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**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

**Issue 39
Spring
2009**

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

CHANNEL DRAUGHT



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Know
WHISTABLE
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THE CARPENTERS

Real Ale Comeback in Coldred



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June 2009

CHANNEL DRAUGHT

ISSUE 39
Spring 2009

Welcome to the spring 2009 edition of Channel Draught. As I write the Chancellor has just revealed the details of this year's budget. Despite its general depressing perspective, from the drinkers point of view it could have been worse. A 2% increase in duty is certainly preferable to the near 5% which would have been imposed had he combined the 2.9% inflation rate announced a day or two earlier with last year's plan to increase alcohol duties by 2% above inflation for the next four years. But of course as he has already raised beer duty by 8% in November, to compensate for the temporary 2.5% VAT reduction, it barely reflects generosity, especially if the 8% remains in force when VAT is returned to 17.5%, as appears quite likely. Despite extensive lobbying, the underlying picture remains of a Chancellor with scant interest in the traditional British pub, who views beer as simply another source of revenue. We can expect the decimation of pubs to continue.

Despite all, real ale continues to hold up well with over three quarters of our branch pubs now selling it and an increasing number holding regular beer festivals. The return of real ale to the Carriers Arms in Tower Hamlets and to the Carpenters Arms in Coldred (see Local News and Page 23) typifies its local strength. For the second year running, the Berry, Walmer is Branch Pub of the Year and we congratulate Chris and his staff on doing such a great job.

On the debit side, however, we have to announce the sad loss of the Butcher's Arms, Ashley, which as well as being a disappointment in itself, raises worrying questions over the Government's criteria for granting rural pubs permission to close – we report in greater detail on page 45. Also in this issue, as well as lots of news and reports from across the district and beyond, we take a further look at pubs of earlier days, including the well remembered Cause is Altered, and continue with the Beery Boaters 1985 navigation of the Four Counties Ring.

Martin Atkins

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EVENTS DIARY

Fri 1 st May	Beer Festival; New Inn , Canterbury*
- Mon 4 th May	
Sat 2 nd May	Rural Ramble; meet Berry , Walmer, 1430.
Sat 16 th May	Rural Ramble; meet Fleur de Lis , Sandwich, 1200.
Mon 18 th May	Branch Meeting; Five Bells , Eastry.
Fri 22 nd May	Beer Festival; Crabble Corn Mill , River, Dover* (see page 12)
- Sat 23 rd May	
Fri 22 nd May -	Beer Festival; Rose , Wickhambreaux*
Mon 25 th May	
Fri 22 nd May	Beer Festival; Crown , Finglesham* (see page 42)
- Mon 25 th May	
Sat 30 th May	Rural Ramble; meet Hare & Hounds , Northbourne, 1200.
Sat 13 th June	Folkestone Pub Crawl , start at Wetherspoons 12 noon.
Mon 15 th Jun	Branch Meeting, Yew Tree , Barfrestone.
Sat 27 th June	Real Ale & Cider Festival, Kent & East Sussex Railway, Tenterden
Thurs 16 th	Kent Beer Festival, Merton Farm (off B2068) Nr Canterbury.
-Sat 18 th July	
Mon 20 th Jul B	Branch Meeting, Chequer , Ash.

Branch Website www.camra-dds.org.uk

Branch meetings are normally held every third Monday of each month and start at 7.30pm.

For full details about rural rambles & pub strolls, please email john.pitcher@ic24.net

or call 01304 214153.

Events marked * are not organised by CAMRA

A Nation of Shopkeepers

Napoleon's jibe appears at last to have come true. For the first time ever the country's grocers outnumber publicans. Recent figures give the numbers of supermarkets, convenience stores and corner shops as 55,854, while at the end of last year there were just 54,818 pubs, down from 61,000 a decade ago. However the carnage is unlikely to stop there. The British Beer and Pub Association is predicting that there will be only 52,200 by the end of this year, and that by 2012 one in eight will have closed. All this will come as no surprise to local drinkers. Since the Millennium Dover has lost about 30% of its pubs, Deal and Walmer half a dozen, and Sandwich and the rural parishes about another dozen. Folkestone too is suffering, a quick trip round the town reveals a host of closed and boarded-up premises.

The alleged causes are well established, cheap alcohol in supermarkets, not unusually sold below cost price, the highest tax levels in the European Community, ever mounting regulation, and changing lifestyles. Alongside these is the simple premium in value that often attains with conversion of a pub to residential use. To many the most critical factor is Government policy, which has seen sharp increases in tax and the regulatory burden since the 2005 Licensing Act. The 2007 smoking ban and last years budget tax hike proved particular onerous, and later this year the implementation of the mandatory code of practice will cost pubs an estimated extra £300m.

The industry's problems are well illustrated by Wetherspoon's most recent trading figures (See National News),

and there was wide spread disappointment when the Government dismissed the advice of its chief medical officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, to set a minimum price per unit, as a way of dealing with alcohol abuse: it would also have cut the disparity between pub and super-market prices. Mark Hastings for the British Beer and Pub Association commented: "....more needs to be done to support beleaguered venues with real community value like pubs. You don't rush to celebrate a new job, new baby, engagement, wedding or your team winning the cup in the supermarket. You can't play darts, join the local football or cricket team, sing karaoke or do the quiz in the fruit and veg aisle."

As we've reported previously, concern is extending to the Government's Parliamentary colleagues. Liberal Democrat MP Bob Russell, a member of the home affairs select committee said: "The Government needs to decide whether they think pubs are an important part of a sustainable community. If so, they need to think hard about their planning rules, and their taxes, which have contributed towards neighbourhood shops, post offices and pubs being squeezed out of existence."

However, more fundamentally, the Government needs to demonstrate that it has a real interest in sustainable communities. So far its actions have been distinctly ambiguous. Not only do its tax and regulation policies do little to engender confidence, but it had to be dragged into supporting the Sustainable Communities Bill in the first place, and then devised legislation that left implementation as an option for local authorities, among whom, perhaps unsurprisingly, interest has so far been low.

BLAKES OF DOVER

Your country pub in town

Drop in for a pint or three of our excellent
real ales, real ciders or perries.

Or just a coffee. Or a glass or bottle of wine.
Or one of our collection of over 50 malt whiskies.

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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@camra-dds.org.uk

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

DOVER

As we report above about a third of the town's pubs have gone since the Millennium, either converted to other uses, demolished or closed with future uncertain. Little evidence of their former use remains on the sites of the **King Lear**, **Primrose**, and **Engineer**, while work appears to be underway at the **Prince of Orange** in New St. for conversion into four flats. The **Renaissance** has a sold sign outside, and work was underway at the **Hare and Hounds** around Easter. The **Orange Tree** and **Britannia** remain boarded up, and are joined by the **Castle**, Russell St., which succumbed to metal shutter disease in mid March. Presumably its owners, having had it on the market for over a year, and dropped the price at least once, have given up hope of selling it as an almost going concern. Posters proclaiming everything of value has been removed (or similar) adorn the outside. Also closed and up for sale is the **Flagship** and the **Royal Oak**, Whitfield, the latter with an asking price down from £800,000 to £550,000, while in Tower Hamlets the **King Edward VII** closed at the start of April: we hear this is also up for sale. All a far cry from the exhibition currently on display at the **Dover Mu-**

seum of the town's pubs over the years: in 1880 there were reputedly 300, which had shrunk to 81 by 1969 and just 30 to 40 today.

However it's not all closures. Just before Easter, **Marstons** submitted a planning application for a new pub and restaurant at the junction of Honeywood Rd. and Menzies Rd., Whitfield. There will be at least 20 full time and 20 part time jobs and parking for 87 cars.

White Horse, St James St: The story of the pub cat, Harvey continues. Hearing, earlier in the year, of an in-season female cat, landlady Jill was quite happy that Harvey's 'fully intact' credentials should be put to the test, and a liaison was duly arranged. However, the female in question, Tango – ginger, hefty and until she went on heat in January thought to be male – had other ideas. Somewhat larger and considerably more assertive than Harvey, she turned on him with sufficient ferocity to rapidly dispel whatever romantic or carnal thoughts he might have been harbouring. As yet there have been no further attempts at union. Turning to matters of greater certainty, the usual fine selection of real ales has been

maintained. Northern beers seemingly particularly popular at the pub, we have enjoyed recently, in addition to the regular Landlord, brews from Acorn, York, Moorhouse and Old Mill, all of which attracted considerable praise. From elsewhere a barrel of Oakham' Bishop's Farewell disappeared without trace and the ever reliable Tring Brewery provided us with the very drinkable Jack O'Legs.

Blakes, Castle St: The pub currently hosts an in-house quiz every Tuesday evening, as well as fixtures from the Dover Beer and Brains Quiz League every third or fourth Thursday during the winter. On one such quiz evening in mid March we enjoyed a superb dark guest ale from Cottage – Metropolitan at 4.7% ABV. House bitter remains Harveys Sussex, now on stillage and always available (the handpumps devoted to guest ales), while Broomfield cider continues to win over converts. Those with £10 to spare might do worse than join the pub's loyalty scheme: members receive a 10% discount on selected items of food, drink and accommodation for a year, with half the £10 going to charity.

Lord Nelson, St James' Lane: Now run as a gay pub by the former incumbents of the **Kingfisher**, which they tell us, has been sold as a pub. Real ale appears somewhat limited, visits so far, finding on a couple of occasions Spitfire, and on another none at all.

Carriers Arms, West St: Closed for much of the winter, the pub has recently reopened with a familiar face behind the bar, John Townsend, who you might well remember from his recent stint at the Eagle, who has taken on the lease from Admiral Taverns with his son Mike. Of particular interest to our readers, he has reinstalled hand-

pumps and reintroduced real ale – first on were Courage Best and Courage Directors; however he has a wide portfolio to chose from and hopes to be offering a varying choice.

Fox, Temple Ewell: Full marks to both the pub and brewers Marston's for an excellent pint of rugby inspired Sweet Chariot at the start of March, a very well balanced and superbly flavoured 4.8% bitter. Standard brews remain Deuchar's IPA and Abbot, with regular contributions from Archers and Cottage. Recent guests have included Osetts Black Bull, Cavendish Dark Extra, Bateman's Court Jester, and the award winning Triple FFF Alton's Pride. At the nearby **Dublin Man O'War** March and April saw Sharpe's Special (5.2% ABV) on the handpumps, alongside Greene King IPA.

Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club: A visit on Sunday 8th March found the remnants of the club's beer festival still available at the very reasonable reduced price of £2 a pint. The festival had started two days earlier with nine barrels (six firkins and three pins) set up on the verandah at the front of the club within a secure awning, an arrangement which created both extra space and kept the beer at a reasonable temperature. Most came from Kent micros – Hopdaemon, Ramsgate, Westerham and Whitstable – but two had been bought in from Dark Star in Sussex. They ranged in style and strength from the light and hoppy 3.7% Dark Star Hophead (first barrel finished) to Ramsgate's 5.3% Dragon's Blood, and included the ever popular and award winning Whitstable Oyster Stout (second finished, although only a pin). By mid Sunday afternoon small quantities of only four remained including a very palatable Common Conspiracy from Ramsgate.

Louis Armstrong, Maison Dieu Rd: Also in festival mood, but a week earlier, the Louis had lined up a dozen real ales and a large variety of wines to see the pub through its end of winter celebration. Once again most of the ales were local – Gadds, Goacher's, Hopdaemon, Westerham and Whitstable – and once again Neil's step ladder provided sterling service as a makeshift stillage at the back of the bar. Response did not match last year's end of summer event, but most of the beer disappeared over the next week, helped by the pub hosting Kent CAMRA's March Regional Meeting on the 7th. With seven real ales available and an excellent spread of food we were well indulged. Beer strength varied from 4% Incubus to Goacher's heavyweight 1066 Old Ale at 6.7%. Particularly popular were Burton Bridge Tri Spy and Nethergate Augustinian, and the strong dark duo, Dogbolter and Dark Star Original.

