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



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Issue 40
Summer
2009

CHANNEL DRAUGHT



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Getting to
Know
**THORNBRIDGE
BREWERY**

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**Pubs That
Never Were**
Paul Skelton
looks at what
we missed

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SUMMERTIME IS

BEER FESTIVAL TIME

Get along to one of the many local festivals
See Page 3 for details



Channel Draught

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Editorial Team

Editor &
Advertising
Martin Atkins

Editorial Assistants
Trisha Wells
John Pitcher

Design & Format
Steve Bell

Editorial Address

You can write to the
Editor c/o
2 Eastbrook Place
Dover CT16 1RP
01304 216497
Email
martin_atkins_camra@yahoo.co.uk

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CHANNEL DRAUGHT



ISSUE 40 Summer 2009

It's Summertime and the Living is Easy – as the song has it, and currently probably, not too many others, being as we are in the midst of swine flu and the after effects of last year's financial debacle. However, the hard pressed publican will be at least grateful that trade is marginally better than in the traditionally dark days at the start of the year, while perhaps, for the moment at least, the pub closure contagion may have locally run its course; there seemingly being no new losses since our last newsletter, and actually a couple of re-openings. Meanwhile, real ale continues to belie the generally depressed state of the brewing industry; the micro producers in particular, working at full tilt with capacity barely sufficient to meet demand, and a number of pubs reintroducing it or taking it for the first time.

The ever increasing number of beer festivals is a good indication of real ale's health, and, as we go to print, final preparations are being made for the biggest of them all, CAMRA's national event, the Great British Beer Festival to be held at Earl's Court from 4- 8 August. Also at a national level, and following a critical report by the Commons Business and Enterprise Select Committee, the Campaign is to use its power as a 'Super Complainant' to call for an Office of Fair Trading investigation into the working of the beer tie (see National News).

On a sadder note, the world of real ale and real pubs has this summer been mourning the loss of Flossie Lane, late of the Sun at Leintwardine and included in this edition are Roger Marples' personal recollections of an outstanding landlady. Elsewhere Roger also describes a visit to Thornbridge Brewery, Paul Skelton investigates some pubs that never were, and Jim Green reports on the latest expedition of the Beery Boaters – plus of course all the usual news and comment.

Martin Atkins

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EVENTS DIARY

Tue 4 - Sat 8 Aug	–	Great British Beer Festival: Earls Court
Sat 8 Aug	–	Sandwich Summer Stroll: Red Cow 1200.
Sat 8 Aug	–	Funday & mini beer festival: Three Horseshoes , Mongeham*
Sat 15 Aug	–	Yellow Bus Tour: Royal Oak, Nonington - Midday (Details John Pitcher 214153 or see website)
Mon 17 Aug	–	Branch Meeting , Carpenters Arms, Coldred.
Sat 22 Aug	–	Deal & Betteshanger RFC 4th Annual Real Ale Festival: Drill Field, Canada Rd.*
Sat 22 Aug	–	Family Festival & Fête: Red Lion , Stodmarsh (see Local News)*
Thu 27 - Mon 31 Aug	–	Beer Festival: Chequer Inn , Ash*
Thu 27 - Mon 31 Aug	–	Summer Ale Festival: Ship , Sandgate *
Fri 28 - Mon 31 Aug	–	Anniversary Fun Weekend: Five Bells , Eastry *
Fri 28 - Mon 31 Aug	–	Beer Festival: Louis Armstrong , Dover *
Fri 28 - Mon 31 Aug	–	Beer Festival: Crown Inn , Finglesham*
Fri 28 - Mon 31 Aug	–	Beer Festival: Three Mariners , Hythe*
Sat 29 - Mon 31 Aug	–	Beer Festival: East Kent Railway , Shepherdswell*
Sun 30 Aug	–	Beer Festival & Funday: Three Horseshoes , Great Mongeham *
Sat 5 & Sun 6 Sept	–	Faversham Hop Festival*
Mon 7 Sept	–	'Middle of Nowhere' minibus trip: White Horse, Dover 1830
Wed 16 Sept	–	Dadlums evening , Carpenters Arms, Coldred
Sat 19 & Sun 20 Sept	–	Brogdale Farm Cider Festival*
Mon 21 Sept	–	Branch Meeting , The Archer, Whitfield.
Sat 10 Oct	–	Berry Octoberfest: Berry, Canada Rd.*
Fri 16 & Sat 17 Oct	–	Thanet CAMRA Cider Festival: Churchill Tavern,
Mon 19 th Oct	–	Branch Meeting , Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club, Dover
Fri 30 & Sat 31 Oct	–	Crabble Mill Cider Festival (TBC)*

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

Government Policy Flawed

A report from the Institute for Public Policy Research has borne out what many already suspected: Government policy towards pubs is radically flawed, it is indiscriminate and treats all pubs the same. Commissioned by CAMRA to research the importance of pubs at a time when 39 a week are closing, the report assesses the social value of community pubs, shows why pubs matter and why the present state of the trade is of concern.

Investigating the current spate of closures it identifies a number of trends:-

- alcohol consumption has fallen as a result of the current economic downturn
- changing communities, tastes and lifestyles has seen a shift from drinking beer to drinking wine, more drinking at home and fewer 'regulars'
- rising cost of beer and new legislation is an increasing burden for publicans – pub beer prices rising faster than supermarket beer prices

Commenting on the role of pubs the report says:-

- pubs provide a community meeting place and host events and activities, while many provide additional services such as post offices, general stores and internet access
- the average pub contributes £80,000 for its community every year – more than off-licences or supermarkets – and generates more income for the Treasury per pint than the off-trade
- little alcohol related disorder can be linked to community pubs
- pubs can help preserve community tradition and authenticity

The report identifies two particular problem areas. The Government's one size fits all approach places the same burden of regulation and taxes on the small community pub as its larger competitors, although it is much less likely to be a cause of problems and much less able to bear the additional costs. Secondly the widening gap in the price of beer between the pub and the off-trade is not only economically harmful to the former but is counter productive in tackling crime and disorder. In conclusion it recommends the following to support the well run community pub:-

- 50% business rate relief for pubs operating as local community hubs
- strengthened planning law in favour of pubs, with permission required for demolition, and restrictive covenants banned
- a minimum price to prevent irresponsible drink promotions, and no further duty increases while pub closures remain high
- creation of a more balanced tie relationship between pub owners and tenants, a code of conduct for rent calculations and an arbitration process
- diversification of business and consideration of the Community Interest Company format with access to cash and loans
- emphasis on training and professionalism

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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:

channel.draught@camra-dds.org.uk

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

DOVER

Archer, Whitfield: The pub rarely, if ever, mentioned in these pages due to the long term absence of real ale, has now been acquired by the Brakspear pub chain and real ale reintroduced. Its last use of handpumps probably dates to its days as a Charringtons establishment, and it certainly sold Charringtons IPA in the 1980s and possibly at times Bass and Worthington. At the time of writing real ale is being sold on gravity from the bar top using an autotilt. A visit in late May found Brakspear's Oxford Gold in good condition but, perhaps not surprisingly, a little on the warm side.

Carriers Arms, West St: Three handpumps now adorn this Tower Hamlets pub which has been "dry" in real ale terms for the best part of ten years. Ironically it was the venue for the launch of this newsletter in October 1999 in its original format as a folded A3 sheet. As reported in our spring edition it was reopened earlier in the year, following several months of closure, by John Townsend who many will remember from his several years at the Eagle. John re-installed real ale but has now handed over day to day running to his son Peter, also ex-Eagle, to allow him to concentrate on another Tower Hamlets Pub, the **King Edward VII**,

which he plans will also sell real ale. Choice at the Carriers is a continuously changing range – a visit just after Easter found Wadworth's St George & the Dragon and Courage Best on the handpumps with Everards Sly Fox waiting in the wings, while the start of June saw beers from Sharps, Jennings and Harveys. And perhaps somewhat surprisingly, by the time you read this real ale will be available as well at the **Funky Monkey**. Apparently this will be via the new 'choice of dispense' pump from Greene King.

Golden Lion, Priory Place: Excellent pint of London Pride on election day in early June, but not as good as the award winning Wickwar Station Porter that was available a few weeks before. Although deceptively strong at 6.1% ABV, it wasn't quite appropriate for the 'quick pint' while driving up the town. On the other side of the roundabout the **Renaissance** remains boarded up, though apparently sold, and in mid July with scaffolding erected – any news gratefully received. Meanwhile at the far end of nearby Queen's Gardens the conversion of the **Prince of Orange** into flats appears complete.

Crabble Mill, River: The mill's now regular beer festival over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend once again

proved highly successful. Estimated profit is £10,000 although the organisers had to contend with £160 in forged £20 notes. Reports on Friday night spoke of long queues and a crowded bar (sounds familiar to old White Cliffs hands) – certainly the Dover pubs seemed very quiet. In fact with 47 ales and 15 ciders volume is approaching that of the latter festival and interestingly attendance was more or less identical: 700 plus on Friday and another 400 or so on Saturday. Two thirds of the ale and cider was locally sourced with nine Kent brewers and five Kent cider makers represented, including their own Millers Cottage Cider. And despite duty increases price per pint was held at last year's level of £2.60. Spokesman Graham Butterworth said that the festival was the Mill's biggest fund raising event during the year and paid tribute to the large number of sponsors, supporters and volunteers on which it relies, including the Deal, Dover, Sandwich and District Branch of CAMRA. "We get tremendous help and support from the local branch of Camra although this is not a Camra-organised event," he said.

Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club: The club was the venue, earlier in the year, for the presentation of donations by the White Cliffs Festival of Winter Ales. Saturday evening May 9th saw £400

presented to the Merchant Navy Memorial Fund by Branch chairman, Martin Atkins, and a month later he presented a further £200 to the RNLI. Regular club real ales are Goacher's Fine Light and Whitstable Native, supplemented by Incubus and Skrimshander from Hopdaemon. In the winter Goachers Imperial Stout is normally available but, not being brewed in the summer, at the time of writing, the club is trying out a pin of Whitstable Oyster Stout.

Louis Armstrong, Maison Dieu Rd: Carnival day saw the pub's float win 2nd prize in its class. Featuring local ska band Hey Rudi and dancers, and decorated in black and white it was striking and original. The following week the pub hosted another successful social evening for Dover Castle's English Heritage staff, with the Branch's dadlums table once more called into use. The pub's real ale selection continues to concentrate on Kentish beers, with Skrimshander its house bitter. An end of summer festival is once again booked for the last weekend in August (see advert), when landlady Jackie Bowles expects to expand her ale range to brews from across the country.

Blakes, Castle St: With special offers Monday to Thursday and the benefits of the Blakes Loyalty Card the pub offers some of the best value drinking in the town. House real ale remains Harveys Sussex Best Bitter, with up to three guests available. Local cider producer Broomfield, having run out until the autumn, is currently being replaced by East Stour of Mersham (see Cider News), while Thatchers and Weston continue to represent the West Country. Tuesday evening is quiz night. Among recent guest ales particularly notable were the 4.6% Northumberland



Dave Green & Martin Atkins present a £400 cheque to the Merchant Navy Memorial fund

Brown (see Last Knockings) and 1648 Brewery's Three Threads, a dark mild style beer at 4.3% - both delicious.

White Horse, St James St: With no further exploits reported from pub cat Harvey we'll move straight on to beer. Standard real ale continues to be Timothy Taylor Landlord, the only regular outlet locally, while the remaining three pumps carry a section of old faithfuls, beers from Tring, Oakham, Acorn, etc. together with new 'unknowns'. Particularly notable among the latter over recent months have been Loddon Hulla-baloo, a well balanced 4.2% bitter, and Mathews Bob Wall, also a 4.2% bitter, but somewhat fruity and dark. Quizzes feature strongly among pub activities – the famous monthly Sunday afternoon quiz now a Dover institution, and last winter's Beer and Brains Thursday Quiz League seeing three teams representing the White Horse: White Horse A being particularly successful winning the League Premier Division and Champion of Champions outright, and jointly with Fox A, the Premier Knock-out competition.

