Museum), with its collection of brewing equipment and memorabilia from across the country, has gained the support of the Minister for Culture, Media and Sport, Margaret Hodge, who gave it her backing at a meeting with the campaign group in June. Coors, who planned to close the centre at the end of June, have at least agreed to maintain the collection and to stable dray horses. It is hoped that a charitable trust, with the ability to apply for Heritage Lottery Funds, could be formed to run the museum as a separate entity from the Coors Brewery. It has also been suggested that it might contain and operate a school of brewing to train young brewers.



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Kent Small Brewery News

By Roger Marples

Westerham Brewery Co. Ltd., Crockham Hill, Edenbridge 01732 864427
sales@westerhambrewery.co.uk

We have no report direct from Westerham this issue, however their ales are increasingly popular in East Kent. In Dover both the Louis Armstrong and Blakes are regularly supplied and the Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club now have a changing Westerham Beer every few days to replace the Goacher's Stout which has been discontinued for the summer. They have also been producing various single hop bitters; two recent brews being Bramling Cross and Goldings. Summer Perle is their Summer Ale, and has been popular with the fans of light coloured bitters.

P & DJ Goacher, Tovil, Maidstone 01622 682112

Silver Star (4.2%) has been selling well and will be supplied throughout the summer months. The final recipe includes all Fuggle hops in the copper, and late hopped with East Kent Goldings. This beer is lighter in colour than Gold Star, malts being Pale Malt and Cara Malt, which gives body, but not colour to the beer. Silver Star will be appearing at The Kent Beer Festival and a special brew of stout is being brewed for The National Festival. Despite Shepherd Neame announcing that profits are down 2%, Goacher's are buoyant with increased profits for the second year running. One can draw one's own conclusions.

Ramsgate Brewery Ltd., Broadstairs 01843 580037 info@ramsgatebrewery.co.uk

The special beer for June is the snappily named Dr. Sunshine's Special Friendly Wheat Ale (with many more names like this the column will be taking up more room than The Beery Boaters' reports!). July will bring Summer's Day at 4.3%, which is brewed using Munich Malt and Kentish grown Cascade hops to give a deep amber ale. The brewery shop at 1 Hornet Close, Broadstairs is well stocked with various brews from Eddie's brewery and those of other chosen breweries.

Hopdæmon Brewery – Newnham 01795 892078

Bewitched, the 3.7% Golden Ginger ale will be brewed again, for The Kent Beer Festival. Green Daemon will be brewed throughout the summer, and will be available at selected outlets, in cask form. Both Skrimshander and Green Daemon will be available in bottle conditioned form at the National Beer Festival, and Golden Braid will be available in the cask. Green Daemon and Skrimshander are also available, in the bottle, from Kentish Tesco's.

Whitstable Brewery – Grafty Green 01622 851007

The annual Whitstable beer festival will be held in The Whitstable Brewery owned East Quay Tavern, which, not surprisingly, is in Whitstable. The festival will start on Wednesday 23rd. July, and finish on Sunday 27th July. Pearl of Kent (4.5%) has now been brewed for a couple of months and is proving extremely popular.

Nelson Brewing Co. Ltd., Chatham 01634 832828

sales@nelsonbrewingcompany.co.uk

Their Summer Ale is Powder Monkey, which has been brewed for some years and has been found to be popular. It has maize in the brew. Beers will be supplied to the National Beer Festival and The Kent Beer Festival. Nelson will be providing glasses and will have a dedicated bar at The Greenwich Jazz and Beer Festival, 16th – 20th July. Recent deliveries have been made to The Albert and Bohemian in Deal, the Eagle in Dover, Wetherspoons and Phoenix, in Canterbury, and the Jackdaw in Denton, which is now a regular outlet. Nelson bottle conditioned beers are usually available in local ASDAs and Thresher's.



The Northwest Frontier



Thursday, 18th September

Join us on a trip to the real ale pubs in the Northwest corner of our branch, which includes Preston & Stourmouth. Cost is £5.00 a head and non-CAMRA members are welcome. Leave from the White Horse, Dover, at 6.30pm, and there are pick-ups and drop-offs in Deal and Sandwich. Places are limited so book early.

For more details and to book: Tel: (01304) 611090 or email pubs.officer@camra-dds.org.uk



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THE CRABBLE MILL BEER FESTIVAL

The 4th Crabble Corn Mill Beer Festival was the mill's most successful beer festival ever, and raised over £9,000 which will go a long way to keeping the mill open. Every beer and cider was sponsored, there was a record number of visitors, and all but 70 pints of cider was sold. Now an established Dover event it was held, as usual, over the Friday and Saturday of the Spring Bank Holiday weekend – the grade-II listed building, one of the finest examples in Europe of a working 19th-century working watermill, as always making an excellent venue.

Once again the weather kept fine, and more than a thousand people attended, including, it seemed, on Friday night, almost every real drinker in Dover. Harry Reid, Chairman of the Crabble Corn Mill Trust which runs the mill commented: "The behaviour was impeccable and the atmosphere terrific". As well as paying tribute to the event's many sponsors and volunteers, and the providers of some "excellent music and entertainment", he added that, "Perhaps, above all we need to thank the public who attended in such large numbers and who so love and cherish our wonderful mill."

Among the volunteers were not a few of our branch members. Tom Mitchell was involved in organising and setting up the festival, and CAMRA members were much in evidence behind the bar – Friday night seeing Jim Green, John Pitcher, Ron Meares, and Linda and Malcolm from Denton (apologies to any I've missed).

Forty to fifty real ales were on offer, and a dozen ciders. With one or two exceptions ales were either Kentish or West Country, including most of the Kentish brewers, and some well known names from the far west such as Skinners, Sharps and St Austell. It was particularly good to see three ales from Larkins, all too rarely seen outside West Kent, and particular reference must be made to the otherwise unknown Jail Ale from the Princetown Brewery, a superb well balanced and full bodied strong bitter of 4.8% ABV, which was sold out all too quickly. The cider selection was also either Kentish or West Country, and included Crabble Mill's very own Millers Cottage Cider (7.2% ABV), as well as a selection from many of our usual suppliers, varying in strength from 4.9% - 8.4% ABV. Among the latter was Kingston Black from Broadoak Cider of Somerset, which like the above mentioned Jail Ale sold out well before the end of Friday evening, and well before this particular reporter had had a chance to sample it.