DEAL & WALMER

Strand, High St: Still more proposals for the redevelopment of the former Black Horse. Permission was granted early in the year for conversion of the ground floor into a restaurant and a retail shop, and in February a fresh application was submitted for conversion to an amusement centre. Permission already exists for the conversion of the upper floors into flats. And at the former **New Plough**, Middle Deal Rd., now converted to two houses, little evidence remains of its former use.

Deal Hoy, Duke St: Good reports earlier in the year – busy, excellent atmosphere and very comfortable sofas – and the beer wasn't bad either. As well as Master Brew and Spitfire the pub was also offering Sheps Porter and, around Burns Night, Robbie Burns Ex-

tra Special. All in very good condition. Round the corner in West St., things continue to improve at the **Alma** where an end of March visit found Woodforde's Wherry, Butcombe Bitter and Master Brew on the handpumps. At the **Ship** Middle St. real ale choice recently has centered around Gadds and Dark Star, No 7 and Seaside from the former and Original and Hophead from the latter. In addition Caledonian Deuchar's IPA is always available. Meanwhile choice at the **Prince Albert** is more varying. Selection over the last few months including Wickwar Station Porter, Westerham Grasshopper and British Bulldog, Northumberland Brown, Whitstable Native, Cotleigh Barn Owl, Harviestoun's Bitter & Twisted and Mauldons Midwinter Gold.

Royal Marines Club, The Strand: Another expanding outlet for real ale. Traditionally the club sold Master Brew as its real ale but from late last year added a guest, breweries featured so far including Marston's, Bateman's, Fuller's, Everards, Thwaites and Woodforde's. Particularly notable was a barrel of Wadworth's Henry's IPA in February, which proved so popular that it is planned to install it as permanent beer in place of Master Brew.

Three Horse Shoes, Mongeham: Goods reports and an interesting range of beers from this pub on the edge of Deal. February and March saw Brain's SA, Greene King Flanker's Tackle, Westerham British Bulldog (described by one of our members as fantastic, sweet to drink with a very dry finish), Robinson's Trouble & Strife, Westerham "1965" and Theakston's XB.

Berry, Walmer: For the second year running the pub has been chosen as the Deal, Dover, Sandwich and District CAMRA branch Pub of the Year (see

Tony's Tappings). Friday and Saturday February 20th and 21st saw the pub's second winter beer festival, with a dozen ales of various styles from across the country, ranging in strength from Highgate Dark Mild and Grainstore Rutland Panther (both 3.4%), to York Centurions Ghost (5.4%); and including a good selection of old favourites such as Harveys Armada and Ringwood Fortyniner. Under Chris's management real ale has gone from strength to strength, increasing over the past year from three barrels during the week and four at the weekend, to four barrels during the week and five at the weekend. Usually a varying choice of four or five ales are available, with Harvey's Sussex as standard, and a couple of ciders, or a cider and a Perry.

SANDWICH AND RURAL

In Sandwich, work appears to have started at the **Greyhound** to convert the pub into a restaurant and two self-contained flats. However the **Admiral Owen**, closed for a couple of months during the winter, reopened earlier in the year under the management of Jason Blown from the Market Inn. Real ales are London Pride and Greene King IPA plus a guest and there are regular quiz nights every Wednesday.

Five Bells, Ringwould: Closed since the end of last year the future of this pub seems cloaked in mystery. The new owners state that they are keen to return the pub to the heart of the community but felt that in its present state they could not offer the public an adequate service. They have various plans for alterations and renovations but say they feel hampered by regulations and local red tape. Ostensibly, at the time of writing, little seems to have happened and the facility remains unavailable for

the community. Any further information gratefully received. At Martin Mill, the also closed **Ugly Duckling**, has we understand, been sold. In March an application was submitted to convert it to a single dwelling, however there are also rumours that there are plans to use it for b&b accommodation for golfers with some sort of bar facilities. At Ripple, however, the **Plough Inn** remains open and busy – regular real ales include Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter, Fuller's ESB, Bass, Master Brew, Courage Best, plus guests. "The Courage Best Bitter was so good I had to have a second pint", commented one of our members recently.

Swingate Inn, West Cliffe: New owners are friends and university graduates Kunaal Patel and Sumit Patel, who plan to introduce Indian food onto the menu and create a balanced "modern and rustic" feel to the premises. They have retained the eight employees from the previous leaseholder, are training the head chef in Indian cuisine and planning theme nights. As yet there is no news of real ale policy.

Lighthouse, Capel: Real ale mainly restricted to national brews, visits in January finding Bombardier, Broadside and Greene King IPA on the hand-pumps, with the first two in good nick. Interestingly no one tried the last. The following month it was good to see a barrel festooned in hops on the end of the bar – this was, or had been, Directors, as all had been drunk by the time of this reporter's visit. Apparently the management are giving serious thought to expanding the real ale side.

Yew Tree, Barfreestone: As hinted at in our last issue bar stools have made a return to the main bar. Real ales still rely principally on local sourcing – Hop-daemon, Gadds, Whitstable, etc. One

of our members waxed particularly lyrical about "a superb pint of Hopdaemon Incubus. There was also Gadds 80/- and Whitstable Native," she said "which I did not try because it was lunch time and I had to drive later." The Incubus deserved top marks – "perfect condition, served well, full pint given, tasted ambrosiastically." Good thing she didn't try any others. As reported in our winter issue the **Carpenters Arms**, Coldred is now a regular outlet for real ale, largely supplied by the Ramsgate Brewery, and a handpump has now been installed (see Roger Marples article). At Lydden, on the other side of the A2, the **Hope Inn**, closed for some time in the winter was expecting new tenants in February. They duly took over and the pub re-opened, but shortly after the pub was "done over" and all stock stolen, and the pub closed again.

Chequer Inn, Ash: Richard Munden, who reopened the pub in November, has been awarded Cask Marque accreditation for the quality of his real ale. He was particularly pleased as it came just in time for his beer festival which ran from April 9th- 13th, and which featured fourteen guest ales. He was also anticipating adding bat and trap and darts to the pub's attractions.

Blue Pigeons, Worth: At the start of March the pub was undergoing some refurbishment. Very good reports on real ale – Adnam's Bitter and Dartmoor Best, while during the Six Nations rugby matches there were very quick turnarounds on Brain's SA and Everard's Tiger.

CANTERBURY

Black Robin, Kingston: A visit Monday lunchtime in late February found the pub well patronised and Bombardier on the handpumps, with Deuchars IPA and Harveys Sussex just finished or

about to go on. In a departure from normal pub business it has expanded into the grocery trade with a fresh fruit and veg stall, and a range of tins and packets, etc.

Hop Pocket, Bossingham: The pub gave whole hearted support to the Home Rugby Competition. Flags of all six nations decorated the outside of the pub and there was TV inside to cover all the matches. The real ale didn't escape either with such appropriately named brews as Bateman's Hooker and Marston's Sweet Chariot appearing on the hand pumps.

Spring beer festivals are planned for the **New Inn**, Havelock St., over the May Bank Holiday weekend (Fri 1st May – Mon 4th May) and at the **Rose**, Wickhambreaux for the Spring Bank Holiday weekend (Fri 22nd May – Mon 25th May)

FOLKESTONE

Suspended across the bottom of the High St. between the now defunct Kat Man Do and the Famous Amusements Emporium, has appeared a sign, in glittering blue, announcing this to be the town's 'Creative Quarter.' Is that the whiff of Gauloise and the strains of an accordion hanging on the night air? – not in Folkestone on a chilly evening in early spring, nor one suspects at any other time, the street's occupants seemingly blissfully unaware of its new designation. Gallic jokes aside, however, while there were plenty of shops dealing in paintings and other items of creative enterprise, the street, save for a van delivering to one of the premises, was empty. The Whole Earth (or whatever it's called) Café halfway up was closed, as was, nearer the top, the **Earl Grey**, which Sheps appear to have decided is yet another pub surplus to the requirements of their balance

sheet. Boarded up, and all signage removed, only the faded lettering on the fascia suggests its former use. Added to the closure, a year or so ago, of the **Shamrock and Thistle** (aka George or Chequer), the area seemed distinctly lifeless: not the character normally associated with an artistic neighbourhood, or for that matter with the High St. at night in former years.

In the nearby Bayle, however, there still appears plenty of life at the **Guildhall** and **British Lion**, the latter's guest ales on the same evening being Saltaire Trio Pale and an extremely palatable Evan Evans Warrior, a mid brown 4.6% bitter. Later in April, to celebrate National Cask Ale Week (6th to 13th) the two pubs held their own beer festival with a choice of up to eighteen real ales, including Acorn Old Manor Porter, Holden's Black Country Mild and Thornbridge Jaipur.

Around the corner in Church St. the **Pullman** remains closed and 'To Let', and there appears currently little change for the rest of the town's boarded up sector – the **White Lion**, **Martello**, **Two Bells**, **Brewery Tap**, **Three Mackerel** and **Railway Bell**.

Chambers, Cheriton Place: The annual Easter ale and cider festival took place over the bankholiday weekend and was its normal resounding success. As well as the regular five on the handpumps there were another fifteen real ales and five ciders on gravity on the festival bar – Chris was particularly pleased with the two barrels from East Stour cider, a new local producer run by one of his customers. Of the beers Arundel Old Knucker was delicious, Westerham Audit deceptively strong, and Ramsgate India IPA (8% and served in half pints only) compared by one drinker to Worthington White Shield at its best. By

Friday evening many of the first tranche of ales were running out, with replacements not due until the following day. This unfortunately included Adnams' 'one off' revival of their old favourite, the 4.3% Adnams Extra, and Whitstable Kentish Reserve, although a pint or two of the latter were subsequently sunk the same evening by a late visit to Richard at the **East Cliff Tavern**.

Ship, Sandgate: Normal fare for the real ale drinker is a choice of half a dozen including regulars Abbot and IPA from Greene King contrasting with Hopdaemon Incubus and Hopback Summer Lightning plus, Biddenden Cider. A recent 'guest' has been the very welcome Harvey's Old, which has stretched the term guest to be available all winter. The pub plans to stock the beer until May when Harvey's finish brewing it until next winter.

ELSEWHERE

Cinque Ports Arms, New Romney: The following e-mail came to us earlier in the year:-

"My name is Richard and I wanted to let you and your members know I have taken over the Cinque Ports Arms in New Romney on a 'free-of-tie' tenancy. I know I am a little way out of your region but I wanted to let you and your members know that if they are ever heading our way they will be made very welcome. Our aim is to drive cask ale and build local contacts with our regional micro brewers. We have kicked off this week with 2two beers from Westerham brewery, plus a Landlord, Youngs, Abbott and a Batemans. Looking to put Level Best on for the weekend. Any mention or assistance we can get from yourselves will be a great help. If you are ever going to be in the area please call in, I can be contacted on 07967 021109."



2009 WHITE CLIFFS FESTIVAL OF WINTER ALES

Once again the first weekend in February found Dover Town Hall full of happy drinkers enjoying some of the best examples of British winter ales. As usual most of the beers had arrived the previous Monday morning and by midday had been set up on stillage along the right hand side of the Stone Hall. Over the next few days they were spilled, tapped and brought to peak condition under the careful supervision of Festival Organiser, Dave Green.

The festival proper opened at 1pm Friday, with a queue already waiting outside, and within in hour or so, several hundred real ale enthusiasts were battling with Leviathan, Rutland Beast, and Grim Reaper; raving it up with Wild Hare, Moonraker and Bone-shaker; or falling asleep with Absolution, Rest in Peace and Comfortably Numb. We had hoped, that as in the last couple of years, by shifting opening time from 5pm to 1pm and selling



tickets in advance, we would have avoided the lengthy Friday night queues. Not so this year, and from early evening, for several hours we once again had people queuing back past the war memorial. Our commiserations with those who had a long wait (or didn't make it), but we are restricted by the hall's fire limit.