DEAL

Berry, Canada Rd: Celebrations all round at this Walmer pub. A few months ago landlord Chris Barnes reached his 500th different real ale at the pub, and to commemorate the event Chris arranged with the Nelson Brewery of Chatham for the brewing of

a special beer called Rasp-Berry. Later, on Monday 6th July, locals, regulars and CAMRA members gathered to attend the presentation of the CAMRA Branch Pub of the Year 2009 award, presented by Martin Atkins, Branch Chairman. This is the second time that the pub has received the award, having also won last year. Chris has done much to raise the presence of real ale in the Walmer area – increasing the number of hand-pumps and range of real ale, as well as introducing real cider. He has also hosted real ale and real cider festivals. The question now is whether the Berry will make it three in a row in 2010.

Eagle Tavern, Queen St: Good news from this traditional local which has reintroduced real ale after being “dry” for several years. A visit in early May found Charles Wells Bombardier in good nick. However, the reintroduction of real ale at the **Mill Inn**, Mill Hill has proved short lived. By the end of May it was back to no real ale, there apparently being no demand from customers. The nearby **Yew Tree**, though, has reopened.

Dunkerley's Hotel, Beach St: The start of May found a very good pint of Greene King IPA on offer, and the bar/cafe “bustling with people for lunch, entertained by a live piano recital.” For those concerned about the absence of St. Austell Tribute, seemingly a Dunkerley's regular for some time, it was back on again the following week.

Prince Albert, Alfred Square: Michael was keeping his prices commendably low earlier in the spring (£2.50 for a pint of Whitstable Native), but said they would have to go up after his return from holiday. Other beers have included Wychwood Dragon's Bite, Cottage Tornado, Fuller's Chiswick and



Cotleigh Kookaburra. Particularly nice to find the very pleasing Cain's Dark Mild on tap in May.

The Strand, High St. A further planning application received in early July for change of use of part of ground floor to café and amusement centre.

Deal Hoy, Duke Street: Despite assurances to the contrary from its long time landlord Jeff, April saw new licensees at the Hoy, where former Deal restaurant and bar owners Brian & Vanessa Short took over as landlord and landlady. Brian is a former Royal marine musician who still plays regularly with local musicians, and the pub has started hosting music evenings on Wednesdays – already lined up as a regular is Ian Shawcross whose band plays the first Wednesday of every month. Food is available as Tapas style light snacks.

Brickmakers Arms, Mill Road: Closed for a period earlier in the year with rumours of possible conversion to flats the pub is now reopened. However, no knowledge of whether or not selling real ale.

SANDWICH & RURAL

Fleur de Lis, Sandwich: Cottage beers have been a regular accompaniment to the pub's standard Greene King IPA and King and Barnes Sussex over recent months. Box Tunnel, Blower Bentley and Merchant Navy were among the selection during the spring, and all receiving appreciative comments. Of the Merchant Navy one of our members said that while he normally found Cottage beers somewhat bland and flat in flavour, this had everything you would want from a beer.

Red Cow, Sandwich: New landlord and seemingly new range of beers. While beers from both Greene King and Full-

ers feature prominently Gadds have been making a distinct impression with No 5, Common Conspiracy, Dr Sunshine's Special Friendly English, Dragon's Blood and Festive Ale. Other beers seen over the spring period have included Hop Back Summer Lightening, St Austell Tribute and Sharp's Doom Bar. All at a very competitive £2.50 a pint.

Blue Pigeons, Worth: Visits over the spring found an interesting range of ales, including Lees Cask Bitter, Adnam's Bitter, Ringwood Best Bitter, Bombardier and Pedigree. The pub has also started selling Weston's Old Rosie Cider. Good value food by all accounts.

Turners Inn, Woodnesborough: By the time you read this landlord Dave expects to have completed the purchase of the pub from Punch. The name Charity will be returning and the business expanded to include grocery sales, the village stores having closed. Four real ales are normally available, with strong local representation, particularly Gadds and Whitstable – a visit in late June found two Gadds, Bath Spa and Gravesend Shrimpers. And the pub will be joining the select group selling real cider with a couple from the West Country. Bath Spa must have been on one of Punch's recent lists because it was also to be found at the **Hare and Hounds**, Northbourne around the same time, alongside Greene King IPA and an excellent Harveys Sussex.

Jackdaw Inn, Denton: As predicted in previous editions of *Channel Draught* the pub reopened in the spring under the management of Eric Gaskell and Helen Brown who have run the Duke of Cumberland at Barham for the last couple of years. The pub had been closed since September, when the previous

licensees suddenly left, and has subsequently been substantially refurbished and redecorated. Capitalising on its famous appearance in the film *The Battle of Britain* decoration has followed an RAF theme with each room dedicated to a particular aircraft. Although still a heavy emphasis on food the front bar now feels more accommodating for drinkers. However the former five hand-pumps have been reduced to four and a visit at the start of June found an ale selection limited to larger producers – Broadside, Directors, Spitfire and Harveys Sussex.

Yew Tree, Barfrestone: Venue for the Branch's June meeting we were excellently accommodated in one of the pub's upstairs rooms. Beers available included locals Incubus and Seaside, and from the increasingly impressive Loddon Brewery, Shrimpcatcher, which was excellent.

Hope, Lydden: Reopened again in the spring under new licensees Steve and Cassie, who have moved from Chesham, Buckinghamshire after being made redundant by Marston's. The couple have brought back the skittles, darts and pool teams and are thinking of holding Saturday morning boot fairs. Real ales are Bombardier plus guest.

Coastguard, St. Margaret's Bay: Following its designation as one of the country's top 250 restaurants, by style and fashion magazine Harper's Bazaar, the pub, or at least its landlady, has collected a further accolade. Sam Wydymus was approached by the food group, Produced in Kent, to provide the sole recipe on which the latest publication in the Food Trails series, the Soul to Sole Fish Trail guide, is based. Despite serious food interest the Coastguard continues to offer a fascinating range of small brewery ales, both from

Kent and other parts of the country, as well as Weston's cider and continental bottled beers. However, the recession has not been without its impact. "People are being more cautious about what they do with their money," said Sam's husband, Nigel.

Good to see more pubs taking local brews. In early June the **Black Robin** at Kingston was selling two Gadds ales with a third just finished, while the **Kings Arms** at Elham had replaced the long standing Greene King IPA with Hopdaemon Golden Braid.

CANTERBURY

In the city centre, at the time of writing, the **Three Tuns** at the corner of Watling St. and Castle St. is currently steel shuttered and surrounded by scaffolding, and appears to be undergoing major renovation. Whether future plans include continued use as a pub or some other purpose no one seems to know, but Canterbury City Council had received no planning applications by the middle of June. From the nearby **Blind Dog** (formerly **Cardinal's Cap**) we hear conflicting stories – that it has reverted to a restaurant only, or that there is pub use as well with real ale re-installed. The **Old Brewery**, Stour St. was concentrating on Kentish brews in the middle of June, with Hopdaemon Incubus and Winkle Picker and Kentish Reserve from Whitstable. Whitstable also at the **New Inn** with Native on alongside St Austell Tribute. At the **Old Coach and Horses**, Harbledown, there appeared to be a Manchester theme with Hydes Sacre Blue and Rob-inson's Nosey Parker, on hand pump.

Rose, Wickhambreaux: Following last year's success, the pub this year put on another Spring Bank Holiday Beer Festival, with by all accounts equally good

results. This is a cosy little pub which manages to combine food trade with the conviviality of a local. It's strange now to think that there used to be a second pub in the village just down from the Rose. Called the **Hooden Horse** it was quite small and closed in the 1970s. In Bramling a visit in mid June found four ales available at the **Haywain**: Master Brew, London Pride, Bombardier and a particularly fine offering from Brain's – Steaming Wagon, a 4.4% bitter. Also very pleasing to see a group of "old boys" dispensing with the delights of modern technology and settling down for a few hours' crib.

Red Lion, Stodmarsh: A notable absence during the early summer, for those entering the pub by the back door, was the tiger's head which normally sat alongside the mangle and other accoutrements in the conservatory. However landlord Robert Whigham says not to worry: his response to the obvious question being not, as Lonnie Donegan had it, "four foot from its tail," but that it is away having a slight tear mended, and hopefully will be back shortly. A family festival and fête is arranged for August 22nd., with twelve real ales and various events including Punch and Judy, face painting, a coconut shy, jazz band and pony and trap trips around the village, countryside and lakes. Robert is also anticipating a visit by eight steam vehicles and two tanks. And a week later, on the bank holiday weekend, another helicopter pub crawl is planning for Saturday 29th August, finishing at Robert's daughter's pub, the Old Coach and Horses, Harbledown. The pub is also extending its real ale range to include local brewer Whitstable – beers so far have included Native, East India Pale Ale and Oyster Stout.

FOLKESTONE & HYTHE

Three Mariners, Hythe: Evidence, if any is needed that pub and brewery chains have a less than complete grasp of the true nature and potential of the public house. Put up for sale by Shepherd Neame as a back street local with few prospects, it was bought and refurbished last year by one of their own tenants, the then current landlord of the Clarendon, Sandgate. Since then the Three Mariners has gone from strength to strength. A visit in early June found six real ales, including Young's Bitter and local brews from Westerham and Rother Valley. Over the May bank holiday weekend it hosted a festival of Kentish ales. Perhaps the pub's advert carries the secret of its success – "no food, no juke box, no fruit machines, no pool table....just good beer and good company." Nearby, we hear that the **Gate**, where there were rumours of conversion to flats, has reopened as a pub.

East Cliff Tavern, East Cliff: Also thriving as a traditional pub this one bar operation is always worth a look. It's a pub as pubs used to be, no frills or fancy decoration, just a local for the locals. One sultry Sunday afternoon earlier in the summer there was Incubus and Gadds No 5 on the hand-pumps, a well crowded bar inside plus more sitting, drinking and smoking outside at the front – excellent.

Mariners, The Stade: Closed for several months during the winter it reopened in early March and was selling London Pride, Adnam's Bitter and Hopback Summer Lightning – a wider selection than formerly. A subsequent visit in mid July found Bombardier, Directors and Adnams. The **Three Mackereels** remains closed although the 'for sale' sign has disappeared.

Royal Norfolk Hotel, Sandgate: Real ale was reintroduced during the winter, firstly in the shape of Wadworth 6X on stillage, and subsequently on a re-installed handpump which was selling Everards Beacon earlier in the year.

More Everards also at the **Raglan**, currently the only open pub in Dover Rd., where the now not so common, Tiger, has been seen. Opposite, the **Martello** remains closed and up for sale, while further up the hill the boarded up **Railway Bell** is looking ever more destined for demolition. In Canterbury Rd. the **Two Bells** is still also boarded up, as is the **Brewery Tap** in Tontine St., and, we understand, the **Earl Grey** in the High St. However, something at last appears to be happening at the **Pullman** in Church St. where the for sale signs have gone and internal decoration is going on. Bars and handpumps are still intact so perhaps we might hope for resurrection as a pub in due course.

Chambers, Cheriton Place: Chris has been changing his selection of late. In mid July ciders were Biddenden Bushels and East Stour Medium, and ales Cottage Broadgauge, Skrimshander, Whitstable Kentish Reserve and former 'guest' (it always seemed to be on), Dogbolter. Guest ale was Sharps Honey Spice. Around the same time Bombardier was the choice at the **Frenchman**, a couple of streets away, where its four handpumps are still limited to just one real ale – normally a national brew.

ELSEWHERE

Following the demise of the Rare Breeds Festival, Ashford, Folkestone and Romney Marsh branch's revised site at Tenterden Station proved, by all accounts, a great success, and it is hoped to continue the event in future .

Cinque Ports Arms, New Romney: As reported in our spring edition the former Greene King house is now being operated effectively as a free house. Under its new licensee, Richard Boniface, the pub is now a thriving real ale outlet, selling up to four changing ales. Visits in spring found beers from Rother Valley, Westerham, Timothy Taylor, Greene King and Batemans, and there are beer festivals planned for the summer.

Blue Anchor, Ruckinge: Also in our last edition we referred to the current closure of the Blue Anchor and fears for its future. However, we understand that the pub is reopened under the previous landlord, and that Adnams and Youngs has been seen on the handpumps.

