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**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

**Issue 58
Winter
2013 /14**

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

CHANNEL DRAUGHT



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to be taken
lightly
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Channel Draught

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CHANNEL DRAUGHT

ISSUE 58
Winter 2013/14

Christmas, New Year and the mid winter festivities now consigned to memory, we are now enjoying that traditional "quiet" period at the start of the year. However, don't despair, there is still plenty of good ale around and not a few festivals – e.g. our own White Cliff's Festival of Winter Ales at the start of February, the Berry's annual late winter bash a couple of weeks later, and at the beginning of March the Roger Marples Festival at the Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club. For details of these, and other forthcoming events see Branch Diary.

It is also that time of year when the Chancellor's annual budget doth approach, and, as we point out elsewhere, for the first time in years, the 2013 budget was one that beer drinkers could applaud. After many years of smacking us about the head, so to speak, is it too much to ask that 2014's budget does us a few favours as well? – as we also point out there are plenty of options to help the hard pressed pub and its customers.

Locally, the two most notable events of recent months have been the success of the Rack of Ale in Dover, now an established part of the town's drinking environment, and the opening of the new Time and Tide Brewery. If the rest of its brews match its Smugglers Stout then we have on our doorstep a very good brewery indeed.

A very different operation, however, from breweries of a century or so ago, and in this edition we take a look at one of Dover's in the 1880s. We also include the reminiscences of one of Kent's longest established micro-brewers, rerun the Beery Boaters 2003 stag boat trip ten years later, and report on a visit to a few more of Britain's unspoilt pubs, plus of course all the usual items.

Martin Atkins



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EVENTS DIARY

Mon 3 Feb	Beer Festival Set-Up, Dover Town Hall , 9am
Fri 7 - Sat 8 Feb	WHITE CLIFFS FESTIVAL OF WINTER ALES , Dover Town Hall
Sun 9 Feb	Beer Festival Take-Down, Dover Town Hall , 9am
Thur 13 Feb	AFRM Branch, Dover Pub Crawl, Blakes 5pm
Mon 17 Feb	Branch Meeting, Rack of Ale , Dover.
Fri 21 - Sun 23	Beer Festival, Berry , Walmer*
Fri 7 - Sat 8 Mar	Roger Marples Beer Festival, Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club*
Mon 17 Mar	Branch Meeting, George & Dragon , Sandwich.
Sat 22 Mar	Deal Pub Crawl, Sir Norman Wisdom , 12 noon
Mon 14 Apr	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and Branch Meeting , Alma, Deal
Thur 17 – Mon 21 Apr	Easter Beer Festival, Chambers , Folkestone*
Fri 18 - Sat 19 Apr	Planet Thanet Beer Festival , Winter Gardens, Margate
Sat 3 & Sun 4 May	Rotary Beer Festival, Fox , Temple Ewell*
Mon 19 May	Branch meeting, Chance , Guston
Fri 23 - Mon 26 May	Beer festival, Haywain , Bramling*

Branch Website www.camra-dds.org.uk

Branch meetings are held every third Monday of each month and start at 7.30pm.
For full details about rural rambles & pub strolls, please email john@ramblingrumbler.plus.com or call 01304 214153.

Events marked * are not organised by CAMRA



TAX REFORM

Among the variety of problems facing traditional pubs, the level of tax takes a central place. Excise duty, VAT and Business Rates all take a substantial chunk out of whatever income a pub can manage to generate. In his annual budget last spring Chancellor George Osborne, following a lengthy and determined campaign by CAMRA, scrapped the crippling duty escalator which had been introduced by his Labour predecessor Alistair Darling in 2008, as well as taking 1p of the duty on beer.

Now he has turned his attention to business rates, promising in his Autumn Statement that more would be done to help small businesses, such as pubs, with high business rates. George Osborne told Parliament "there is one group of businesses that has found the recession especially hard. These are our local retailers – the shops, the pubs and the cafés that make up our high streets across Britain. I want the government to do all it can to help them."

