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



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

Issue 38  
Winter  
2008/09

# CHANNEL DRAUGHT



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## **Channel Draught**

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# **CHANNEL DRAUGHT**

**ISSUE 38**  
**Winter 2008/09**

As more and more evidence of skulduggery and incompetence emerge from the financial world, those of us accustomed to sorting out the affairs of the world over a few pints at the local, will find ourselves not the least bit surprised. The general opinion being that as traditional industrial jobs are replaced by an economy dependent on consumer borrowing, ever rising house prices, and an overblown financial sector, it would only be a matter of time before the whole caboodle ended in tears: a complete house of cards as one of our company is fond of saying. It is perhaps some consolation that real ale, at least, seems to be weathering the storm reasonably well, very well if the reports from our local small brewers are typical of the country as a whole – apparently a particularly good festive season was enjoyed.

East Kent readers of this newsletter might also be intrigued at all the media talk of a finished boom and the need to cut back on spending. Boom, what boom, they might reasonably ask; and which part of the essential requirements of everyday life are they expected to do without. Dover with its tranches of empty premises, charity shops and pound stops, and where a quarter of the pubs have closed since the millennium, hardly oozes affluence: a strange contradiction, perhaps, for one of the busiest and most successful ports in the World.

Meanwhile we plod on as normal. February sees the annual White Cliffs Festival of Winter Ales at the Town Hall (our 16th), with 70 odd real ales at strengths of 5% ABV and above available, and a month later there is a mini festival at the Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club. In April there are festivals Easter weekend at Chambers in Folkestone and Thanet (Thanet CAMRA's annual Planet Thanet bash); and last weekend at the Five Bells, Eastry. We have bus trips planned, and in March John Pitcher will be back on the road (track, muddy footpath or whatever) guiding us around our Branch's real ale providers. Full details of all in Branch Diary.

A happy new year to you all.

***Martin Atkins (Editor)***

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## EVENTS DIARY

Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Branch Meeting, Ship, Deal
Fri 20 <sup>th</sup> & Sat 21 <sup>st</sup>	Beer Festival, Berry, Walmer
Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Eastern Front mini-bus trip. Meet White Horse, Dover, 18.30 Sandwich & Deal pickups available. Call Trisha 01304 611090 to book.
	Beer Festival, Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club*
Fri 6 <sup>th</sup> Mar 18.00 - 23.00	
& Sat 7 <sup>th</sup> Mar 12.00 - 23.00	
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Kent Regional Meeting, Louis Armstrong, Dover, 11.30
Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Dover Town Crawl, meet Eagle, Dover midday
Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Branch Meeting, Red Lion, Dover
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Deal Town Crawl, meet Bohemian, Deal, midday
Good Fri 10 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Planet Thanet Ale Festival
& Sat 11 <sup>th</sup> Apr	
Fri 10 <sup>th</sup> Apr to	
Mon 13 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Easter Ales Festival, Chambers, Folkestone*
<b>Monday 20<sup>th</sup> Apr</b>	<b>Annual General Meeting and Branch Meeting, The Berry, Walmer</b>
Sat 25 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Beer Festival, Five Bells, Eastry *
& Sun 26 <sup>th</sup> Apr	

**Branch Website    [www.camra-dds.org.uk](http://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](mailto: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!*

## BEER TAX PRESSURE

The Government is coming under increasing pressure to do something about the present state of the British Pub, with MPs, the industry and CAMRA, all campaigning to halt the currently disastrous spate of closures. CAMRA and the British Beer and Pub Association have together launched *Axe the Tax – Save the Pub*, which as well as aiming for a curb on taxes, also argues for better use of existing laws to deal with alcohol abuse, an end to irresponsible advertising, promotion of the responsible majority, and support for the role of the pub as a community asset. Meanwhile the Society of Independent Brewers with the support of CAMRA, MPs and the Publican newspaper is calling for a minimum alcohol price of 50p per unit. (See *Axe the Tax* and *National News*)

Some of the strongest opposition, however comes from their own colleagues in Parliament. In November the All Party Parliamentary Beer Group published the report of its Community Pub Inquiry. Two years in the making, it took expert evidence from a wide range of organisations including CAMRA, many of whose policies form the backbone of its findings and proposals. These include:-

- The call that “community pubs need a vocal and persistent champion across government” if they are to survive.
- A freeze on beer duty and, particularly, the abandonment of Alistair Darling's duty escalator, which will see above-inflation increases on alcohol duty for the next four years.
- Government research into the social effects of beer tax, including the risks

of closing community pubs and moving drinking from controlled to uncontrolled premises such as homes.

- Duty and or VAT to be reduced on draught beers sales, to stop pre loading at home, and concentrate drinking back into the regulated environment of the pub.

A publican constituent of Lib Dem Greg Mulholland, MP for Leeds NW and Beer Group member, likened the present Government's attitude to community pubs to that of Margaret Thatcher towards the mining industry. The MP said: “The report makes clear that over-regulation, increases in beer duty and a failure to tackle supermarket selling practices are not only making life difficult or intolerable for many publicans, but are leading to the closure of many pubs. The Government needs to wake up and smell the hops. The great British pub is part of our heritage and I hope this report will serve as a stark warning that, unless the Government changes its policies, we will lose many of these valuable community assets.”

Further criticism came from Derby North Labour MP Bob Laxton. Backing CAMRA's call for an end to the duty rises he said that the above inflation rate beer duty rise for the next four years would accelerate the decline in community pubs. “People are going to stop buying beer from traditional pubs Part of that is the availability of cheap booze from supermarkets,” he said. “Tackling that would be good for society and the pub business . But these are stringent times, and if there are things that can be done to ease the pressure by not increasing beer tax then we should be taking a look at that. As the price of beer goes up, sales are going down and the tax take is falling. I agree with CAMRA.”

# BLAKES OF DOVER

*Your country pub in town*

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real ales, real ciders or perries.

Or just a coffee. Or a glass or bottle of wine.  
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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](mailto:channeldraught.pubnews@virgin.net)

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

## DOVER

The town's loss of pubs continues apace. As our Autumn edition went to the printers we heard about the closure of the **Renaissance**, **Flagship** and **Nelson**, to add to the half dozen already standing idle. The Nelson has at least re-opened, however the other two remain closed, the Renaissance having struggled ever since the death of landlady Linda Martin, while Dave Watson, who took on the Flagship in January 2007, closed the pub at the end of the summer, blaming the spring road works for driving away customers: summer takings being down 80% on the previous year. Of the remaining closed or lost pubs redevelopment work appears nearing completion, or finished, on the sites of the **King Lear** and the **Primrose**, and well underway at the **Engineer**. For the rest of Folkestone Rd. (now the road with no pubs) the **Orange Tree** remains boarded up as it has for several years now, and as has been the **Hare and Hounds** since last January. The latter with consent for conversion to a house, appears to have attracted no takers as yet, and a "for auction" sign that appeared in the autumn soon disappeared. The **Castle** is up for sale and the **Britannia**, now destined for Council redevelopment, has

presumably seen its last pint pulled. At the **Prince of Orange**, New St. a new application for conversion to flats was submitted in November, this time for just four, last year's application for conversion to six having been thrown out as being over intensive.

Very different a hundred or so yards round the corner is the **Eight Bells** in Cannon St. The end of October and first half of November saw Wetherspoon's nation wide International Real Ale Festival, featuring, as well as forty plus British real ales, half a dozen from around the world. In Castle St., Wetherspoon's other Dover premises, the as yet undeveloped and increasingly derelict looking former cinema-cum-nightclub **Snoops**, has again further news. Having launched a revised scheme for conversion into a pub and flats, with much publicity and futuristic artist's impressions, the planning application was suddenly withdrawn in November, without, to our knowledge, explanation.

**First and Last**, East Cliff: Landlord Graham Hopkins informed us in the autumn, that the pub offers both Master brew and Spitfire on draught now; and they were currently give a 5% discount on draught ales and lagers to anyone

participating in the Dover Loyalty Card scheme – available to anyone living in Dover itself. People can ring on 01304 212571 or 07919 025058 to check for availability.

**Eagle Inn**, Dover: As reported in previous issues the pub has been expanding its range away from Nelson of late – one of our members mentions enjoying a very good pint of Bass, excellently priced at £2.10, and a good pint of Tom Wood Shepherd's Delight. However Nelson beers have not been abandoned and were back on in the Autumn. Changes also at the nearby **Red Lion**, Charlton Green with the pub becoming another outlet for Harvey's Sussex. In mid November it had replaced London Pride on the handpumps alongside Bombardier, a line-up Jan and Keith planned to keep for the time being. The Red Lion is very much a traditional pub with two bars, open fire, darts, skittles and a fine walled garden, and is one of the few pubs these days where crib is regularly played. Always worth a visit. Along the road the **Louis Armstrong** hosted our November branch meeting, providing a choice of four excellent local real ales – as well as house bitter Skrimshander we enjoyed Whitstable Oyster Stout, and Old Brown Pig and Dark Conspiracy from Gadds. The latter, a new dark and bitter ale at 4.9% ABV, found particular favour with our Pubs Officer: "The beer clip for Gadd's Dark Conspiracy promised much and the beer delivered. A dark, brooding 4.9% beer, with a fantastic deep, smoky taste to it. One of the best beers I've tasted for a while." For cider drinkers there was the excellent Rough Old Wife cider from Old Wives Lees.

**Golden Lion**, Priory Place: Usual wide varying selection over the Autumn and

start of the winter. Earlier autumn beers included London Pride, Landlord, Bombardier, Greene King IPA and St Austell Tribute, the latter being rated superb. Later on we enjoyed Bank's St George's, Ruddles County, Young's Winter Warmer, Landlord, Nelson's Loose Cannon, Hydes Rockin' Robin, Marston's Ugly Sisters and the particularly excellent Cameron's Christmas Ale and Bath Ales Barnstormer.

The **Prince Albert** was selling Gadds No 3 alongside regulars Ruddles Best and Thatcher's Farmers Tipple in November, and at the **Park Inn** the normal line-up is Adnams Explorer and Broadside, and Sheps Spitfire. A few doors away the **Falstaff** normally has a real ale on the bar these days, although the pump clips, or lack of, can sometimes mislead. Beers in the autumn have included Tanglefoot, Greene King IPA and a very good Friggin' in the Rigg'in' from Nelson.

**Blakes**, Castle St: Excellent beers available over Christmas including the 6.7% ABV 1066 from Goacher's of Maidstone, a deeply flavoured traditional dark old ale, which owing to its strength kept beautifully throughout the whole festive period. In the new year, almost as good, was Colley Dog from Tring Brewery. Peter had left the beer a month before tapping to enhance its condition. Blakes has now launched its own loyalty card, giving customers a 10% discount on selected items of food, drink and accommodation. It costs £10 per year, of which half goes to charity.

**White Horse**, St James St: Maintaining its traditionally eclectic selection during the last few months we were able to enjoy excellent beers from across the country. In addition to regular ale Land-

lord, particularly outstanding were Oak-leaf Reindeer's Delight in mid-December (a mid-brown slightly sweet-ish bitter), Mordue's Workie Ticket in late October, and at the start of the year Ringwood Best Bitter and O'hannon's Royal Oak. Other regularly featured breweries include RCH, Acorn, York, and Robinson's. Latest addition to the establishment is Harvey, a stray cat who as adopted Jill and Jack. Apparently he is a fully intact tom, and has derived his name from his initial few days at the pub, when, somewhat disorientated, he had a habit of bashing into walls – Harvey Wall Banger seemed well appropriate for a pub.