Pubs of the Year. Our adjoining branches Thanet and Ashford, Folkestone and Romney Marsh, have recently announced their pubs of the year – respectively the **Montefiore Arms**, Ramsgate and the **Red Lion**, Snaragate. The Montefiore Arms beat off challenges from second placed Churchill Tavern, also Ramsgate, and Margate's Northern Belle. Of the winner Thanet Branch's newsletter, *Ale of Thanet* said: "The pub, fondly known as Monty, is a genuine free house and one of a dying breed of pubs that still do things the customary way. The establishment opens for two hours at lunch time, is closed in the afternoon and then reopens for the evening session, has no noisy fruit machines or loud music and usually has three real ales on tap – Ramsgate Brewery's Gadd's No 7, and two guests, plus a real cider. At the **Red Lion**, widely known as Doris's, April 2009 also saw landlady Doris Jempson achieve her 80th birthday, to become the branch's oldest and longest serving landlady.



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SELECTION OF REAL ALES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY



TONY'S TAPPINGS

The perambulations and musings
of our Pubs Officer, Tony Wells

"Everybody has to believe in something.....I believe I'll have another drink." W.C. Fields

Real Ale returns to the Alma

New tenants at the Alma in Deal are overseeing the welcome return of serious interest in real ale at the pub. Michael and Lorraine Newill have been at the Alma since November 2008, and Lorraine has two stated aims: a) serving real ale in top condition and b) working her way through Enterprise's extensive real ale list. She's already beginning to see the benefit of this approach as some of the pub's older customers return.

Prior to the Alma, Lorraine worked behind the bar at the Magnet, where she got to like looking after the beer from delivery from the brewery to delivery to the customer. Michael continues to work as an HGV driver, although their intention is to develop and increase the trade at the pub so he can work at the pub full time. They had been thinking about a pub for a while and had heard that the Alma was on the market and decided to take over the leasehold.



Inside, the pub has seen a spruce up and certainly looks neat and tidy. They serve food, and you are advised to book for Sunday lunch. A function hall at the back is available for rent, from £25 for an afternoon or evening event, such as a children's party, to £100 for the whole day.

During my visit there was Shepherd Neame Master Brew and a good pint of Butcombe Bitter, although Lorraine did comment that she felt it was not at its best. As ever, I wish Michael and Lorraine the best for the future and will certainly be popping in more often.

A Spring Walk around the Deal Area

Just three people turned up for the next in the series of GBG walks, taking in The Berry, Walmer; Three Horseshoes, Great Mongeham and Prince Albert, Deal.

At the Berry, we noticed that Chris had already updated the chalk board on the outside of the pub to announce his recent award of Branch Pub of the Year 2009 – a well deserved accolade for one of our flagship pubs. Inside, we were treated to

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plus Guest

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another fantastic beer from Dark Star, one of my favourite breweries: **Dark Star Old Chestnut**. To paraphrase the advert off the television: "it tastes just like it says on the beer clip" – in this case "Dark & Mellow". Also on offer was a very good pint of **Butcombe Gold** along with the usual range of three other beers and three ciders.

To get to our next pub, the Three Horseshoes, Great Mongeham, we took the 82 bus from Walmer seafront out to Mongeham and a short walk down to the pub. We passed by the Leather Bottle, which looked very neat and tidy on the outside following its refurbishment. Unfortunately we didn't have enough time to pop our head around the door – that's for another day. At the Three Horseshoes itself we found **Charles Wells Bombardier**, and very good pints of **St Austell's Tribute** and **Cameron's Nimmo's XXXX**.



The Light Bites menu at the pub included simple dishes such as beans on toast and cauliflower cheese, however we treated ourselves to cheesy chips and onion rings to sustain us to the next pub.

To get to the Prince Albert we took a walk across the levels towards the north end of Deal. Here there was **Whitstable Native**, **Cottage Tornado** and a good pint of **Wychwood Dragon's Bite**. Altogether a pleasant afternoon.

Real Ale comes to Whitfield

With the recent closure of the Royal Oak, in Whitfield, this area of Dover might have appeared destined to become a real ale desert. However that is all in the process of changing. Congratulations to Andrew Brind on a successful trial of real ale at The Archer in Whitfield. Served from an autotilt on the bar, he has had Brakspear's Bitter, Brakspear's Oxford Gold and Wychwood Hobgoblin. However, at the time of writing, plans were under way to install two handpulls during July, and a mini-beer festival was being considered sometime during the summer. Keep a look out for what's going on at the pub, and if you should be passing why not pop in for a pint or two. I can also recommend the pub food. And to further add to the locals' choice, earlier in the year of course, Marston's announced the construction of a completely new pub on a site within the former Old Park Barracks.

Introducing real ale into a pub

The introduction of real ale at The Archer prompted me to think about how a non-real ale pub could go about introducing real ale. Certainly, the approach that was used at the Archer was particularly very effective. Putting a cask on the bar has a number of benefits:-

- Handpulls don't have to installed

- It avoids having to traipse up and down from the cellar
- The cask is visible to customers as they enter the pub, so it advertises itself.

A few further thoughts on this approach:

- It is a bit more difficult to keep the beer cool
- A chalk board should be put outside, so that passers by know that **real** ale is available
- The local press and CAMRA can help promotion
- If the pub staff are new to real ale, advice and assistance on tapping and spiling, etc. might be useful

Hopefully the trial is a success and real ale is retained on a permanent basis. It is of course important to concentrate on quality NOT quantity. Personally, I like to see one or two real ales being served in good condition rather than a selection of five ales in average condition. One option would be to serve one or two real ales during the week and then put on an extra ale over the weekend when the pub is busier. Then there's real cider.....but that's another story.

Campaigning Matters - Real Ale at a Football Club!!

In June, Deal Town Football Club held a Family Funday to raise money for the club and the new clubhouse, and our branch thought that this would be an excellent opportunity to promote real ale amongst a group of people who are predominantly non-real ale drinkers. As a result we sponsored a barrel of real ale for the event. Working with Chris Barnes, the landlord of The Berry, we made a barrel of Gadd's Seaside available; while the football club themselves put on a second barrel: Hop-back Summer Lightening.

On the day, the home dugout was converted into a beer tent, which was kept busy throughout the event. It all went off very well, and was certainly helped by some excellent weather. Bob Chivington, Deal Town FC Secretary, thanked us for helping make the day a "fantastic success" and they are planning on holding it again next year, with a larger beer tent. Whether we converted anyone to real ale I don't know. However, the Football Club is looking to introduce real ale into the new clubhouse when it opens.



Tony Wells



RAMBLINGS & RUMBLINGS

Wed 1 Apr – Two Sawyers: Sharps Doombar, Adnams bitter – twenty five or so ramblers descended for lunch, this time presumably with few days warning, on occasion of one member's 80th. Service polite and efficient. **Fox:** Thwaites orig, Youngs Special, Deuchars IPA, Abbot. **Fri 3 Apr – Crown Finglesham:** Brentwood Heavenly Body, Whitstable Pearl of Kent – Good bustling atmosphere on 'Happy 2 Hours' night. **Mon 6 Apr – Five Bells, Eastry:** Hound Dog bitter?, Greene King IPA – good to see several locals in at 'teatime', hopefully staying open all day is paying off. **Tues 7 Apr – Blue Pigeons:** JW Lees Cask bitter, Adnams bitter – very quiet at lunchtime apart from five walkers. **Easter – Derbyshire:** CAMRA Real ale Walks. **Wed 15 Apr – Turners Inn:** Greene King IPA – bad timing, Bombardier just finished, Gadsds coming soon. Fifteen ramblers livened the place up, mainly drinks only. Menu looked quite interesting but will it win back the crowds once attracted when it was the Charity? **Sat 18 Apr (GBG Walk) – King's Head Kingsdown:** Cottage Breast bitter, Tornado, Greene King IPA – pub quiet sat lunchtime, good value food. **Coastguard:** Broughton 80/-, Whitstable EIPA, Westerham bulldog – pub very busy at 3pm, quietened down by 4. **Blakes:** 1648 Winter Warrant, Black sheep, Harveys Best, Goachers Mild – last call on GBG cliff walk as White Horse temporarily shut.

Tues 21 Apr – Thomas Ingoldsby: Greene King Gosnold's Glory + others – beer too strong, too dark, couldn't see pump clip, people standing in front. **Half Moon Seven Stars:** Master Brew, London Pride, Greene King IPA – fourteen lively walkers hit the pub at 7.45, but only for 15 mins, since had to return to Wingham before dark! **Wed/Thurs 22/23 Apr – Blue Pigeons:** Adnams bitter, Ringwood Best, Bombardier, Westons Old Rosie – good number of walkers present on both days, good value food. **Chequer Inn, Ash:** Spitfire, London Pride, Greene King IPA – wandered into bar at 3.30 to find myself in the middle of old folks bingo session! Mine host was the 'caller'. Very pleasant sitting in garden. Landlord told me locals liked above beers so would stick with them, though hoped to have varying 'guests'. **Fri 24 Apr – Blakes:** Northumberland Gold, Harveys Best – Very busy, many punters White Horse temp exiles. **Sat 25 Apr – 5 Bells, Eastry Fest:** Marston Moor Cromwell bitter, Holdens black country bitter, Concertina One Eyed Jack, 'Mr Tod' – festival quiet, late Sat afternoon, great success by all accounts. **Tues 28 Apr – Dog & Duck, Plucks Gutter:** Wadsworth Henry, Bombardier, London Pride – quite busy early lunchtime, food good but pricey. **Eight Bells:** Incubus uninspiring. Disappointing visit – was intending to try some festival beers, but hardly anything under 5%, too heady for late afternoon.

Fri 1 May – Blakes: Black Sheep Bitter, Northumberland Newcastle Pride, Westerham 1965, Harvey's Sussex. **Wed 13 May – Fox:** Warwickshire Ffiagra, Caledonian Deuchar's IPA, Cottage Arches or Archers Cottage? **Sat 16 May – Fleur de**

Lis: K&B Sussex Bitter, Cottage Merchant Navy. **Mon 25 May – Admiral Owen:** Fuller's London Pride, Greene King IPA – good to see open again, weekend guest, Jennings Tom Fool, had sold out quickly. Midday opening now only Fri, Sat, Sun. **Thurs 28 May – Chance Inn:** Bass – good evening for Ramblers' skittles match. Ample supplies of chip butties provided by landlord Roger Morris. **Fri 29 May – Golden Lion:** Fuller's London Pride. Large group had drunk up other beers yesterday, according to a local. **Carpenter's Arms, Coldred:** Gadds No 5 & Seaside – rare time-warp pub (probably East Cliff Tavern only similar around), needs support. Opens 6pm, so handy for 5.48 bus (NSU) from Pengester. No buses back but Shepherdswell Station not too far away. **Bell Inn, Shepherdswell:** Adnam's Bitter, Greene King IPA, Old Speckled Hen – back to average village pub again, some locals, no sign of foodies, strange on a Friday night. **Sat 30 May – Plough & Harrow, Tilmanstone:** SN Early Bird & Spitfire – quiet afternoon, nice garden, but Spitfire @ £3.20!!

Mon 1 Jun – Fleur de Lis: Cottage QE2, K&B Sussex, GKIPA. **Market Inn** – viewed from Fleur across street: 'No credit crunch here' MB @ £2 from 11 to 5. **Tues 2 June – Griffins Head:** MB, Whit Bay – 'Look at this place, dripping with money', one rambler's comment on observing clientèle and their vehicles. **Red Cow:** SA Tribute, Gadds Seaside, Loddon Ferrymans, Alton FFF Stairway to Heaven, London Pride – now all-day opening. Sunny afternoon relaxing in garden. Several other punters, so hopefully staying open pays. **Wed 3 June – Fitzwalter:** MB – quite busy with foodies at lunchtime. **Thurs 4 June – Port Arms:** No real ale, and not much of anything else, either! Loud music did nothing for atmosphere. **Sat 6 June – Gate, Marshside:** Whit Bay, Kent Best, SF & MB. Popular pub with rambblers but my first visit. Quite busy and good atmosphere, good value food. **Sun 7 June – Cat & Custard Pot:** Whit. Bay, MB. **East Cliff Tavern:** Incubus, Gadds 5. **Mon 8 Apr – Blakes:** shut for work to be done. **Eight Bells:** Mordue Badgy Cadgy, Nelson's Blood. On Mondays, only just beats Blakes for price. **Thurs 11 June – Duke of Cumberland, Whitstable:** Whitstable Bay @ £3.25 my all time record!!! MB, SF. **Smack:** Canterbury Jack. **Naval Reserve:** MB

Sat 13 June - Folkestone Crawl: East Cliff Tavern: Skrimshander, Cottage Thames Tunnel. **Lifeboat:** Doobar plus others. **Princess Royal:** MB, Bishops Finger. *One's notes illegible from this point.* **Mon 15 June – Yew Tree:** Incubus, Gadds Seaside, Loddon Shrimpcatcher. **Thurs 18 June – County, Ashford:** Brewsters Daffy's Elixir. **Fri 19 June – Royal Oak, Capel:** Marstons Ashes Ale, Greene King Fresh Golden Ale (both at £2-10). Meals also look good value. **Sun 21 June - Hare & Hounds, Northbourne:** Bath Spa, Harveys Best – pub very busy for fathers' day, fortunately plenty of room outside. **Tues 23 June – Bowling Green:** Flowers IPA, Bass, Abbot. In the middle of urban sprawl not the easiest pub to fit into rambblers' schedules, but worth the effort – pleasant pub with large garden. **Wed 24 June – Shepherd & Crook, Burmarsh:** Adnams bitter, Thwaites Nutty Black, Biddenden. Small pub coped 'personfully' with unannounced arrival of five rambblers, most wishing to lunch! **Sun 28 June – Hop Pocket, Bossingham:** Cottage Champflower, Broadgauge, MB – my first visit, good impression.