Acknowledging that previous efforts had not hit the mark, Osborne said "we can do more." He added: "I also want to help those who have struggled hard on our high streets – often working long hours for not enough in return. So I can announce today that for the next two years every retail premise in England with a rateable value of up to £50,000 will get a discount on their business rates. This discount will be worth £1,000 off their bills. This is what we offer. Business rates capped. For the smallest firms, no rates at all. And help for the high street, £1,000 off for small shops, pubs, cafés and restaurants across our country."

CAMRA has welcomed the chancellor's pledge. Chief Executive Mike Benner has hailed this windfall "a vital lifeline for struggling licensees and will help keep pubs open". The Chancellor also extended the current small business rate relief provisions until April 2015. "All but the largest community pubs will benefit from this £1,000 reduction and around a quarter will additionally gain from the retention of the current small business rate relief," said Mike. "We hope the Chancellor will continue his commitment to beer and pubs and the million jobs they support by freezing beer duty in next year's Budget." The full Autumn Statement can be found at <http://miniurl.com/617h>

However, that still leaves the UK with practically the highest beer duty in the European Community, in the region of 50 plus pence on a pint, or about ten times the lowest. On top of this, the poor drinker then has to cough up a further 20% VAT on the combined price before the pint is passed across the bar top.

If we understand the Government's rhetoric correctly, lowering taxes is a prime objective. What better place to start then, than with what in modern parlance, is often referred to as the hospitality industry – hotels, cafés, restaurants and pubs. CAMRA would welcome further reductions in duty, but a major revision downward of VAT could be a lifesaver. This has already been done elsewhere in Europe, to great benefit, and it is something at which a forward looking and reforming Chancellor, should take a serious look.



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The Local News

Contributors - Martin Atkins, The McIlroys,

John Pitcher, Tony Wells, Jim Green and Mike Sutcliffe 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.

A SUCCESSFUL 2013

- Three new pubs opened in the branch: Pier Three, Dover (which has sadly closed); Sir Norman Wisdom, Deal; and Rack of Ale, Dover.
- The former Lord Nelson, Walmer, consigned to conversion to flats, has recently reopened as the Light-house Inn, Walmer.
- The Carpenter's Arms, Coldred celebrated 100 years under the ownership of the same family.
- The Crispin Inn, Sandwich launched its own ale, brewed by the Mad Cat brewery
- Extra hand pumps appeared on the bars of the Anchor Inn, Wingham and the Red Lion, St. Margarets-at-Cliffe.
- The Rose Inn, and the Steak House and Dive Bar in Deal, and the Roman Quay in Dover, have started serving real ale.
- The number of regularly held annual beer festivals continues to expand.
- Our new brewery, Time & Tide, had its launch event in December.
- The Berry, Walmer won CAMRA's Kent Pub of the Year.

DOVER

Red Lion, Charlton Green: Hook Norton Lion has now established itself as the pub's second real ale alongside

London Pride – the beer's pump clip now in the form of a 3D lion's head. A month or two before Christmas customers were also able to enjoy Hook Norton's long established strong bitter – Old Hooky. Along the road at the **Louis Armstrong** winter selection so far has included Westerham Double Stout, Dark Conspiracy and Little Cracker from Gadds, and, over Christmas and New Year "king of them all" Goacher's 1066 old ale (6.7% ABV), that brewery's most singular contribution to Kent festive cheer – dark, mellow and distinctly soporific. Drinkers have also had benefit of a range of bottle conditioned ales from Gadds, Hopdaemon and Old Dairy, the latter's seasonal Snow Top (6% ABV) particularly impressive.