Beer of the festival (first barrel finished, at around 6pm Friday evening) was Jaipur IPA from Thornbridge Brewery (see below), sponsored by Narrowboat Rosie. By the end of the night some dozen other barrels had gone completely, with those remaining averaging just about a third full. Friday night entertainment came from folk outfit *Fair Isle* who provided a selection of Irish style music which drinkers up and dancing in front of the stage.

Following tradition Saturday was quieter. Starting at 10.30am it ran through until 6pm by which time the equivalent of just two firkins of ale remained, spread across ten to twelve barrels. Among these was Burton Bridge Old Expensive, a deliciously smooth strong bitter, likened by some to a barley wine. Although costing no more than the rest of our beers, maybe subconsciously drinkers were put off by its name. For those with sporting inclinations, or who perhaps just liked sitting in front of the TV, there was the start of the six nations rugby to watch in the afternoon.

Once again we would like to thank all those who gave their time to help; our sponsors and supporters, including Dover District Council, Dover Town Council, Thanet Leisure, Rochester's Man of Kent and Adams Printers; and of course all those who turned up and enjoyed themselves, and without whom the festival would not be possible. Thank you all very much and hope to see you again next year.

May is Mild Month

In May, CAMRA will be promoting Mild and will be celebrating National Mild Day on Sat, 9 May 2009.

Your local branch of CAMRA will be working with pubs, breweries and the local press to bring and publicise Mild in our area.

So, whether you are a pub-goer, landlord or brewer, go to our website, at <http://camra-dds.org.uk>, to see what you can do.

Or contact pubs.officer@camra-dds.org.uk



Crabble Corn Mill



This is a fund raising event for Crabble Corn Mill Trust—reg. charity No. 297098

40+ Real ales & ciders

Fri 22nd May 2009

3:00pm to 11:00pm

Sat 23rd May 2009

11:00am to 11:00 pm

OR UNTIL THE BEER RUNS OUT!!!

Information : 01304 823292

www.ccmt.org.uk

E-mail : beerfest@crabblecornmill.org.uk

**Crabble Corn Mill, Lower Road,
River, Dover, CT17 0UY**

**£1 entry discount (by refund) for
card carrying CAMRA members**

**Limited amount of advance tickets for Friday
from Crabble Corn Mill.**

Chasers.....

Enterprise. According to the pressure group Fair Pint, the Government duty on beer is dwarfed by the extra that some pubcos add to the beer they sell their tenants. For example, it says, Enterprise charges 53p a pint more for Carling lager, then a publican would pay if buying straight from the brewer. Duty, meanwhile, is just under 36p a pint.

Stag at Bay. Watneys former beer factory, the Stag Brewery at Mortlake – a location name, some felt, of almost Dickensian aptness – and most recently home to Anheuser-Busch's Budweiser, is set to close with the loss of up to 300 jobs. Despite its perhaps chequered recent existence, it is London's oldest brewery and brewing has been continuous on the site since the early 18th century.

Brewing to Continue at Wandsworth: However don't get your hopes up. The brewery in question will be a micro-brewery within the site of the former Young's Ram Brewery, if plans passed by Wandsworth Council for redevelopment go ahead. The main development will comprise two tower blocks, and contain 1,000 homes, bars, restaurants, shops and community facilities, and provide 400 hundred jobs.

Health Police: The disturbing prospect of constant health surveillance came a step closer in Hove recently, when a pregnant woman was thrown out of a pub for sipping from a friend's drink. She had already drunk a pint of lager, and the pub, taking the view that she was to have no more, had refused her friend the purchase of two more drinks.



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TONY'S TAPPINGS

The perambulations and musings
of our Pubs Officer, Tony Wells

"Not all chemicals are bad. Without chemicals such as hydrogen and oxygen, for example, there would be no way to make water, a vital ingredient in beer." Dave Barry

Welcome

A belated welcome to a new publican in our branch. It's been eight months since Matthew and Mark Philpott took over the George and Dragon, but this columnist finally got around to meeting up with Matthew to find out what's been going on and what the plans are.



Over a good pint of Hook Norton Hooky Bitter, I found out that Matthew and Mark, in taking over the George and Dragon, have returned to their roots. Both were born in Sandwich and moved out when they were about 18 years old, and before returning to Sandwich, ran restaurant/pubs to the west of London, in Windlesham, Surrey and Ascot, Berkshire. When selecting the George and Dragon they had help from their family who still live in the area.

One of their first actions was to set about changing the menu. Out went the pizzas and the pizza oven, which apparently played havoc with the refrigerators, and in came smaller menus, changing every five weeks or so, presenting good quality, seasonal food, with roasts available on Sunday. On the real ale front, Shepherd Neame Master Brew is their regular, which is backed up by one guest during the week and two at the weekend.

Matthew is endeavouring to improve the beer trade at the pub, rearranging the seating area nearest the bar to provide places to sit, drink and converse. His favourite real ale is Sharps Doombar, although he spoke very highly of Wye Valley HPA, a beer I don't believe I have tried. The pub has been going through a slow but steady refurbishment and there are plans to start on the restaurant area. So, welcome back and best wishes for the future.

A Pub of the Year Trip

The disappointing number of just four rendezvoused for our trip out to the Butcher's Arms in Herne, one Saturday early in the year. Reputed to be the smallest Free House in England, the pub had just been judged Kent's Pub of the Year, and so we had thought it a good idea to organise a pilgrimage.

For lunch we stopped off at the First and Last on Herne Common, a short bus trip

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from Canterbury, and had to apologise to the bar staff as our original estimate of around twelve people was well off the mark, but they took it in good grace. Lunch was hearty and good value and was supported by a very good pint of Skinner's Betty Stogs. As we got on the bus to take us to Herne we had the first inkling that we were not alone. A short text message told us that four more people were in the bus immediately behind ours, and when we arrived in the centre of Herne we found another member fastening her bike to the lamp post and two more already partaking of the excellent beers that Martyn, the landlord, had on offer.



The pub is quirky. Seating for about ten and standing room for another fourteen or so – it is small. There is no actual bar or pumps, so Martyn serves beer direct from the casks into a glass or a jug, depending on what and how much you have ordered. For those of you who don't like beer, there's wine and lemonade, introduced to keep the partners of the real ale drinkers happy. Lager is definitely out, as the acronym NFL etched into the window proudly proclaims. The floors, walls and ceiling are covered in all sorts of beer-related and non beer-related paraphernalia. Kegs are used as foot stools, bar towels as wall and cushion covers, the tables are old butchers blocks, and the metal railing hanging from the ceiling would, I imagine, have been used to hang meat from. Today this same rack is used to hang an interesting range of plastic animals. More people continued to arrive, taking our number to 13 – unlucky for some perhaps, but this meant the pub was full while leaving enough room for Martyn to serve beer and arms and elbows to carry pints to lips.

Now to the beer. Five beers are usually on offer at extremely reasonable prices, including Dark Star's Over T' Moon at £2.25. Other beers included Dark Star's Hophead, a personal favourite of mine, Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter, Larkins' Porter and Hooky from Hook Norton. The beer and conversation flowed throughout the afternoon and so did the people – no one sat or stood in the same spot for any length of time. If you live in the area you have to make a visit to this unusual pub. Getting there can't be easier since it is on the main bus route from Canterbury to Herne Bay and Whitstable and the buses run every 10 minutes.

Update on the National Beer Scoring Scheme Website

In the last edition of Channel Draught I mentioned a way that you could submit beer scores on behalf of someone else through the National Beer System Scheme website. Well, things are even easier. A new field has been added to the NBSS website which allows you to enter the name and membership number of the person who surveyed the pub, if it wasn't you.

Clubs Update

I'd like to welcome the Deal Royal Marine Association Club as the first club in our branch to officially welcome CAMRA members. Their regular beer is Shepherd Neame Master Brew and they normally have a guest beer on as well. Recent

guest beers have included Marston's, Bateman's and Thwaites. CAMRA members are welcome and will be signed in as a guest on production of a valid CAMRA membership card. (See local news)

We'd like to hear from any other clubs in our branch who would allow CAMRA members into their club. Please ask a member of the club's committee to send an email to pubs.officer@camra-dds.org.uk detailing how CAMRA members gain access to the club, usually a valid membership card is typical although some clubs allow access on production of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide. We also need to know if there are any other conditions such as dress code or days of the week entrance is allowed/not allowed.

Change of Email Address

We will be retiring our email address channel draught.pubnews@virgin.net at the end of April. This is being replaced with channel.draught@camra-dds.org.uk. So please update your Address Book.

Pub of the Year 2009

For the second year in a row The Berry on Canada Road, Walmer, has been voted as our Pub of the Year. The Berry came out a clear leader ahead of the other finalists: Crown Inn, Finglesham; Louis Armstrong, Dover and The Ship, Deal and the White Horse, Dover. In selecting the Pub of the Year, the five judges, including a member from the Ashford branch, judged the five pubs on beer quality, atmosphere, welcome & service, clientèle mix, support for CAMRA aims and overall value for money.

I believe this award reflects the work that Chris is doing in supporting real ale and CAMRA's aims. Over the past few years he has significantly increased the range of real ales and cider at the Berry, removed keg cider, run two beer festivals and is planning his first cider festival. As we go to print a date for the presentation night has not been set. So, please check our website, www.camra-dds.org.uk, for an announcement.

Deal Pub Crawl

At Midday on a Saturday in mid-March a goodly bunch of real ale fanatics gathered in the Bohemian, Beach St., Deal for the second town walk of the year. A full range of beers were available on hand-pump, including Caledonian Deuchars IPA, Hook Norton Hook Bitter and a good example of Timothy Taylor Landlord. Weston's Old Rosie was also available, which is the Bo's regular real cider.

A short walk took us on to the Deal Hoy, picking up a couple of excellent Cornish pasties for lunch. The Deal Hoy is a Sheps pub and is known for serving good quality beer and their Spitfire was no exception. We had a bit of a breakaway here when two members decided to try out the Alma instead (see inset). While in the Hoy, John Pitcher and myself discussed the

The Alma

New landlords, Michael and Lorraine Newill took over the Alma in November 2008. The reports from the Alma looked promising. Good pints of Woodforde's Wherry and Butcombe Bitter were served alongside Shepherd Neame Master Brew.

possibility of arranging a meeting with those landlords who are CAMRA members. So watch out for more information.

Lastly on to the Ship, which is a popular destination for anyone visiting Deal for a few pints of real ale. The group took over the back room and with spring sunlight streaming through the window we supped on pints of beers from Gadds, Dark Star and Caledonian. I was particularly impressed with the Dark Star Hophead that I just had to have another pint. This was the official end of the crawl around Deal. However a group of us went on to the Berry to see the day to the end. Our POTY 2009 had it's usual good selection of five beers and 3 ciders.



2009 Price Survey

As you may know, each year CAMRA carries out a price survey in advance of the government's budget. This allows CAMRA to gauge the impact of tax rises and the other pressures on beer prices. The table below shows the result of this year's survey (sample size: 26) and the percentage increase since 2008.

Compared to the increase in real ale prices between 2007 and 2008, which was 1.72%, the increase over the last twelve months of 4.23% shows that the impact of the government's approach to taxing alcohol is having a significant effect.

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Min	£1.95	£2.40	£2.60	£2.50	£2.60	£2.90
Average	£2.73	£2.78	£2.93	£2.76	£3.00	£3.15
Increase	4.23%	13.61%	4.33%	2.16%	4.32%	5.22%

However, real ale is still cheaper to drink than keg beer, so at least there is something to be thankful for. As a final point, a number of tenant landlords did indicate that further price rises were expected, as indicated by letters they had received from the pub's owners. So the standard £3.00 pint comes ever closer.