Stroller



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GATEWAY TO KENT

A new guide to West Kent Pubs

From three of our west Kent branches comes an excellent guide to 500 pubs from mid Kent to the Surrey border and from the edges of Dartford, Gravesend and the Medway towns to the Sussex border.



The publication, entitled the *Gateway to Kent Pub Guide* is entirely the work of volunteer pub surveyors from the Maidstone, West Kent and Gravesend and Darent Valley branches of CAMRA, who pooled their resources to produce the first guide to the area since 1999. Running to 176 pages, and with full colour standard throughout, it lists all licensed premises in the area, together with details of real ales and ciders sold, opening hours, food and facilities and descriptions of each pub, as well as including photographs of 100 or so of the best. Additionally, there are articles on real ale styles, bygone and current Kent breweries, cider and hop picking (including a list of current cider producers), beer festivals and over twenty pages on getting around the area. This latter section includes walking and cycling guides, touring by car and a summary of the local public transport service. Maps of the principal towns are inset among the pub descriptions, and at the end of the guide is an index of all the pubs and a fold-away map of the area covered.

In his introduction to the guide, editor Simon Scott, says: "...as a relative newcomer to Kent I have been delighted by the quality and range of different pubs the county has to offer; unspoilt rural inns, chatty locals, quiet venues for reading the paper or a romantic date, family-orientated pubs and of course gardens for which Kent is justifiably known." And he goes on to quote Charles Dickens in *Pickwick Papers*: "Kent, sir – everybody knows Kent – apples, cherries, hops and women." However, he says, with five pubs a day closing we need to use them to retain those remaining. They offer a real and unique alternative to drinking at home, and are social centres and part of our cultural heritage.

Although produced by CAMRA the guide is not aimed solely at the real ale enthusiast. To point the reader towards the pubs they consider the area's 'flagships' a variety of symbols are used to indicate those particularly noted for their beer quality, attractiveness or interest, while the pub information is the result of survey work carried out between Autumn 2008 and Spring 2009.

Priced at £4.99 the *Gateway to Kent Pub Guide* can be purchased in local pubs, bookshops, and other outlets. It is also available by post at £6.49 inc. P&P from Gateway Guide, 251A Upper Grosvenor Rd., Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2EJ. Cheques payable to 'Gateway Guide'.

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The National News

By Martin Atkins

CAMRA SEEKS ACTION ON BEER TIE

Following the criticism of the working of the beer tie by the Commons Business and Enterprise Select Committee, CAMRA is using its power as a Super-Complainant to call for an Office of Fair Trading investigation into the subject. However CAMRA is concerned to avoid a lengthy competition enquiry, and hopes that agreement can be reached within the industry itself. It is looking for the establishment of an open and transparent mediation process, involving all stakeholders, as proposed by the association of Licensed Multiple Retailers, from which a fairer tie can be developed. CAMRA chief executive, Mike Benner said: "CAMRA's super-complaint to the OFT will send a clear message to the industry that they must voluntarily embrace change or face intervention from government and the competition authorities." He added, if mediation doesn't work then the industry could face a complicated probe – which is our least preferred option and could take years to resolve. The Campaign is calling for a real ale guest beer right, action to strengthen the hand of lessees in rent negotiations, a greater share of large pubcos discounts to be passed on to lessees, and a ban on restrictive covenants. (See 'Beer Tie under Pressure' on page 36)

MP CALLS FOR CHANGE TO PLANNING LAWS

Highlighting the concern expressed by the 2009 spring edition of *Channel*

Draught, LibDem MP Greg Mulholland is calling for planning law to be changed to protect pubs. He believes that no pub should close without proper consultation and a genuine viability test. He was particularly critical of the use of the word viability by pubcos and developers: "The V word is used and abused and excuses made such as the smoking ban and the economic downturn making pubs unviable." He went on to say that some councils were not recognising the importance of pubs to their communities. "It is clear that pubs that should not close are being allowed to close," he said. He was speaking at a meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Save the Pub Group, which he chairs, and his comments came at the same time as figures from CGA show an increase in pub closures per week from 46 to 50. He believes that the future of the British pub should be enshrined in law.

RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

Meanwhile, restrictive covenants are also receiving Greg Mulholland's attention. Following the recent upsurge in their use (reported in our spring edition), he roundly criticised the practice, saying it must stop and suggested that where a pub is being sold or closed, the tenant should have the first right to buy. His views were supported by Conservative MP Jonathan Djanogly, shadow spokesman on business, who described the practice as anti-competitive. However the Government may be about to take action. In a

parliamentary debate, consumer minister Gareth Thomas said he was talking to stakeholders before a consultation on the future of the Competition Act 1998 which deals with restrictive covenants. CAMRA is totally opposed to the practice, which involves including clauses in the sale of a pub that prevent it from being used as a pub in future. Pubco Enterprise has been a main exponent of their use in recent months, as has been reported by many CAMRA branches.

“BINGE DRINKING” CRACKDOWN

The Government is proposing a series of measures which it hopes will deal a major blow to the “binge drinking culture,” but is fighting shy of adopting the suggestion of its chief medical officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, that the sale of alcohol should be subject to a minimum price. Speaking at a crime conference in May the Prime Minister said that a wide range of powers already existed to deal with problem drinkers, however, to assist the police and other agencies the Government was going to bring in “a new mandatory code on the sale of alcohol – not as some have asked, bringing in a minimum price, which would punish the majority of responsible drinkers – but to tackle binge drinking, targeting the kind of promotions like ‘Drink all you can for a fiver’ which can turn some town centres into no-go areas.” It is also planning to restrict special offers by supermarkets and shops, although consultation would be needed to establish what constitutes a bulk buy.

Meanwhile CAMRA is backing the call for a minimum price. In evidence to the Health Select Committee, the campaign said that a minimum price of 40p per unit of alcohol would increase

the cost of mainstream beer brands in the off trade, to a third of the price charged in the pubs. It would result in a shift in consumption back to pubs, said Mike Benner CAMRA chief executive. “Such a change would influence consumer behaviour, leading to a greater percentage of alcohol sales being made through well-run licensed premises.”

TOUGH TIMES FOR PUNCH AND ENTERPRISE

In a move to reduce its debt, which stood at £4.5bn last August, Punch Taverns has been selling off pubs, with over fifty going to a variety of local brewers. Six pubs have gone to Fullers and thirteen to Shepherd Neame for respectively £22m and £15m. The Fullers purchase, at £3m - £4m per pub, comprises landmark pubs in central London, while Sheps acquisition, although a far lower valuation, still produces an average price of over £1m – significantly more than the ordinary boozier would expect to fetch, and further evidence that the brewery is moving away from its traditional market. The additional 13 brings their estate to 378. Other pubs have gone to Robinsons, Lees and Charles Wells. More recently Greene King bought eleven Punch pubs for £30m. The properties are in central London, south east England and Scotland. Meanwhile, earlier in the year, Enterprise announced a suspension of its interim dividend following interim pre-tax profits down £29m at £303m, and a fall in turnover for the six months to 31st March of £34m to £404m.

DRINKERS SPEND MORE TIME IN HOSPITAL

More doom and gloom from the health profession. Researchers from the

universities of Bristol and Glasgow, after studying a group of 6,000 Scottish men for 35 years found that those who drank more alcohol spent more time in hospital. Their findings however, while widely reported in the media, were, as so often, only sparsely accompanied by statistics, and thereby left the average drinker unable to assess the level of risk. One tends to think that if it is anything other than marginal, the actual figures would have been highlighted. Among the report's various conclusions is that as little as eight units a week makes a stay in hospital more likely (a statistic which appears to conflict with the health benefits supposedly derived from a glass of red wine a day), and that those drinking over 35 units a week spent 58% more time in hospital than teetotallers. However, as this extensive group includes at the one end those drinking just two to three pints a night, and at the other alcoholics on a couple of bottles of spirits a day, it is hardly illuminating or useful.

Presumably all other factors were taken into account, and the survey responsibly and fairly carried out, but, if the extremely modest consumption of just one unit of alcohol a day (half pint of bitter), is deleterious to our health then what price the rest of the nation's diet, stuffed full as it is of fats, sugars, salts, additives, E numbers and all manner of other substances which have over the years raised concern? Perhaps we should all live off wholemeal bread and lettuce leaves. The report also raises the old chestnut of cost to the NHS, when, as anyone who has studied the figures knows, unless a drinker has spent his or her life consuming homemade beer, wine and moonshine, any health costs are well covered by what they have

contributed in duty.

CAMRA MAGAZINE WINS INDUSTRY AWARD

Following from being 'Highly Commended' in the Best Magazine Charity/Membership category at the MemCom Awards 2009, BEER magazine was declared 'Winner' in the 'New Publication' class at the 2009 British Association of Communicators in Business Awards in May. Tom Stainer, BEER Magazine editor, said: "One of the most rewarding aspects of this award was the feedback we got from the judges. They said as non-real ale drinkers that they still found BEER to be interesting and engaging, and encouraged them to find out more about the subject. It's exactly what we designed BEER to achieve and it's great to be told that the magazine is doing what it should, not only promoting real ale to non real-ale drinkers and encouraging people to sign up to CAMRA, but providing a high quality, entertaining, informative and now award-winning magazine to our current members." BEER was re-launched last August as a stand-alone magazine after being a supplement in CAMRA's monthly paper, What's Brewing, and has attracted contributions and interviews from renowned figures such as Sebastian Faulks, Marco Pierre White, James May and Rick Stein. BEER is available in selected retailers, or for free as part of a CAMRA membership subscription.





CIDER NEWS

New cider maker making a big hit locally is the **East Stour Cider Company** based at Hanover Mill, Mersham. Established last Autumn, it produces traditionally made cider from Kentish apples. "Using only a select group of private orchards, that produce spray-free apples, we believe our product to be a unique and far superior taste and quality than other mass produced ciders available on the market today," says the company. Three ciders are on offer – dry, medium or sweet – in 22.5 litre barrels from £40 per barrel. As we reported in our spring edition two barrels of East Stour Cider were a great success at this year's Chambers Easter festival, and a barrel of medium was one of Crabble Mill's selection for their Spring Bank Holiday festival.

In Dover, Blakes have found East Stour Cider an excellent substitute for **Broomfield Orchard**, which has run out of stock until this year's apple crop is fermented in the Autumn (see Local News). However, in the meantime it was awarded second place in the regional cider judging, with the prospect of being represented at the National Cider of the Year competition.

Other new Kent cider producers include Hardcore Cider from Canterbury and Kent Cider Co, Faversham. **Hardcore Cider** – info@juice.co.uk – use only a rough filter, with consequential sediment, and produce at strengths of 5.5% or 8% ABV available by the litre, half litre or in polypins (approx £50). **Kent Cider Co**, Faversham – info@kentcider.co.uk – have a wide range of products, with all cider hand pressed, and no sprays used in the orchard. **Neal's Place**, however, is to cease production on retirement of the cider maker.

The growing strength of Kent cider has seen moves started towards the formation of a Kent Cider Producers Consortium for marketing and distribution purposes. It might have proved useful for this year's Members' Weekend at Eastbourne, where a distinct lack of Kent Cider and Perry was noted in the members' bar. Following a number of enquiries APPLE will consider whether/how cider can be included in the Locale scheme (Locapple perhaps?), but there seems no reason why branches should not initiate their own schemes.