In Ladywell, the **Rack of Ale**, Dover's first micro pub, took off like an express train, and has proved a startling success, probably for none more so than proprietors Trish and Steve, who can never have envisaged the amount of trade generated. Offering real ale, wine and cider, it has proved a hit with many of the town's pub users, and not just real ale drinkers. Real ale choice is normally three or four different ales, mainly microbrews, both local and from afar. The evident success of the Rack might explain renewed activity in the run up to Christmas at the **Sir John**

Falstaff, or Fleur as we understand it is likely to be called if/when it reopens. Although, at the time of writing, early January, everything appears to have gone quiet again.

However, while pub activity seems to be picking up in Ladywell, other parts of Dover are not doing so well. The **Golden Lion** was closed again in January and at the time of writing remains so. In the Market Square we hear the **Ellie** has closed with rumours of it becoming an Indian restaurant – No real ale here for many years, but it's always a pity to see any pub disappear. There are also rumours over the future of the **Flotilla**, which we understand is up for sale. Also sadly gone is **Pier Three** in Bench Street, which opened with considerable fanfare last March. Never making the impact it hoped for, it finally closed its doors in December. Describing itself initially as a micro pub/bistro it perhaps fell between stools – not quite one thing, and not quite the other. Before it packed up, however, the bar did provide a venue for our November Branch meeting where we enjoyed Tír Dhá Ghlas Jimmy Riddle and Ripple Steam Best Bitter.

And Pier Three's closure will mean as well, one less outlet for the Tír Dhá Ghlas Brewery at **Cullin's Yard**, which hosted this year's Branch Christmas Social – an entertaining Saturday afternoon in mid December. Adnams Bitter and Broadside were available but most of us stuck with its very own and most excellent Jolly Roger Ale, brewed of course in memory of our much missed friend and fellow CAMRA member Roger Marples. Around Christmas/New Year we heard good reports of an addition to their range, a 6.2% stout.

Fox, Temple Ewell: The excellent Kelham Island Pride of Sheffield remains

the regular bitter, alongside two or three other real ales, among which Butcombe Bitter often features. In early May the pub will again host a beer festival in aid of Dover Rotary charities.

DEAL

A Cuckoo in the Nest Big news for Deal this winter was the launch on Saturday 14th December of the branch's third new brewery, Time & Tide Brewing. Although the business is located in Deal, it is currently using spare brewing capacity at the Ripple Steam Brewery based in Sutton – hence the above heading – but its owners intend, in due course, to set up their own plant and premises somewhere in the Deal/Walmer area. The well-organised launch event, held in the Berry, Walmer, featured each of its first three beers in cask, KeyKeg and bottle: Spratwaffler Pale Ale (3.7% ABV), Calista IPA (6.1% ABV) and Smuggler's Stout (5.2% ABV). Their brewery stall also had a range of brewery products for sale, including gift packs, glasses and clothing.

Unfortunately it coincided with our Branch Christmas Social, but that did not deter some of our members going on to the Berry afterwards to sample the new beers. Commenting on the event, Branch Pubs Officer, Tony Wells said that he arrived too late to sample the first cask of Spratwaffler which was finished in under three hours, but that, "the other two ales certainly appealed to my taste buds and the Smuggler's Stout went down a real treat: "an opinion, with which those of us who have tried the beer at Dover's Rack of Ale, will heartily concur. The day also included a beer-food pairing event, and live music in the evening – and all the Time and Tide beers were gone before the pub closed.

KeyKeg? KeyKeg is basically a beer-in-a-box dispense system, served through a keg beer font, but with some major differences. Sam, the brewer, was on hand to talk about and explain how it works. Tony tried a half of the Spratwaffler from in KeyKeg format. "Although the ale was flavoursome," he said, "it was a little cold and gassy for my palate." However, he thought was certain to appeal to those drinkers who are looking for a more flavoursome beer than those offered by the big keg brewers. (See page. 33)

The **Berry** itself continues providing an extensive and eclectic range of ale with up to ten beers available. Besides regulars, Harveys Sussex Bitter and Dark Star American Pale Ale, and well established local brews, there is always a fine selection of beers you will never have heard of from brewers you might

just have heard of. A fine example from mid December being Brew Wharf Hopfather II, described by one of our members as "an excellent product, well-kept and similar to the citrus taste of Thornbridge Jaipur, but this pips it at 6.1%."