**Royal Oak**, Whitfield: An application is currently under consideration for the erection of four dwellings – presumably the site of the current car park, as a new parking area is to be reconfigured behind the pub. Good news for drinkers as it suggests the pub is to be retained.

**Fox**, Temple Ewell: Caledonian Deuchar's IPA and Greene King Abbot Ale were regular beers over the Autumn joined for quite a time by Triple FFFs award winning Alton's Pride. Other autumn beers included Archer's Best Bitter, Courage Director's, Spitfire, Cottage Golden Arrow and Fox Bitter, although whether the latter was brewed for the pub or someone else's brew of the same name we don't know (the only 'Fox' beer in the GBG is from Exmoor). Another fox around Christmas time in the shape of Cottage Festive Fox which appeared alongside Bateman's Rosey Nosey Highgate Stocking Filler, Archer's Xmas Pud, Thwaite's Good Elf, Hardy & Hanson's Rocking Rudolph and various others of a festive nature. The pub continues to offer a broad selection of other attractions including curry nights, quiz nights and big

screen football. Boxing day lunchtime found the pub packed – excellent, but the same customers need to be using the pub in January and February.... how many will?

## DEAL & WALMER

We start off in Beach St where plans have been approved to convert No. 65 into a wine bar with manager's flat. No other information at present. However in Queen St. all has gone quiet on the proposed transformation of Deal's former Jobcentre into a **Smith and Jones** outlet for the Barracuda Group, following the grant of planning permission by Dover District Council last year. Work was due to start in the summer but as yet there seems to be no sign of any activity. A victim of the "Credit Crunch"?

More alterations lined up for the **Strand** in the High St. where further proposals were submitted for the former Black Horse. Late last year Giarti of Whitstable, applied for change of use to ten flats, and Jimmy Godden for conversion of the ground floor into a restaurant and a retail shop. Permission already exists for the conversion of the upper floors into flats. In Middle Deal Rd. work is well under way to convert the **New Plough** to residential use – the middle of November finding the sign removed and painters and decorators at work. A chalet bungalow now seems the preferred option for the adjoining land rather than a terrace of houses as originally proposed.

**Berry**, Canada Rd: In October Chris Barnes arranged an OctoberFest featuring 16 different German and Belgian Beers in addition to the normal complement of five British real ales including Harvey's Old. The continental selection covered a wide range of style and fla-



vours and ranged in strength from De Troch Banana at 3.5% to Schneider Aventinus at 8%. On Saturday afternoon (Oct 11<sup>th</sup>) there was live music from "The Old Lone Gin Band". Leaving aside special events the pub continued with its normal wide selection: in addition to the regular Harvey's Sussex its autumnal selection included Exmoor Gold, Ossett Turning Leaves, Gadds Rye Pale Ale, Hydes Owd Bill, Wickwar Cotswold Way, Orkney Dark Island and Henry's Harvest Special from Clark's. All seem well received except some found Owd Bill a little disappointing. For those who might want an alternative to ale several real ciders/perries are normally available, and to look after our external warmth, Chris has had a real fire installed. At the end of September the pub was fortunate enough to be able to obtain a barrel of Nelson's Special Birthday Ale, from the Nelson Brewery. At 4.9% ABV and mid brown in colour it was just one of only 6 firkins sent out to the trade, the rest of the brew having been bottled.

**Bohemian**, Deal: Autumn selection has included Adnam's Broadside, Everards Beacon, Wyre Piddle Brewery Piddle in the Pub, Gadds No 7, Woodforde's Wherry, Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Sharp's Doom Bar, with on the fruit juice front, Weston Country Perry, Weston Organic Cider and Biddenden Dry Cider. However, despite its doubling of the number of handpumps a year or so back, the range of real ale seems to have been cut back of late, with often only two or three on at a time.

**Ship Inn**, Middle St: Real Ale Selection normally two from Gadds (often No 7 & Seaside), two from Dark Star (Hophead and a dark beer – e.g. Original or Porter), and Deuchar's IPA. Vari-

ous visits late last year rated all top quality. And good ales always available along the road at the **Prince Albert** at the corner of Alfred Square. A visit just before Christmas found fine examples of Helmsman and Shiver M' Timbers and Frosty Whippet from Cottage.

**Deal Hoy**, Duke St: Recently refurbished, the new décor particularly impressed one of our members who liked the new bright feel and the pictures of beech huts, boats, etc. Beers in early Autumn were Spitfire, Master Brew, Canterbury Jack and Late Red. Feelings about Canterbury Jack vary. Despite proving popular with the tasters in CAMRA's Beer magazine local opinion is not altogether enthusiastic. Comments included: "long in taste but lacking depth," and "a nice subtle beer, although perhaps too subtle." And Shepherd Neame's brewing credentials were further put to the test in November when the Hoy was among those selected to take part in the brewery's "Beer Festival" (see Festival News) which involved offering various west country beers in a number of their tied houses. Just round the corner at the **Alma**, West St. a visit in mid November found the pub to be another outlet for the ever expanding Harveys Sussex.

**Saracen's Head**, Alfred Sq: Also taking part in Shep's Festival mid November found Dartmoor IPA from Dartmoor Brewery of Princetown, on the handpumps alongside Master Brew and Spitfire. By all accounts the pub had a good Folk Festival – "filled with locals and musicians – a bustling place to be on a Saturday afternoon", commented one of our members. Mid October saw Canterbury Jack on sale.

**Three Horse Shoes**, Mongeham: Sam and Sarah Rodwell, who took over the

Admiral-owned pub in July, appear now well settled in, and maintaining an interesting range of well looked after real ale. Back in the Autumn one of our members reports enjoying a particularly good pint or two of Jennings Cocker Hoop – “a great pub”, he added, and in November another CAMRA drinker rated a pint of Young's Winter Warmer as the best beer he had tasted all year – beautifully rich and warm. Three real ales are usually available, and the pub provides food every lunchtime, except Monday, with a roast on Sunday. Just along the road at the **Leather Bottle** Dan Warwick has continued with an expanded range of ale, late November seeing Sharp's Doom Bar, Robinson's Spellbound and the excellent Elgood's Cambridge Bitter.

## SANDWICH & RURAL

**Greyhound**, Sandwich: As suspected the Greyhound looks like becoming another loss to our Branch list of pubs, an application now having been submitted for rear extensions, and the conversion of the ground floor to a restaurant, and change of use of the first floor to 2 self-contained flats.

**Fleur de Lis**, Sandwich: The hotel provided the venue for our December branch meeting and Christmas Social, which proved most successful. Three real ales are normally available, but the range appears more extensive of late. Regularly featured beers now include King & Barnes Sussex Bitter from Hall and Woodhouse, as well as Greene King IPA and Archer's brews. Other beers spotted recently have included Brewster's Daffy's Elixir, Okell's Dr Okell's IPA and Harveys Sussex.

Elsewhere in Sandwich the **Admiral Owen** was selling Fuller's London

Pride, and the now rarely seen Everard's Tiger in November, while the **George and Dragon** had Exmoor Gold and Brain's SA on pump alongside Master Brew. At the **Red Cow** several visits found a standard selection of Greene King IPA, Fuller's London Pride and Gadd's No 5. The **Market Inn** took full advantage of Shep's Autumn festival, mid November finding Butcombe Gold and Princetown Dartmoor IPA being sold along with Master Brew – the Dartmoor being very highly regarded.

At Worth the **St. Crispin Inn** offers a choice of four real ales. On various visits in the Autumn we found Jennings Cumberland Ale (rated most highly), Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter, Ringwood Fortyniner, Adnam's Broadside, Fuller's London Pride and Courage Director's. One of our members was particularly impressed by the jolly atmosphere one lunchtime visit just before Christmas. At the **Blue Pigeons**, where there was a change of licensee earlier last year, normally two or three real ales available such as Adnam's Bitter, Fuller's London Pride and Wychwood Hobgoblin.

**Crown Inn**, Finglesham: Heavy concentration of late on beers from Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Locals Hopdemon and Gadds compete with the likes of Hogs Back, Dark Star and Surrey Hills – the latter rapidly becoming a favourite of our Pubs Officer. “Surrey Hills Ranmore Ale and Surrey Hills Albury Ruby, which have recently appeared at the Crown, have both been excellent beers, with very different tastes, (the latter) a wonderful deep tasting beer full of roasted malt flavours.” He also waxed lyrical (again) about Gadds Dark Conspiracy (*Hear hear! – Ed.*).

**King's Head**, Kingsdown: Autumn saw the welcome reappearance of Goacher's Fine Light Ale as well as a (presumably) new seasonal from Greene King – Bonkers Conkers, quite a tasty brew and much better than their IPA according to one drinker. The pub also acquired some Dark Star Sunburst which produced the comment, "worth missing last bus for!" (*Ho yes, last bus at 6.16 by the way! commented our local transport guru*). Regarding Greene King Bonkers Conkers, landlord Alex wondered if brewers are going down the right path with silly names, might well deter people more than it encourages.

**Yew Tree**, Barfreestone: Although now a serious foody pub the Yew Tree still maintains a good supply of real ale with strong local representation. A visit in the Autumn found a full house of Kentish brews Rye Pale Ale, No 7 and Seaside from Gadds, Goacher's Mild and Hopdaemon Incubus. Drinking though, is now mainly confined to the rear bar, and even here ones table may be required for a meal booking, as happened to one of our members enjoying a quiet pint last year. However, with the new year things might be looking up, for drinkers. We understand that Monday to Thursday from 6-8pm all draught beers are £2 a pint, while there are rumours that bar stools will be returning to the main bar.

**Carpenters Arms**, Coldred: A pub probably not mentioned in these pages before, because of the absence of real ale, now very much deserves to be included, having of late started taking beers from Gadds – most recently a barrel of their new 80/- scotch style brew. This was joined in mid January by a true Scottish beer, Pipers Gold. Real ale is not always available, and at

the moment served only on gravity, but the installation of a handpump is promised.

**Jackdaw Inn**, Denton: Closed since the end of last summer through, we understand, financial difficulties the pub was due to reopen in the new year, under the management of the licensee of the **Duke of Cumberland** at Barham, who plans to run both pubs. Local opinion considers this no bad thing as the Cumberland has a good real ale reputation, with a festival in the summer. Normal range is four real ales, a visit in mid November finding Adnams Bitter, Black Sheep, Green King IPA and St Austell Tribute.

**Frog & Orange**, Shatterling: Good to see the pub sticking with local brewers Gadds of Ramsgate – No 5 and No 7 being available at the end of September. A pleasant pub and pleasing food as someone commented. And Gadds also proving a success at the **Three Tuns**, Staple which regularly maintains two from the brewery along with Greene King IPA. A visit in early autumn found Seaside and No 5, although all beer had to be drunk outside, one pint per person only, and supped fairly quickly. Having arranged to meet there at noon for a Branch ramble, our intrepid walkers were greeted by a big notice on the wall 'Closed for function'. Apparently the pub was playing host to a wedding party – a pain perhaps for the casual visitor, but as one of our number pointed, the financial benefit to the pub would in the long term benefit us all, when pubs often need all they can garner to stay afloat.

**Chequers**, Ash: New landlord is Richard Munden who reopened the pub on November 1st. (see Tony's Tappings). Not so long ago there were five pubs in

# The Chambers 2009

## EASTER ALES FEST'

FRI 10TH - MON 13TH APRIL

20 ALES & CIDERS FROM  
ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

CURRENT HOLDER  
**ASHFORD FOLKESTONE &  
ROMNEY MARSH CAMRA  
PUB OF THE YEAR**

Cheriton Place, Folkestone,  
Kent, CT20 2BB.