Martin Atkins



BEER DUTY & THE BUDGET

As a citizen of the United Kingdom you now have the pleasure of paying the highest rate of duty on beer in the European Community: you also pay the highest rate on wine, if you smoke the highest rate on cigarettes, and the second highest rate on spirits – Sweden being the single country whose spirits duty is higher. A puritanical Heaven one might imagine, a society of sober and industrious citizens going about their daily lives with diligence and considered restraint, stopping only for the odd pint of beer or glass of wine when the work is done. And, no doubt it might well be the Government's vision; 21 or 28 units a week for men, 14 or 21 for women, it varies according to who's giving the advice. A pint of beer or a glass of wine a day, with a little more at weekends. Sounds like the country we know and love? Hardly, the British have acquired the reputation for excessive and riotous drinking, binge drinking as the fashionable phrase has it, despite alcohol's high cost; or maybe because of it. It is certainly a curious fact that those countries where alcohol is a problem correlate fairly closely with those where it is most expensive (Britain, Scandinavia, etc.), and contrast with the easy going, low tax Mediterranean where alcohol forms just a part of the normal everyday diet.

The following table gives a comparison of alcohol taxation levels in half a dozen European Community states.

	Pint of Beer ABV 5% (pence)	250ml of Still Wine (pence)	Packet of 20 Cigarettes (pence)	25ml of 40% Spirits (pence)
Germany	4	0	191	9
France	5	0.06	230	10
Spain	7	0	104	6
Netherlands	17	10	155	10
Sweden	30	40	183	36
UK	42	48	382	21

However the level of duty is not always translated directly onto the product on which it is imposed, and particularly in the case of beer in the pub a duty increase by the Government will see a substantially greater increase in the price of a pint. As you will be aware in his Budget in March the Chancellor Alistair Darling increased the excise duty on beer by the equivalent of 4p a pint or 6% above the rate of inflation. If you were to buy beer direct from the brewery gate you might get away with paying just an extra 4p, but you would have to buy your beer by the cask. In the normal commercial world the supply chain from brewery to pub can be quite long and convoluted, and each person along the

route will wish to maintain his or her margins and gross profit. The excise duty rise was actually equivalent to a rise of 10% and by the time it worked its way through to the pump it has also often generated increases in the region of 10%, or 20 – 25p for a £2.50 pint.

Almost 30% of the price paid for a pint goes direct to the Treasury for not only is beer subject to excise duty it is also liable for VAT at 17.5%. The table below gives a rough breakdown of who gets what from the price of a pint. It is only illustrative and of course depends on exactly how the pub is run; whether it is a free house, a managed pub or tenanted or leased and what the transfer pricing policy is if the pub is owned by a brewery. As well as the duty hike other factors have caused the price of a pint to rise, including substantial increases in the cost of malted barley and hops, and rising energy costs, particularly oil which has impacted on all transport costs. The British Beer and Pub Association calculate that this all adds up to a further 7%.

<u>BREWING & DISTRIBUTION COSTS</u>		<u>RETAIL COSTS</u> (running the pub)		67p
Raw Materials	16p	<u>SURPLUS</u>		42p
Production costs	16p	(profits, investment in estate, etc.)		
Distribution	10p			
Selling & Admin costs	14p	<u>THE GOVERNMENT TAKE</u>		
Marketing	8p	Excise Duty		35p
		VAT		37p
Total brewing costs	64p	Total Government take		72p

The above figures are based on a 4% ABV pint of beer sold in a managed pub for 245p – UK average price of a pint of real ale according to CAMRA's 2008 Prices Survey (February 2007). Of course much beer has an ABV above 4% and in those cases the duty take is higher and the budget price increases have reflected this: and whilst some brewers or licensees may have taken advantage of the Budget excise duty rises to push up prices higher than need be, most pub price rises have simply derived from the need to maintain margins. In fact from observation not a few landlords have absorbed some of the increases themselves. Of course one area where price rises are likely to have been less are supermarkets whose extent of operation and low margins enables them to limit the effects of Budget increases. CAMRA intend to monitor pre and post Budget supermarket beer prices, and has recently conducted a mini prices survey on the Budget's effect on the price of a pint in the pub. It is planned that this will form the basis of our comments prior to the Chancellor's pre-Budget statement in November.

Martin Atkins



CHANNEL VIEW

One of the great brewing successes of recent years, in fact amounting to a revolution, has been the creation of the micro industry. Leaving aside the handful of existing home brew pubs, the first micros started to appear in the late 1970s and early 1980s and, benefiting from the increasing free trade as the national brewers slimmed down their estates, the following decades saw them become a substantial force in the industry. Currently they number five hundred or so. Small and adaptable, and without the need to provide for a tied estate, micro brewers have proved innovative and inventive, and have greatly expanded the range and variety of real ale available. However, critical to their continuing success is the continuing availability of outlets, and while the market is no longer in the hands of a few brewers and their tied estates, the number of true free houses, independently owned and able to buy from whoever they want, has shrunk dramatically.

In Dover this has seen the disappearance of the Mogul, Arlington, Boar's Head, and Park Inn either through closure or takeover by pub chains. In Deal the Bohemian and Alma have been acquired by pub chains and the Admiral Penn has closed, while elsewhere the Hare and Hounds, Northbourne, the Black Pig, Staple, the Blue Pigeons, Worth and the Plough and Harrow, Tilmanstone have either been bought

by pub chains, or in the case of the latter Shepherd Neame. Meanwhile the Chequers, West Hougham awaits demolition, and the Endeavour, Wootton, the Butchers Arms, Ashley and the Way Out Inn, West Marsh all remain closed with future uncertain. Ten years ago all these were available as true free trade outlets. This is not to decry the choice available at many of the pub chain houses, and Dover Wetherspoons (the Eight Bells) usually offers a good selection of micro brews. To be perfectly honest it is often not possible to tell from the real ales on offer exactly what a pub's ownership status might be. However there does tend to be a correlation between a pub's independence and its interest in providing more unusual beers. That doesn't make the beers necessarily any better but it does enhance that important element, choice, which encourages variety and acts as a brake on the corporate tendency towards standardisation and the lowest common denominator.

That was the state of play by the early seventies when CAMRA was formed. The bulk of beer production was in the hands of half a dozen large brewers, all desperately keen to push their big keg brands and cut back on what real ale they still produced. Local tastes and local production were yesterday's world: the future lay with national beers, with little to distinguish one from another,

except the enormous advertising campaigns which promoted them. To a large extent of course this is still the face of modern brewing, dominated as it is in terms of volume by mass produced lager and keg bitters. Fortunately there was enough interest in tradition and taste not just to keep real ale alive but to develop a whole new approach to brewing, or perhaps more accurately an old approach to brewing – small scale and craft based. With the disappearance over recent years of many of the remaining family run local and regional brewers the micros are now often the main alternative to the globalised industry; it is vital that we protect them.