On the Strand in Walmer the former Lord Nelson, due at one time for conversion to residential use, has been granted salvation and converted into the **Lighthouse Music & Arts Centre Bar**. Reopened a few weeks before Christmas initial plans were to see it operating from Thursdays to Sundays. We understand that its management is decidedly keen on marketing Kent produce (beer, cider, wine, etc.).

Plenty of festive cheer at the **Just Re-proach**, King Street where in mid December more Goacher's Old was to be found – "a fine end to the evening with the tastebuds sated with this," some-

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one commented. Goacher's also provides the micro-pub with Beyond Reproach. On the seafront, however, the **Three Compasses**, hardly much larger than a micro, appears to have given up trying to operate as both restaurant and pub, and is now designated as restaurant only – “we do not really have enough room for drinkers as well as diners, especially at busy times”, they say.

Elsewhere visits to the **Mill Inn** found Brakspear Bitter and Oxford Gold, Doom Bar, and Thunderbird from the Kite Brewery. The pub also regularly has real cider available. At the **Alma** the ale range continues to improve, recent beers including Thwaites Wainwright, Timothy Taylor Landlord, Ripple Steam Brewery IPA, and Harvey Sussex Best Bitter. In Queen St. at the **Sir Norman Wisdom**, as befits a Wetherspoons, beer choice has been broad and far ranging. In the run up to Christmas ales have included Mordue Oatmeal Stout, St Peter's Extra, Rooster's All Star, Liberation EPA, Thwaites Lancaster Bomber, Greene King Abbot, Spencer's Galaxy, Evan Evans Organic Gold and Stone's San Diego.

Leather Bottle, Mongeham: Interesting news from landlord Dan Warwick who tells us that he now has real ale stillaging on the bar, so beers are poured straight from the cask. Currently he has two ales on the go, but he would like to put it up to three (or more!), demand permitting.

SANDWICH AND RURAL

The Crispin Inn, High St., Sandwich: The new Mad Cat Brewery is a regular supplier, providing the pub's own Crispin Ale. Other beers have included Doom Bar, Broadside and Hogs Back Tea. In mid December also from Black Cat came Thanksgiving. Around the

same time a fine pint of Wantsum More's Head could be had at the **George & Dragon**, the **Market** was selling Whitstable Bay, Xmas Ale and Master Brew, and the **Red Cow TEA**, Wells Good Stuffing, London Pride and Doom Bar .

Endeavour, Wootton: Recent speculation of the exact status of the pub, which has not been open to the public for the best part of ten years, elicited the following information from the Dover District Council. Currently the property is still rated as a commercial premises and, following complaints that it had been converted to a dwelling, several visits have been made by Council staff since 2005. However, other than a few minor alterations, most notably the removal of the small bar top which was seen to be propped up against a wall, not much appeared to have changed, and insufficient to be considered a material change of use. Conversion to a single dwelling would require planning permission, and would be contrary to policy DM23, loss of local shops, in the Core Strategy.

The owners maintain that to run the pub as it was, was not a viable option, but whether that was because of size, location or some other reason is not specified. However, one, not dissimilar pub, on the other side of the A2 is currently showing what a small pub in a small village can achieve. The **Carpenter's Arms** in Coldred, which last year celebrated 100 years in the same family, sits very much at the heart of the community, and provides local drinkers with an excellent choice of real ale.

In the run up to Christmas the selection included Gun Dog and Spring Tide from Teignworthy, Ruby Witch from Moorhouse's, Dark Star Partridge Best Bitter, and Skinner's Lushingtons, and

for the festive period Rudgate Rudolf's Ruin and Milk Street Winter Spice. Local brews are not ignored either with the likes of Gadds, Hopdaemon and Goacher's all appearing regularly. One of our members having enjoyed an excellent pint of Goacher's Fine Light, tried a second pint mixed half and half with Goacher's Best Dark, which he considered even better.