Tel: 01303 223333

[thechambers@btconnect.com](mailto:thechambers@btconnect.com)



Ash village, now there are just two, if you include the **Volunteer** at Gilton. The **Ship** became a house, the **Lion** an Indian restaurant, and the **Crooked Billet** demolished for housing.

At Capel the **Lighthouse** changed hands in early November from Oxford Hotels to a group of three business partners – Carl, James and Edwina. A visit shortly afterwards found just two real ales available, although this should improve once the changeover is sorted out; however don't expect much in the way of micros as the pub has a tie with a supplier who deals mainly with national brews: just after New Year it was back to four ales again. The **Royal Oak**, normally has a choice of two or three, Shepherd Neame, Greene King, Bass and Nelson beers featuring regularly. Nice to see Bishop's Finger given an outing again in late November. Prices are excellent, a pint of Cat o' Nine Tails from the latter, costing just £1.80 in mid October. Food too is keenly priced with a considerable choice for well under a fiver. The pub now has its own web site which can be viewed at [www.roval-oak-capel.co.uk](http://www.roval-oak-capel.co.uk) .

**Coastguard**, St. Margaret's Bay: Renowned as a home of good ale since they acquired the pub some seven years ago, Nigel and Sam have now received the accolade of being named one of the top 250 restaurants in Britain, by style and fashion magazine Harper's Bazaar. "We had no idea that we had been reviewed for selection and were quite astounded when we were told," said Sam. "To be placed alongside Michelin starred restaurants and celebrity chefs is quite an honour, and a very nice surprise." And success in the kitchen has not been at the neglect of the beer. Real ale continues to be sourced from smaller producers with

good local representation. Visits during the Autumn, found among other brews, ales from Adnams, Highland, Northumberland and Surrey Hills from away, and Gadds, Hopdaemon, Goachers and Whitstable from Kent. Cider remains Weston 1st Quality and the pub carries an interesting range of foreign bottled beers

## FOLKESTONE

The town's boarded up selection of pubs remains the same, with no indication of re-opening or being converted to other uses. For the **White Lion**, **Martello**, **Two Bells**, and **Brewery Tap** this must be a couple of years at least. Of the more recent closures the **Pullman** and **Three Mackerel** are up for sale, the latter with a sign in the window informing all and sundry that "all items of value removed", while as reported in our Autumn issue rumour suggests that site of the steel shuttered **Railway Bell** is destined for one of Tesco's small local stores.

**Chambers**, Cheriton Place: Around the New Year Henry IPA joined the pub's selection alongside Gadds No. 5, and Incubus and Dominator from Hopdaemon. Ever faithful Dogbolter was the 'guest', although back on November 5<sup>th</sup> this had been a dark, explosive sounding brew from Cottage – Wessex Banger. Adnams bitter remains the **Happy Frenchman's** choice for real ale and similarly **Harveys** is sticking with Bombardier and Courage Best. At the **Guildhall** Everards Tiger appeared in November and in January there was more from the brewery in the shape of Original and Sleighbell. Other guests included beers from Tom Woods, Goffs, Lees and Titanic.

At Sandgate a January visit found Mas-

ter Brew, Spitfire and Kent Best at the **Clarendon**, and at the **Ship** Greene King Abbot and IPA, Summer Lighting, Incubus and very palatable Harveys Old.

In the run up to Christmas at the **Carousel** in Hythe Young's Bitter and Wadworth Henry IPA found themselves in the company of the very seasonal Brain's Party Popper, Robinson's Mr Scrooge and Sharp's Nadelik.

**Lifeboat**, North St: Early November found the appropriately named Hobgoblin Pumpkin and Ridley's Witchfinder on tap among the more regular brews, and an equally seasonal selection at Christmas and New Year. By mid January normal service had resumed featuring Doombar, Bombardier, London Pride, Harveys Sussex and Old Speckled Hen.

## CANTERBURY

**Phoenix**, Old Dover Rd: The first weekend in December saw the pub's annual winter beer festival taking place. With some thirty different real ales available, it was voted by some of our branch members who attended a great success. Previously in November it had also hosted a CAMRA beer tasting seminar. The bar now sports eight handpumps with normally a substantial selection from Nelson of Chatham.

**New Inn**, Havelock St: A visit one evening in mid November found Doombar, Elgoods Cambridge and Ossett Pale Gold on the bar at a very competitive £2.40/£2.50 a pint. Whether a games night was under way, or just normal pub activity, it was good to see chess and cards being played. At the **Old Brewery Tavern** Otter Bright was on sale



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**Friday 27th Feb - Standard Five - Blues**

**Sat 28th Feb - Wilson Ford**

**Sun 1st Mar - Sheila Collier & Lasse**

alongside local brews Hopdaemon Skrimshander and Gadds Storm Warning.

In Bishopsbourne and Bridge the **Mermaid** and the **Plough and Harrow** took

full advantage of Sheps festival in mid November, visits finding the two respectively selling Butcombe Gold and St. Austell Black Princess, and Butcombe Gold and Dartmoor IPA.

## Chasers.....

**Pull Your Own Pint.** The landlord of Taps, in Leicester has bought the British rights to a US concept – personal handpumps. Every table in his pub now has its own handpump from which customers are able to pull their own beer. Volumes are metered by a counter in the cellar, and customers pay when they leave.

**Coffin Protest.** The current plight of the pub trade drove Tonbridge publican Colm Powell to undertake a ten day hunger strike in October, during which he slept at night in a coffin in the bar. Having run a good community pub for seventeen years, he was protesting against his treatment by Enterprise Inns, and pledged that if he was evicted in November as proposed, they would literally have to carry him out of the pub, as he was planning a repeat performance.

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# TONY'S TAPPINGS

The perambulations and musings  
of our Pubs Officer, Tony Wells

## A Limerick

*There was a young barmaid from Sale,  
On whose breasts were the prices of ale.  
And on her behind,  
for the sake of the blind,  
was exactly the same but in braille*

## Update from the Chequer Inn, Ash.

After being closed for a short period of time, for a lick of paint inside and out, the Chequer Inn, Ash, has reopened with a new tenant, Richard Munden, behind the bar. Richard, who worked in retail for 11 years was looking for a change, and following two years at Wetherspoons in Canterbury and a short period at the Bell Hotel, he took over and on 1<sup>st</sup> November opened the Chequer Inn.

**Chequers Inn, Ash**



He was attracted to the pub by its character, its location and its potential. He plans on turning the inn back to a pub which is part of the community: serving real ale; good home-made food, and for somewhere people can go for a talk. The pub will also offer a variety of entertainment, for example quiz nights and folk evenings. In 2009, he intends to start up the Bat and Trap team again. For those of you who play Bat & Trap in the East Kent Friendly League, the Bat & Trap pitch at The Chequer Inn is perhaps one of the most challenging in the area.

Richard, who is a member of CAMRA, will continue to serve real ale. Currently, Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Greene King IPA are regular beers with a guest offering. In January, he intends to apply for Cask Marque accreditation and will participate in National Ale Week, in April. His favourite brewery is Shepherd Neame, for its historic connections to brewing, and his favourite beer is Young's Waggledance. As ever I wish him all the best for the future. Note, that the telephone number of the Chequer Inn has changed to (01304) 813918.

## Shepherd Neame's Pub Beer Festival at the Market Inn

What does Shepherd Neame's First Pub Beer Festival and the African Grey Parrot have in common? – both could be found at the Market Inn, Sandwich in November.



The Market Inn was taking part in Shepherd Neame's First Pub Beer Festival, pairing Shep's Kentish ales with some cask ales from the Southwest. At the time, Butcombe Gold was being served with an excellent Princetown Dartmoor IPA.. While chatting to the landlady, I became aware of a large bird cage tucked away in one corner of the pub, on the top of which was perched a parrot. I was told it was an African Grey called Rio. Thoughts of Monty Python's Parrot Sketch popped into my mind, but I decided to hold my tongue.

Getting back to the business of real ale, they have recently had some more handpumps installed. So they are now in a position to serve Shep's full range of beers, including the seasonals. They were also proud to have achieved Shepherd Neame's Master of Beer accreditation, and a plaque will shortly appear on the pub's wall. Immediate plans are for further refurbishment to the outside of the pub, including some additional signage.

### **Complaints from licensees**

I continue to receive complaints from some licensees that their pubs do not appear in Channel Draught. So I thought I would clarify how and why pubs are mentioned in Channel Draught; why the branch cannot guarantee to mention a pub; what you, the Channel Draught reader, can do about it; and how you can contact the branch's Pubs Officer.

#### *Why are pubs mentioned in Channel Draught?*

Typically, a pub is mentioned in Channel Draught following a visit by one of our branch members, who then submits a report to me, the Pubs Officer. I record and report this to the branch and the Editor of Channel Draught. If the report contains something of interest, such as an interesting beer, an event or perhaps a change of landlord, then this may be mentioned in the next edition.

#### *So, why can't we guarantee to include a particular pub?*

We cannot guarantee inclusion in Channel Draught for a number of reasons. If no reports are received or the reports indicate no change and business as normal, then a pub is far less likely to be mentioned in Channel Draught. If we don't receive a report then there is nothing to report, and as we have few active members, we cannot be certain about getting to all the pubs in our branch in a timely manner.

#### *What can you, the reader, do about it?*

The simple answer is: tell us what is going on. If you are the licensee then don't wait until one of our members calls around. Tell us what is going on at

your pub. If you are a CAMRA member and would like to see your pub appear in Channel Draught, then submit a beer report or other pub news. So it's over to you and please, no more complaints.

*Pubs Officer contact details*

Email: [pubs.officer@camra-dds.org.uk](mailto:pubs.officer@camra-dds.org.uk). Tel: (01304) 611090. Text: 07518 949 587.

## **National Beer Scoring System Comes of Age**

The National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) has been running since 2004, and in that time the most important achievement was the release of the NBSS on line version. The major benefits of having an on line system are:

- Pubs scores are available to branches instantly rather than having to wait for cards to get through the system
- There is less work for staff and volunteers to do to sort and distribute cards
- There are no postage expenses for CAMRA.
- Using the on line system is better for the environment

As a result of this success CAMRA HQ has seen a noticeable reduction in the number of beer scores submitted using the old NBSS card system. So, from 31<sup>st</sup> January 2009, CAMRA HQ will be phasing out the use of paper cards and will NOT accept or distribute completed NBSS cards.

Steve & Jackie welcome you to  
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Basket Competition***

***Beer Garden Piano Darts***

"So, how do I submit my beer scores?" I hear you cry. The best way of submitting your scores and reports is through the NBSS website at [www.beerscoring.org.uk](http://www.beerscoring.org.uk). But scores and reports are acceptable by email to [pubs.officer@camra-dds.org.uk](mailto:pubs.officer@camra-dds.org.uk) – please include your name and CAMRA Membership Number.

So, what do you do if you are not on line? You can use one of the following:

- Ask a fellow branch member to submit the scores on your behalf through the NBSS website. Please put your name and CAMRA membership number in the Comments box
- Use a PC at your public library
- Submit your scores directly to the Pubs Officer, by text message to 07518 949587 or by sending your scores to Outspan, Finglesham, Deal, Kent, CT14 0ND

### **Update from the Five Bells, Eastry.**

The Five Bells, at Eastry has been under new management for six months, and I had a long chat with the new licensee, Mary Franks, just after she had taken over..

Mary had always had an ambition to run her own pub and she knew when she walked into the Five Bells this was the pub for her. What appealed to her was its community feel, including supporting the local branch of the British Legion.