As things stand at the moment the micro industry would appear to be generally in excellent good health and locally most small brewers have as much trade as they can handle. However the recent takeover of two of the country's larger micros, Ringwood and Refresh UK, by Martsons, Scottish and Newcastle's acquisition of Caledonian, and Mordue and Arran being forced into administration (see National News) is somewhat unsettling. Perhaps not greatly significant in themselves they may be indicative of future trends. Arran blamed difficulties in getting beer to the market as the source of its problems, while the takeover of Refresh, Ringwood and Caledonian hints at the prospect of "consolidation" appearing in the industry – both examples of what might be expected as available outlets contract into fewer hands. At the moment, in addition to their large contracts with the nation-

als, Punch and Enterprise seen content to source ale from a variety of micros, but is such an approach viable in the long term? Would not hard business logic view such choice as mere indulgence, and suggest limiting purchasing to just a handful of big suppliers?

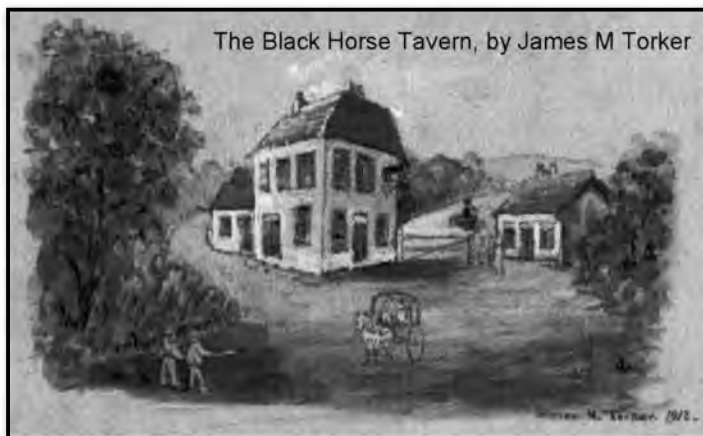
Not a pleasing prospect for those of us who have come to expect and enjoy beers of all types from all over the country. As one local real ale drinker regularly comments, the choice has never been so good. Hopefully the above analysis is wrong, but commercial pressure is such that we would be foolish to sit back and assume everything in the garden is rosy. This is why initiatives such as the LocAle campaign (see National News) by the Nottingham branch are so important. Not only does it support the local industry but is in tune with current trends of local sourcing and limited transport. However, more than this we need the Government to re-introduce the publicans right to a guest ale, that was part of the now rescinded Beer Orders. Additionally they might also look at the size of pub estates, with or without a brewery tie. At the moment neither the Competition Commission nor the Office of Fair Trading seem to have any concerns over the increasing concentration of pub ownership, although it is hard to identify any benefit to the consumer that derives from the current situation where 30% of public houses are in the hands of just two pub chains.



A STROLL THROUGH TIME & TOWER HAMLETS

By Paul Skelton

Following the article published in the Winter edition of Channel Draught, I would like to take you all on a stroll through the Tower Hamlets area from London Road to Elms Vale Road, calling in at all the pubs that at one time or another might be found there. I hope you can all cope with the walk, it's only about a mile in total, but on the way we should be entering no less than 22 differently named public houses, 25 if you'd like to count one that changed name from one name to another and then back again and another that has changed back and forth twice to my knowledge.



The Black Horse Tavern, by James M Torker

We will start at the "Eagle", or at least where the "Eagle" is today. In 1805 the site was occupied by a pub called the "Black Horse", indeed what is now Tower Hamlets Road was referred to as Black Horse Lane and used to lead all the way to Hougham. Opposite the tavern

were the gallows where criminals used to be hanged, at least up until 1823 when the last hanging took place. A 1912 painting of the Black Horse by James M Torker, obviously from an earlier sketch, shows the Turnpike Road to London on the right and an "X" bottom right, reputedly where the gallows used to be. On 4th September 1839, the tea gardens that belonged to the "Black Horse" and extended towards Buckland were auctioned off and the tavern was soon afterwards demolished, being replaced shortly afterwards by the "Eagle".

By 1868 the pub was getting a reputation for something or other and the powers that be were going to refuse the licence. However the Queen of Denmark was paying a visit to Dover, and as happens on many an occasion, to get around the problem the "Eagle" changed its name to the "Denmark Arms" in honour of that Queen. Our next record is 1893, and while I am not sure what happened this year, the name is again changed and the "Denmark Arms" re-

verts back to the "Eagle". Spanning another century, I'd like to stay here until the year 1999 when another change of name, saw it become a theme pub called the "Old Irish Times". But that didn't last long, and by 2002 it was once again back to the "Eagle". I suppose that move could have something to do with an incident I was told about regarding some Germans who were seeing the sites of Dover when it was the "Old Irish Times". Evidentially the renovation of the "Old Irish Times" caused a fire to take place in the upper storeys, but all that seemed to happened in the bar area was plaster being knocked off the walls. "Did ve do zis during the war?" the Germans are alleged to have remarked. And so on that note I think we'd better move on to the next pub.



Up Tower Hamlets Rd. to the corner of Tower St. and West St. and the next pub on our route, the Tower Inn, whose opening hours are between 1866 and 1965, that's not a misprint but a span of about 100 years, although the property wasn't sold off till 1974 and was at one time home of the B & H Glass Centre, someone did apply for a wine li-

cense in 1982, but I can't ever remember being able to purchase any around that time. The picture shows the "Tower Inn" before the second world war.

Continuing up Tower Street towards Astor Avenue and Elms Vale Road there are a few more places that I'd like to show you here. All are unfortunately now closed, so we'll have to travel back in time again if you wish a drink. I am now going to do a little bit of detective work, as one must when travelling in time and make an assumption here. We are looking for a pub called the "Victoria", somewhere along Tower Street and between the years 1871 and 1874. I know it is there, but do not know the number for certain. However, I have proof that the licensee of the day called Casey, in July 1874, was caught supplying liquor to two soldiers at four p.m. one Sunday. He was fined two



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pounds and costs or fourteen days hard labour with licence endorsed. That just provides an example of the punishments being meted out to careless publicans at that time. However as one pub closed, another seems to open (a pity that doesn't seem to be the case today). 1875 sees the first mention of the "White Lion", and more detective work tells me the premises is likely to be the same – 19 Tower Street. At least 19 Tower Street before 1928, as renumbering has altered the address to number 35 today, which we remember as the "White Lion". It used to serve Mackeson and Whitbread but on its close in 1997 was owned by Shepherd Neame. One landlord that must be mentioned at this pub was Percy Dawkins who was selling beer at 2d a pint way back in 1910 and was still serving beer there 56 years later at the age of 90. Bet he saw some changes in prices and would probably be pulling his hair out at the continuing rising costs of beer today. The photograph is from 1987.