A Branch Minibus Trip

Following the success of our minibus trip out to the northern reaches of our branch, we organised another minibus trip to some of our more inaccessible public houses on the eastern side of the branch. So, on the evening of the last Thursday in February, and after pick ups in Finglesham, Deal and Dover, a minibus full of people arrived at the Coastguard, St Margaret's Bay. Here we had arranged to have a meal, which turned out to be a scrummy beef stew, a vegetarian curry and a cheese board consisting of two English cheeses – a great way of starting off a pub crawl. Accompanying the meal were good pints of Northumberland Original, Hogs Back

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Having got off to a good start, we moved on to the Plough Inn, Ripple. There was much amazement from the locals when fourteen people all walked into the pub demanding beer. On offer was a good range of beers: Bass, Gales Swing Low, Master Brew, Courage Best Bitter and a very good pint of Fuller's ESB.

Our next stop had taken some arranging. It was the Old Lantern Inn at Martin, and they normally close early on a weekday night. However, after a bit of persuasion they agreed to stay open to allow us to visit. So, we had the pub to ourselves – brilliant!! The pub has seen some refurbishment and has a more modern look than I remember. So, in our "own" pub we downed our pints of Master Brew and Spit-fire.

Our final stop was The Chance in Guston. Here we had more beer, but unfortunately my notes let me down and I can't remember what it was. (Apparently Smiles Old Tosser, and in good nick – see Ramblings) Another successful trip out to pubs we don't normally get to as a branch and hopefully it won't be the last.



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this government seems intent on forcing on us.

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for more information.

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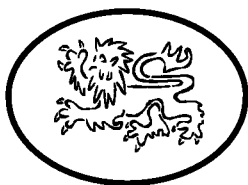
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CARPENTERS ARMS

Coldred

The Carpenter's Arms has recently reintroduced real ales: the last time that these were sold in this establishment, they were from Fremlins. The licensee for the past 40 years has been Daphne Fagg, and The Carpenter's has been in the Fagg Family for over 100 years. The last modernisation was in 1965. There are normally two Ramsgate Brewery beers on sale; one served direct from the cask, the other from a newly installed hand pump. The public bar is in regular use, and the saloon bar is used only on rare occasions. There is no food, no recorded music or fruit machines. This is a rare example of the old fashioned public house where one visits for good beer and conversation, without the myriad distractions that one normally finds in licensed premises today.

The Carpenter's Arms is the centre of village life, as there is very little left in the way of public buildings besides the church, and if one ignores the telephone box and the 'bus shelter, which sees one 'bus in the direction of Canterbury (Monday to Saturdays), and one 'bus in the direction of Dover on school days. This former Leney's house hosts various village functions, in-



cluding the local vegetable growers society, and the occasional Bingo Night. Dominoes, cribbage, table skittles and darts are played, and Friday is snap night. There is a builder's plaque in the bar proclaiming that the building was erected in 1719. Take no notice of the Fremlins price list, or the opening times that are displayed outside the door. Should you want to join the friendly bunch of locals for a pint, in front of the roaring coal fire (winter only), you might do so, from 18.30 onwards. If a number of thirsty drinkers wish to visit outside these hours, give George, who runs the business, a telephone call on 01304 830190, and he will most likely accommodate you. The beers are excellent.

Roger Marples

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The National News

By Martin Atkins

Wetherspoon Slates Tax Levels & Regulation

JD Wetherspoon's latest trading figures, reported in March, showed the company made post tax profits of £17.3m but paid tax of £190m in the six months to January 25th, including £53m of excise duty and £79m of VAT. Chairman Tim Martin commented: "In our view the levels of tax now being levied are unsustainable for many pubs, and this, combined with other factors, is contributing to the closure of pubs in record numbers." He also criticised the methods employed by the police and trading standards to enforce the ban on the underage, particularly the use of under 18s to entrap pubs, as well as the Government's general approach. Rather than stopping the young binge drinking, it is forcing them into the parks and parties, where there is no control: "massively unintelligent and Draconian," he said. Under the Policing and Crime Bill 2008/09, due to be introduced this year, a mandatory code of practice on alcohol sales, designed to reduce under-age or irresponsible drinking, will be introduced. Under its regulations a pub could have its licence revoked if they are caught serving underage drinkers just twice in three months – a measure that will necessitate additional door staff and extra cost.

Cold Wind for Brewing Giants

At the mass production end of the brewing industry times are bleak, with both Heineken (now owner of Scottish and Newcastle's British assets) and Diageo (brewer of Guinness) reporting declining sales. In February Heineken announced a 74% fall in net profits for 2008, £660 of write downs and a substantial fall in UK beer sales. Leading the retreat was Fosters whose sales volumes were down 10% in 2008, while John Smiths and Kronenbourg fell 5%. It is also widely believed that too much was paid for their joint purchase with Carlsberg of Scottish and Newcastle. The UK market was particularly problematic. "Recession, the on-trade downturn, unprecedented excise duty rises, the smoking ban and the fall in the value of the British pound made the market exceptionally challenging," said the company. Meanwhile for Diageo European performance was down, and it had cut anticipated full year organic operating profit growth from 7 – 9% in October to 4 -6% currently. Guinness sales, while taking a larger market share, were down 2%.

Restrictive Covenants Back in Fashion

Restrictive covenants, very popular with the big brewers thirty or forty years ago, when they were disposing

of pubs, have been resurrected of late by Enterprise Inns. The pubco recently sold by auction ten closed pubs for alternative use. Defending the practice in front of the Business and Enterprise Select Committee Inquiry into pubcos, Enterprise boss, Ted Tuppen said: "We tend to put these covenants on if we have an area that is substantially over pubbed. Where we have a pub for sale in a village or a suburb where there were already five or six pubs, it may be in the interests of our licensees and indeed all the other licensees in the area for this to be sold not as a pub."

CAMRA, both nationally and locally, have slated the policy. Johnathan Mail, head of policy and public affairs, said the practice was anti-competitive and resulted in the closure of potentially viable pubs, and similar comments have come from branches across the country. Bristol Pubs Group member Michael Chappell, objecting to a restrictive covenant on the sale of the Bell in Prewett St. in Redcliffe said: "We believe this could be a successful pub in the right ownership. Enterprise is imposing the covenant as it does not want the competition from another operator running a pub nearby." And in Malvern local CAMRA members staged a protest outside the similarly threatened Morgan Inn. Mark Haslem said: "Potentially viable pubs are closing unnecessarily. If we were to sit back and watch pubs close, it will reduce overall the number of freehold pubs in the UK and rob communities of their social centre." In Parliament Leeds NW MP Greg Mullholland said

the sale of a pub with a restrictive covenant preventing its use as a pub was a scandal and should be outlawed.

Local Vat Cut

Under new European Commission proposals, national Governments can reduce VAT to as little as 5% on local services such as hairdressers and restaurants, but not alcohol. CAMRA says the tax break should include locally made and sold draught beer and cider, and have now received the backing of Conservative MEPs who have proposed an amendment supporting CAMRA's position.

Conservative economic and monetary affairs spokesman and MEP for Wales, Johnathan Evans said: "We are proposing a tax cut in VAT for the local pub, not to encourage more drinking, but to give our publicans a much-needed break.

Senior CAMRA staff travelled to Brussels to meet with the European Commission. Head of policy and public affairs Johnathan Mail said: "Lower VAT on locally brewed beers would help pubs and make it easier for small breweries to get beers into local outlets. It would also reduce beer miles." *How local is local? A critical fact for us in East Kent – Ed.)*

Crisis Loans

Government loans of up to £1m to help pubs struggling to obtain credit are now available. Both new credit and existing debt that banks will not renew are covered, as also are

Stephan Oliver at it again

brewery tied houses, which were excluded from January's Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme for small firms. Minister Gerry Sutcliffe said: "pubs are often the lifeblood of the communities and I am keen to do what I can to help while times are hard." The Government guarantees 75% of the cash, but Mr Sutcliffe stressed that the loans will only be directed at profitable pubs. The British Beer and Pub Association, while welcoming the initiative, said that pubs will still go under unless beer tax increases are abandoned: "It's giving with one hand, and taking away with the other."

Mr Sutcliffe is also pressing for changes in the licensing system that will make it easier for pubs to extend their range of services to include shops, post offices, etc. without the heavy cost of rewriting their licenses. He said that the Government should support community pubs and be aware of the negative effects that their wider policies might have. The 'Pub is the Hub' campaign reports that nine county councils are prepared to consider making grants to pubs to help them establish ancillary uses.

All very helpful, but there is still the feeling of trying to get blood out of a stone. Mr Sutcliffe and the nine county councils might be welcome allies, but how much will actually come the way of the average local? At a time when billions are being lavished on the banks just a few thousand would be a godsend to many a struggling pub.

Marston executive Stephan Oliver has once again found fault with fellow members of the beer world. Three years ago the micro industry was on the receiving end of his invective when he described it as comprising "airing cupboard comedians" and "happy hobbyists, whose beer is usually cloudy and tastes of p*ss," and who were using taxpayers money to fund their hobby via the Progressive Beer Duty. Now it is CAMRA's turn. In a recent piece in the Morning Advertiser we are described as gobby hobbits, beardy weirdies and whisker-stroking stormtroopers: if nothing else Mr Oliver has a colourful turn of phrase. What exactly has incurred his wrath is unclear, but it seems a pity that it should be directed at those who are largely fighting the same war. Unlike the other regional giant, 'bury it Bury' Greene King, Marston's has, in recent years, acquired, and left largely undisturbed, Jennings, Ringwood and Refresh (Wychwood). It has also maintained production and quality of the very drinkable Bank's Original and Bitter, distributed Burton Bitter nationwide and introduced the excellent Old Empire. Its range of ales must be the largest in the country. We can only hope that despite the present economic problems they are able to maintain such an enlightened philosophy.



THORNBRIDGE BREWERY

Champion ale of the 2009 White Cliffs Festival of Winter Ales was Jaipur IPA from the Thornbridge Brewery of Derbyshire, which had all been drunk within five or six hours of the festival opening. I think to be honest, most of us had never heard of the brewery, or only in the vaguest terms, however since its founding in 2004 it has established a significant presence, particularly in the East Midlands and



Yorkshire. In September 2005 it gained a First place award at Sheffield Beer Festival and has subsequently collected 86 further awards. In the BBC TV series *Oz and James Drink to Britain* shown earlier in the year, Oz Clarke and James May visited Thornbridge Brewery in the first episode, Oz Clarke rating Jaipur IPA as one of his favourites.

The brewery was founded by Jim Harrison in a converted barn on his Thornbridge Hall estate. Originally he had planned to use his marketing and business skills to re-brand and sell on, high quality beer bought in from an outside micro brewery, but despite the large number of local micros (2009 Good Beer Guide lists almost fifty in Derbyshire, Notts. and South Yorks alone), he was unable to find one to provide sufficient volume. He therefore made the obvious choice and decided to brew it himself. From the start he says we set up a professional management team and hired top quality brewers – head brewer being Stefano Cossi from Italy, and brewery manager Kelly Ryan from New Zealand – and in case anyone might doubt the brewery's commitment it operates under the motto, "Innovation, Passion and Knowledge."

Expansion has been rapid. From sales of £50,000 in 2004 the brewery has grown to a projected figure of £650,000 this year, with expansion into new premises planned, which will allow volume per brew to triple. Jim Harrison sees the key to their success as a combination of professional marketing and high quality beer. They also espouse green credentials, spent hops being consigned to the vegetable garden, and spent grain soon to be destined for the wild boar herd which the estate is in the process of acquiring.