**Dan welcomes you to**

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**Open**

**Mon to Fri      4pm to 11pm**

**Sat                Noon to 11pm**

**Sun                Noon to 9pm**



The pub has been refurbished, including swapping the public bar and lounge bar around and upgrading the kitchen. Mary has found that running a pub has been mentally and physically demanding, but having been a registered child minder is used to being always on the go. I should have asked Mary whether there were any similarities between running a pub and running a nursery.

She has no experience of real ales, but a four day course she attended shortly after taking over the pub gave her a good grounding, and she has had help and advice from Peter Clayton, the previous landlord at The Charity, Woodnesborough. Mary has plans to run a beer festival, at the end of April, 2009 , to celebrate her first year at the pub.



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<b>Sunday</b>	<b>12.00 - 4.00</b>	<b>Closed</b>

<b>Food Served</b>	<b>12.00-2.30</b>	<b>6.30-9.30</b>	<b>Monday to Friday</b>
	<b>12.00-2.00</b>	<b>6.30-9.30</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
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# The National News

By Martin Atkins

## CHANCELLOR CONDEMNED

Alastair Darling was roundly condemned by CAMRA, brewers and licensees following the additional 8% increase in beer duty in his November pre-budget report. The duty rise is intended to offset the 13 month drop in VAT from 17.5% to 15%, which for some reason or other the Chancellor saw fit not to apply to alcohol. CAMRA chief executive Mike Benner said, "The Chancellor's refusal to allow beer drinkers to benefit from a VAT reduction means that 7,500 pubs could close by the end of 2012. The Government's failure to support pubs will undermine community life, ruin livelihoods and deprive people of an affordable night out at a pub." CAMRA has joined forces with the British Beer and Pub Association to fight for the future of the British pub with the 'Axe the Beer Tax – Save the Pub' campaign. (See Axe the Tax)

## CUT PRICE CRACK DOWN

Maybe, of course, it was just a preliminary to December's Queen's Speech, in which the Government outlined various measures intended to cut down on excessive drinking. Supermarket deals that offer discounts on large purchases will be banned, a compulsory code of responsible selling will be introduced (the current voluntary code having little effect), and special funding will be available to target pubs and clubs using over aggressive-marketing, and binge drinking black spots. Smaller wine glasses will have to be available, there will be restrictions

on free drinks for women offers, and maybe higher fines for drinking in public areas where alcohol has been banned. Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, said: "I have a duty to cut down on irresponsible promotions that can fuel excessive drinking and lead people into crime and disorder."

However, it appears that plans to end happy hours have been dropped; although special offers such as 'speed drinking', 'all you can drink' deals, and drinking games, might well be banned. Neither was there reference to unit levels having to be displayed, the banning of TV drinks adverts before the 9pm watershed, health warnings, or minimum sale prices – all of which had apparently been under consideration.

The proposals were generally welcomed by the police, and Chris White, of the Local Government Association, speaking before the official announcement said "We want to get back to when our town centres were usable by everyone." Elsewhere, though, there were reservations, with particular concerns about struggling pubs. Rob Haywood of the British Beer and Pub Association said all that was needed was better enforcement of existing laws, while shadow Home Secretary, Dominic Grieve, said, "The answer lies in focused measures and law enforcement – not yet more laws and regulation that sound tough, but are never actually enforced."

## 50 PENCE PER UNIT MINIMUM

However, the Government's proposals

have been somewhat upstaged by a more radical and positive suggestion aimed at protecting the country's remaining pubs. Britain's small brewers, joining forces with CAMRA, MPs and the Publican newspaper, are calling for a minimum price of 50p per unit for alcohol to end cut-price deals at supermarkets. President of the Society of Independent Brewers and managing director of Titanic Brewery Keith Bott, said there had formerly been reluctance to support Government intervention on price, but now that it was interfering through duty increases this would seem the only solution. "The price differential between the on and off trade is just too excessive and will only continue to damage the British pub," he said.

## **CARLSBERG TO CLOSE TETLEY**

Following its partitioning of Scottish and Newcastle with Dutch rival Heineken earlier in the year, the Danish based international brewer Carlsberg, announced in November, that it intends to close Tetley's Leeds brewery, with its traditional Yorkshire square fermenters, in 2011. At risk are 170 jobs, the future of the long established brand, and a variety of other ales owned by Carlsberg or brewed under contract. CAMRA has condemned the move, accusing the brewer of failing to promote real ale when interest in real ales is growing. Bob Stukins, CAMRA vice chairman and director of brewery campaigning said, 'It is unclear where Carlsberg intends to brew the Tetley brands....Brewed outside their Leeds heartland, I fear they would lack the provenance which today's discerning consumers expect.' At the time of writing CAMRA was seeking a meeting with Carlsberg UK to discuss the proposed closure.

The brewery was established by Joshua Tetley in 1822, and became one the country's half dozen national brewers when it merged with Ansells and Ind Coope to form Allied Breweries in the 1960s. At the last count, six real ales were brewed: Tetley mild, dark mild, bitter and Imperial, Draught Burton Ale and Greenalls Bitter for former Greenalls pubs. Consultation with staff commenced immediately to try and redeploy workers or retrain them for other careers, however there is less certainty over the future of the ale brands; as well as the real ales mentioned above, the brewery also produces the nitro-keg version of Tetley's bitter. Carlsberg's other brewery in Britain is at Northampton, currently a dedicated lager facility. The company said, "Carlsberg UK needs to maximise efficiency in order to remain competitive in the face of increasingly challenging market conditions. Unfortunately in this environment it can no longer justify running two major breweries in the UK."

**Does this mean Carlsberg is abandoning real ale and selling the brands; putting their brewing out to contract; or transferring real ale brewing to Northampton? – no one seems to know. However, so long as the brews continue they will have a new home: watch out Burton, Wolverhampton or Tadcaster.**

## **PUNCH IN THE RED**

In November Punch Taverns posted losses of £80.2m for the year to September 23<sup>rd</sup>. The previous year the pub chain made £281.7m profit. Following the news, and Punch's comments that it was "cautious over trading prospects for the coming financial year", its shares dropped 14%. Poor trading conditions resulting from



the smoking ban, two bad summers and increased costs, plus the fall in property values had seen the value of its 8,400-strong pub estate reduced by almost £300m.

Currently the company is trying to dispose of 500 poorer performing pubs. Meanwhile the following month banker Morgan Stanley suggested that a quite plausible 15% decline in profits could cause covenant breaches in 2009 and 2011, which would trigger a financial restructuring that might leave Punch shares trading at just 10p, down from their start of December value of £106.25.

## **TOUGH TIMES FOR REGIONALS**

Fuller's, Greene King, Hall and Woodhouse, and Young's all report trading as difficult with profits either down or only marginally higher. Fuller's first-half figures showed a drop in profits by 1%, although its market share had increased, and while brewing turnover rose 2% to £30.9m there had been a substantial increase in marketing spending. Profits had also fallen at Greene King with turnover for the six months to October effectively flat at £445.5m and operating profit down 4.5% at £106.8m. At Hall and Woodhouse profits were up from £8.8m to £9m for the year ending 22 January 2008. However managing director Mark Woodhouse is looking to protect future profits by reducing the brewery's estate. The company are looking to close 'unviable' pubs on the rationale that it is better to have fewer better supported pubs. And, he criticises local authorities who he maintains "often try to retain pubs without any regard to their viability." Meanwhile at Young's turnover for the half year to September rose 3.7% to £66.3m with operating profits marginally up at £12.2m – a

resilient performance in a challenging environment, the company said, with conditions unlikely to improve in the near future.

## **MITCHELLS BUYS YORK**

Mitchells of Lancaster, which stopped brewing in 1999, is the new owner of York Brewery, the city centre micro with a 20 barrel plant complete with visitors' gallery. York branch chairman Stuart Barkworth said, "Despite worries of any takeover, this seems to offer more opportunities than threats and my first reaction is that York's future is secure." The brewery's name is expected to stay the same. Mitchells has 60 pubs in Lancashire, and York has three pubs in York and one in Leeds.

## **99p A PINT**

Wetherspoon's current promotion, of a pint of Greene King IPA at 99p has left Greene King distinctly underwhelmed. Justin Adams, Greene King's brewing managing director, said: "We were taken aback to hear about JD Wetherspoon's promotion. Legally, brewers have no controls over any prices that pub chains charge their customers. That does not stop us from being extremely disappointed about JDW's decision to apply such hefty discounts to Greene King IPA." Greene King are not supporting the promotion and "believe in the 'pulling power' of cask ale, given its craft, freshness and unique connection to the pub. Wetherspoon's should be focusing on this to get people off their sofas, rather than price alone." Wetherspoon said the discounts – which also include five meals on the menu being sold at £2.99 – would go on indefinitely.



## **The Golden Hind**

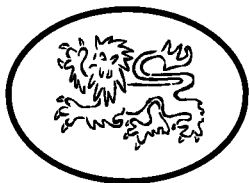
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NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

# AXE THE BEER TAX

**A**s you will be aware, as part of its measures to counteract the recession the Government has temporarily dropped VAT from 17.5% to 15%. So you might reasonably expect products subject to VAT to fall in price. Wrong! If the product concerned is beer, the Government, in its wisdom, has decided that paying less for it is a bad idea and have subsequently increased beer duty to compensate for the fall in VAT (more than compensate many landlords will tell you); and to rub salt into the wound they aren't planning to remove the additional duty when VAT returns to 17.5% in 2010. So what this all means is that prices have not gone down due to the VAT decrease and they will most probably have to increase AGAIN when the VAT is put back up!

CAMRA and the British Beer & Pub Association feel that enough is enough. Having seen beer sales falling and pubs going to the wall at an unprecedented rate, the major representative of the UK beer and pubs industry, and the industry's leading campaigner are joining forces to oppose any further tax increases, encourage responsible retailing and consumption of alcohol, and return the British pub to the heart of community life. Already MPs are signing up in support, many of whom, unlike apparently the Government, are deeply concerned. Below we print the

Introduction to the "Axe the Beer Tax" Manifesto, and a link to allow you to access the whole document, find out more about the campaign and add your support. You can also send a message to your own MP to encourage him or her to join as well.

## MANIFESTO INTRODUCTION

Pubs play a vital role in communities across Britain, and are a unique part of our country's heritage. Together, the pub and brewing industry helps contribute approximately £28 billion per annum to the UK economy.

Yet Britain's brewing and pub sector is experiencing one of the most severe and sustained periods of pressure on record.

- Total beer sales are down to their lowest level in almost 40 years, with beer sales in pubs at a level last witnessed in the Great Depression of the 1930s.
- The number of pubs closing each week has risen dramatically. In 2005, an average of two pubs a week were shutting down. Today it is 36 – equivalent to five pub closures every day.
- More than 44,000 jobs were lost from 2000 to 2005 and a further 43,000 are projected to be lost in the next five years.

Of course, all industries must adapt to new economic and social trends – and the beer and pub sector has changed in response to new consumer habits and trends. Food is now served in 80 per cent of all pubs, with over one billion meals sold every year. But heavy tax and regulatory changes imposed in recent years have played a significant role in contributing to the decline of the British pub. Today, a customer buying a pint of beer for £2.50 pays 80p in tax. This is one of the highest tax rates in the world - and means that the Government now makes 50 times the brewer's profit on each pint sold.

### **Things are set to get much worse**

In the 2008 Budget, the Chancellor not only imposed a duty rise of 9 per cent but also proposed the creation of an alcohol duty escalator. This is designed to increase duty on beer by 2 per cent above the rate of inflation in each of the next four years.

- The result of this year's tax hike and the accelerator plan is that beer taxes, which are already a third of the price of a pint, are certain to climb even higher.