We are going to cross the road now to number 48 Tower Street, which closed its doors in 1987, but which I have traced back as serving as a pub as early as 1861, a little earlier than the "Victoria". The pub while open used to trade under the name the "Imperial Crown" and believe it or not used to have a skittle alley in the back garden, something difficult to believe if you know the size skittle alleys take up and the size of the pub garden. Up to 1928 the address was 46a, and it does have the appearance that at one time it has grown by a single storey extension. The photo is from 1987 again.



The Imperial Crown

Back across the road and roughly in the same time period, to numbers 35 and 36 Tower Street, until 1924 that is, after which the premises was renumbered to 69. This is the "Havelock Arms". The buildings started to appear on this side of the street around the 1850's and there is evidence that the pub traded as early

as 1860 when a report appearing in the Dover Express gives the following account:-

Stephen Sneller, landlord of the Havelock Arms, Tower Hamlets, Charlton, was charged with infringing his license by having his house open for the sale of beer at ten minutes to four o'clock on the afternoon of Sunday December 23rd.



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TASTE THE HISTORY !

It appeared from the statement of Superintendent Coram that the police visiting the house in question, which is situated at Tower Hamlets, on the Sunday morning were met when near to it, by a man named Feakins who returned by a short cut and warned some persons who were assembled there that the police were coming. By the time the constables arrived therefore they found the house cleared. Feakins and some of his companions meeting them at the entrance and one of the men remarking to the police, "we've beaten you this time."

This happened during the hours of Divine Service. On the circumstances being reported to him he (the superintendent) directed the constables to visit the Havelock Arms again in the afternoon, which they did at the house named, and found several persons assembled including the scout of the morning the man Feakins. Geddes said that on entering the house at ten minutes to four o'clock he found six men in one of the rooms with pots and glasses before them.

He (witness) was accompanied by P.C. Corrie. Sneller in defence said he had endeavoured to clear the house at church time but he had been unable. The beer the men were drinking had been drawn previous to the time of Divine Service. The men refused to go till they had drunk their beer and when five or six men positively declared they would not move it was a difficult thing for a man to make them. The only thing a landlord could do was to refuse to draw any more beer, and that he did. Superintendent Coram in reply to questions put by the magistrates said that although the defendant had not previously been summoned before the Bench for an offence of this nature there had been several complaints by the neighbours of the manner in which the Havelock Arms had been conducted. The defendant was fined 20s. including costs.

So, before we all get caught drinking after hours I think we should move on to our next port of call, and I am now looking for a pub named the "White Horse". At first mention I thought that perhaps someone is getting mixed up with either the "Black Horse" and the "White Lion", and although we have no more address than Tower Hamlets, there are a couple of dates and licensees' names, so I am going to assume that this one is not a figment of someone's imagination. The first record refers to licensee, James Castle is 1842, and predates the earliest listing of the "White Lion", and probably the buildings that are there now. So, we must assume that there used to be a "White Horse" somewhere in the Tower Hamlets area. I am hoping to find further confirmation about this pub, but to date, nothing has materialised, apart from another licensee, Henry Saunter in 1866. Neither names nor dates tally with anyone I already know about, so all I will say is that we will find this pub during our walk between 1842 and 1866.

(This ends the first part of our look back at Tower Hamlets. In our Autumn edition we will complete Paul Skelton's stroll - Ed)

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Thursday 7th - Curry Night - two home cooked courses for only £10.95

Thursday 14th - Spanish Tapas Night

Sunday 17th - 2.30 Pig Roast BBQ & Bouncy Castle in the Garden

Sun 24th Aug - Bank holiday weekend, Pig roast, Football tournament, Beer Festival, Craft Stalls,

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Monday 25th - Farmers Market and Antique market with BBQ, Bouncy Castle and Beer festival, over 80 stalls with Carnival

Friday 29th - Whisky club 4 shots of single Malt for only £10

SEPTEMBER

Monday 1st - Virgin V make up and jewellery party night

Thursday 4th - Curry Night - two home cooked courses for only £10.95

Monday 8th - Wine and cheese tasting

Thursday 11th - Oyster and Cyster Night Fresh Oysters washed down with Gadd's 6.2% Oyster stout

Thursday 18th - Thai night (click here for typical menu)

Monday 22nd - Charity Quiz night for Darnelze House

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OUT AND ABOUT IN EAST KENT

On a sunny day 5 CAMRA members gathered in The Eagle, London Road, Dover, in preparation for what wasn't going to be a particularly strenuous day. Our first pint of the day was a very good pint of Nelson Rochester, which was followed by a quick half since we had a time. A very short walk took us to the bus stop, just outside the Eagle Inn, where we caught the 68 to The Fox, Temple Ewell.



On tap at The Fox was the usual range of beers such as Caledonian Deuchars IPA and Greene King Abbot. The guest beer was a very palatable pint of Nethergate Vixen. A new introduction at The Fox is a computer allowing customers access to the internet.

Following a spot of lunch, we took a short walk through the gardens of Kearsney Abbey, to pick up the 66 from the end of Lewisham Road. This dropped us by the old Royal Mail sorting offices, leaving us a walk back up Maison Dieu Road to the Louis Armstrong.

At the Louis, Jackie Bowles specialises in beers from local breweries. Hopdaemon Skrimshander is the regular beer, which replaced Bass sometime ago. The guest beer was Gadd's Dr Sunshine's Special Friendly English Wheat Beer. Time was on our side so I was able to try both beers and very good they were too.

And that was it - a short day out. There was some discussion about the distance that we actually walked, personally I think it was about one and a half miles - in total.

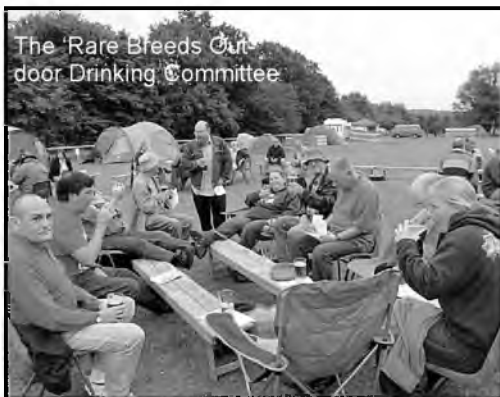
A Trip to the Rare Breeds Festival

As a thank you to the volunteers, who worked at our beer festival, we organised a bus trip to the Rare Breeds Beer Festival, near Woodchurch. If you have never been there I would highly recommend it. This was my third time and it hasn't lost any of its appeal.