Kent Cider Pub of the Year is the **Swan**, at Wittersham, Isle of Oxney.

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Kent Small Brewery News

By Roger Marples

P & DJ Goacher. Tovil Maidstone 01622 682112

The excellent Goacher's Crown Imperial Stout is no longer being brewed for the summer months. It is being replaced again by Silver Star (4.2%). The Three Mariners in Hythe has been taking Fine Light of late, whilst at the time of writing the Louis Armstrong, Dover has just had Dark & Silver Star delivered.

Hopdaemon Brewery Co. Ltd. Newnham 01795 892078

hopdaemon@supanet.com

The Carpenters Arms at Coldred is a new outlet. Murray's General Store at the Goods Shed in Canterbury is now supplying Incubus on draught in four pint containers for the take home trade. Tonie also supplied beer to the CAMRA beer festival at the Kent & East Sussex Railway at Tenterden. This venue is in place of The Rare Breeds Centre. The Kent Festival will also, of course, be supplied.

Nelson Brewing Co. Chatham 01634 832828

sales@nelsonbrewingcompany.co.uk

Nelson will be holding their first Maritime Beer and Jazz Festival at the Historic Dockyard from 18.00 Thursday 23rd July, and from 12.00 Friday 24th – Sunday 26th July. There will be a discount for CAMRA members; see the dedicated website. A special 4.8% bottle conditioned beer was produced for Armed Forces Day on 27th June. The brewery will be represented at the hop festival in Faversham on Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th September, and also has a stall at The Kent Show. A celebratory 500th beer is being supplied to the Berry in Walmer. This will be Chris' 500th different beer that he will have sold and it will be a 4.8% raspberry fruit beer.

Ramsgate Brewery Ltd. – Broadstairs 01843 580037

info@ramsgatebrewery.co.uk

Eddie, forever the innovator, has brewed a barley wine named "Reserved". This is available in the bottle from the brewery, and is aged in wooden casks from Chapel Down Vineyards of Tenterden, which formerly held red wine made from the Rondo grape variety. Eddie describes it as, "a bit special". There was a Gadd's beer festival at Ramsgate Harbour during the first weekend in July, as part of The Ramsgate Rocks event, which included live bands, street entertainers, children's fairground, food stalls and a continental market. A range of Ramsgate Brewery beers was available, plus guests from elsewhere, such as Dark Star and Pot Belly Brewery. Among Eddie's brews were two not normally available in cask, Pandemonium Angelica and Ooks.

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

sales@westerhambrewery.co.uk

Westerham have now launched their first National Trust branded beer, which is a 5% bottle conditioned beer, and is available in National Trust shops throughout the land. The beer is made from malt and hops that are grown on a National Trust farm. Scotney Castle provide local Kentish Target and Progress hops. The beer is described as a proper bitter India Pale Ale, which beer writer Roger Protz says, "puts to shame some of the lacklustre beers of modest strength that masquerade as IPA," (*I wonder of which beers he can be thinking*). He continues: "This sumptuous beer has plum jam and blackcurrant aromas and palate from the hops balanced by sappy malt and a long, lingering bitter, fruity and quenching finish." So call in to the National Trust café on the cliffs, above the Eastern Docks, and buy yourself a crate or two.

Whitstable Brewery – Grafty Green 01622 851007

whitstablebrewer@btconnect.com

Another brewery organised beer festival was held at Whitstable Brewery's East Quay from Wednesday 22nd July to Sunday 26th July. Live music was provided in the evenings and all day on Saturday. The Red Lion at Stodmarsh, has to the delight of many, added Whitstable Native and IPA to its range alongside Greene King IPA and Old Speckled Hen. The Three Mariners at Hythe is another regular outlet for Whitstable beers.

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CHANNEL VIEW

Fifty Years of Keg

Earlier in the year, thanks to William McHugh, one of its readers, *Private Eye* posed the following question:

Who is the odd man out? Former HBOS chairman Lord Stevenson, former HBOS chief executive Andy Hornby, former RBS chief executive Sir Fred Goodwin, former RBS chairman Tom McKillop, chairman of Treasury select committee John McFall MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair Darling, or presenter of Radio 2 Breakfast Show Sir Terry Wogan.

Answer: Sir Terry Wogan. He is the only one with a banking qualification, his early working life apparently being spent in that business. What, you might reasonably ask, has this to do with brewing, pubs or anything remotely connected with real ale? Nothing, other than it is indicative of a currently prevalent philosophy, that sees all business as alike, and the running of those businesses requiring no more than a set of management skills that can be seamlessly transferred from one organisation to another. Mass production and mass marketing lie at its heart, and the inevitable resort to the lowest common denominator – a range of products acceptable to the largest number, but often indistinguishable from each other, and not really satisfying anyone. It was adopted by the large brewers in the 1960s, and was a major factor behind the formation of CAMRA in 1971.

Second question:

Why should the year 1936 and the

East Sheen Tennis Club resonate with real ale lovers?

Answer: Because it was in that year, and at that venue, that drinkers were first offered keg beer. The club had been having problems with wastage of draught beer during the week when attendance was low and asked their supplier what could be done. "Ah!" said the brewer (a certain Messrs Watney, Coombe and Reid) "Try some of this", a pressurised and pasteurised brew they had been developing to supply troops in India. It was, of course, the original 'experimental' version of what later was to become Red Barrel.

Add keg beer to the universal manager and industrial scale production and you have the marketing man's dream – an inert, long lasting and homogeneous product to which all kinds of imagery and spurious qualities might be attached, and that could be sold the length and breadth of the country. Keg's initial growth, however, was slow and nothing much was heard of it until the late fifties, when, in the era of nuclear power, 'Never Had It So Good' and all things new, the breweries found it the perfect product to demonstrate that they too had entered the 20th century, and were no longer wedded to old fashioned and boring hand pumped beer. It also complemented the consolidation that was then taking place within the industry itself – a nationwide brand for a nationwide brewer. Within a few years the likes of Tankard, Toby, Red Barrel and Tavern Keg, names which ironically harked back to an earlier era

and the traditional inns and taverns of popular imagination, were being rolled out across their vast tied estates. Barely indistinguishable one from another, they are now hardly remembered, having been replaced by, to many of us the equally forgettable, keg lager and nitro keg bitter: but the philosophy remains, for the large brewer draught beer effectively means keg.

Maybe, however, the pigeons are at last coming home to roost. Even before the current recession the attractions of much hyped and heavily marketed national and premium keg brands were starting to fade, see previous editions of *Channel Draught*. By contrast, for many hundreds of microbrewers business is booming. As we remarked in our 2008 Autumn issue, Eddie Gadd's Ramsgate Brewery, sited in an industrial unit at the back of Broadstairs, is as different from the factory-like concerns of the major brewers as is possible. Eddie is a brewer first and foremost and it shows. Like many other micros he produces a range of real ale that puts to shame the choice offered by his national competitors, and can sell all he can brew. Perhaps eventually, drinkers are just taking note of what their taste buds are telling them, rather than the multi million advertising campaigns of big business.

Farewell to Flossie

Elsewhere in this edition Roger Marples relates his own personal recollections of the Sun Inn at Leintwardine, and its long serving landlady, the late Flossie Lane. Flossie was born at the pub in 1914 and ran it with her brother from 1935 until his death in 1985. Subsequently, she ran the pub on her own – and then latterly, when her own health began to fail, with the help of her

regulars. A few miles from the Welsh border in north Herefordshire, the Sun is a very basic institution: no bar counter or servery, just wooden table and benches, an open fire, and a clock and pictures on the walls. Until recently it served only beer, when as a concession to modern times a little wine was allowed. There is a staunch following of locals and the pub is a meeting point for the cricket club, bell-ringers and those fly fishing on the river Teme.

However, although unique, and the recipient of many a plaudit – 'outstanding national interest' (the Good Beer Guide), the only pub to be awarded five stars (Classic Basic Unspoilt Pubs of Great Britain) and considered by many beer connoisseurs to be one of the last five remaining classic English pubs – the Sun is not alone. Across the country there are not a few similar examples, and we have some in Kent. Elsie's – the Queen's Head at Cowden Pound near Edenbridge, Doris's – the Red Lion, Snargate and Ashford, Folkestone and Romney Marsh Branch's pub of the year, and in a similar vein, but of much more recent origin, the Butcher's Arms at Herne. All are pubs for drinking and talking and so very different from the food orientated pubco house or the 'binge drinking' establishments which so preoccupy the thoughts of the Government. Flossie never sold a meal or saw the merest hint of trouble. Such pubs are much loved and attract loyal followings but rarely feature in the thinking of big business or big Government. Big business has its own agenda, but as examples of responsible and sensible drinking, and real community spirit, the Government would do well to pay them serious attention.



DISAPPEARING PUBS

Part One of Paul Skelton's look at
pubs that never were

During my research on Dover's numerous pubs and hotels throughout history, it is sad to find so many that no longer exist, and even sadder to see them now dropping like flies. The rumour that there was once one pub for every day of the year, is definitely an urban myth, but in 1882 there were certainly 224 operating, and Bob Hollingsbee quotes 242 for 1900. Meanwhile at different times, over the years, I have a list of over 600 pub names in the town, from the "Adam and Eve" to the "Young Prince of Wales," and another 385 in 72 surrounding villages. All can be viewed at www.Dover-Kent.Com. It always amazes me that, just when I think there couldn't be any more pubs to find, another one turns up. However, during the research I have actually found 11 establishments that never existed at all, and I have pictures of some of them. Strange you may say; let me explain.

THE DOVER ARMS. The first one I'm going to show you below is the Dover Arms. The photograph says it's Frem-lins, but I know it never held a license, let alone sold any beer. It's certainly in living memory and was dismantled in



2001. How many people can tell me where it was? The answer will be revealed at the end of this perambulation.

THE FINEST HOUR. This pub was just on the verge of coming into existence, and I even have a picture of the intended sign (below). It was actually a pub already and was really only going to change its name. After much talk



and press coverage, RAMC and RAF plaques being presented to the pub, and plans for the pub to be refurbished with war-time memorabilia, the renaming was arranged for 10th May 2007. However it never happened and closed later that year. At time of writing it is open again under its original name – the "Sir John Falstaff."

HENLEY LODGE. This one goes back to the end of 1993. Never built, let alone opened, it was going to occupy the site of the Dover Stage (seen opposite above) after it was demolished in 1988; and would have been a five storey, 60 bedroom hotel owned by the Dover Harbour Board. A planning appli-



cation was approved in early April 1994, but never proceeded with; councillors apparently being unhappy with financial aspects of the proposal, on what was by then a DDC owned site, as well as not being entirely happy with the design. The site today is a car park.

INTERNATIONAL HOTEL. The building was actually built as a hotel, the model plans of which are shown in the picture below. The hotel was going to be Britain's first Eurotel, a project organised by an international company with headquarters in Zurich. It would have contained a penthouse restaurant, roof gardens and luxury apartments. Unfortunately, after being built,



the hotel plan was abandoned leaving that monstrosity we have today called "Burlington House", hopefully soon to be demolished. But I'll believe that when I see it.

THE LITTEN TREE. The year 2001 saw the Dorset-based SFI Group plan "The Litten Tree" for what used to be the Covered Market below the Income Tax offices at 17-19 Bench Street. *(There had already been a night club proposed for the site, some years earlier – Ed.).* However the plans came to nothing and the site is still empty today, although since all of this, the "Funky Monkey" has opened just a few doors away, in what had formerly been "Jays".

Paul Skelton

In our autumn edition we will complete Paul's survey of Dover pubs that never were, including a look at the various uses and proposals for the premises below, shown in all its pre-1960s glory, which some of us well remember. We will also provide an answer to Paul's question about the Dover Arms.





BEER TIE UNDER PRESSURE

In May the Commons Business and Enterprise Select Committee (BEC) reported on the operation of the beer tie under which pub companies supply beer to their tenants. Among other findings they established that most landlords under the tied model earned less than £15,000 a year and that there was a fundamental inequity in the bargaining power that pub companies had over their lessees. It recommended that the arrangement should be investigated by the Competition Commission. CAMRA, however, feels that a lengthy Competition Commission enquiry would not necessarily be in the interests of struggling publicans. "A two to three year investigation would create huge disruption and uncertainty," said CAMRA chief executive Mike Benner. "A lengthy investigation may also serve to delay urgent action to deliver fairness to struggling pub licensees and their customers."