The effect on consumers already being hit by rising costs of living will be significant, causing further irreparable harm to a uniquely British industry. Unless action is taken soon, sales of British beer will continue to decline, pubs will close at an even faster rate, and more jobs will be lost.

### **Now is the time to save the Great British Pub**

We are setting out five demands to give this industry the breathing space it needs to arrest the decline and maintain its place in Britain's social and economic life.

### **Our five demands:**

1. to axe plans to increase beer tax even further
2. to enforce existing laws – not create new ones - to deal firmly with irresponsible drinkers and premises
3. to end the irresponsible promotion of alcohol in supermarkets, pubs and elsewhere
4. to trust responsible adults to make informed choices about what they drink, not punish them for the actions of an irresponsible minority
5. to support the British pub as a vital part of social life in local communities

We look forward to receiving your support.

So please think very seriously about this and click on the link to join. It doesn't take up much time, but it could make the world of difference!

<http://www.axethebeertax.com/>



Andrew, Sarah & Kevin  
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Evening Meals 6.30 - 10pm Mon to Sat  
Book Early to avoid disappointment  
Business Lunches, Birthdays & all special occasions catered for  
*No Smoking Throughout*



# Kent Small Brewery News

By Roger Marples

It is good to see that, in this time of economic gloom and with the demise of well known national companies, the local small breweries are doing well. Read on.

## **P & DJ Goacher - Tovil, Maidstone 01622 682112**

Business is brisk with the last two quarters trade better than the last two quarters of the previous year, which were at a record level. Crown Imperial Stout is back on sale, and was, as is usual, in superb condition at both Blake's and the Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club.

## **Hopdaemon Brewery Co. Ltd. - Newnham 01795 892078**

[hopdaemon@supanet.com](mailto:hopdaemon@supanet.com)

All of the brewery's beers were sold out over Christmas and Tonie is frantically brewing to replenish his stocks. Hopdaemon is another brewery that had a very busy year last year. Leviathan will shortly be in a public house near you and Dominator will be available throughout the winter months. Dominator has been regularly featuring alongside Skrimshander in The Louis Armstrong, Dover. The Three Mariners at Hythe is now a regular outlet for Hopdaemon beers.

## **Nelson Brewing Company. - Chatham 01634 832828**

[sales@nelsonbrewingcompany.co.uk](mailto:sales@nelsonbrewingcompany.co.uk)

Sales over Christmas held up very well and there was no decrease on last year. A new beer, described as lemony in colour, with a good floral hop character is being brewed for those wedded to the motor vehicle. It is only 3.4% and brewed with Progress and Challenger hops. It is aptly named Helmsman. Shipwrecked at 5% is now being brewed again, and Shiver my Timbers at 4.9% will be still available for the next few months. Nelson Brewery will be concentrating on their standard range with fewer specials, in the future. A good pint of Pieces of Eight was sampled in the Albert in Deal recently, and The Green Berry in Walmer are putting in regular orders for the brewery's beers.

## **Ramsgate Brewery Ltd. – Broadstairs 01843 580037**

[info@ramsgatebrewery.co.uk](mailto:info@ramsgatebrewery.co.uk)

The special for January and February is a malty Scottish style 80/- beer, and is named, quite logically, 80 Shilling Ale. This is 4.6% ABV. The other special is "Great Scot!" at 4.7%, and is a peated ale, to give that Laphroig taste. This will be ready for Burns' night, and is described by Eddie as, "a pale ale that defies sense, and the senses."

Two brews that will have been put into bottles, by the time you read this, are a 9% plus porter, that has been aged in Islay whisky casks for fifty days and a 8% plus India Pale Ale, brewed with local Golding hops. The new policy with special brews is, instead of a special each month, as last year, there will be two specials every two months. This has the obvious advantages of giving a greater choice of two

guest beers, and double the period of time to track them down. (*Sounds a great idea to me - Ed.*)

**Westerham Brewery Co. Ltd. – Crockham Hill, Edenbridge 01732 864427**  
[sales@westerhambrewery.co.uk](mailto:sales@westerhambrewery.co.uk)

Two new 24 barrel fermenters will be installed in the new year, and will increase fermentation capacity by 80%. A new bottled beer for the National trust will be brewed during 2009. There will be an increase of single hop varietal beers in 2009. These beers will be brewed with locally grown Kentish hops. (See Westerham Brewery visit elsewhere in this issue)

**Whitstable Brewery – Grafty Green 01622 851007**  
[whitstablebrewer@btconnect.com](mailto:whitstablebrewer@btconnect.com)

Rafik confirms that the brewery," had a very good year and sales are still holding up well". A new brew was available for the Christmas season and was sold as Christmas Cake at 4.6% ABV. The amber coloured beer was brewed with three different hop types and crystal malt. It was also dry hopped in the copper. As Christmas Cake sold so well the recipe will be retained, and will be used again next Christmas. A new seasonal beer is 'Winkle Picker', and is still available as I record these words. Locally, it proved very successful at the Louis Armstrong. The beer is described as an amber/copper coloured beer, well balanced between hops and malt. It is also dry hopped.

The Yew Tree at Barfreestone and The King's Head at Kingsdown are now being supplied with Whitstable beers.

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# CHANNEL VIEW

A reasonable person might well assume that the Government, or at least its Chancellor, either has some particular grievance against the public house, or is particularly prone to what Oscar Wilde might have called carelessness. A kick in the teeth in March followed by another in November suggests no other conclusion, and whichever might be the case, it doesn't give those of us who like pubs and real ale, much confidence that the future of either is safe in their hands. Having responded to CAMRA's request for a penny off the duty in last year's spring budget by raising it four pence and promising above inflation rises for the next four years, we find that in the crisis budget of November the producers and retailers of beer have been proscribed as second class citizens. Unlike almost all other businesses the benefit of the 2.5% VAT cut is immediately clawed back by a reciprocal increase in duty; an increase which we understand is not going to be rescinded when VAT returns to 17.5% (or higher) in 2010.

These duty increases are unparalleled, both historically and by comparison with other countries – the UK pays the highest level of tax on beer in the European Community. Already, before last year's tax increases, pubs were closing at an unprecedented rate, and where any other industry facing such problems would have at least received Government sympathy, and possibly specific help, brewers and public houses find their position being made actually worse. Is this what the Government want to see, the industry reduced to a rump of gastropubs, city centre boozers

and country hotels? Of course the horrible truth is that they probably don't know and don't care. The apparent disdain with which our approaches last year were received is deeply significant – we might have been medieval lepers. Marie Antoinette, you should be alive today. "What, beer in pubs too expensive? Let them buy it from supermarkets."

Perhaps, however, we shouldn't be surprised. While Margaret Thatcher allegedly had a certain partiality to whisky, and one of their Treasury predecessors was wont to stay up half the night drinking wine and listening to jazz at Ronnie Scott's, neither the Prime Minister nor his Chancellor exude much in the way of enthusiasm for either alcohol or the public house. It's hard to envisage them finding much pleasure in real ale or popping into the local for a pint. Too much opportunity for encountering iconoclasm and free speech, or hearing a non-PC joke; much better we should all be at home, tucked up and uncomplaining in front of our TVs. And should their resolution falter there is always the dour presence of the health lobby, with more than its fair share of teetotalers, to provide moral support. No doubt, Alistair Darling considered the increasing of duty a win-win situation – at the same time both raising taxes and keeping the anti-drink brigade quiet. Perhaps the Government's real thinking on the traditional pub was best revealed by the minister, who at the time that '24 hour drinking' was being introduced, insisted of talking about drinking dens – presumably establishments whose main



activity was conversation and drinking beer, and not at all like the Mediterranean café culture which we were then all supposed to be embracing with our families.

Ironically of course, it's just such traditional public houses, that not only played a major role in the working class communities from which the Labour Party sprang, but could now be equally important in achieving two of the Government's alleged prime objectives – curtailing alcohol abuse, and regenerating community spirit. Previous, and very possibly wiser, generations, identifying the problems of alcohol, had restricted sales largely to public houses and dedicated off-licences, where some measure of control could be exerted. Today half the country's beer is bought through the supermarket, sometimes at a tenth of the price that might be charged in a pub, and with minimal control over its consumption. Despite the Government's rhetoric, little seems to be done. The proposals outlined in December's Queen's Speech suggest no more than tinkering around the edges. It appears hamstrung by both an ideological dislike of interfering in 'the market', and a certain over respect for big business, and its very substantial lobbying. Duty increases are easily absorbed by a supermarket, for whom alcohol is only a part of its business. For the average local it's almost all its business, and every additional cost weighs against its survival.

Fortunately, however, many are less indifferent. As we report elsewhere MPs, brewers, CAMRA and the trade press are all pressing the Government for positive action. Whether or not the Government is prepared to listen is, of course another matter. So far its track record is not good. Having, it seems, adopted a proprietorial interest in our

lives, it appears more interested in telling us what to eat, drink and smoke, extend surveillance into ever more parts of our daily lives, and swap our personal data around its extensive bureaucracy – although following last year's economic debacle, many will be quite justifiably asking whether the Government hasn't forfeited the right to advise on anything, and wondering how its obsession with surveillance missed what was going on under its very nose. The situation is now dire. Irrespective of their own personal feelings about real ales and the public house, the loss of seven or eight thousand pubs by 2012, as some have forecast, is not something ministers should be treating with equanimity. Even if the impact on local communities, including more uncontrolled drinking on the streets and at home, doesn't register, then surely the economic argument must. If "it's all about jobs," as our Prime Minister loudly proclaims, what are they doing adding another thirty or forty thousand, plus all the related knock-ons, to the unemployment total?

In real terms, the price of a pint in the public house is at an all time high. The Government should make an objective comparison with duty rates among our continental counterparts, who, all evidence suggests, have a far better record of management than this country; and it should seriously investigate the retailing of alcohol, and consider why our present problems did not exist forty or fifty years ago. Most importantly, though, it first of all must act now and halt all further tax increases on beer, while there are still public houses for us to worry about.



# Lost Pubs

## THE JOLLY SAILOR

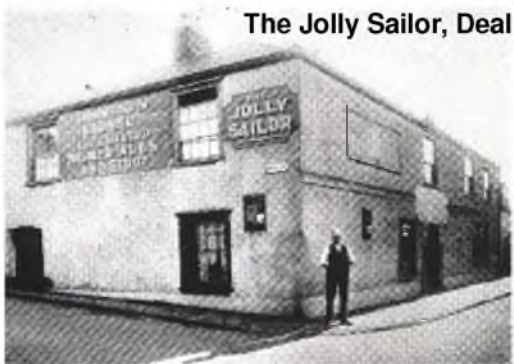
### Deal

Some older readers may recall the Jolly Sailor which stood on the corner of West St. and Western Rd. It was demolished in 1969 to make way for road widening but had been closed since 1966 due to subsidence caused by the mine workings of Betteshanger Colliery. Its closure, however, had been on the cards for many years and had first been proposed in 1936, because, according to Peter Foat, son of its last landlady, there were two other pubs nearby.

The exact age of the pub is uncertain although it was believed to have been one of the several inns that stood along the 'Ancient Highway' that joined Upper Deal to Sandwich, and which in former days were likely to have been involved in smuggling. Names along the route that come down to us from those days include the Maxton Arms, Noah's Ark, Halfway House (now the Chequers) and the Jolly Sailor itself, then called the

Norfolk Arms. Deal at the time comprised not much more than the area around St Leonard's Church (Upper Deal) and the streets, lanes and alleyways of the Middle Street area, and the Ancient Highway, following very much the line of Church Path, Western Rd. and Golf Rd., ran through the desolate marshlands and sandhills to the north and west of these settlements. As inns, these premises would have provided for travellers and for the stabling of horses, attributes which together with their isolation and proximity to the coast, made them ideal for the concealing and transporting of contraband, as well as accommodation for those involved in the trade.