Just a 45 minute journey from Dover will find you in a marquee, in a field surrounded by casks of beer, from all over the country, and barrels of cider. A fantastic location for a beer festival with something for everyone.

The evening was overcast but warm, so we sat outside sampling the beers. My beer of the festival was Copper Dragon's Golden Pippin, a brewery based in Skip-ton. It was my first beer of the night and scored an immediate 4.5 on the National

Beer Scoring System. Unfortunately, none of the other beers I sampled that night could quite reach this, but they were all well worth the journey. The food at the festival is basic: hamburgers, sausages and pork belly, served in rolls, by the staff from the Rare Breeds Centre. And if you want to drink but don't fancy trying to get there and back by public transport or taxi, then take a tent - there's camping within yards of the beer tent. So once you've had your fill of beer or cider you can fall out of one tent into another and crash for the night. And don't worry about facilities. The Rare Breeds Centre has a toilet block and the restaurant is open in the morning for breakfast.



Have Bus Ticket will travel

On Saturday, 17th May we had arranged another bus trip around our branch. To set us up for the day we started at the Eight Bells, Dover, and one of their good-value breakfasts. A short walk took us to Pencester Gardens where we caught the Number 88 to Ramsgate, which dropped us off at the Plough and Harrow, Tilmanstone for the first drink of the day.



The Plough & Harrow is a Shep's house usually serving Master Brew, Spitfire and a seasonal beer, which today was Early Bird. The Master Brew and Early Bird were both very good and I hoped that this would be a good omen for the rest of the day. Out into the rain to catch another 88, this time to take us to the Five Bells in Eastry, which has recently changed hands and was now open all day. London Pride and Greene King IPA were on offer, with the Greene King being in particularly good form – an interesting eye opener.

A short walk to the old Eastry Hospital to catch the next bus, which took us to the Volunteer at Guilton on the outskirts of Ash – another pub which has seen a recent change of landlord, and where we found an interesting range of beers; Flowers IPA, Sharp's Cornish Coaster and Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter. As a result, we decided to change our schedule and stay on for another drink.

The Fleur in Sandwich was our next port of call and a late lunch. Along side their regular real ales of Greene King IPA and Wadworth 6X they were selling a good pint of Archer's Top Brass, Archer's being one of their regularly featured breweries.

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A very short walk back to the Guildhall and a bus through to Sholden and the Sportsman, also now open all day. The ubiquitous Fuller's London Pride and Greene King IPA were on tap and time allowed us to try both of these beers, of which general opinion considered the Pride to be the better.

Our next port of call was Deal, get it!!, and a call into our usual end-of-day pub The Bohemian on the seafront. As usual, there was a good range of beers and ciders available, including Weston's Perry, Sharp's Doombar and Goacher's Gold Star. At this point we separated and went our own ways home, but another good day out was had by all.

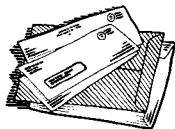
So there you have it. For a great day out around the pubs in our area, all you need is a £5.00 Day Explorer ticket, a timetable (and the ability to read it), a watch and a bit of planning.



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LETTERS & E-MAILS TO THE EDITOR

The Old Brewery, Canterbury

Just picked up the latest issue - thought I'd point out a big oops on the local news editorial! Don't worry, nothing to worry about, just made us chuckle - it's re: the Old Brewery in Canterbury. Michael Caine, top actor that he is, can't hold a candle to Michael Caines, the one-armed, Michelin starred chef of Great British Menu fame, in the kitchen, who has the food franchise at the hotel. It's owned by the entrepreneur Andrew Brownsword (hence the ABode name of the hotel). Not as exciting I know, but for factual status. By the way, we had the office 30 yards away which we named the Old Brewery, after a microbrewery that lasted just over a year!

Kind regards

Barry Aldridge, Sue Potter (Canterbury area but not CAMRA members!)

Thanks Barry and Sue – Channel Draught is suitably admonished, and apologies to all concerned..

The Falstaff, Dover

I just thought I would let you know that when I was in Dover on Saturday lunch-time I had a beer in the Falstaff in Ladywell. While there was no real ale on, the manager told me that they were waiting to have hand pumps installed. They would also be aiming to serve a dark mild (probably M & B?). The manager said he had had experience managing a Shepherd and Neame house and that there would be a restaurant serving good value food. He said he also aimed to have his ales keenly priced.

As the recent edition of Channel Draught that I picked up at the KRM at the Malling Town Club had a photograph of the Falstaff commenting that it was closed I thought you would be interested in this news. I told the manager I would tell Dover Deal and Sandwich CAMRA so you may want to pop along in a couple of weeks to see if the hand pumps are working.

Regards,

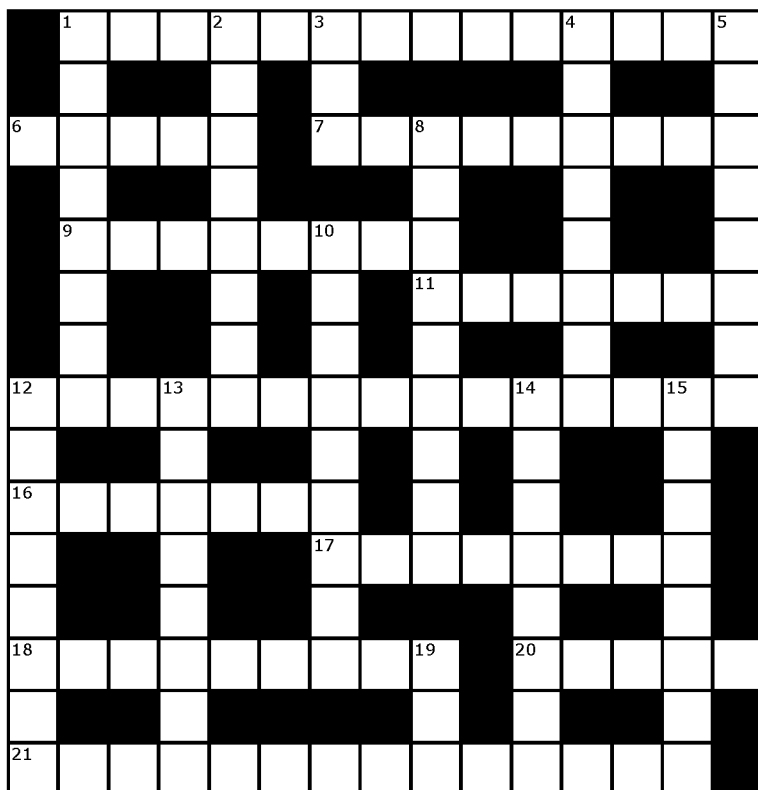
James (Chairman – Medway CAMRA. 02/06/08)

Thanks James, we'll certainly give the pub a visit.