Andrew, Sarah & Kevin
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Kent Small Brewery News

By Roger Marples

P & DJ Goacher: Tovil, Maidstone 01622 682112

Silver Star will be re-introduced for the summer, and there is a slight possibility that the stout might be continued for the summer months. If you are a fan of this exceptional brew, as am I, lobby Phil Goacher for its continuation. Fairly regular outlets for Goacher's locally are the Louis Armstrong, Dover, the King's Head, Kingsdown and the Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club, Dover which takes the Stout and Fine Light as regular beers.

Hopdaemon Brewery Co. Ltd: Newnham 01795 892078

hopdaemon@supanet.com

Greendaemon will be put into casks for the summer trade, and Bewitched, the 3.7% ginger flavoured beer, will again be available at The Chambers (Folkestone) beer festival. Apart from that, not much other news. Tonie is still very busy, especially with the bottling.

Nelson Brewing Co: Chatham 01634 832828

sales@nelsonbrewingcompany.co.uk

The brewery had a bar at the Easter Steam Weekend in the Chatham Historic Dockyard, and is one of the sponsors for the annual Crabble Corn Mill Beer Festival, where its beers will obviously be available. A new beer is Golden Galleon, 4.3%, a light hoppy beer, as its name suggests. The Eight Bells in Dover has regularly been selling a range of Nelson Beers. Consistency of the quality of beers is an important consideration, and the brewery's efforts in this respect have been reflected in improved beer sales. Although new brewing equipment has been delivered, in order to double brewing capacity, it has not been possible to install this, as there has been no spare time between brews.

Ramsgate Brewery Ltd: Broadstairs 01843 580037

info@ramsgatebrewery.co.uk

Cask beers for May & June will be "Gadd's Thoroughly Modern Mild", and a re-introduction of the crisply named "Dr. Sunshine's Special Friendly Wheat Ale" at 4.2%. At the time of writing Eddie is developing a recipe for this new mild. Bottled beers available from the brewery are: Black Pearl Oyster Stout (6.2%), Ancestors Islay Whisky Aged Double Porter (9%) – ideal for those fans of peaty Islay whiskies, and India Pale Ale (8.3%). Gadd's No.1 Barley wine will soon be available, and this will be followed by Gadd's Reserve No.1 which is being aged in red wine casks. Ramsgate Brewery also found time to win the Taste of Kent Awards.

Westerham Brewery Co. Ltd: Crockham Hill, Edenbridge 01732 864427

sales@westerhambrewery.co.uk

During April a new beer will be launched, under the National Trust brand and will be named "Viceroy India Pale Ale". Unlike Green King IPA, and the erstwhile Charrington's IPA, the Westerham IPA will be brewed in the true and distinctive style of IPA. – pale, bitter, hoppy and strong. This beer was inspired by Lord Curzon of Kedleston Hall, who whilst Viceroy of India restored the Taj Mahal. After he returned to England he purchased both Tattershall and Bodiam Castles in order that they would not be demolished, and on his death gave them to the National Trust; I digress. This beer will use both malt and hops grown organically at Grange Farm, where Westerham Brewery is located. The beer should be 100% organic by 2010. It is Robert Wick's aim to, "restore the true real ales made with Kent Hops to the South East".

Two new 36 barrel tanks have been installed in order to increase fermentation capacity by 80%, as the brewery is currently working to full capacity. Now five years since the Brewery first sold its first beer to a public house, it has just completed the purchase of a pub of its own – the Royal Oak, also at Crockham Hill and within half a mile of its premises.

Whitstable Brewery: Grafty Green 01622 851007

whitstablebrewer@btconnect.com

Please see article on Whitstable Brewery (page 39)

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CHANNEL VIEW

ANOTHER VIEW

CAMRA, if nothing else, is a collection of independently minded individuals with about as many differing points of view as there are real ales. To celebrate its 30th anniversary the Feb/Mar 2009 edition of the 'London Drinker' printed the following contribution from its first editor on the current state of the campaign.

WHEN WE WERE YOUNG

At the time I edited the very first edition of the 'London Drinker' thirty years ago, CAMRA was run almost entirely by its volunteers. There was only a handful of paid staff at headquarters. Development of policy and campaigns was led by a National Executive whose membership included several highly able and clued up individuals, and supported by a handful of volunteer committees with (generally) well defined remits. And it worked! In the few years between CAMRA's birth and 1979, the availability of real ale had grown quite remarkably: several brewers (such as Fuller's) who had gone down the keg or top pressure road were returning to the fold, and handpumps were re-appearing all over the place, including in areas such as Scotland and the North East which had been arid deserts for good beer.

How things have changed! CAMRA is now a flourishing organisation with

close to 100,000 members and around 30 full time staff, and is financially far more secure. But wait a minute. What is the current state of the market for cask ale? Well, it now accounts for little more than 5% of beer sales (by volume), far less than it was when CAMRA started life. What has happened to breweries? Well the hated Big Six have been swallowed up by multinational chemical engineering companies who make the likes of Watneys and Courage seem like champions of cask ale. As for the independent sector, why not try a little exercise. If I give you Brakspear, King and Barnes, and Hartleys for starters, make a list of the independent breweries that have shut since 1979. You should have no difficulty in getting to 50. True, plenty of microbreweries have sprung up (mainly because of a favourable tax regime), and many produce excellent beers; but how many micros would it take to produce the barrellage which once came out of Wandsworth? As for pubs, even before the present recession they were being hammered by the greed of many pubcos, the growth of city centre kiddy bars and the availability of cheap alcohol from supermarkets.

I would be the first to admit that the disastrous trends of recent years could not have been prevented by CAMRA but there were things which could have been done that might have limited the damage. The most

obvious one would have been to fight hard for a ban on mass-media advertising of alcohol. Real ale has been reamed, steamed and dry cleaned by advertising that has promoted a handful of junk lagers to overwhelming market dominance. Such advertising distorts competition and also helps promote irresponsible drinking and yet CAMRA has not only been silent on the matter but has even on occasion denied that it believes in such a ban – despite the fact that a desire for one had been part of its stated policy since the 1980s.

According to the current statement of CAMRA's objectives, we now apparently aspire to be the voice of all pub-goers and the campaigning body for such vital issues as securing legislation to ensure that drinkers will get a full pint without having to undergo the trauma of asking for a top-up. In 1973 I joined an organisation that simply campaigned in support of good real beer, the breweries that produced it, and the pubs that sold it. That was it and, whilst CAMRA had a hard enough task on its hands trying to secure these objectives, this narrowness of focus was a major contributor to the campaign's success.

So how does CAMRA get back to achieving that level of success? Well for a start, let us focus once again on beer, breweries, pubs and nothing more. Our efforts recently have become too dissipated, with too many of us distracted from the main task. Then let's face the industrial and commercial realities, investigate the causes and try to identify what might be done to alleviate the situation for

real ale, its breweries and pubs, rather than take false comfort from feelgood stories and marketing and promotional spin. And to achieve this end, wouldn't it be a good idea once again to involve more of CAMRA's volunteers in developing our strategy instead of somehow expecting the central staff to do most of it for us? Our national magazine, *What's Brewing* could serve as a place where the membership at large is kept up to speed on what the centre is doing; it *could* serve as a forum in which the important issues of the day are debated and where ideas are exposed, evaluated and refined. *London Drinker* has done this on occasion even though, as a local magazine, it is not the most appropriate forum for discussion of national issues.

In short, a return to the ethos and objectives of those early days would be no bad thing. The spirit of those days led to real, meaningful successes for CAMRA, whereas the current style risks leaving us as observers at the roadside as the hearse burying real ale's coffin glides slowly by.

Brian Sheridan





LOST PUBS

Martin Atkins looks back at days gone by

THE CAUSE IS ALTERED

The Cause is Altered stood at the corner of Queen Street and Princes Street, opposite the Sea Training School, now in the process of being turned into flats.

During the 1950s and 1960s this part of Dover was one of the few remaining parts of the old town to have survived the expansion of the docks and railways, and German shelling and bombing during World War II. At the side and back, it adjoined St. Mary's Infants School, which together with St Mary's Primary School on the other side of Queen St. your editor attended during the 1950s; as also did the daughter of the pub's last licensees, Julie Smith. Like the majority of Dover pubs of the time it was a Fremlins House, before being taken over by Whitbread in the late 1960s for the last few years of its life.

The pub's exact age was uncertain, but at the time of its demolition in the early 1970s it was considered to be at least 300 years old and very possibly a lot more – its construction of flint, rough stone and brick, whitewashed over, together with irregularly spaced windows of various styles (those on the ground floor mostly with shutters) suggests considerable age. The origin of its name has provoked much speculation over the years, from changing loyalties during the Civil War/Restoration period in the 17th century to the more fanciful corruption of, 'the cows is haltered' or 'the cows is halted': the pub formerly abutted the old Cow Gate which was demolished in 1776 and whose existence was commemorated by a plaque on the pub's southern corner.



Perhaps, however, the most likely explanation is that published in the South Kent Gazette in October 1979 which itself drew on information set out in John Bavington-Jones' book *A Perambulation of the Town, Port and Fortress of Dover*, published in 1906.

"The name was in bold raised letters over the door, and an old inhabitant told the author that he saw that particular sign fixed there before he went to sea in the year 1826. The sign of this house was originally "The Black Horse," and being situate in a lonely spot on the walls, was a resort of smugglers, but when Mr. Bourne took the house at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he resolved to make a change for the better, and put up the new sign "The Cause is altered." Certainly the pub had had a number of names over the years including, as well as the Black Horse, possibly the Blacksmith's Arms and almost certainly in 1805, the Carpenters Arms.

Obviously these weigh against a 17th century connection. Meanwhile Mr Bourne's sign remained for the rest of the pub's lifetime. Like many Dover pubs the Cause is Altered had strong connections with the sea, and it is said that in its later years any out of work seaman would be well looked after there until he found a ship.

It was closed in 1969 and subsequently demolished, to make way for the York St. dual carriageway, although the actual course of the road does not cross the site the pub, which is now an unused grassed area. Road construction at the time, seemed to owe much to the principles of General Sherman's march through Georgia in the American Civil War, and required a large swathe be cleared either side of the route.



Along with it disappeared also, its near neighbours, The Five Alls, the Criterion and the Prince Louis, as well as the Red Cow and Griffin at the bottom of Folkestone Rd. For those who might think that the volume of traffic using York St. does not justify a dual carriageway it should be pointed out that it was built as part of the 1950s scheme which saw traffic brought into Dover via a widened Folkestone Rd. – although it must be open to speculation if by 1970 rising house prices had not already made that option unlikely. However, the wheels of Government moving with slow deliberation it was by then probably too late to halt, and in any case we were then in the grip of the post World War II brave new world of big blocks, big highways. Apparently similar developments were planned at one time for the Middle St. area of Deal, but fortunately abandoned.

KING WILLIAM 1, TOWER HAMLETS

Further information has come our way concerning the King William 1st at 12-14 Tower Hill, which was referred to at the end of part two of Paul Skelton's Stroll Through Time and Tower Hamlets in our Autumn issue. The remains of the pub are still there and comprise a single storey dwelling, the upper floor or floors presumably destroyed by the wartime bombing that saw the end of its existence as a licensed premises. The 'stove enamelling' activity simply involved, as its name suggests, providing the outer finishing of cooking stoves. The pub was also the site, some time in the past, of a notorious murder in which an argument that started inside ended with a stabbing on the hill outside. Apparently copious quantities of blood ran into, and filled, the culvert that still runs down the side of the hill.

THE HALFWAY HOUSE, DEAL

Not truly either in Deal or a lost pub, the subject of this piece we now know as the Chequers, and lies halfway between Deal and Sandwich, on the Ancient Highway which once ran between the two towns. However, a couple of centuries ago it was called the Halfway House, and had a history of being involved in the substantial smuggling trade carried on locally during the 18th and early 19th centuries, as the

following story from 1830 illustrates. Once again I am indebted to David Collyer for the details.