Returning specifically to the Jolly Sailor, David Collyer, who wrote about the pub in 2001 and to whom I am indebted for most of the information in this article, describes it as "a rather gloomy-looking, run down establishment, always in need of a good lick of paint." Photographs taken just before its demolition very much back up this description. They also suggest that, despite its slate roof and comparatively modern looking rendering, its origins were of considerable age – the windows being large sashes, irregularly spaced, and with that



next to the door appearing at a slight angle to the pavement, as might be found with timber frame construction.

The name change appears to have taken place in the late 19th century, by which time the disreputable activities of earlier years had largely, if not completely, ceased. In 1882, with Patrick Harris as landlord, it is recorded as the Norfolk Arms, but by 1911 it was the Jolly Sailor. Peter Foat maintains that the change occurred between 1872 and 1888. Certainly by the end of the century, and being run by first his grandfather, Grandad Neeve and then his uncle George Neeve it was the Jolly Sailor. The pub stayed with the family and his parents took it on in 1938 when his uncle moved to the Magnet in London Rd. Again from photographic evidence it would at that time have been owned by Thompson's of Walmer, subsequently transferring to Charringtons when the latter took over the local brewery in the 1950s.

Peter Foat's descriptions of life in a pub before World War II are fascinating, and portray a different world.

'We had eight to ten bedrooms, as the inn operated as a doss house, and the old boys who stayed there would play cards in the back room of an evening. I used to sit in when one of them had to leave the game, and would sneak a sip of beer from an unattended glass. By the time I was seven years old I could play all the most popular card games, even Euchre! We had a large back garden with fruit trees, where we kept pigs, and the ullage from the bar was used to feed our tomato plants. There was also a large stable, and a shed where an old recluse was in permanent residence. I had a little dog named Sailor, who loved to play football with me and my friends. He was very good at finding money which had been dropped on the floor of the tap room. He would take this down to cellar, which was half concrete and half earth, where he would bury it. I dug it up and used it as extra pocket money.'

He also recalls the various characters of the time, many of whom appear to have been contending with serious physical disabilities: One-armed Jack McKlusky who ran the snooker hall in Middle St., Uncle Ticker who had a wooden leg and rode a bike with it strapped to the pedal, and One-eyed Reilly, a knife grinder who used a contraption worked by the back wheel of his up-turned bicycle.

The Second World War found Deal under shellfire and bombing raids. One of these caused damage to the Jolly Sailor and the family went to stay with Uncle George at the Magnet.

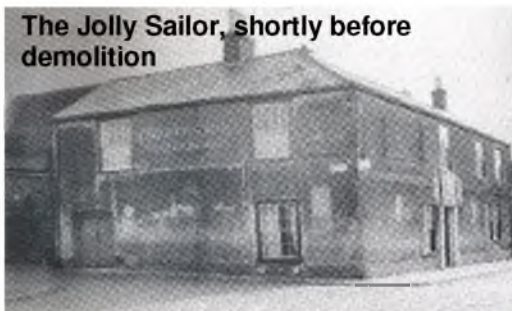
'The Magnet had its own bowling green beside it, and I can remember playing in the long grass on the overgrown bowling green,' recalls Peter. 'The little pavilion still had the named lockers for the members of *Ye Old Deale Bowling Club* with their bowls still inside. There was another bowling green next to the Bell Inn in Robert St.'

Some of his memories are less pleasant. Evacuated to South Wales with his school later in the war he remembers one boy being called to the headmaster's study to be told that all his family had been killed by the shelling of the Park Tavern the previous night.

After the war normal pub service resumed at the Jolly Sailor, but with Peter's mother as sole proprietor, as his father had died in 1944. Meanwhile his sister and brother-in-law took on the license of the Five Ringers in Middle Deal Road (demolished for three houses a few years ago). However, the Jolly Sailor's days were numbered, even though the pre-war plans for its

closure had apparently been abandoned. It survived for another twenty years before subsidence forced the family to move out: Mrs Foat dying shortly afterwards. For the next few years it remained boarded up and neglected, before finally being demolished for the necessities of road widening.

**The Jolly Sailor, shortly before demolition**



*Martin Atkins*

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## GETTING TO KNOW WESTERHAM BREWERY

Roger Marples visits the award winning Kent Brewer

**W**esterham Brewery is located in a former dairy at the National Trust owned Grange farm at Crockham Hill, near Edenbridge, and was founded in 2004. Co-founder and leading light is Robert Wicks, who was an investment banker until he eschewed the City to enter the world of brewing. It is a move that, with hindsight, was fortuitous given the present financial climate. Robert inherited his love of brewing from his godfather, Dick

Theakston, who was the father of Paul Theakston, the founder of Black Sheep brewery of Masham, in Yorkshire. Through Theakston's, he also has a connection with David Bruce, the founder of the Firkin chain of home brew houses.

The brewery is an inheritor of an earlier Westerham brewery, the erstwhile Bushell, Watkins and Smith Black Eagle Brewery. Its beers were extremely popular and there were 79 tied houses which stretched as far afield as Folkestone. In 1948 it was taken over by Taylor Walker, but as the beers had such a loyal following, production at Westerham was kept up until 1965. The last brew to leave the brewery were three barrels of a special brew of the 1048 OG special bitter. The water supply, from a bore hole in the lower greensand ridge, to the south of Westerham, is the same as that used by the Black Eagle Brewery, and is particularly suited to brewing pale and bitter beers.

Robert is very interested in the Black Eagle Brewery, and has purchased from Carlsberg, the two strains of yeast that were used there when it ceased to be. This yeast has been carefully propagated in the present brewery, and he has recreated the last brew from Black Eagle Brewery, using the same water supply, the same yeast strain and as far as possible, the same recipe. Robert plans to recreate many of their recipes. He

Westerham Brewery



has recently discovered, from the brewery's last head brewer, Bill Wickett, who is still living locally, that this brew was dry hopped with Styrian hops. Robert will now emulate this dry hopping with the next brew of 1965 Westerham Special Bitter.

There is a twelve barrel brew length, which gives a current capacity of 60 barrels per week. This will soon be increased to 108 barrels, as new equipment is on order, and will probably make Westerham the largest craft brewer in Kent. The copper which has been converted to be direct fired by liquid petroleum gas (Robert's policy is to be as environmentally friendly as possible), comes from Michigan, and was purchased from one of the only two American breweries to have survived the period of prohibition. Hop pellets are used in the brew, and together with dry hopping in the bulk tank, the brewery use 85-90% Kentish hops, and Marias Otter malt is the only malt used. The beers are fermented for a minimum of seven days and conditioned in tanks at the brewery,



thus ensuring that the beers are not released in a "green" state, and will be in peak condition to sell. All beers are racked straight from the tanks, to order, thus giving maximum 'shelf life'. Robert is assiduous with his fight to keep harmful bacteria at bay and goes to great lengths to maintain the consistency and quality of his beers. The plant uses "CIP" (Cleaning In Place) Systems, thus avoiding manual cleaning, and minimising exposure to infection.

Westerham Brewery sell two bottle conditioned beers, William Wilberforce Freedom Ale (4.8%), which contains a Free Trade brewing sugar, and British Bulldog (4.3%). Both are regular cask beers. Bottling of beers is done by a specialist contractor and the beers are sent away in tanks for this purpose. Last Autumn there was a special seasonal beer, Little Scotney Green Hop Harvest Ale (4.3%). This is made using freshly picked moist hops, from the Scotney Castle Estate Hop Garden, one of the largest new hop growing areas in Kent to have been planted for some years. They also grow a Progress organic hop which will be used at the brewery.

Other seasonal beers include Up the Kreik Cherry Beer (3.8% ABV), available when I visited the brewery, and from mid October there was General Wolfe Maple Ale (4.3%) using maple syrup in the brew. A Christmas Ale, God's Wallop (4.3%), was produced at Christmas, from which a donation of 10% of the sale price is made to a Christian Charity. Other winter brews include Puddle-





dock Porter (4.3% ABV) which is further matured for two months, and Audit Ale (6.2% ABV), originally brewed by Black Eagle, which I sampled. This had tremendous hop character and an exceptionally long finish. Robert offered us a firkin for The Festival of Winter Ales, in February. So be there, in Dover Town Hall. One other interesting beer which was produced for the public smoking ban, and for those who like that sort of

thing, was Holy Smoke. This was in the style of a Bamberg smoked beer, and was 4.0% ABV.

Should you feel inclined to drink Westerham Brewery products at home, this is possible. Besides bottled beers, mentioned above, 36 and 18 pint polypins, and 9 pint minicasks of cask conditioned beers may be purchased from the brewery. Notice, though, needs to be given, as the beers are racked to order.

*Roger Marples.*





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**Mon 23rd – Charity Quiz** night in aid of Demelza House Children's Hospice.

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### **March**

**Thurs 5th – Curry Night** All home cooked, selection of three starters and three mains for only £10.95

**Mon 16th – Charity Quiz** night in aid of Demelza House Children's Hospice

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# CAMRA MEMBERS WEEKEND & A.G.M.

Eastbourne 17th to 19th April 2009

**P**reparation is now well under way for the 2009 CAMRA Members' Weekend and AGM at the Eastbourne Winter Garden, from Friday 17 April until mid-afternoon on Sunday 19 April 2009.

The weekend is open to all CAMRA members, and provides an opportunity to:

- Review the last year at branch, regional and national level
- Have a say in reviewing campaigning themes and forming policy
- Hear guest speakers on CAMRA issues
- Meet CAMRA members from across the UK, the National Executive and HQ staff
- Discuss ideas regarding future CAMRA campaigns
- Enjoy a few beers at accompanying members' beer festival
- Visit pubs in Eastbourne and the surrounding areas – pub crawls are planned around Eastbourne (Town Centre and Old Town), Lewes and Hastings, and several Eastbourne pubs are planning mini beer festivals.
- Visit local breweries on organised trips - proposed trips include Harvey's in Lewes, Dark Star at Ansty, 1648 at East Hoathly, Whites at Bexhill and Beachy Head at East Dean



You can pre-register to attend the weekend via the CAMRA website [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk), following the link from the Members' Weekend pages. Further information is available in 'What's Brewing' and online, and there will be regular updates as the weekend approaches. All CAMRA members are welcome, and the weekend is just one of the benefits of joining CAMRA, so if you are not a member, why not join today by completing the form in this magazine, or by going on-line to [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) and clicking on 'Join Us'.



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# TALES FROM THE OTHER SIDE

The casual reader expecting the following to involve stories of ghosts, ghouls and the undead might well be disappointed. Conversely In fact, it is about the very much dead, at least in terms of beer in the barrel – the keg lager industry. Information has come our way, that struggling against falling sales and the economic downturn, the accountants and industrialists who brew the stuff have come up with a new wheeze to persuade more of it down our throats, or at least the throats of those prepared to drink it. We don't expect you to be amongst its consumers, but as we occasionally do, feel you might be interested in the lager industry's goings on .

Once upon a time the draught lager market was split between lager, the bog standard ordinary brew of about 4% ABV, and premium lager, typically about 5% ABV. Now, however, there is a third choice: 4% ABV premium lager. In time for Christmas, Inbev launched, at this strength, a new version of their long time big seller, Stella Artois. With it comes the 4% ABV draught version of Becks, in which Inbev have a substantial investment. Called respectively Stella Artois 4% and Becks Vier the marketing of both beers emphasises their al- leged pedigree, and that they maintain the 'full bodied flavour' of premium brews.