Its nice to know our newsletter gets read. Any comments, criticism (or praise) are always gratefully received, so keep on writing and e-mailing.

Martin Atkins (Editor)

BEERWORD



Across

1. You're reading it! (7,7)
6. The colour of nectar, according to Australian brewers (5)
7. Servers of drinks in the air (5,4)
9. Pub (8)
11. Modesty forbids blowing your own (7)
12. What binge drinkers slip into (15)
16. Something you can confidently predict ...(4,3)
17. ... and this too if you over imbibe (8)
18. Seized legally (9)
20. Burgundy wine village (5)
21. Gin, cherry brandy, lemon and soda (9,5)

Down

1. Organised course of action to achieve a goal (8)
2. Cheshire brewery (8)
3. And the rest (3)
4. Rare (8)
5. 200 year old Lancashire brewery (8)
8. St. Bernard composer (9)
10. Not hurt (9)
12. First floor (8)
13. Too lengthy (8)
14. Measure of sugar (8)
15. Location of Traditional Scottish Ales (8)
19. Colour (3)

Answers on Page 61

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THE BEERY BOATERS INVADE WALES

This was to be our third visit to Wales on the Llangollen Canal. Previously we had used Middlewich Narrowboats, from whom we hired on our first trip, the much-related 'Horrible Trip', the 70ft boats 'Oak' and 'Sycamore' and in 2000 just 'Oak'. Since then the boatyard had acquired new owners, who set about replacing the fleet – we saw 'Oak' (my favourite hire boat ever) on our last trip from Middlewich in 2006, moored forlornly against the opposite bank, awaiting a purchaser – and for this trip we switched to Anglo-Welsh at Bunbury on the Shropshire Union, about three miles north of the junction with the Llangollen Canal. Our homes for the week were the narrowboats 'Lincoln' (65ft) and 'River Dance' (69ft), and with seventeen and a dog in the two crews it was the largest ever participation in the history of the Beery Boaters, including, on 'River Dance' a ship's orchestra (Colin with squeeze box, Simon with bodhran and tambourine, Dave with Jaws Harp and me doing solos on the harmonica).

At lunchtime on Saturday 26th April sixteen of us (Giles involved in a family event that evening wasn't arriving until Sunday) met at the Travellers Rest, Al-phraham, a superbly unaltered pub of several small bars, where we drank very good Tetley's. Then to the boatyard about a mile away, where after the usual familiarisation with the boats we set off towards the end of the afternoon, up the two Bunbury staircase locks; 'River Dance' going ahead as 'Lincoln' needed to turn. These were the only 'wide' locks (14ft instead of 7ft) that we encountered and as there was another boat coming down on its own, we had the curious experience, impossible in ordinary locks, of passing in the middle, within the lock. As we were leaving the top lock a lady from a group beside the canal handed a large flat box to me, a birthday cake she said, but too big for them to eat. When the lid was opened we found it was about 2 feet square and 6 inches deep, and she had taken just a small corner! The rest lasted us for the week.

Colin got off here with Jess the dog and said that he would meet us for the evening stop at the pub at Barbridge. An hour or two later we were moored just before Bridge 100, across the canal from our evening' venue, the Barbridge Inn, having passed Barbridge Junction, where the Middlewich Branch joins with the Jolly Sailor opposite. 'Lincoln' was now right behind us, but there was no sign of our towpath



tramps. They were not in the pub and Colin's portable telephone was either switched off or not with him. However someone had a flash of inspiration and telephoned the Jolly Sailor, where they were found to be. Before very long the ships' band were united and in full flow on the canal-side



veranda, and receiving as much appreciation as the girl singer did inside later in the evening. I'm afraid that I didn't enjoy the Barbridge Inn as much as I had on previous visits. In my lorry driving days I used to park round the corner for the night when I was in the area and there were then often some interesting beers on tap. Now, there seemed to be the usual run of rather bland national brews.

Up and away at 6 o'clock on the Sunday morning. It was raining, and half a mile later we turned right at Hurleston Junction onto the Llangollen Canal, where immediately you are confronted by the Hurleston Flight of 4 locks, rising up by the reservoir of the same name. Unlike most canals, the Llangollen has a



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constant flow of water (about 2 knots from the Horseshoe Falls above Llangollen), being deliberately constructed to feed the Hurleston Reservoir and a good bit of the Midlands. There aren't all that many locks (by *our* standard) on the Llangollen Canal and we would pass through most of them on our first full day. However, while there may be a paucity of locks on the Llangollen Canal, it has many lift bridges, and although mostly hand operated with a windlass the one at Wrenbury, being on a busy road, is worked mechanically, thereby taking more time and holding up more traffic! However, our morning's timing was impeccable, and we arrived at Willey Moor Lock, our lunchtime stop for a pint or three promptly at mid day, just as the pub opened. The rain had stopped, and we enjoy good food and good beers, as befitted the pub's regular GBG entries. Also a GBG regular is the Blue Bell at Tushingham, about a mile across the fields from the canal, and after sustenance some of the party departed thence. The remainder stayed put and enjoyed the pub's wide range of ale, True Grit from Millstone proving particularly popular. In due course we were joined by Giles, and our complement was now complete.

Our evening stop was Whitchurch, just three miles further on, but with seven locks, including a staircase of three with a lock keeper on hand to sort out any problems. Needless to say, we had none, but were delayed by other traffic. However once completed we shortly after tied up opposite the very truncated Whitchurch Arm of the canal. It had been suggested that we might press on five miles more to the Waggonners at Platt Lane, but it was as well that we didn't for we later learned that it was closed because of a fire. Whitchurch, an attractive town with some good pubs, is unfortunately about a mile from the canal, and it was a fair hike. We found the Old Town Vaults with a good selection of ales, where most of us ate, then later on to the White Bear, where we came upon a group of young ladies in strange garb, on some kind of girls' night out.