Good reports from the **Plough & Harrow** at Tilmanstone, for both Master Brew, Late Red and Shepherd Neame Christmas Ale, and also from the **Crown** at Finglesham, a staunch supporter of local brews, where brews from Gadds, Wantsum, Whitstable, Ripple Steam and Canterbury Ales, have all been recorded. One pint of Ripple Stream IPA was so good, commented one member, "that I nearly didn't switch to Whitstable Pearl of Kent" – which also proved excellent.

At Staple we understand that the **Black Pig** has reopened, but less good news from Woodnesborough where the **Charity** has closed, after apparently going into receivership. In Eastry, as reported in our last issue, the **Bull** remains closed and apparently unused. And at Ash last rites are taking place at the former **Lion Hotel**, which following use as restaurant, and a fire, is now applying the final touches to complete conversion to residential.

Major works planned, by all accounts, at the **Royal Oak**, Capel, where permission has been granted for "erection of single storey extensions and conservatories to both sides, rear extension, installation of rear and side external stairs and balcony (existing extensions and outbuildings to be demolished)"

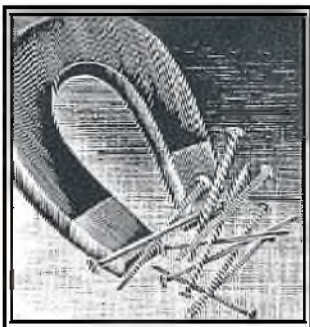
Hope, Lydden: Currently work in progress, with scaffolding erected along the road frontage, and the end nearest

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Dover demolished in line with the existing permission which included its retention as a pub. Villagers fear that the final outcome may be a conversion to residential use and were disappointed that the Council rejected an application for its registration as an Asset of Community Value on the grounds that the pub was not at the time in use. Whatever the eventual outcome, at the time of writing the pub sign remains as does the pub name along the front wall.

Late news just before we went to print. We hear of Planning Consent being granted for a new micropub in Barfrestone. It is understood that it is located on the edge of the village and is expected to open in May.

FOLKESTONE

The last Saturday in January saw a crawl around the centre of Folkestone hosted by our neighbouring branch Ashford, Folkestone and Romney Marsh, and including in our number, the owner of the new Spencer's Brewery of Ashford. Starting at the **Sam Peto** at midday, we found a choice of half a dozen ales including Westerham Grasshopper and a golden ale from Elland Brewery called *Work in Progress*. Waiting in the wings, but not yet available, was Fireside Porter, whose brewer was unfortunately not noted. Around the end of last year the pub's Christmas selection included Coachman Christmas Stocking and Bate-man's Rosie Nosey.

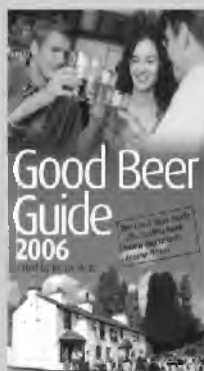
Next stop was Folkestone's latest addition to the town's real ale outlets, **Kipps' Alehouse** at the corner of the High St., just above the former **Earl Grey**, now seemingly some kind of chocolate emporium. At Kipps', all real ale is dispensed straight from the barrel, the casks being set up behind a sliding grass screen at the back of the

bar, which, except for when beer is required, is kept closed to maintain a controlled temperature. Choice was No. 7 and Dogbolter from Gadds, and Growler Augustinian, which was very good.