Stella Artois 4% is described as distinctively smooth and triple filtered, and as 'a lower ABV beer from a brand consumers love and trust.' There will be a multi million pound advertising campaign, and of course dedicated glassware, and a brand new condensation dripping font – the currently fashionable silver – in the shape of giant four. Becks Vier accentuates its German background. Imported from Germany and 'brewed in strict accordance to the Reinheitsgebot German purity law,' it is 'clean, crisp and refreshing'; and consumers will be expecting to see it on the bar, landlords are told. Again there is dedicated glassware and publicity material.

The joint promotion received the whole hearted support of Enterprise Inns who, to make room for them, summarily dispatched Carlsberg and Castlemaine XXXX – 'the number of stockists and volumes have fallen to such a low level.' (According to one local landlord they might as well add the original full strength draught Stella, whose sales, in his pub at least, are in total free fall.) Or at least that was the initial plan. For whatever reason (probably its commer-

cial clout) Carlsberg have been reprieved, and is still available. The carrot held out to licensees to install Stella 4% or Becks Vier is the premium they can command over existing 4% lagers, respectively 5 pence and 12-20 pence a pint according to Enterprise., who interestingly are offering the former to their tenants for about the same price as Carlsberg. How the mighty have fallen, 'probably the best lager in the World' clinging on by its fingertips, with a cut price version of what once proudly proclaimed itself as 'reassuringly expensive', waiting in the wings to replace it.

The cost to the landlord, however, still exceeds that of many a real ale. Drinkers might well ask how it is that lager, brewed in vast quantities with every advantage of mass production and modern technology, tends to end up on the bar as more expensive than real ale. Could it be the cost of the vast bureaucracies and huge advertising campaigns required to support the product.

*Martin Atkins*

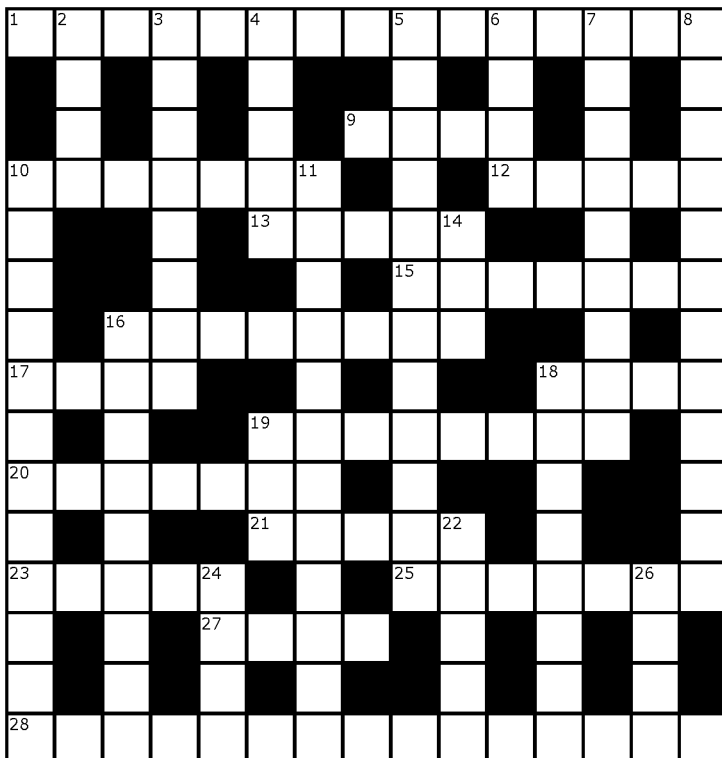
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## Across

1. Pin in front of gate – way of getting out (3,6,6)
9. Protest is out of mode (4)
10. At sea on a warm ship (3-1-3)
12. Nothing missing from legion going back for boy (5)
13. Mad and full of seeds (5)
15. Studying in Berkshire (7)
16. Old man in a state over instrument (8)
17. Young horse fell over a lot to start with (4)
18. Step made trouble (4)
19. Fourth grade follows man or city (8)
20. Dishonest cat, I hear! (7)
21. Famous dog from ancient city (5)
23. Some Cajun hippies not cool (5)
25. First the Spanish, then America I've followed – hard to track down (7)
27. State sounds high in rounds (4)
28. Reviewed Schedule E amidst fungal infection (5,3,7)

## Down

2. Up before volcano (4)
3. I follow nothing in barn, not quite all of nobility (8)
4. A fang makes a Dickens of a character (5)
5. Exciting flame heater (8,4)
6. Flatten metal(4)
7. Card measured enormous (4-5)
8. Dark place in no-man's-land (8,4)
10. Made and applied fertiliser around truth for all to see (12)
11. Very ordinary grinder went for a jog! (3,2,3,4)
14. Longing for currency (3)
16. Create transport cobbled together (9)
18. Newspaper folk almost certain of stress (8)
19. Wear down idiot (3)
22. I was dancing in Bali at the time! (5)
24. Lithuania comes out of Polish fancy (4)
26. Inspects old soldiers (4)



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# BOLDLY GOING FORWARD BECAUSE WE CAN'T FIND REVERSE

## THE BEERY BOATERS AUTUMN 2008 EXPLORATION OF THE LEE AND STORT

On the previous occasion that the Beery Boaters had encountered the Lee and Stort Navigation, we had used it because there was a convenient base at Broxbourne from which to hire a boat to navigate the London Ring; that is, from Limehouse Basin at Stepney in East London, up the tidal Thames to Brentford and then back via the Grand Union Canal, the Paddington Arm and the Regent's Canal. That was the end-of-year trip in 2005. On that occasion, having a day or so to spare at the end, we carried on past Broxbourne as far as Sawbridgeworth on the River Stort before returning at the end of the week. There was still the remainder of the Stort to explore up to the end of navigation at Bishops Stortford, and all of the River Lea as far as Hertford above its junction with the Stort. Note, I am not being confused by the spellings of 'Lee' and 'Lea'. The river is properly called the River Lea, while the navigation, which runs from Hertford down to Bow and the Limehouse Cut in East London, is the Lee.

So this time we decided to fill in the blank bits on the map. We hired our boat from Lee Valley Boats at Broxbourne again. This time it was the 69ft 'May'. Due to an unforeseen shortage of numbers, we only had six in the crew and could really have done with a smaller boat, but, never mind, it gave us plenty of storage room. We couldn't have our usual Saturday start (*not so usual of late though; our last Saturday start End of Year Trip was 2003 – Ed*) as May was only available from Mondays, and also not being available the week before, our start date was the somewhat late 6<sup>th</sup> October. Before we set off I looked at the weather forecast for the week and was not encouraged by what I found!

I travelled up by car with Martin and Jeff whilst Dave drove himself, John and Terry; we arriving early afternoon to find them already there, or least Dave's car already there: of its occupants there was no sign. While Martin and Jeff went in search of provisions, I checked out a few likely looking pubs in the town, but could not find them, neither were they back at the boatyard when we returned. Eventually, having loaded our gear on to the boat, we spotted them return-



ing from the most obvious place – the Crown, a hundred yards or so across the cut, so while they loaded their gear we spent half an hour in the pub. They told us that looking down from the bridge they had noticed some large crayfish through the clear water. We subsequently learned that the Lee & Stort is infested with the crustaceans, and a few days after the trip had ended I saw a TV nature programme, about an area of the waterway around Enfield, further down towards London, which confirmed this. Not only is it infested with American crayfish (presumably what they had seen), but also Chinese mitten crabs, both of which are considered pests. As both species are regarded as delicacies, there seems an obvious way to try to keep them in check!

We had decided to go down to Waltham Abbey for the Monday evening before turning and exploring the northern reaches of the rivers, so, after the usual preliminaries we set off behind a smaller hire boat which waited for us in the first lock. The Commodore was at the tiller of May and full of confidence. He slid May expertly alongside the other boat and engaged reverse. Or rather, didn't! The lever went in the right direction but the propeller didn't! The emergency brake (i.e., the bottom lock gate) effectively stopped us! We subsequently learned to keep the control lever pushed over while putting it into reverse, and had no further problems in this respect. However, the skipper of the other boat decided not to accompany us any further but to tie up for tea below the lock!

At Waltham Abbey we turned in the winding hole above the Town Lock and tied up



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alongside the small park by the canal. The excellent Old English Gentleman next to the bridge over the canal, and previously our first stop, now being closed, we walked to the town centre, which was unusually quiet. We sampled McMullen's beers at the Crown and the Welsh Harp, followed by Chinese take-aways from the esteemed and long established Mr Hing to accompany us, or at least some of us, back to the boat: for while myself, Martin and Jeff got our food at about 10.30, five or ten minutes later the others found he had closed. In fact we suspect he was about to close when we had turned up, as we found a rather grumpy Mr Hing, who tried to insist that I couldn't just buy chop suey on its own: I did.

A note about McMullen. They brew at Hertford and have a tied estate of 135 pubs, celebrating 180 years brewing in 2007. However their beers are rarely seen outside their locality. There are three regular real ales, AK 3.7% ABV, Cask Ale 3.9% ABV and Country Bitter 4.3% ABV. We came across all three, and probably found the Country most to our taste. In fact all McMullen's beers have their own characteristic taste, an acquired taste some might say, and I by the end of the week I think it had been well acquired.

Breakfast on the Tuesday morning was taken at the small café which we had discovered on our previous visit, just below the road bridge and near the British Waterways Sanitary Station. After a hearty meal we returned to May and set off back up the navigation in an increasing cross-wind. An event-free morning saw us pass our hire base, and the flower bedecked Carthage Lock and moor up toward mid-day at the Fish and Eels, Dobb's Weir near Hoddesdon. This was once a small riverside pub but has taken in some adjacent buildings and is now quite a large establishment. There is quite an emphasis on food, but it does normally have up to three real ales, usually of the more common variety. Some, if not all, of us ate there, but we moved on towards mid afternoon when the real ale ran out. They had had, we gathered, a busy weekend.

The wind was now quite strong, and after passing through Fielde's Weir Lock (all of the locks on the Lee & Stort come up as individual locks), we turned left at Fielde's Weir Junction up the River Lea, with the River Stort bearing off to our right. A little while later on the same side we passed the Rye House speedway and go-kart centres, and, just afterwards the Rye House pub. Rye House itself is no longer there, being demolished during the reign of Queen Victoria, but is notorious for the abortive 17<sup>th</sup> century plot to ambush Charles II as he travelled past. We moored up on a narrow landing stage outside the pub only to find no direct access to it, and what's more it appeared closed. So after the Commodore had attacked a wasp nest sus-



pended in a tree above us with a boat-pole (it proved empty but the Commodore is used to being pursued down tow paths by angry wasps), we carried on to St. Margaret's, a village on the outskirts of Stanstead Abbots, where it started to rain. So we tied up at the extensive moorings by the town bridge and headed for the Jolly Fisherman (an unlikely name for a pub if there ever was one!) for more McMullen's.

The downpour lasted for a couple of hours, by the end of which it was too late to move on, so we abandoned going to Ware for the evening as originally intended, and stayed where we were. Later we crossed the bridge to the village centre and enjoyed a quiz and some Fullers beer at the Lord Louis. The quiz did not see us covered in glory, coming second to last out of seven or eight teams. Our downfall proved to be a picture round of celebrities, of whom we identified only two, and one of those was whispered to us by the question master. As we returned to the boat it was apparent that the sky had now cleared, and it remained clear for the rest of the week. In fact it proved to be one of the best weeks in a rather indifferent year for weather.