The Landlord of the pub at the time was a George Marsh, and while he was suspected of involvement in smuggling no proof had ever been found. However, the Excise Men were well aware that smuggling was extensive and that quantities of contraband were regularly being hidden, often in no more than hidy-holes in the Sandhills. At some time during 1830 the authorities decided on a combined sweep of the area and drafted men from the local Coastguard Station to assist. Just one hoard was found but the search also included the cart shed of the old dairy farm that adjoined the Halfway House, a building that then additionally acted as a temporary mortuary for any bodies washed up on the foreshore, before they could be collected and buried in The Strangers' Burial Ground in Deal. One of the Coastguard Men had noticed a lot of activity in the vicinity of the pub and the cart shed and decided to investigate. On this particular occasion the cart shed contained two bodies awaiting removal, laid out in normal fashion on planks laid across two barrels, and covered by a tarpaulin. Raising the corner of the tarpaulin, however, he found a dozen tubs of brandy stacked underneath.

The excise men decided to leave the brandy in place and set a trap for the smugglers. Accordingly they were back the next night and lay in wait. In due course a group of men with pack animals were observed approaching from Deal, but before they reached the cart shed a low whistle warned them that all was not well, and they very rapidly turned round and disappeared. Neither did the Excise Men retrieve the contraband, for when the tarpaulin was removed it had gone.

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GETTING TO KNOW WHITSTABLE BREWERY

Roger Marples visits

On the last day of February, the Whitstable Brewery were hosts to the North Cotswolds Branch of CAMRA, who had arrived in company with various members of their neighbouring Gloucestershire Branch, in a coach. They were there to present Rafik Abidi, the Head Brewer and driving force of Whitstable Brewery, with a certificate for Oyster Stout, which had won the Beer of the Festival at their recent event. I was there to write an article for Channel Draught, accompanied by David Green as an observer. Also present was Peter Burstow, the Whitstable Brewery CAMRA Brewery Liaison Officer, who very kindly collected us from Lenham Station. As many will know, Whitstable Brewery is rather more than a short hop from Whitstable, and is located in sylvan surroundings, on a farm not far from Grafty Green. It was certainly pleasant to stand in the brewery yard holding a pint of excellent Whitstable beer listening to the trill of birdsong and the intermittent drilling of a woodpecker, in the weak but warm winter sun.

The Whitstable Brewery was founded about six years ago, by the Whitstable Oyster Company, and it was originally conceived that it would supply solely that company's outlets. However, after a period of eighteen months, there was sufficient interest to sell to the outside trade, and the brewery has gradually expanded to supply premises in Surrey, Sussex and London. They even export to Sweden, three or four times a year.



Real ales make up 80% of their business, with the remainder being filtered bottled beers and, very surprisingly for a small brewery, keg lager, produced for the parent company's own outlets. Five regular Whitstable Brewery beers are produced: Native Bitter 3.7%, East India Pale Ale 4.1%, Oyster Stout 4.5%, Perle of Kent 4.5% and Kentish Reserve; and there is the possibility that bottle conditioned beers will be produced in the future. Wheat beers, which are normally produced in keg form, are also occasionally made available in cask. Unusually, three different strains of yeast are used – for naturally conditioned beers, keg wheat beers, and keg lagers. The malt is supplied by Crisp's, "the leading independently owned maltster in the UK," to use its own words. Hops

are a mix of local Fuggles, Goldings and Challenger, together with European and American varieties. I am pleased to note that no brewing sugars are used. In addition to Rafik, there is a part time brewer and another full time brewer; and that is it. Everyone turns their hand to the various tasks that entail the successful running of a brewery, including the deliveries.

You might wonder, given his name, about Rafik's antecedents. His family were originally from Algeria, although Rafik himself spent much of his early life in Paris. He decided to come to a 'civilised' country, where people appreciate good beer, and studied at University, in Edinburgh. After working for Fuller's and Shepherd Neame, he saw the light and joined forces with the Green family who own the Oyster Company, and there began to brew beers of flavour and character.

He took us on a tour of the brewery, the equipment being housed in a large, long barn, which gives the impression of considerable spaciousness. The assembled company from the West of England, Kent and a few CAMRA types, who had somehow joined us from South Wales, listened with great interest to his descriptive and technical talk about the procedure of brewing; subsequently finding much to talk about while sampling the brewery's products. Whether, after Rafik's hospitality and a few stops on the way back, many of us remembered any of the details by the time we arrived home, is another matter.

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RAMBLINGS

New Year's Day – Coach & Horses, Burgess Green: Landlord and staff coped well with 26 ramblers and their varied requirements. Kept cheerful despite probable lack of sleep. Excellent Bombardier. **Tues 6 Jan – Plough, Ripple:** Harveys Sussex (very good), Fullers ESB, Bass, Master Brew, Courage Best. Arrived at 1205 to be greeted with 'Sorry not open till one. Revised later opening times now apply early in the week, apparently. Luckily we got reprieve when they realised there were ten people behind me. **Thurs Jan 15 – Old Lantern, Martin:** Master Brew and Spitfire. Huge group of 38 ramblers descended on the small pub, with 2 hours notice. Fortunately few other customers, and everyone bought drink, with about twenty snacks and meals. The professional, pleasant service was very impressive, and a contrast to the incompetent, and even surly approach we have sometimes experienced elsewhere.

Mid Jan – Mini Dover Town Crawl: DDS's Pubs Sub Committee – John Pitcher, Len Hood, Tony Wells, and Trisha Wells as the self sacrificing driver. First stop **Boar's Head** which was in the process of re-decoration. Single real ale was Young's Bitter, standard at the pub for some time now, and as usual was in good condition. The Barman seemed a bit overwhelmed by three demands for real ale so early (7pm) on a quiet evening. Talking to the landlord we gathered that the pub being revamped. Currently most customers came to watch football, play pool, skittles, etc. but they would like to attract wider range of clientèle. They will be sticking with Young's Bitter, which should always be available. Next the **Eagle** for Pieces Of Eight and Trafalgar from Nelson. First pint of Trafalgar wasn't brilliant but the landlord replaced it without question, having noticed us tasting beer and come over to speak to us. Affable conversation – he explained that his manager, Peter, had recently left. Lot of noise from four or five occupants at other end of room. On to the **Red Lion**, Charlton Green we enjoyed Bombardier and Harveys Sussex. A quiet welcoming pub with pleasing ambience. Last stop the **Golden Lion**, Priory Place where we drank Marstons 175 All Out and Hook Norton Hookie Gold. Fairly quiet by usual standards, but in its usual rough and ready fashion cheery enough.

Mon 2 Feb – Blakes, Dover: Shut at lunchtime. Found out later owing to Landlord Peter slipping on ice previous evening, banging his head, and ending up in hospital. However no harm done and out next day. **Wed 4 Feb – Plough, Ripple:** Harveys Best, Courage best, Master Brew, Fullers ESB. Pub opened early at 12 for 10 walkers. 'Weren't exactly sure if they were pleased to see so many of us so early, however not a bad place', as someone remarked. **Wed 11 Feb – Two Sawyers, Woolage Green:** Incubus, Adnams bitter. Pub already busy with rotary types lunching when 28 ramblers arrived. Young girls serving polite and efficient. **Thurs 12 Feb – 5 Bells, Eastry:** Cotswold Joust, Greene King IPA. 16 walkers arrived, about half of whom ate, new landlady and staff coped well including new barmaid on first shift. **Mon 23 Feb – Crown, Finglesham:** Nethergate Jolly farmer, Harveys

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Thurs 21st – Middle Eastern Night – Large selection of dishes from around the Middle East – Pre Book.

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Thurs 11th – Mixed Canapes & Wine Night – Pre Book.

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Best, Gadds Dogbolter. Good to see pub full on a Monday night for quiz. Car park very full so perhaps not vast amounts of alcohol consumed, but sales of soft drinks and food probably worthwhile.

Thurs 26 Feb – Eastern Front Minibus Trip: Pick-up point, **White Horse, Dover** - Old Mill Old Curiosity and Loddon Hullabaloo. Next to the **Coastguard, St Margaret's Bay**. Hogs Back TEA, Incubus, and Northumberland Original, and a good range of self-service food. On to the **Plough Ripple** for George Gale Swing Low, ESB, Courage Best, Master Brew and Bass, and then the **Old Lantern, Martin**. Wasn't keen on staying open 'late', though reconsidered – I think we arrived about 915. Said locals didn't use pub in evening, so usually shut in week by nine or so after eaters had gone. Spitfire (expensive), and Master Brew. Lastly the **Chance, Guston** for Smiles Old Tosser. Bit alarmed to see same beer on as last Sun, but in good nick, so clearly fresh barrel or excellently looked after. Successful trip – minibus full, good contingent of younger members who seem to enjoy social occasion as well as beer. All pubs pleased to see us; useful additional custom at otherwise quiet time of the year. Great example of CAMRA supporting local pubs. What a pity we didn't start this years ago!

Sat 14 Mar – Dover Crawl: Start **Eagle** – Nelson Pressgang, Bateman Hooker. Not surprisingly, quiet at noon, but good beer and welcoming. **Golden Lion** for Hare Raiser and Pitchblack (no mention of breweries on pumpclips!). Bustling as usual, I must have had the last pint of Hare Raiser, though still very good. This meant that only real ale on offer was very dark stout type beer, perhaps not to everyone's taste. Next to **Blakes** with Burtonbridge XL, Cottage Titan and Harvey's Best. Good to see place busy with diners as well as drinkers. Enjoyed good value food. **Red Lion** – unscheduled visit whilst waiting for Louis to open at 4pm. Harveys Best and Bombardier; good beer and nice pub. **Louis Armstrong:** Westerham Freedom and Skrimshander. Quietish, as just opened, one's senses a trifle dulled by this stage!

Wed 18 Mar – Bell Shepherdswell: Under new management, open all day, food available normal times. London Pride, Hobgoblin, Greene King IPA. **Fri 20 Mar – Sportsman Sholden:** London Pride, Greene King IPA. Nice home cooked veggie food. **Three Horseshoes Mongeham:** Westerham 1965, Robinson Trouble & Strife, Cameron White Rabbit. Now doing food Thurs – Sun.

Sat 28 Mar – Deal Crawl: First, **Bohemian** – Deuchars IPA, Hopback GFB, Hooky Bitter and Landlord. Quiet early in day but we livened it up. **Deal Hoy** for Master Brew and Spitfire. As always good ambiance and a pleasure to visit this pub with its cheery bright interior, disappointed though by lack of seasonal beer. Landlord Jeff informed me that reports of his imminent departure were much exaggerated. At the **Ship** we 'took over' back bar as for informal meeting. As usual good selection of beers – Dark star Hophead & Orig, Gadds 7, 3 & Seaside, Deuchars IPA. **Port Arms** – quick visit whilst waiting for bus. Recently re-opened and refurbished: Abbot, Old Speckled Hen, Wadworth 6X.

Ramble



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CURTAINS FOR THE BUTCHER'S

After a four year fight the villages of Ashley, Studdal and East Studdal are without a pub. Permission for conversion of the Butcher's Arms to a house was granted in January, following a successful appeal to the Secretary of State. The pub has been closed since spring 2005, its owners arguing that there was insufficient local support to continue – a position strongly contested by local residents, and consistently opposed by Dover District Council and the Deal, Dover, Sandwich and District Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale. Over the subsequent years several applications for change of use were refused by the Council, and an earlier appeal to the Secretary of State dismissed.