On Monday morning it was twelve miles to Ellesmere, but with no locks and just a handful of lift bridges we made good time, arriving before noon and taking the opportunity to refill our water tanks. On the way we had crossed Whixall Moss, a raised bog where peat cutting is still carried out, and skirted some large lakes, or meres, one of which gives Ellesmere its name. Also around Bettisfield we passed through an outcrop of Wales before re-emerging in Shropshire. Not far from the basin, with new developments in progress all around, we found two good pubs, the Black Lion, a Marston's house, and the Market Inn which had Black Sheep and Green King IPA. The well-known butchers, bakers and delicatessen, Vermeulens, also proved to be some attraction to the gourmets among us. That evening we moored on the embankment above the Bridge Inn, at Chirk Bank, which proclaims itself as the 'last pub in England', and where we drank Marston's and Jennings. Later some of our group walked across the bridge over the River Ceiriog into Wales and up the hill to Chirk village, and two more pubs.

The stretch from Chirk Bank to Llangollen is the gem of the canal and unsur-

passed by any waterway in the country. Making our usual early start on Tuesday morning, we first crossed Chirk Aqueduct over the Ceiriog, an impressive stone structure in its own right, but overshadowed by the even more massive railway viaduct alongside. Immediately after the aqueduct ends, the canal plunges into the 459 yard long Chirk Tunnel, followed shortly after by the shorter Whitehouses Tunnel, then turns left to follow the embankment besides the River Dee. At Irish Bridge suggestions were made about a certain individual trying to find a Beery Boater's Badge which he lost in 1987!

Crossing the Pontcysylte Aqueduct



After the Fron Lift Bridge, the canal turns right to cross the Dee, 130 feet below, by means of the Pontcysylte Aqueduct, an iron trough supported by stone pillars, 7 feet wide and over 1000 feet long. There is a towpath on one side, but the steerer can look down the other side with only a narrow edge between him and a long drop! Straight on from the aqueduct is the short Ruabon Arm which was planned as the main line to Chester and the Mersey (hence Ellesmere Port – the port for

Ellesmere). However, it was never developed, and was eventually dropped in favour of the Shropshire Union main line. The route to Llangollen from here



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was designed as a navigable feeder, and is shallow and very narrow in places, sometimes just wide enough for one boat, and follows the River Dee on a tree-covered mountain side. Its entrance from the end of the aqueduct is deceptive and very sharp, and an unwary steerer can easily put a dent in the side or front of his boat if he doesn't approach it with caution. Further on, as you approach Llangollen the lie of the landscape around produces the peculiar optical

illusion of the canal running steeply downhill in front of you.

You arrive at Llangollen after a long narrow stretch with a sheer cliff on one side and a steep slope on the other. Once limited in space to tie up, British Waterways have enlarged the winding hole at the end of navigation to provide a basin with ample mooring pontoons as well as improving the canalside moorings. True, they charge you for mooring (£6 per boat per 24 hours at the time of our visit) but each mooring has its own water point and electricity supply if needed. As on our last visit to Llangollen in 2000, we occupied the afternoon with a trip on the Llangollen Steam Railway to Carrog and a few hours in the Grouse Inn. So after some Robinson's beer at the nearby Bridge End Inn, we duly assembled at the station, where Giles, acting as Tour Guide, purchased us a group ticket. Carrog is about 8 miles up the line alongside the River Dee, with the Grouse Inn (or Tafarn Grugair if you look at the other side of the sign) 10 minutes from the station – and a most enjoyable afternoon was spent drinking Lees beer accompanied by an excellent meal. Another worthy Good Beer Guide pub.



Back in Llangollen it was decided that we should all meet at the Sun Inn at the top of the town later in the evening. Meanwhile people went in various directions. I accompanied a group to the Corn Mill, across the Dee from the station, and then Wynnstay Arms before reaching the Sun. By now the rain, which had started intermittently at Carrog was teeming down. The Sun was still as good a pub as when we had first discovered it on our last trip, with a wide selection

of ales. By closing time, with the rain not desisting, and a long way back to the canal basin, Giles organised a mini-bus to transport us at the cost of only £1 per head.

The rain had stopped and we set off in bright sunshine on the Wednesday morning. Despite rather gloomy forecasts, it was to stay fine for the rest of the week. It was surprising how the flow of water affected us on the narrow section, and we were soon back at the Pontcysylte Aqueduct. We were somewhat delayed at Chirk Tunnel by a boat which seemed to take for ever to come out (boats cannot pass in Chirk and Whitehouses Tunnels) but made good progress again after that. After the 2 New Marton Locks we arrived early at the Jack Mytton at Hindford and had to await its lunchtime opening. Another excellent pub, even though it has been absent from the Good Beer Guide since 2003. With a bit of justice the new landlord, who has recently arrived from a micro-brewery in Cornwall, might lead to this state of affairs being amended, as we found the beers and the food very much to our liking. Ellesmere and the Market Inn and the Black Lion again in the evening with Chinese take-aways to follow.

Thursday morning proved uneventful. 'Lincoln' had to stop for a pump-out near Whitchurch and 'River Dance' took the opportunity to top up with water above Grindley Brook Locks while waiting; and then descended with the ship's band playing in the bows and a few dozen German tourists generally getting in our way. The music continued at the Willey Moor Lock Inn which was the mid day stop again. Evening was the Bhurtpore Inn at Aston, just outside Wrenbury, but



closer on foot from Bridge 17. (Cross the road, and take the junction opposite, then after a quarter mile turn right along a dead-end road, over a railway line, and past a farm to a stream, the upper reaches of the Weaver, crossed by a footbridge and ford of considerable depth. Aston and the pub are about another quarter mile.) Although it does do excellent curries to go with the equally excellent beers, curry has nothing to do with the name of the pub, which goes back to some earlier association with the Indian Raj. The less energetic or otherwise impaired got taxis back to the boats, while some of us stayed to chucking out time and, full of beer, walked back under the stars.

On Friday, and back on the Shropshire Union Canal with time to spare, we turned right after Hurlston Junction and moored on the aqueduct above Nantwich. The Black Lion being closed until later, we walked to the town centre and visited various hosteleries such as the Talbot and the Vine, where we drank excellent Jennings and Hydes. Jeff and Rob left us to catch trains back, and we were heading back to the boats when, one group, including the band, found the Black Lion open, and were very soon sitting around the table in the front window with a music session in full swing. Eventually we set off at about 5pm. Just outside Nantwich we came upon 'Oak', obviously now in private hands but

with nothing much seemingly done to it as yet. We had intended to moor at Bunbury for the night, but stopped a mile short at Calverley and went to the Davenport Arms instead. In due course the real ale ran out, and a karaoke evening ensued; and while some took the bus the short distance for a second visit to the Travellers Rest, the rest of us returned to the boats for an early night.