The price which tied houses must pay for their beer has long been a source of grievance for pub tenants. Pub companies and breweries regularly charge them considerably more than they could buy the same beer for on the open market – currently often about an extra £100 per barrel (36 galls). Additionally, the present fashion for leasehold agreements requires an initial substantial outlay by the publican, while his rent level is subject to the whims (or avarice) of the pub's owner.

Punch and Enterprise, the country's two largest pub chains, with around 15,000 pubs between them, have been robust in the defence of the present set up. Ted Tuppen, boss of Enterprise, has stated that the reason six pubs a day are closing lies purely in the hands of their landlords; if they have failed it's their lack of business acumen, effort and initiative – nothing to do with the high price that the pubcos force them to pay for their beer and the level of rent, and not much related to the present economic climate. Admittedly many pubs do succeed, but with earnings averaging less than £15,000 a year it's hardly a goldmine. "The lessees may share the risks with the pubco, but they do not share the benefits," said the BEC report. And if they are successful they run the risk of the fruits of their labours being spirited away by rent rises.

There is also the suspicion that some leases are being cynically sold to tenants who the pub owners anticipate will fail. A London publican summarised his perception of the system: "The plan is essentially to find inexperienced licensees, tie them into onerous agreements, take their savings off them, ramp up the rent and – if they go bust – get them out before the rent deposit is used up, and wheel in another mug. Hence the high level of churn." However, such is the endearing picture of the public house that the British hold in their hearts, that there is always a ready supply of optimists waiting to sink their savings or redundancy in a dream.

For Enterprise, Punch and the rest a public house represents little more than a business investment to be sweated for maximum profit: for the regular pub user it is an essential part of his or her community, and for a landlord a livelihood. If the system is to work all three need to be kept in equilibrium.

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GETTING TO KNOW THORNBRIDGE BREWERY

Roger Marples visits the home
of the award winning 'Jaipur'

It was decided at a recent CAMRA branch meeting that the certificate for Beer of the Festival at this year's Festival of Winter Ales, the 5.9% Thornbridge Jaipur, would be presented, personally, at the brewery. To this end, four of us who had had involvement with the Festival set off for Thornbridge Hall on Wednesday 20th May; David Green, myself and Pauline, my wife, from Dover, plus from Faversham, Jeffrey Waller of Swale Branch, a long term friend of our branch and festival stalwart. We were to spend the night in Sheffield before making an early start for Thornbridge Hall, the next morning – Jeffrey joining us later that evening, for a few pints in one of the most interesting cities for beers in this country.

We had arranged to take the bus to Bakewell next morning and from there a taxi to the brewery. Thornbridge Hall lies between Great Longstone and Ashford in the Water, in 100 acres of parkland, formal gardens, and woodland and supports a population of about 40 wild boars. The situation is truly magnificent and the actual brewery is located in the grounds, near the Hall, but it is not ideally situated for public transport. The bus duly arrived, late, having being delayed in heavy city centre traffic, with Jeffrey already on board, ensconced on the top deck front seat. We travelled through the striking moorland scenery south west of Sheffield and the even more picturesque scenery of the Peak District National Park, to arrive in Bakewell with time to spare. We obtained a list of local taxi operators from the helpful tourist information office and, after a number of attempts, managed to acquire the services of one of these good people.

Arriving at the brewery office, we were made welcome and introduced to Stefano Cossi, the Head Brewer. Stefano, as his name implies, is not a local man, but a native of Italy. His passion for yeast microbiology bought him to Thornbridge, which, to my mind, is one of the most innovative small breweries with which I have had any contact. The Brewery Manager, Kelly Ryan, whom we also met, and which despite his two Irish names, is a New Zealander, also has a tremendous passion for beer. The other two brewers, both of whom are British, were not present at the time of our visit. This young, polyglot, enthusiastic team



Dave Green (right) presents the
Beer of the Festival Award to
Kelly Ryan and Stefano Cossi

certainly turns out some amazing beers with character, taste, and originality being their hallmark. On the way to the brew house we were shown the "Brewer's Garden", a small herb garden planted by the brewers in order that they might have available a selection of esoteric plants with which to enhance their special brews.

Small amounts of experimental hops are also grown here. Stefano then took us the brew house, and described to us the brewing process. We were given a glass of warm wort (the liquid before hops and yeast are added). It had a pleasant taste, reminiscent of Horlicks. The use of different hops is a speciality, and an art, at Thornbridge and I certainly learnt of many varieties of which I had not previously heard.

Among their recently developed beers, Thornbridge has created a traditional IPA – Double Imperial IPA. India Pale Ale was originally brewed to supply the many troops and British people in the employ of the Honourable East India Company. It had to be very strong and highly hopped, hops being a preserving agent, to survive the journey to India. A number of years ago I was able to taste an IPA that was brewed by Bass to its original recipe, specifically for exportation to India. It was 6.6% ABV, and well worth drinking. I had always thought this to be the bench mark for all IPAs. – until I tried the offering from Thornbridge. We were very fortunate in being the first people outside the brewery to try the Thornbridge brew. It was exceptional, one of the best that I have tasted. As I am a hop fanatic, it suited me down to the ground. David was just as enthusiastic and hopes to have it for our next year's festival. Pauline found it a little bitter for her palate, and although Jeffrey thought it was a little early to drink beer (what nonsense), he did give it his approval.

The beer is a real IPA, not at all like Greene King IPA, which bears as much resemblance to an IPA as a Kraft cheese slice bears a resemblance to a Colston Basset Blue Stilton. The Thornbridge IPA is 7.7% Alcohol by Volume and has a

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tremendous 100 International Units of Bitterness (IBU). 32lbs. of hops are used to eight brewer's barrels of beer! This is considered to be the technical limit of hop bitterness. A standard bitter would be roughly 30 IBU and an Imperial Stout about 60 IBU. Obviously the amount and type of malt used in a brew also affects the taste of bitterness. Another distinctive Thornbridge beer is a forthcoming special brew using green hops and Belgian yeast. Stefano has arranged for an Italian brewer to visit Thornbridge to brew a barley wine which will be aged in Nyetimber (an English Vineyard) wood casks. Bottles of beer have been laid down each year since 2005.



Jim Harrison, a Sheffield businessman and entrepreneur, owns Thornbridge Hall and Brewery. Jim has long maintained an interest in beer and had the space at Thornbridge to brew beer for David Wickett from Kelham Island Brewery, with whom he was friendly. When Kelham Island won the Champion Beer of Britain, with their Pale Rider, they were short of space at their Sheffield brewery, and a temporary arrangement was the precursor to Jim starting his own brewery, at Thornbridge Hall.

Thornbridge has its own yeast strain, which came originally from the now closed, and sadly missed, Ward's of Sheffield, although the yeast currently in use is from Joseph Holt of Manchester. The varieties of hops in use are manifold, and include Centinal, Chinook and Antanum in Jaipur. The first Thornbridge brew was Blackthorn, a golden ale at 4.4% ABV followed by Lord Marples, a classic English Bitter at 4.0% ABV, and the multi award winning Jaipur IPA at 5.9% ABV. My own favourite regular brew is Kipling at 5.2% ABV which is described as a South Pacific Pale Ale, full flavoured with masses of Nelson Sauvín (NZ) hops to create flavours of passion fruits and kiwi fruits. The main supplier of the various malts is that well known Yorkshire supplier Thos. Fawcett. Before leaving the brew house we were given a couple of bottles of St. Petersburg Imperial Russian Stout, which is bottled for the U.S. market. It is available on draught in the winter months and is 7.7% ABV. Our next stop was the brewery laboratory where the yeast cultures and beers are analysed. Finally we were taken back to the office where David presented the certificate to Stefano, with Jeffrey the official photographer. Stefano offered us a drink of tea or coffee. I suggested that we tried a pint of his excellent beer, as we were in a brewery. He left, and to our surprise, returned with a nine-pint mini cask of the excellent Kipling Bitter.

Jim Harrison, then showed us around Thornbridge Hall. Gardeners were busy with the colourful formal and vegetable/herb gardens, and in the tropical style greenhouses, which include an outside kitchen that is supplied by the nearby vegetable garden, and with game from the estate. There is also a small orchard and the possibility of Thornbridge cider has not been ruled out. The brewery's public houses and restaurants are supplied from the estate. However, starting in July it is planned to move the main brewery to an industrial estate in Bakewell, with views over the

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River Wye. The first brew is scheduled for mid July and the whole operation completed by October. The old brewery will be retained for special brews. Capacity will increase twelvefold.

My antecedents are from Sheffield and my formative years were spent there, but I was surprised to learn that I was related by marriage to Jim and that we attended the same school. Even more surprisingly was the discovery that I was probably related to the eccentric Lord Marples of Thornbridge Hall, who lived there for 31 years from 1896, and insisted that the local railway company built him a private and grandiose railway station on his land. He made many changes to the Hall and although never actually ennobled, insisted that his staff addressed him as Lord Marples.

This brewery visit was by far the most interesting that I have made to a craft brewery, and the beers some of the most exceptional. Jim kindly drove us back to Bakewell where we had a bite to eat, followed with a pint of Thornbridge beer in The Rutland Hotel Bar. We then had a hair raising ride by bus back to Sheffield. The well loaded single decker vehicle had trouble climbing hills, but on downhill and level bends, the driver seemed to delight on throwing the bus round, on what seemed like two wheels. Jeffrey returned by train to London, whilst Pauline, David, and I went on to enjoy more of the varied range of beers that Sheffield has to offer.

Roger Marples

(In our next issue we will visit Kelham Island Tavern, National CAMRA pub of the year, and some of Sheffield's better pubs)



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SHOVE HA'PENNY ON THE SLIDE

The traditional British game of shove ha'penny appears to be going the same way as the coin with which it is played, after the last known pub league utilising the standard board packed up in May.

The game, hundreds of years old, has been regularly played in various forms, in pubs and homes all over the country, for many years. The first known version, called shoffe grote, dates from the 15th century and, as its name suggests, was played using the fourpenny worth groat. By the 19th century the modern game had been developed using five halfpennies and a rectangular board, a foot or so wide by a foot and a half to two feet long, and divided from side to side across the middle of the narrower



width into about nine parallel beds, slightly wider than a halfpenny. The game is played by shoving the halfpennies, with the palm of the hand, up the board towards the beds, with the intention of getting them to settle cleanly within the beds, whereupon points are scored. The game is restricted to two players or teams, alternatively taking it in turns with the five halfpennies, and the objective, under normal rules, to score three points in each bed. Useful accessories include chalk, to mark up the scoring at either end of each bed, talcum powder to rub into the board to enhance its slipperiness and a kitchen knife to run along the groves which separate the beds, to confirm whether or not a halfpenny is cleanly within a bed.

Shove Ha'penny boards are usually made of mahogany although other woods or materials may be used, and not surprisingly the playing quality of boards varies, with many having sticky patches where the slide is poor or sweet places where it is particularly good, perhaps too good. Slate boards are not unknown; the Red Lion, Charlton Green has one, and there are other versions of the game played on boards of different dimensions. The late Jack Hargreaves once devoted an edition of *Out of Town* to a Shove Ha'penny league in the pubs around Corfe in Dorset that use a long board some five or six feet long with a variety of scoring areas in addition to horizontal beds.

The last remaining league, situated in the Lincolnshire town of Louth and of late reduced to just 3 teams playing each other week after week has called it a day. League president George Dunn said: "It's very sad. I remember people queuing up to play on Saturday night," and referring to the popularity of pool, he added: "Youngsters would sooner put 50p in a table to play a game that's over in minutes." The end of the game in Louth follows the collapse of the west country Keynsham league last year, where the game is now kept alive by weekly matches at the Ship Inn.