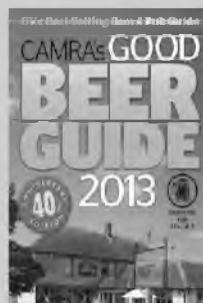
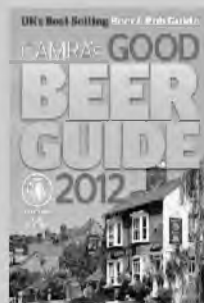
A somewhat longer walk now took us to the **East Cliff** and **Lifeboat**. The former, recently repainted in bright blue, selling Ripple Steam IPA and the all too rarely seen Hopdaemon Dominator, and the latter, three microbrews – Goody's Good Shepherd proving very palatable. A change from recent times when nationally available ales tended to dominate.

Very much retracing our steps we came to the Bayle where we found Green King IPA and Abbot, and Harveys Sussex Best at the **British Lion**, and among the selection at the **Guildhall** an excellent 4.2% ABV brew called Winter Season's Best from the Prescott Brewery. Last stop was Cheriton Place where we called in at **Chambers** and the **Firkin**. At Chambers, now offering five ales on handpump, we were able to sample local brews from Ripple Steam and the very new Time and Tide Brewery, whose Spratwaffler was available. "Crawl exhaustion" inhibits exact recollection of choice at the Firkin, but we apparently found it very satisfying.

Elsewhere in Folkestone, visits before Christmas found Bombardier and Doombar at the **East Kent Arms** and Bombardier and Courage Best at **Harvey's**. At the **Happy Frenchman**, following a long period with just one real ale there was a choice of Bombardier, Adnams and Doom Bar. In Church St. we understand that the **Pullman** is currently closed. And in Sandgate at the **Ship** beers from the excellent Long Man Brewery of Sussex now feature regularly alongside the normal range –



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CANTERBURY

A visit to the city centre in December found a fine Kentish selection at the **Bell and Crown** Palace St. – Gadds No 7, Old Dairy Gold Top, Whitstable East India Pale Ale and Tonbridge Copper Nob, which was excellent. More local beers at the **Cherry Tree** in White Horse Lane, which was selling Gadds Dark Conspiracy and of course at the **Foundry**, home of Canterbury Brewers, where their winter special, the spiced and golden Christmas Pudding Ale, was available, along with five or more others from their own brewery, which sits behind the main bar.

Phoenix, Old Dover Rd: Always an interesting and varying selection of real ales from near and far. Problems, however with the Cossack Brewery, the pub's very own micro which started production last year. Wild yeasts have been interfering with the brewing process, and the plant is currently being redesigned.

Red Lion, Stodmarsh: After many years and recent illness Robert Whigham and family after relinquished the reins. New owners took over in November and despite a few changes the unique establishment remains very much as it was. One improvement has been a widening of the beer range, which was formerly largely confined to Green King IPA. Currently in addition to GKIPA the pub offers Bombardier and one of Goody's locally brewed beers, which we understand sell extremely well.

Haywain, Bramling: It might be a few months away but planning is already underway for the pub's annual beer festival over the Spring Bank Holiday

weekend. Bigger than ever, it will take place from Friday 23rd May to Monday 26th May, with music and 35 beers and ciders.

ELSEWHERE

Sad news from the other end of the county from where we hear that Elsie of the **Queen's Arms** at Cowden Pound has gone into a care home. We understand that Elsie is unlikely to return, and that the pub's owners Admiral Taverns have closed the pub, whose future would now seem distinctly uncertain. Might we hope for a local buyout? The pub should at least be declared an asset of community value.

In Thanet, seemingly the beating heart of the micro pub revolution, we hear of three more open, or in the process of being established – at Minster, Cliftonville and St. Peters. However, on the debit side, all information suggests that the **Why Not** in Westgate is no more, following a complex series of events. Any further information gratefully received.



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PUB OF THE YEAR SELECTION

Not something to be taken lightly

In mid-March the branch will be announcing its 2014 Pub of the Year (POTY). So we thought this edition of Channel Draught would be a great opportunity, in advance of the announcement, to explain how we select our branch POTY.