Saturday morning, and we cruised back to Bunbury, mooring below the locks and waiting for the boatyard staff to arrive: the boats cleaned up and us ready to depart south. Group photographs duly taken and we were away (until the next time! – Oct 6th 08, Lee and Stort Navigation).

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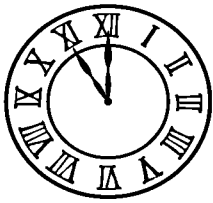
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LAST KNOCKINGS

Many were the dire predictions when Young's ceased brewing at Wands-worth and transferred production to Charles Wells' site at Bedford. However having come across Young's ordinary bitter a couple of times recently I was pleasantly surprised – but then I was never a great Young's fan in the first place, their bitters always seemingly possessing a hard edge. By contrast the revised brew seems softer and to my taste more palatable. Certainly there was no shortage of takers at the Kent Regional Meeting at the Town Club, West Malling in early May, when Young's ordinary bitter was one of three ales available. There used to be a general adage about the inadvisability of moving real ale from one brewery to another, it being considered unlikely that the new location could ever match the original. However, our judgement locally may have been unduly influenced by Whitbread's habit of closing local breweries and transferring production to Cheltenham, from where nothing worthwhile ever seemed to emerge. Certainly, in addition to Young's move, recent years have seen the production of King and Barnes Sussex shifted to Hall and Woodhouse's brewery at Blandford, from where a more full bodied version has appeared, while for those who appreciate a near copy, it would be hard to fault Wychwood's recreation of Brakspear's Bitter and Special at Witney, although much of the old Henley brewing equipment was transferred to the new site.

In these days of widespread closures no one is surprised to come across pubs with doors and windows covered with chipboard or metal shutters, or carrying signs advertising a business opportunity or lease for sale. However, it is particularly depressing when what is remembered as a thriving local is found with no customers and a for sale sign displayed. Such was the case with the White Hart at Ellesmere, Shropshire on this Spring's Beery Boater expedition. The recollection from our last visit in 2000 was of a popular local selling Marston's ales. We drank the ever reliable Marston's bitter, now re-issued nationally as Burton Bitter, and played nap, while from the other bar came the sound of conversation and laughter, and an obviously entertaining TV programme being enjoyed. This year we found the pub empty but for the landlord, opening only from late afternoon, and no sign of Marston's ales, just London Pride and one or two others from the standard nationwide repertoire.

Apologies for going on about golden ales again but we do seem to have been inundated by them over recent months. I also have my suspicions about ex-

actly how much malt goes into some of them – certainly there are golden ales whose flavour seems to consist mainly of hops. However I suppose one can't argue against personal choice and certainly they appear to sell, although of course also, so does keg lager. Having said that, once again during the Beery Boater trip, one pub on arrival offered a choice of three golden ales. During our stay the range was altered to include the bitter style Sharp's Eden Ale. As pints were finished and more pints bought it was interesting to note that almost the whole company abandoned the golden ales in favour of the Sharp's.

It appears that some level of realism has now entered the pronouncements of the Alcohol Health Alliance. Where once they appeared to be unaware of, or at least refused to distinguish between, the rock bottom price of alcohol in the supermarket and the many times more expensive pint in the pub, recent comments have suggested that this has now worked its way into their considerations. Interviewed on Radio Four's PM news programme on May 22nd. following the release of Government figures showing a doubling of alcohol related illness over the last few years, the Alliance's leading light Professor Ian Gil-mour admitted that the main problem lay with discounted sales by supermarkets and off licences, and not public houses. In a comment that will ring in the ears of the country's landlords and their customers he said we should try and get prices in real terms back to what they were ten years ago. However, he still complained, of the cost to the Health Service, which while no doubt considerable, is many times covered by the duty raised from alcohol.

And the low price of supermarket beer has once again demonstrated how the Government's adherence to the free market and the uncontrolled interplay of market forces, acts as a self imposed strait jacket. Faced with massive discounting, sometimes to below cost, the Government and its agents are able to do nothing. The Competition Commission is well aware of the way market operates, but claims it can only judge competition issues and not social or moral ones such as alcohol and drinking. Despite the Government's willingness to interfere elsewhere in the free market, such as the supply of building land via the planning laws, general retailing is sacrosanct, and it is left wringing its hands over binge drinking and alcohol abuse, and the anti social behaviour that follows. Interestingly, Scotland feels more liberated and is seriously talking about imposing a minimum price below which alcohol can not be sold. Meanwhile the supermarkets, despite alleged concern and suitable accompanying rhetoric, appear to be carrying on as normal. During the European Nations Football Competition customers entering Tesco's Cheriton store were confronted by stacks of half price cases of Becks.

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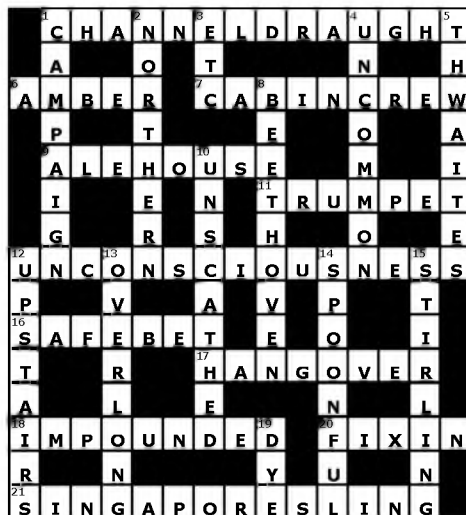
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And Finally.....

Police pulled a car over on the Ross Highway, south of Alice Springs in Australia's Northern Territory and discovered the driver had strapped in a 30-can pack of beer but left his five-year-old child unrestrained on the floor. A police spokesman said they were "shocked and appalled" at the discovery

The driver was handed a fine of A\$750 (£362) for failing to ensure a child was wearing a seatbelt as well as driving an unregistered and uninsured vehicle. Constable Wayne Burnett said: "I haven't ever seen something like this before. "This is the first time that the beer has taken priority over a child. The child was sitting in the lump in the centre, unrestrained."

"When I asked him about the fact the child was unrestrained and the beer was, the driver just looked at me blankly. He didn't get it," Constable Burnett said.

Superintendent Sean Parnell of Alice Springs police said the incident was a "timely reminder" to ensure "all passengers are secured".

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