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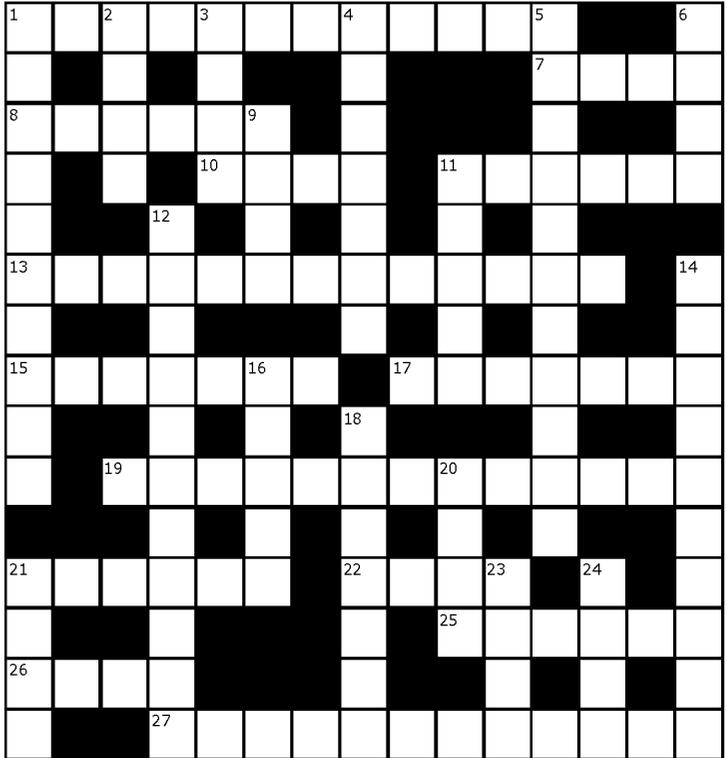
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Across

1. Meat dealer's limbs in Herne (8,4)
7. Fermented grapes (4)
8. Gentlemen of the road (6)
10. Pub in Middle Street, Deal (4)
11. Man who propels boat in Oxford (6)
13. Brown and sweet (8,5)
15. Asked someone for a job (7)
17. Became less drunk (7)
19. Machine for putting text on paper (6,7)
21. The way your eyes feel in the morning (6)
22. Measure of beer (4)
25. Pacific island (6)
26. Dutch cheese (4)
27. North Deal pub (8,4)

Down

1. Canterbury pub near cricket ground (3,3,4)
2. Tool for transporting several drinks at once (4)
3. Shop around for beer ingredient (4)
4. Folkestone area (7)
5. Pub on Deal – Dover road (8,3)
6. Main ingredient of perry (4)
9. Branch of Islam (4)
11. Disney character in the outer Solar System (5)
12. Kingsdown pub (7,4)
14. Gadds' seasonal beer (6,4)
16. Have fun! (5)
18. Pencil to stop bleeding (7)
20. Hire charge (4)
21. Ale (4)
23. Faucets (4)
24. End of drinking period (4)

Answers on Page 61



FLOSSIE AT THE SUN

It is unfortunate that the traditional British Public House is becoming a rarity. Where can one go these days without the ubiquitous wailing and thumping of recorded pop music, and the intrusive portable telephone. However there are a small and fast dwindling number of public houses that have eschewed these modern practises, and have remained havens of tranquillity, conversation and the drinking of good ales. The landlady of one such house, has recently died, just short of her 95th birthday. This was Flossie Lane of The Sun at Leintwardine, a small village in Herefordshire; not far from the Welsh border, the nearest town being Ludlow.

I have always had an interest in the old fashioned and little changed public houses, that have remained in the same family ownership for many years and to my mind the Sun was the very best example. I first learnt of it well over twenty years ago, and have visited every year since. At the time of my first acquaintance, Flossie was not far off 70. She was very much the dominant person in the bar, and always oversaw proceedings. She had a sense of humour and was fascinated by people, always wanting the latest news and gossip and was an authority on her customers. Mathematics, though, was not her strong point and she would normally total the price of the beer on a piece of paper. The price used to vary, quite considerably. It was helpful to do the addition for Flossie.



Until they were abolished under the recent revisions to the licensing laws, the Sun possessed a rare beer only license, and over the years the beer it sold changed several times. When I first visited the Sun it sold Ansell's Bitter and Mild. It then changed to Boddingtons which was rare straight from the cask, and after this Wood's of Wistanstow Mild and Bitter. The final choice was mild and bitter from Hobsons of Cleobury Mortimer. However in recent times, as the main drinker of

mild had departed this world, there was sometimes only the bitter available. To my mind the Hobsons was the best beer that the Sun had sold.

When one entered the door of The Sun, there was a lobby with a room to the right that contained two long tables, with benches around the walls. A roaring fire was very welcome in the colder months. The only food was a jar of pickled onions, supplied by the excellent local butcher, who was a regular customer, and potato crisps. To the left was Flossie's private room, which in latter years, as she became more frail, contained Flossie, and her television set. Flossie used to sleep in her chair, at night. Beyond and through this room was the kitchen which contained the casks of

beer and the glasses. Latterly the procedure was for the customer to enter the lobby, turn left and chat to Flossie, enter the kitchen, serve oneself with beer from the cask, put the money in an old box, and return to the drinking room having said a few more words to Flossie. This procedure was repeated at intervals throughout the evening, eventually the glass being taken back to the kitchen, washed and dried and returned to the shelf. The last person out tucked Flossie into her chair, put out the lights and locked up. A truly amazing place.

There have been long obituaries to Flossie Lane, in both the Times and the Daily Telegraph, and also a short piece on Radio 4. Unfortunately Flossie and The Sun became more famous in her demise than at any other time. There was a very loyal band of regulars, who treated her with great affection, and would do anything to help her; and there is no truth in the long held belief that Flossie did not like people with beards. Speaking as a member of the bearded tendency, I have been accompanied by branch stalwart, and bearded, David Green on a number of occasions and we were always made very welcome, and enquired after.

On one occasion I visited the Sun with another long standing (and bearded) branch member, David Underdown. At that time one of the then regulars, who has long since passed away, possessed a small and very vicious Jack Russell. This dog was extremely unpopular and was just about tolerated by Flossie. It sat quietly by its owner, but if anyone left the room it went for their ankles. The procedure was to inform the dog's owner, Jimmy Noakes, that they wished to leave the room, and Jimmy would hold on to the animal, which would bark furiously, but would be restrained. I warned David about the dog and the procedure was followed. However, David had a metal false leg, so I suggested to him that on his next visit to the lavatory he did not warn Jim, and we would see what happened. David thought this a splendid idea, and remembering not to proffer his good leg to the dog, suddenly arose and went to the door. The dog leapt up and Jim made a grab for the dog, but not quick enough, and it pounced with a growl on David's tin leg, and then leapt back as though it had suffered an electric shock. Explaining what had happened to the two other customers and Flossie, we all thought it was hilarious; except Jim. After that the dog stayed clear of David, and the event was spoken about for many years afterwards, but Jim never saw the funny side of it.

Few people ever arrived before 21.00, and as Flossie advanced in years she would not let anyone in unless she knew them. On one occasion four of us went to visit the Sun and the first to arrive had not been there before. I met him outside looking rather worried. He told me that the place was closed and that he had queried it with the landlady, but she then told him that she had run out of beer and had nothing to sell. That would have been a disaster as we had travelled all that way for one purpose. I went back with him and we opened the door. I said, "Hello Flossie, what do you mean that you have no beer?" She peered at me and the penny dropped, "Oh, hello," she said "We've just found some now; you had better come in". I have spoken to local people who thought it was some sort of private club, as so many people were turned away before any of the "trusties" had arrived.

This was a truly amazing public house of exceptional character. We will never see its like again.

Roger Marples



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WE'RE NOW ON PLAN 'F' BUT DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH! The Beery Boaters' April 2009 trip to the Birmingham Canal Navigations

Plan 'A' for the 2009 Beery Boaters' Spring Canal Trip was to start at Great Haywood (junction of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire and Trent & Mersey canals), continue down the S&W to the Stourbridge Canal at Stourton Junction, up the Stourbridge Canal and twenty locks to the BCN, on to Wolverhampton, round the Wyrley & Essington Canal, down part of the Tame Valley Canal to Gravelley Hill Junction (right under the famous Spaghetti Junction on the M6), along the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal to the Coventry Canal, up to the Trent & Mersey Canal and then back to Great Haywood. However, even before setting off, this was revised to plan 'B' by cutting out the run to Stourton junction and instead turning left at Aldersley Junction and going straight to Wolverhampton. This would reduce the number of miles and locks considerably, even allowing for a diversion to Brierley Hill and back to take in Ma Pardoe's and the Bull & Bladder, both 'musts' for CAMRA members.

So on the afternoon of Saturday 25th April fifteen of us, having refreshed ourselves at the GBG listed Clifford Arms, and some also at the other pub in Great Haywood, the Fox & Hounds, set off from the Anglo Welsh boatyard in Sandringham and Hatherton. The itinerary suggested Stafford as the first night's stop, but there were a couple of hours of daylight remaining when we arrived at Weeping Cross, about a mile from the town. The canal-side Radford Bank Inn, some sort of 'Fun Factory' pub had no real ale, so we decided to push on another six miles and four locks to Penkridge, a small town about the size of Sandwich with a handful of pubs. We arrived just as the light was failing, and tied up outside the Boat Inn. Inside we found Bombardier and, of all things, Shepherd Neame Spitfire, plus some basic, tasty and inexpensive food. Some of us stayed there for the evening, while others later went off to explore other pubs in the town.



Sunday morning dawned fine and Sandringham's steerer was on the tiller at 6am with a quorum of crew members to manage the couple of locks at Penkridge. Some of the crew of Hatherton had also emerged as we left and, we thought, they wouldn't be that far behind us. We had covered the ten miles and half dozen locks to Aldersley Junction by 11.30, but with Hatherton, we learned by phone, now a long way back. With everyone working as a team, Sandringham made the ascent of the

21 locks in just two hours, which we considered quite good, and we moored in Wolverhampton Basin and retired to the Great Western for a well-deserved pint or three.



The Great Western is a Holden's pub, also selling Batham's, a few hundred yards from Wolverhampton Canal Basin, and reached via a covered walkway between Wolverhampton High Level Railway Station and the former Wolverhampton Low Level Station, ex LMS and GWR respectively. A long standing entry in the Good Beer Guide, the walls of the bars are covered with railway pictures and memorabilia. A couple of hours later the crew of Hatherton arrived. Apparently they had mistaken the route and tried to gain access to the

BCN via the aptly named Hatherton Junction – a flight of locks linking to the Wyrley & Essington Canal which closed in about 1954. We now made a further alteration of plan and decided to stay in Wolverhampton for the rest of Sunday, and cruise down to Brierley Hill for Monday lunchtime.

Rain was tipping down on Monday morning as Sandringham set off along the BCN Main Line in the direction of Birmingham. I actually enjoyed my spell on the tiller for the first hour and a half. Few boats moor along the BCN Main Line so we didn't have to slow down much. Even so, it's quite a demanding and unforgiving canal, and in the windy conditions, when I let my attention stray too much, I soon found the bow jammed against one bank and the stern aground on the other. As we set off again we saw with no little satisfaction that Hatherton, now close behind, had also discovered some shallows. However, I was eventually glad to hand over to Robert, and strip off my waterproofs for breakfast. We descended the three Factory Locks, and shortly afterwards turned right to negotiate the 3027 yard long Netherton Tunnel. At the far end we took on water at the new visitor centre at Windmill End but it was a slow process as the pipe between the water take-on point and the water tank had a very restricted bore and the water point tap could only be turned on a small way. Hatherton, arriving while we patiently waited, decided to press on and to water up on return. The storm had now passed over and the sun showed signs of emerging.

Eventually Sandringham set off again along the twisty Dudley No 2 Canal around the back of Netherton Hill. Turning left at Park Head Junction we went down one lock onto Dudley No 1 Canal, and on past Merryhill shopping centre towards Brierley Hill, and Delph Locks. We found Hatherton moored above the Locks, the canal being too narrow to turn as planned. A Waterways employee suggested it would be easiest if we reversed and turned at Merry Hill where the canal has been widened into a basin. He also told them, that the Stourbridge Canal below the locks was closed again (it had recently reopened after a breach had been repaired), hence

making it fortuitous that Plan A *had* been abandoned. We tied up alongside Hather-ton and set off for the Vine (aka Bull and Bladder and Batham's Brewery Tap), which we reached just in time for food, after getting lost in some undergrowth following what appeared on the map to be a short cut. As we had found previously it is an excellent pub. The beer was good and inexpensive as was the home-cooked food, which came in large quantities.