In determining the most recent application, the DDC said: "The application fails to demonstrate that the loss of the public house does not and would not cause harm to the economic and social viability of the community, and it fails to demonstrate that genuine and adequate attempts have been made to market the premises as a pub." On appeal, however, the Inspector for the Secretary of State, while accepting that the pub's loss might well harm the community, felt that sufficient marketing had been undertaken. As local plan policy required only one of these criteria to be complied with, he allowed the appeal.

The Dover District Local Plan, which sets out planning policy for Dover District Council, places considerable emphasis on the importance of rural shops and pubs and the need for their retention. Of rural pubs it says: "Such pubs are often not simply a place to have a drink but also provide a venue for local clubs and societies to meet and facilities for people to hold parties and receptions. The loss of such pubs to other uses can seriously diminish the range of facilities available to local people." The relevant policy states: "Planning permission will not be granted for the change of use of a rural shop or pub unless:- (i) its loss would not harm the economic and social viability of the community which it serves; or (ii) genuine and adequate attempts to market the premises as a pub have failed.

In the case of the Butchers Arms, the pub had been offered for sale at £400,000 and marketed for six months by a local estate agent, as well as approaches made to a couple of pub chains; all without success. Apparently, while the Dover District Council found this to be inadequate it satisfied the Secretary of State. Logically, we would have thought that the price at which a pub is marketed needs to be a reasonable approximation of its value as a pub, while the marketing exercise needs set guidelines to cover the nature, volume and period of advertising. At present the whole area seems clouded with uncertainty and vagueness. In this instance we thought the asking price to be excessive, while we have reservations about the adequacy of its marketing. We are not surprised that there was little interest.

Martin Atkins

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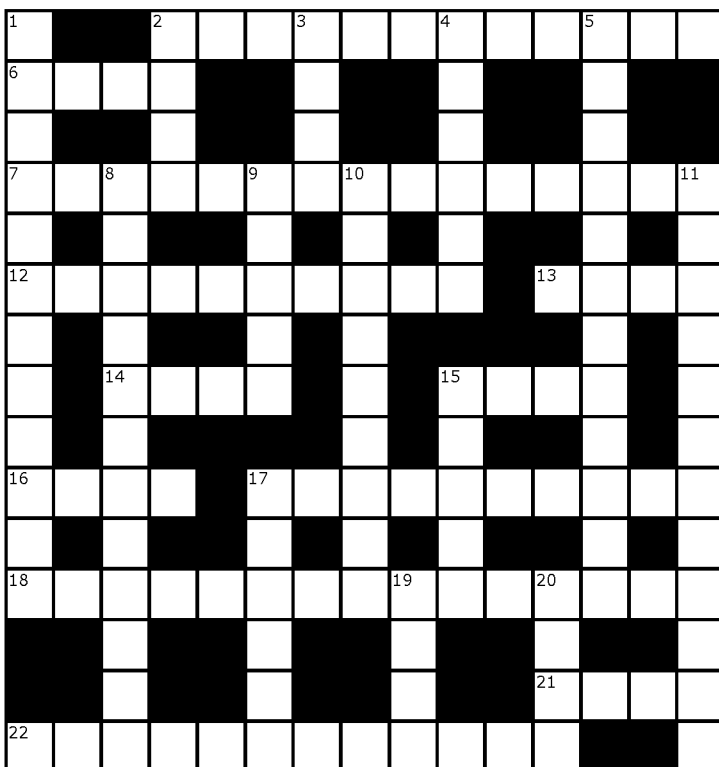
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Across

2. Cider makes you see two (6,6)
6. Kari mixes Turkish spirit (4)
7. Divinest insects combine individual characteristics (15)
12. Holy man, Ron, storms for barley wine (6,4)
13. Rome fiddler from the Milton brewery (4)
14. Single whisky used in brewing (4)
15. House bound, not free (4)
16. Included in speech, on reflection (4)
17. Old fashioned drunkenness (10)
18. Training in a Kent market town? (8,7)
21. Principal sun (4)
22. Dover pub conifer, support at the end (5,3,4)

Down

1. Setters cared about confidential ingredients (5,7)
2. Coke losing weight! (4)
3. Initially blue light over city federation (4)
4. Swedish cars made from five loos. Five! (6)
5. Ned needs pint brewed by smaller companies (12)
8. Mash drinkers mix beer from Kent brewery (12)
9. Dark nobleman, I hear (5)
10. Wire message to Deal pub (9)
11. Brief rule isn't enough (5,7)
15. Bend or rut in West Country (5)
17. S. American maize beer which I chanced to conceal (6)
19. Hip temperature (4)
20. Break remainder (4)

Answers on Page 61



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SATURDAY 20th JUNE - MIXED EMOTIONS



NOW WE ARE TWO

PART TWO OF THE NOSTALGIC LOOK BACK AT THE BEERY BOATERS 1985 TRIP ON THE FOUR COUNTIES RING

(In our Autumn edition we left the Beery Boaters, Sycamore and Pine on Tuesday evening enjoying an enormous Chinese meal after a night out in Stafford. Now read on.)

Wednesday morning arrived bright and clear with an odour reminding me somewhat of dawn over downtown Hong Kong drifting over from *Pine*. We set off for Great Hayward Junction and the Trent & Mersey Canal, passing through on the way, Tixall Wide, which looks more like a lake than part of a canal, and in which a full length narrow boat can do a 360° turn, as was proved with *Oak* the following year. According to legend, the local Lord of the Manor (of which only the gatehouse now remains on a hill to the north) would only allow the canal to cross his land if it was disguised to look like an ornamental lake. Geese, swans and ducks were in abundance (although not any of its noted kingfisher population), many of them eagerly following *Pine* and disposing of the remains of the Chinese take-away.

Great Hayward arrives shortly afterwards, and we turned left up the Trent & Mersey, nothing of note occurring for the remaining nine or ten miles to the bottom of Stone Locks and the Star Inn – the River Trent keeping us company to the left, and the London to Manchester main railway line and the A51 occasionally coming close to the right. We pulled in outside the pub somewhat before midday, and were not surprised to find it a Bass house. Stone was then a bastion of Bass, having recently taken over and closed the town's own brewery, Joules, whose canalside warehouses with 'Joules Stone Ales' brightly painted on them still existed, and as far as I know still do. The Star proved to be relatively unspoilt; i.e. no jukebox, piped music, electronic games or pool table, and the beer in excellent condition (Bass then brewed by the 'Burton Union' system), and, if I recall correctly, the food was not the 'greasy fish & chip' variety. We also visited the Red Lion, again with Bass/M&B beers, where the pub TV was showing horse racing. Ray, always



game for a flutter, noticed a horse called 'Long Boat' in a race about to start, and telephoned a bet to his bookie, and believe it or not, the old nag won! You can imagine the shouts of glee and of disbelief!

The afternoon was also uneventful, and after about nine miles and ten locks we moored up in the Fenton district of Stoke-on-Trent, near, I believe, Stoke football ground. Our first port-of-call, was the Regent, a not very inspiring Tetley's pub, but where, as we were leaving the boats in dribs and drabs, we arranged to stay until the company was assembled. Shortly after the first thirsty boater had arrived, several youths entered and carried in various guitars, drums, large amplifiers, etc. designed to do a power of no good to one's eardrums (*You Philistine Jim - Ed*). As they set up their equipment, various strangers arrived in two's and three's, and when they started tuning their instruments their glances to each other said: "We've got a good audience tonight, lads!" However, immediately after striking a chord for their first number, most of the audience rose as one



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and walked out. The Beery Boaters had now all arrived, sunk a pint for good manners sake, and were moving on to pastures new. These we found at the Terrace, a small Bass/M&B pub, which, as the name suggested, was a back-street pub in a terrace of houses, and much more to our tastes – although some did also visit the nearby Star for some Marston's. Unsurprisingly there was no food, but we made up for this afterwards at an excellent fish & chip shop, which fortunately for us was still open well after the pubs had closed.

From our moorings at Stoke it was only four miles to the southern portal of Harecastle Tunnel. As this is 2926 yds long (I will not follow British Waterways and desert the measurements in which our canals were built for metric ones!), and not wide enough for two narrow boats to pass, passage is either by a convoy system, several boats in



one direction and then another group in the other, or by reserving mornings for one direction and afternoons for the other. At the time of our trip, northerly traffic was in the afternoon, so Thursday morning we had plenty of time to spare. However, *Sycamore* needing to take on water, eventually set off and pulled in by the water point at the BWB Etruria Yard, near the start of the Caldon Canal. From our direction the junction makes a very acute angle, and we needed to go past and reverse back in. Incidentally, we were now on the summit level of the Trent & Mersey Canal and it was to be all downhill from here on. We had breakfast while we topped up, and were still moored when *Pine* arrived, its crew rather puzzled at us having apparently come down another canal. We asked them how they had managed to miss the short cut!

On the move once more we cruised through the Shelton Steelworks, then still operating but due for demolition to become the site for the 1986 National Garden Festival. It was around here that *Sycamore* fell foul of a temporary canal bridge made out of scaffold tubing, and carrying a notice warning of 6ft 6in headroom. The Skipper, knowing that our boat wasn't that far out of the water carried on as usual, but as we approached those of us at the front suddenly realised that it looked a bit low. It was, and we came to a sudden halt with the front of the cabin jammed firmly underneath it. Fortunately *Sycamore* had a curved steel frame over the front well-deck against this sort of thing, so nothing got damaged, and this being the highest part of the boat, we eased the boat through, with everyone up front as ballast. However it left us with a worry. The canal guide books warned that boats with 5ft 6in above the water line 'must

NOT attempt to enter Harecastle Tunnel or they **WILL** get stuck! We sincerely hoped that the warning notice on the bridge was wrong.

Meanwhile, we tied up at Longport Wharf and paid our respects to the Railway and the Pack Horse, respectively Bass and Ansell's. Setting off again, we came across a British Waterways vessel, which one of their staff on the tow-path told us had been cast adrift by vandals, and would we tow it to the tunnel for him. It was some sort of unpowered metal square-cut punt, and Mike Green leaped aboard and secured it to *Sycamore*. The vessel, obviously not used to being towed at 4 mph, weaved from side to side and tried to bury its front corners under the surface of the water. Mike, still aboard, was somewhat relieved when we arrived at the tunnel. We had to wait for a single boat coming south, and so had time to look at, and take photographs of, the three tunnel entrances: Brindley's original, long disused because of subsidence, the railway tunnel, disused because of Beeching, and Telford's tunnel, built in 1827 to compliment Brindley's and allow two-way traffic, and now the only one in use. The tunnel keeper assured us that *Sycamore* would have no trouble, the temporary bridge by the steelworks was also suffering from subsidence. The tunnel has no ventilation shafts, but at the south end there are large doors which are closed when it's in use, and huge extractor fans which draw the exhaust fumes out and pull in fresh air from the north end. From the amount of smoke coming out as we waited, we reckoned that the boat in the tunnel must have exhaust like a Clyde Puffer (*Whatever that might be – Ed*). However, when it



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emerged it turned out to be a trim little narrow boat with not a wisp of smoke coming from it. There was still plenty coming from the tunnel though!

Now it was our turn. *Sycamore* entered first, followed by *Pine*, and the doors were closed behind us. Harecastle Tunnel was then the longest that we had travelled through as well as being our first experience of a long, narrow, one-way tunnel. I found that it is probably easier to steer through a narrow tunnel than a wide one as the boat can't swing from side to side so much. Despite having to be careful of the old metal towpath, partly removed and partly decaying into the canal, along one side (it's now been removed completely), we had no problems, and 28 minutes later passed out of the northern portal. Here the reason for the smoke became apparent. The northern tunnel-keeper had got a fine fire going in his house above the portal, and thick smoke from the chimney was being drawn through the tunnel and out of the ventilation fans at the other end. If nothing else, it proved that the extraction system worked.