- The selection process started on 1st January 2013. This is when we began to collect the beer scores submitted by CAMRA members.
- Beer scores were collected throughout the year and at the January 2014 branch meeting the scores were used to select those pubs, serving the best real ale, to appear in the 2015 edition of the Good Beer Guide.
- From the GBG candidate list we selected the top six pubs, serving the best quality real ale in the branch.
- We then asked CAMRA members from across the region to judge each of the POTY candidates. We usually have at least ten judges. This year we have 24!
- The judging process, which takes around six weeks, involves each judge visiting all the POTY candidates and scoring them on a range of categories.
- These scores are then compiled to give an overall score for each pub.
- The pub with the highest score is awarded the title of Pub of the Year and is announced at our March branch meeting.

Notes

- Each year the GBG and POTY candidate list is refreshed
- Year-on-year the competition for entry into the GBG and POTY has become more competitive.
- POTY candidate selection is based on the quality of real ale a pub serves. It is not dependent on the style of pub, the number and range of beers that the pub serves or how many times the pub has won POTY.
- Any pub, potentially, can be a POTY candidate.
- Pubs are judged on: Quality of Beer, Cider & Perry; Atmosphere, Style & Décor; Service & Welcome; Community Focus; Good Value and Sympathy with CAMRA Aims.

If you are a CAMRA member, and would like to take part in POTY judging, please contact me at pubs.officer@camra-dds.org.uk or telephone 01304 611090

Tony Wells (Pubs Officer)

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LocAle UPDATE

As we explained in our Autumn issue, besides campaigning for real ale, community pubs and consumer rights, CAMRA also campaigns on behalf of breweries, of which one of the most important elements is the LocAle scheme, which promotes locally brewed real ale. To this has more recently been added a campaign to highlight local cider makers.



Because of the unique position of our branch, in the far South-Eastern tip of England, we have adopted the definition that a "local" real ale is one that has been brewed by any Kent brewery. Currently our LocAle pubs are as set out below:-

These pubs represent some of the top pubs in our branch serving quality real ale from Kentish breweries. Following a recent review we have invited five more pubs to join the scheme:-

Plough & Harrow, Tilmanstone
Rack of Ale, Dover
Zetland Arms, Kingsdown
Cullin's Yard, Dover
Baypoint, Sandwich

If you think your local deserves to be an accredited member of the scheme we'd be interested in hearing from you. Contact Tony Wells, our Pubs Officer with all the details. Email pubs.officer@camra-dds.org.uk or telephone 01304 611090. You can find out more by going to <http://www.camra.org.uk/locale>.

LocAle Pubs – Original 14

Carpenter's Arms, Coldred
Deal Hoy, Deal
Just Reproach, Deal
Ship Inn, Deal
Jackdaw Inn, Denton
Eight Bells, Dover
Louis Armstrong, Dover
Crown Inn, Finglesham
Red Lion, St. Margarets-at-Cliffe
Crispin Inn, Sandwich
George & Dragon, Sandwich
Market Inn, Sandwich
Berry, Walmer
Blue Pigeons, Worth



In 2013, CAMRA's Kent region introduced a window sticker to promote pubs selling real cider made in the county. Look out for these stickers to tell you which pubs are selling real Kent cider. Currently our Branch has identified the following four pubs as qualifying, and has provided them with stickers to display:-

Just Reproach, Deal
Rack of Ale, Dover
Green Oak Cider works, Waldershare
Berry, Walmer

If you are aware of any others, please let us know.

Tony Wells

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ROCKING RUDOLPH

Is Santa's trusty friend becoming too weak?

The recent festive period, as we now have to call Christmas and New Year, saw the normal crop of festive beers, with many old favourites (and sometimes less than favourite) making an appearance. Among this year's offerings was Rocking Rudolph, a former Hardy and Hanson brew from Nottingham, now securely within Greene King's embrace at Bury St. Edmunds.