We set off on the Wednesday in bright early morning sunshine and calm airs through Stanstead Lock and took on water above it, passed Ware and a field where model aircraft were being flown, and arrived at Hertford, the end of navigation on the Lea, in time for a lunchtime session at the Old Barge, where we could tie up outside. Deceptively big (again, this has been enlarged from a small pub), it has made its first entry in the Good Beer Guide in the 2009 edition. We had a choice of four or five real ales including Black Sheep and, I seem to recall, Spitfire.



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## **'May' moored at the Old Barge, Hertford**



We returned mid afternoon accompanied to, and through, the first lock by a motor cruiser. The locks on the Lee and Stort, by the way, are not the most accommodating on the waterways, opening and shutting the gates requiring substantial heaving and shoving, and the first lock out of Hertford is one of the worst. In fact when we had arrived earlier it was being checked out by waterways staff because of com-

plaints. The motor cruiser said they would wait at the next lock, but that was the last we saw of them until we passed them tied up at Ware – hare and tortoise I suppose.

Ware was our destination for Wednesday evening as well, and we arrived late afternoon having passed again the model aircraft enthusiasts still at it. We had some difficulty in tying up, the British Waterway moorings being very limited, however we managed to secure the boat to some chains alongside the river wall, opposite a pub by the name of the Victoria to where we decamped later. This proved to be very much a locals' pub, McMullen's again, and serving Thai meals (Martin had one and declared it excellent). We were made to feel very much at home, and stayed till late.

On Thursday morning we cruised a long way; in fact we missed the lunchtime session. Going back to Fielde's Weir Junction we turned right up the River Stort, which has a totally different character to the River Lea, being much narrower and very winding in places. The locks are also somewhat peculiar, being full length but only 13ft wide instead of the more normal 14ft. We came to Roydon rather too early to stop, so we pressed on towards Harlow, only to find that the Harlow Mill and the Moorhen only sold Greene King beers, (see Last Knockings) so we carried on to Sawbridgeworth, which was as far as we had got on our 2005 Trip. This time we carried on just a bit further and tied up above Sawbridgeworth Lock at the far end of the town. Crossing the footbridge above the lock, a public footpath took us to Station Road, which led to London Road and the Gate Inn. On the way up the hill we paused for McMullen's at the George IV before spending the rest of the evening at the well renowned Gate, home of the Sawbridgeworth Brewery set up



### **A nighttime view of The Gate, Sawbridgeworth**



by Tom and Gary Barnett in 2000. We saw Tom in the bar, an ex professional footballer with former connections with Crystal Palace and our own Dover, while sampling some of the wide variety of real ales available. Martin had brought along some of Robin Basford's Tuesday night Louis Armstrong quizzes, and a couple of these kept us well enter-

tained from an hour or so, as others from the selection did on several subsequent occasions during the remainder of the trip.

Next morning we arrived at Bishops Stortford and the end of navigation on the River Stort. It doesn't look like the end of navigation until you get there to find the river just seeming to vanish past the copious amount of mooring rings; in fact the mooring rings extend beyond the turning point, a sort of unmarked narrow ditch going off to the left. After just about managing to wind, we tied up and went into the town and found the Jolly Brewers, another 2009 Good Beer Guide pub with Black Sheep and Timothy Taylor's beers (oh, and Greene King). However, there was also a guest, Cornish Mutiny from Wooden Hand Brewery, which was most enjoyable. After refilling our water tank we returned to Sawbridgeworth, the George IV and the Gate for the evening, some of our number finishing off with a curry from the Indian along the road.

On Saturday we went as far as Roydon in the morning, walked into the village and refilled ourselves at the New Inn (surprisingly pleasant Courage beer) and the Crusader (McMullen's) with a more solid intake at the former pub. Now we only had a few more miles back to the junction with a day to spare. We thought that we would retrace our track up the Lea for a way. We considered Ware, but were uncertain where we could turn there, but knowing that we could wind below Stanstead Lock we decided to press on only as far as St. Margaret's. This we did, and spent another evening at the Jolly Fisherman and the Lord Louis. Jeff went up to the other pub (the Red Lion) as well, to be regaled by Greene King and Shepherd Neame!

### **The New Inn, Roydon**



Sunday and the last full day, and becoming very warm. Most of the morning was spent feeding the abundant water fowl (swans, mallards, Canada geese and coots)

with a short cruise up to Stanstead Lock to turn and come back, about a mile in total. Then a couple of pints in the Jolly Fisherman and off downriver. We paused at the Rye House Inn, now very much open with many sitting outside in the garden. However, still no access from the landing stage, and we were forced to go round to the road and climb over a locked gate. Real ale proved to be only Greene King, so after sampling the Abbot we went past the junction and moored for the night by the Fish and Eels, which by now had a full complement of weekend beer.

### The Beery Boaters, September 2008



And that was it. Monday morning dawned as bright as all the others after Tuesday, and we cleaned up the boat and set off downstream, through Dobb's Weir and Carthagen Locks to Lee Valley Boatyard; where after routine end of trip photographs, and transfer of luggage to four-wheeled transport, we made our way back to Dover.

*Jim Green*

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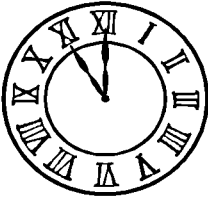
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# LAST KNOCKINGS

**G**ood to see a bit of common sense and reality entering the debate on alcohol abuse. In one of its November editions the local section of the BBC's Politics Show took a look at the current problems and the Government's proposals to attempt to deal with them. The programme which included contributions from Jonathan Neame Chairman of Shepherd Neame, Robert Wicks of Westerham Brewery, Kae Mendham Kent CAMRA's Regional Director and a representative from the BMA all agreed that the problem lay principally with the off trade (mainly supermarkets) and a small, irresponsible element amongst the on trade. One might have expected such an approach from the first three, but all too often in the past, the medical profession and other health campaigners had the habit of bracketing the whole industry as one and demanding nothing less than swingeing increases in taxes in order to reduce consumption. The pointlessness of such an exercise has clearly been demonstrated since the Chancellor's massive tax hike in the last budget. While the on-trade has been forced to increase beer prices to cover it, supermarket lager remains as cheap as ever, equivalent of 31p a pint in one particular instance.

-----

Strange thing economics. Carlsberg, who "can no longer justify running two major breweries in the UK", close their Leeds plant (aka Tetleys) despite the fact that although beer consumption in Britain is generally declining, the one sector that is holding its own, if not actually increasing volumes, is real ale. Whether the company will continue as a real ale brewer is anyone's guess, except presumably its own senior management. However, Carlsberg is an international brewer and its brands are global, requiring mass advertising, major promotions and production by the millions of pints. Its competitors are Inbev and SABMiller, a world away from Tetley mild or Greenalls bitter, and its *raison d'être* is to make profits for its shareholders. Someone recently complained about the insistence of some to only drink beer from micro brewers – 'if it's not a micro it's rubbish.' While such attitudes attract the obvious jibe of tunnel vision, it's understandable that many feel happier drinking beer brewed by enthusiasts rather than the carefully market researched product of a giant corporation.

-----

Family pubs – don't yer love 'em? Not the easy going bars and cafés of southern Europe, as promoted by our former prime minister, but the traditional British pub redesigned and adapted to cater for this uncriticisable institution. The most recent "End of the Year" Beery Boater expedition (reported elsewhere) came across a fair selection, with fine examples along the riverside at Harlow. One was a Beefeater, which despite assurances by another boater, that it had a full range of beer, in terms of real ale, sported but a single forlorn pump in use, for Greene King IPA.



Greene King we found also at the other, the Moorhen at Burnt Mill Lock, presumably a tied house. What real ale it sold was never established, as we never ventured beyond the accompanying signage – 'Fun for all the family, Great food served all day, Bumpies Birthday Parties £6.95 per child, Indoor and outdoor play area.' Sometime, somewhere, someone should have defined the meaning of the word 'pub.'

-----

I fear Chris White has missed the boat (see National News – Cut Price Crack Down). Unless they are dedicated pub users older generations have long since stopped going into town centres in the evening; and I doubt if habits will change now, however much we bring under control the excesses of drinking, or other 'substances'. The tranches of small pubs in and around the country's high streets, some quiet and cosy, some rather more boisterous, but between them catering for most tastes, are a memory. In Dover, the casualty list over the last forty years, of pubs within a couple of minutes walk of the Market Square, includes the Prince Louis, the Criterion, the Mogul, the Cause is Altered, the Five Alls, the Rose Inn, the Wellington Hotel and the Prince of Wales. Also gone are two larger establishments, the Metropole Bars and the Crypt, and of course in the Market Square itself, the Prince Regent, the latter, though, not quite the place for the older person to find a quiet drink.

-----

One sometimes gets the impression that when discussing alcohol the media is following some unspoken hidden agenda. An autumn edition of Radio Four's *You and Yours* devoted the whole of the hour long programme to an analysis of Britain's current problems with alcohol. We all drink too much opined the presenter, while listeners telephoned and e-mailed the programme with their own stories of alcohol abuse. Meanwhile, in the studio, a gentleman from Alcohol Concern and a doctor, solemnly concurred that the picture was very bad indeed. Alcohol, it was inferred, was no good thing (at best a necessary evil), with a quarter of the adult population, some 10 million of us, putting ourselves at risk by exceeding the Government's safety limits. Meanwhile, for 'balance,' a representative of the Portman Group pleaded the industry's case, but with as much enthusiasm as if he was being asked to justify the massacre of the innocents. What we were not told, and what one might have expected an investigative programme such as *You and Yours* to have drawn out, was from what basis the much publicised safety limits of 21 units of alcohol a week for men, and 14 for women, were taken. In fact, as admitted recently by a member of the working party from the Royal College of Physicians that devised them some twenty years ago, they were quite literally 'plucked out of the air'. However, the question was never asked. Other studies have suggested that consumption at up to three times the Government limits might be no more damaging, and might even have certain benefits. Add this into the equation and the 10 million at risk shrinks dramatically.

*Old Wort*

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14	Louis Armstrong, Dover	41	Planet Thanet Beer Festival
15	Three Mariners, Hythe	42	Crown Inn, Finglesham
16	Plough & Harrow, Bridge	44	The Berry, Walmer
16	Park Inn, Dover	46	Podge's Belgian Beer Tours
19	Mermaid, Bishopsbourne	48	The Five Bells, Eastry
20	Leather Bottle Gt Mongeham	50	Red Lion, Stodmarsh
21	Old Coach & Horses, Harbledown	52	Eagle, Dover
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## And Finally .....Skull Splitter headache relieved

Following the bizarre complaints about the 'suggestiveness' of Dorothy Goodbody's beer labels, Orkney Brewery's Skull Splitter ale has also found itself under threat from the drinks industry watchdog. The Portman Group said its Viking logo was an aggressive theme. The controversy saw a House of Commons motion being tabled, aimed at protecting Skull Splitter, when it seemed possible the ale would have to be withdrawn. The Portman Group has now cleared the ale for sale. Norman Sinclair, managing director of the ale's Sinclair Breweries Ltd, said: "I'm absolutely delighted."

Skullsplitter, an 8.5% ale was created more than 20 years ago. It was named after Thorfinn Hausakluif, the seventh Viking earl of Orkney, nicknamed "Skull Splitter". Orkney and Shetland MP Alistair Carmichael had called for the complaint to be rejected in his Commons motion. Mr Carmichael said the name would be inappropriate if it were a low-priced drink aimed at youngsters. But he said it was an award-winning beer which was bought by "discerning drinkers who appreciate its quality and who drink it responsibly". "I remain highly dubious of the process that brought it into doubt in the first place. I would observe in passing that the Portman Group's adjudication refers to 'an aggressive-looking Viking'. History would suggest that there were not really any other sort of Vikings."

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