We carried on for another half mile, dropping down three locks and passing the junction with the Macclesfield Canal and beneath the aqueduct that carries it across the Trent and Mersey, to moor for the night outside the Red Bull public house. Our first port-of-call was Butts Lane Working Man's Club, where we hoped to renew our welcome of the previous year, but a change



of Steward had seen Real Ale replaced by top-pressure beer. So after a bottle of Guinness apiece we left, and headed by taxi for the Bird in Hand at Kent's Green, two miles away alongside the Macclesfield Canal. It was one of our last unspoilt waterside pubs, with no bar, no juke box or canned music, no electronic games, no food, and the superb Bass and Worthington Bitter came in jugs from the cellar. Although canalside, it did not advertise its presence (although once inside, the welcome was sincere), and it was easy to pass it by, as we had done the previous year, without noticing it. Neither did it appear in local Real Ale guides or the national Good Beer Guide – I suspect the local CAMRA lads wanted to keep it a secret to themselves. However, they seem to have succeeded to excess, for after the licensee died in about 1988, the pub became a private house. Maybe it may have benefited from more publicity. It was the first and last time that I visited the pub and I am grateful that I was privileged to do so. The only similar pub I have found was the Three Tuns at Welney on the Middle Level Navigations, and that, too, has gone. As there was no food at the Bird in Hand we eventually and reluctantly returned to the Red

Bull to eat. We were to dine in a small room upstairs, however the Red Bull has many oak beams, the stairs are quite steep and Mike Lock is quite tall. Leading the way, half-way up his pate came into sharp and resounding contact with one of the beams; his sudden halt producing very nearly a domino effect among the rest of us filing up behind. Anyway, the food was good and the beer was good, so we eventually retired well satisfied with our day's adventures.

Friday arrived, and our last full day's boating. A 6am start and we set off down the many locks of 'Heartbreak Hill' most of which had been doubled since the canal's construction to help speed the flow of traffic in the days of working boats. Just after Hassall Green the tranquillity is shattered by the busy M6 Motorway, which crosses the canal, and



then after a couple more miles and eight locks Wheelock is reached where we moored for lunch. Of the pubs in Wheelock at the time, neither the canalside Cheshire Cheese, or the Nag's Head served Real Ale, and the time-warp Commercial Hotel only opened at lunchtime on Sundays, so after a quick tour of the village we caught a bus into Sandbach, about a mile away. There we ate and drank at Robinson's Swan & Chequer in the town centre, and walked the short distance for more Robinson's at the Iron Grey, opposite the ERF commercial vehicle works. In the afternoon we cruised the rather dreary six miles and four locks to the outskirts of Middlewich, mooring for the night just above King's Lock. From what I remember that evening we don't seemed to have strayed from the Newton Brewery pub and its Marston's beers, and I'm sure that we must have dropped into the chippy on our way back.

Saturday morning we proceeded back to Middlewich Narrowboats, passing the entrance to the Middlewich Branch and thus completing the Four Counties Ring for the first time – and with boats unloaded and after obligatory group photographs set off on our various ways home. The Dover contingent had arranged to spend Saturday evening in Rugby with the local CAMRA branch, which we reached via a diversion to Kinver, a largish village near the Staffs & Worcester Canal a few miles north of Kidderminster, and subsequently a favoured stopping place. Its several pubs are excellent, and we enjoyed the now defunct Davenport's and Simpkins at the Elm Tree and the Old Plough, and had my first taste of Batham's at the Plough & Harrow (alias The Steps). We met the local branch at the Seven Stars and started the evening with a pint of

M&B and a game of Northamptonshire Hood Skittles. Rugby really comes to life on Saturday evening and we followed up with Marston's at the Squirrel, Adnams' at the Black Swan, Wilson's at the Prince of Wales, Banks's at the William Webb Ellis and Ansell's at the Half Moon. I'm afraid that our hosts were reduced to half pints by the end of the evening but, after all, we had been in training for a week!

Our lodgings were split between two two guest houses; one a bit 'rough and ready', the other (my accommodation) a bit more refined, and run by a Chinese couple. At breakfast the following morning we found that those stopping at the 'dive' had a hearty meal, whereas our repast was somewhat meagre, and we cast envious glances at a Chinese couple whose Chinese type breakfast looked a bit more substantial. They tried an English breakfast in addition and we were amused at attempts to eat bacon with chop sticks. The last leg home on the Sunday was broken by a visit to the Crooked Billet at Stoke Row, north-west of Reading, a Brakspear's house where beer was brought up from the cellar in a jug, and at another Brakspear's establishment, the Glass and Bottle at nearby Binfield Heath.

And that was that for 1985. For 1986 we decided to move to pastures new and try our hands at the Avon Ring. Or so we thought.....

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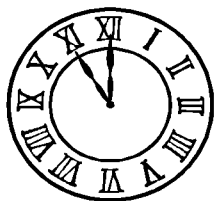
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LAST KNOCKINGS

Afraid you might taste something lagerboy?" runs the advert. Whatever you might think of Wychwood Hobgoblin it certainly possesses a feisty distinctive flavour, and while perhaps its lack of subtlety has kept it from the front rank of stronger ales, it is always a reliable standby in both draught or bottled form. At least that was my opinion, until searching through an assortment of bottled beers of various ages for something drinkable, I discovered a bottle of Hobgoblin some two or three years past its recommended consumption date. Now, bottled Hobgoblin makes no pretence of being bottle conditioned, however its contents had a certain opaqueness, and there swirled around the bottom in suspension, if not a sediment, then a thick deposit of some kind. Obviously, I concluded, it had lost all condition and gone to seed, or whatever was the alcoholic equivalent. Not so. When opened, and gingerly tasted, it proved superb, one of the best tasting beers I had come across for a long time, draught or bottled – full of depth and indeed subtle flavour. Maybe it was just a one off, or perhaps we should be buying cases of Hobgoblin and laying them down for four or five years.

Apparently our beloved Government is pursuing the proposed extension of drink drive regulations to all water-borne craft above a certain minimum length. A good idea you might well think except that it will bring within its orbit narrowboats, the normal mode of transport of the beery boaters, and a method of transport, which to the best of my knowledge, has never caused accident or injury because of alcohol. The initiating cause of the new legislation is a handful of deaths caused by drunken lunatics in high powered speed boats. Not a major problem but obviously one that needed addressing. However, give our present Government the merest whiff of prohibitive legislation and the health and safety juggernaut, with its tranches of civil service departments and advisory quangos, lumbers into motion. As well as the source of the initial problem, all possibly related areas are investigated and assessed, to see if they too could be brought within the scope of whatever new regulations are imposed. Thus in due course we will find the humble narrowboat, maximum speed 4 mph and possessor of an exemplary safety record subject to the same laws as the fastest Ferraris or Maseratis. Whatever happened to 'if it ain't broke don't fix it'?

I note that Marsh Mash, the newsletter of our adjoining branch Ashford, Folkestone and Romney Marsh carries an advert for the Ferry Inn at Stone in Oxney. I have only ever visited the pub once, one lunchtime in the 1980s. It was then a tied Courage house and run by a lady of not inconsiderable years (there may well have been a husband as well but I only saw her). Furnishings were simple, tables and chairs, and on the walls pictures of local football and cricket teams. What, however, is particularly memorable is that it was one of the few pubs I have ever come across (probably the only one, as I can't recall any others), where I was able to buy bread

and cheese: in this instance a hunk of rough bread, a lump of cheddar, a little butter and a couple of pickled onions. Bread and cheese (not a cheese roll or cheese sandwich) was of course traditional pub fare, and the perfect complement for traditional British ale. However, sometime in the 1960s, the marketing industry decided that such simple, old fashioned food was not good enough for us (and no doubt insufficiently profitable to boot) and invented that incongruous combination of cheese, bread, tomato, lettuce, pickles and any other odds and ends that might be lying about the kitchen, known as a ploughman's lunch – although if any ploughman ever ate one after following a horse all morning in the cold and wet we'd all be amazed. It has since become more or less ubiquitous, although here and there a few outposts selling real bread and cheese still exist. One such is the Queen's Head at Cowden in West Kent. Also run by a lady of not inconsiderable age, I am told it needs to be ordered in advance, but is excellent, as is the beer.

From the same source I understand that the Blue Anchor at Ruckinge on the edge of Romney Marsh is currently closed and that the local branch fear for its future – it comes with a not insubstantial amount of land, and Ruckinge is little more than a hamlet. Again I have only ever visited it once, and about twenty years ago, when it seemed a well established local. Of course things have changed, but should its owners, Enterprise, or whoever they might sell it to, apply for change of use I trust that before it considers granting consent, the local authority will require proof that it cannot be sold at a realistic price as a pub.

When did you last hear 'last orders' called in a pub? Very few, if any, seem to bother now, and even those that do, appear to forget or not worry, as often as not. Changing life styles and the revision of the licensing laws a few years ago have largely relegated the closing time ritual to an anachronism, if not an irrelevance. However, for many years it was as prominent a feature of public house life as hand pumps or the spirits optics behind the bar. It was accompanied by a set procedure and strict etiquette. Ten minutes before the regulated closing time 'last orders' would be loudly announced from behind the bar. As well as reminding customers to finish their drinks, it was also the signal for glasses to be drained and refilled, topped up and fresh rounds ordered. On reaching closing time and irrespective, or not, of the presence of women 'time Gentlemen, please' was called, and the period known as drinking up time was commenced. This required all drink to be consumed, and all customers to leave the premises within ten minutes (latterly increased to 20 minutes). To assist proceedings some landlords would wander amongst the assembled drinkers muttering such pleasantries as 'ain't you got no homes to go to', 'drink up your rotten beer and sod off' or 'drain your glasses, shift your arses.' At the end of drinking up time a further call of 'drink up please' would be heard, whereupon any remaining alcohol was downed or thrown down the sink and any stragglers summarily ejected. At night, thirty or forty years ago, in the days of the 10.30 pm closing time, the town's streets would be empty by 11 pm.

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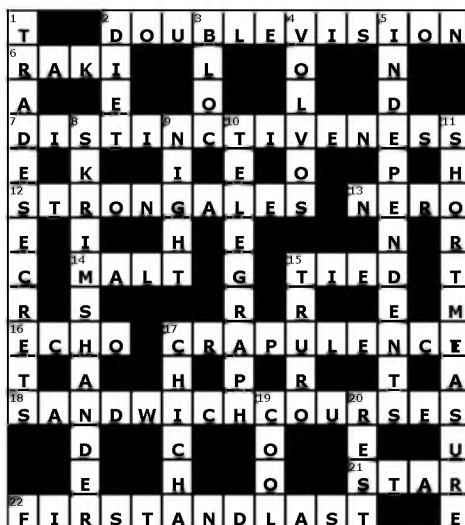
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And Finally.....Camels fired up on

'Old Hookey'

A herd of Warwickshire racing camels have taken to drinking a pint from their local pub before every race. Owners Joe and Rebecca Fossett of Idlicote, south Warwickshire, take the herd down to the Horseshoe Inn, in Shipston-on-Stour, claiming the booze makes the camels run faster.

Joe, aged 54, said: "One of my fastest camels had stopped winning and wasn't as lively as he had been. "Then a local racing trainer let me into the secret. I put some beer in their food and they all perked up and really liked it. Joe added: "The results were astonishing. He absolutely flew down the track and it was thanks to a pint of beer before the race."

Joe now gets all the slops from the drip trays from his local pub, the Horseshoe Inn, in Shipston-on-Stour, which he mixes into the camel's food on race days. Twenty minutes before a race he also gives the camels a pint of their favourite tipple, 4.6 per cent Old Hooky, which is brewed in Oxfordshire. "I have tried them on Guinness and cider but they perform the best after a pint of Old Hooky.

Camel expert Colin Ward, animal manager at Twycross Zoo, said: "Giving animals beer is an old remedy used by farmers for hundreds of years. "It's more than likely

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