Back on the canal we reversed to Merryhill, turned and went back to Windmill End with the object of spending the evening at the Old Swan (Ma Pardoe's) in Nether-ton. A quick visit first to the Little Dry Dock below the embankment found it a shadow of its former self. No longer one of M.A.D' O'Rourke's 'Little Pubs, it quickly ran out of its single real ale, something from Greene King; while the Wheatsheaf, opposite, was equally disappointing. No longer an excellent Banks's local, there was now a large television screen and no real ale at all. We quickly departed towards the centre of Netherton in search of better things!

And better things we found. The Olde Swan is one of the relatively small numbers of pubs in CAMRA's National Inventory of Pub Interiors of National Historic Interest; although it's not quite unchanged as an 'e' has been added to 'Old! Forty years ago under the redoubtable Mrs Pardoe it was one of the handful of pubs then brewing its own beer. After she died, brewing ceased, but recommenced a few years ago and Old Swan beer is now found not only there but in other local houses.

The following morning saw our next change of route. We decided to abandon Tip-ton for the lunchtime session and instead take the Walsall Canal to the Wyrley & Essington, stopping at the Rose & Crown, Birchills at the top of Walsall Locks for our lunchtime ale. So it was back through Netherton Tunnel to the BCN Main Line, and down the eight Ryder's Green Locks to Great Bridge. Although no longer 'like sitting in a dustbin in the back garden having buckets of water tipped on you', and one of the few canals where white water lilies grow naturally, the Walsall still leaves a lot to be desired – plenty of rubbish and lack of dredging, making it extremely shallow in places. Sometime around midday Sandringham's engine gave a couple of coughs and stopped. A great swathe of debris was removed from the propeller but when the engine was restarted it refused to go at more than tick-over: a phone call to the boatyard diagnosed a broken throttle cable. Hatherton towed us to Walsall Basin, where we had arranged to meet the fitter, and most of the lads departed in search of refreshment. The couple of us left in charge of Sandringham went for a pint at the Wharf 10 Bar on the far side of the basin, only to find, that unlike our previous 2003 visit, it was no longer GBG, and now had no real ale at all.

Thankfully the fitter soon appeared and, said that we could leave him to fix the throttle cable. We found the others in Wetherspoons, which like Dover's is a converted cinema, but somewhat larger and more opulent. Beer prices, reflecting the

Black Country level were a lot lower than here in the 'affluent' South-East: the then current Wetherspoon Beer Festival price about 40p per pint cheaper than ours. A surprise encounter was with an old friend of many years ago, Peter Ashby, who some of us last met at a CAMRA beer festival in Pelsall many years ago. Unlike any of us from East Kent, he was wearing a Shepherd Neame Spitfire shirt!

Of course, the diversion to Walsall caused another upset in the schedule, and we now made the Rose & Crown our evening stop. We ascended the eight Walsall Locks rather slowly for, as we have sometimes found before, they were short of water and we had to let more down from the pounds above to make progress. Eventually tied up at the top outside the former Birchills Canal Museum and the temporarily closed New Navigation Inn. The Rose & Crown is just along the road past the New Navigation and it proved a real gem. It's in the 2009 GBG and had beers from the Black Country Brewery and guest ales. We were made to feel really welcome, and while it did no food, we were encouraged to bring back meals from the nearby Chinese to eat there. Sandringham's Ship's Orchestra and Hatherton's Ship's Jester performed and we stayed until the early morning. It was here that the next (and final) amendment was made. Realising, the original route back would probably stretch us somewhat, we decided to turn right at the Tame Valley Canal, instead of left, and return instead to the Walsall Canal at the bottom of Ryder's Green Locks. From here we would go back to Wolverhampton, and then to Great Heywood the way we had come.

Wednesday morning found us turning right onto the Wyrley & Essington Canal. Nicknamed the 'Curly Wyrley', its a lock-free but very twisty canal, and winds through a not unpleasant mixture of suburbia, countryside and heathland now reverting to nature after long-vanished industry. We stopped at Brownhills to take on water, clear the propeller, and top up supplies and then turned right onto the Daw End Branch at Catshill junction to head for our lunchtime destination, the Manor Arms, another entry in CAMRA's inventory of historic pubs.



Uncertain of the Manor Arms' exact location, we stopped at a new pub, the Boathouse, and asked a man mowing the lawn. He denied all knowledge, but it was there right enough, just a hundred yards further on! It stands back from the canal and is obscured by trees until you are right opposite. It wasn't open when we got there at 11.30, but as the Boathouse didn't sell Real Ale, we waited until it opened until midday. It's in a pleasant rural setting, despite being near to Walsall. Indeed, such was our circuitous route that we were only a couple of

miles from where we had set off that morning, despite having cruised some twelve miles. The main feature of the Manor Arms is that it has no bar counter, the hand-pumps being mounted on a shelf attached to the wall, and we had a most enjoyable few hours.

Four miles and nine locks on the Rushall Canal, and a right turn took us down to the almost dead straight Tame Valley Canal which after passing close to the M6 continues through cuttings and along embankments for another four miles to the Walsall Canal. A left turn led us to Great Bridge and we tied up above the second lock at the bottom of the Ryder's Green flight – the canal at the bottom being too shallow. For our evening's beer we walked half a mile to the Port 'n' Ale at Tipton, last visited in 2003 when we were entertained by a large Doberman. Although much altered inside, there was still a good range of beers and it was still in the Good Beer Guide. Of the Doberman however, there was no sign.

Thursday morning found us back in Wolverhampton and once more at the Great Western. Here, Hatherton's crew, wanting to visit the Sarah Hughes Brewery, decided to stay in Wolverhampton and set off Friday morning, while Sandringham continued back down the Wolverhampton flight that afternoon with the intention of spending the night at Brewood (pronounced 'Brood') on the Shropshire Union Canal. We agreed to meet up again at Penkridge on Friday lunchtime. Two hours again to negotiate

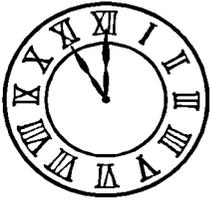


Wolverhampton Locks and right and left turns took Sandringham onto the Shropshire Union at Autherley Junction. There were a large number of dead fish in the water around here, the result, apparently of a chemicals leak from a nearby water treatment plant. Brewood is five miles up the Shropshire Union and we turned just past the village and moored at Bridge 14 near the Bridge Inn, where we commenced our evening session. It is in the 2009 GBG, as also is the Swan which some of us went to later, and found a most convivial and lively local.

Friday, the last full day, and by lunchtime Sandringham was back at Penkridge and the Boat Inn. Hatherton, however was some way astern, having been delayed after depositing one of its crew into the murky waters of the Wolverhampton Flight. Having been dispatched by taxi to Cannock Hospital to tend a cut hand he arrived at the Boat just after Sandringham and well before the rest of his crew, who duly arrived just in time for a pint before the last leg to Great Haywood.

And that was almost that. We moored a short way before the boatyard and walked to the Clifford Arms for our final session. In the morning the boats were returned and we set off in a homeward direction with another successful Beery Boaters' Canal Trip completed.

Jim Green



LAST KNOCKINGS

Next to the sign for ladies toilet matching signs announced, “Disabled Toilet” and “Baby Changing Facilities”. Needless to say, I have nothing against the disabled and not much (despite what some might think) against babies, but something about the signage was profoundly irritating. The pub stands on a busy road junction in the Black Country and when last visited by the Beery Boaters, some six years ago, comprised the traditional two bars with simple furniture. It was GBG then, and is now, but in the intervening years has undergone refurbishment, the full corporate treatment – enlarged, knocked into a single bar, the bar servery completely repositioned and a substantial dining area installed: save for its location the pub would have been unidentifiable. Tens of thousands spent and no doubt tens of thousands anticipated in income. Disabled facilities and baby changing are quite a reasonable expectation in the modern world, but everything about this said formula, as did the rest of the pub, the product of a team in an office somewhere, correctly ticking all the boxes. How very different from the Bull and Bladder, Great Western and Rose and Crown, also included in the Beery Boaters latest outing (see page 51).

One of the most disturbing pieces of news in recent months was that of a pregnant woman being thrown out of a pub for sipping from a friend's drink, reported briefly in our spring edition. The location of this piece of intolerance was Hove, where the staff took the view that one drink was quite enough for a visibly pregnant woman and refused her friend the subsequent purchase of two more. When she was subsequently seen taking a sip from the friend's glass they were asked to leave. While there are very good reasons for pregnant women to restrict their alcohol consumption, normal practice in a free and civilised society is to advise, but leave the decision to the woman herself. However, we appear to be in an age of growing authoritarianism and interference. In New York, always in the vanguard of any fad or fashion, signs have been appearing in the windows and doors of stores that sell alcohol, showing a bottle with a cross drawn across it, under the slogan “mother doesn't know best.” And although its not illegal to sell pregnant women alcohol in New York, there is pressure to make it so. One can't help suspecting that the motivation is as much a puritanical dislike of indulgence, as it is concern for the unborn child.

Late May saw Blakes selling a superb beer from Northumberland Brewery, Northumberland Brown Ale – not to be confused with the well known, widely available, and frankly, considerably inferior, Newcastle Brown Ale. It is a heavy, opaque and dark brown brew, substantial and full flavoured but quite soft. Personally I would have liked more hoppiness, but then brown ale is not supposed to be hoppy; and it was not at all sweet, in the way that, for example, bottled Mann's Brown Ale is. Many might think that it is a far better representative of Tyneside brown ale than Newcastle Brown, which currently benefits from European protected location

status, or whatever it's called. How such prestigious distinction was conferred on such an uninspiring product defies reason, and must throw doubt on other of the authorising body's judgements. However, having acquired the much sought after designation Scottish and Newcastle shortly afterwards transferred production from its Newcastle Brewery, for which the accreditation had been granted, to the former Clubs Federation Brewery at Gateshead which by then it owned. Since then, I understand, it has been transferred somewhere else entirely, and is nowhere near its original Newcastle home. If this is the case, then by any logic, it must surely forfeit its protected location status, it is after all already contravening it. Surely, also, as north eastern brown ale has been recognised as a distinct style of beer, Northumberland, and any other of the area's brown ale brewers, could apply to be awarded the designation.

"Shock. Horror. BBC in binge drinking extravaganza!" Not that I believe this headline ever existed but it could have done had the Government's guidelines been applied to the first episode of Oz and James Drink to Britain. At the time of writing, being repeated on BBC2, this highly entertaining but, for real ale lovers, somewhat superficial series, found its eponymous presenters, Oz Clarke and James May rounding off the edition with a pub crawl through the station buffets of the West Riding. Admittedly they only went to three, but the real ale selection was extensive and pints were downed at each; while their ability to miss trains suggested that a single drink per station was unlikely. It is therefore reasonably conceivable that the "8 units per session" limit would have been breached, and the pair cast into the binge drinking slough. Like other pronouncements on alcohol, those on binge drinking seem to derive from thin air and magic wand school of advice. A unit of alcohol is equivalent to a half pint of 3.6% beer; and it will be to the delight of drinkers everywhere that the quite moderate consumption of, for example, three pints of Summer Lightning or Dark Star Original over an evening, places them among the anti-social yobage. Meanwhile Oz and James emerged the following week with no ill effects, and continued through the rest of the series in apparently robust good health and good heart.

It's now two years since the smoking ban, and we have all become accustomed to the effect on the nation's watering holes – fellow drinkers suddenly disappearing from the bar, the strange variety of structures sprouting outside any building possessing an on-license, and the small knots of people braving all weathers in and around any pub doorway. Whether benefit has been conferred on the country's smokers, non-smokers, or for that matter the bar staff for whom the legislation was ostensibly enacted, is anyone's guess, although, for the determined smoker, the consequences of inhaling lungfuls of diesel fumes along with tobacco smoke, while enjoying the vagaries of the British climate might well suggest that it hasn't. Meanwhile a survey conducted a year or so after the introduction of the ban, has actually shown an increase in smoking. Announced as "no significant change", interviews with 5,000 people, found that while the numbers of women smokers stayed the same at 21%, men smokers had increased from 23% to 24%. A Health Department spokesman commented: "The legislation was never intended to reduce smoking prevalence."

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Channel Draught 40

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North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Il, decided he wanted a world class brewery for his country and the Ushers plant began a long journey East. Perhaps the secretive regime in North Korea is not building nuclear installations after all but satellite photos are merely showing the Koreans' thirst for a decent beer.

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