Greene King's treatment of its brewery acquisitions has proved distinctly disappointing. Unlike its national rival Marstons, which has tended to keep taken-over breweries operating, with the lone exception of Belhaven in Scotland, all have been closed and brewing transferred to Bury. Many well established beers have disappeared or been reduced to occasional appearance, while those that are still brewed regularly have sometimes been treated with scant respect – the once prestigious beers Old Speckled Hen and Ruddles County having been reduced respectively from 5.2% to 4.5% ABV and from 5% to 4.3% ABV.

Rocking Rudolph now appears another victim of the Greene King treatment. Trawling the internet one discovers that the original brew in its home town of Nottingham started off at a hefty 5.5% ABV – “lots of body and it 'rocked'”. Hardy and Hanson themselves reduced it to 5% ABV, perhaps with hopes of selling more, but it was still considered a very good pint. On the rare occasion that it got this far south, it was well worth seeking out. Then came the Greene King takeover, and in due course Rocking Rudolph was reduced to 4.5% ABV. This year its strength was reduced further to 4.2%, its appearance drawing the following online from drinks industry commentator Drinks Business:-

Greene King has re-launched one of its fastest-selling festive ales, Rocking Rudolph. The premium ale is described as rich, dark and fruity in character. Hoping to warm up drinkers in the winter season, Greene King's head brewer John Bexon said: "This beer is robust and full of flavour with toffee overtones. The hoppy bitterness of Rocking Rudolph goes really well with good quality pub food such as stews, rich pork pies and mince pies."

Other online comments were less favourable. General impression of being OK and quite drinkable, but no one was particularly enthusiastic – “a bit tame.....dull.....wasn't that great” – and many felt there was nothing particularly Christmassy about it. Certainly, according to this selection, robust and full of flavour it was not.

So what was Greene King's strategy here? What was the target market? On the balance of the above comments it can hardly be aimed at drinkers who know and love their real ales. Perhaps more intended for the occasional real drinker, or occasional seasonal pub user.....or the landlord who wants something a bit festive over Christmas that will not be costing him an arm and a leg – which at 4.2% we trust it did not. After all, it will only be around for a few weeks, and in party mood people will drink all kinds of things. Unfairly cynical? Perhaps so, but forty years of watching the brewing industry makes you that way.



KENT SMALL BREWERY NEWS

Canterbury Ales, Chartham 01227 732541 canterbrew@gmail.com

No news to report.

Canterbury Brewers, Canterbury 01227 455899 thefoundry@live.co.uk

A Wee Heavy (ABV 8.9%) is being aged in whiskey/Matusalem sherry and should be available for the end of February, and a malty sour cherry beer is also being aged in whiskey barrels. Experiments are underway with parti-gyle brewing, a now almost vanished technique which involves making strong ale/barley wine from the first part of the mash, then re-mashing the grain to make a lighter brew, known as 'small beer'.

Caveman, Swanscombe 07900 234644 cavemanbrewery@gmail.com

Late January will see a return of the popular Citra (ABV 4.1%), and a 3% ABV session ale, hopped with as many East Kent Goldings as possible. Bottling is hoped to start in February, and some of the stronger beers will be put into kegs. Cavedweller Porter (ABV 5.8%) is now a regular.

Goacher's, Maidstone 01622 682112 info@goachers.com

No news to report.

Goody Ales, Herne 01227 361555 karen@goodvales.co.uk

No news to report.

Hopdaemon Brewery, Newnham 01795 892078 info@hopdaemon.com

The brewery is flat out at the moment, with all beers in their range selling well.

Hop Fuzz, West Hythe 01303 230304 daryl@hopfuzz.co.uk

Fermenting capacity has been doubled and a new brew plant is planned for April. The full range of Hop Fuzz beers (now quite large) will be available for viewing on their website, to be launched in February. A Thai beer, Y'en, is being brewed under license for a few Thai restaurants/takeaways.

Kent Brewery, Birling 01634 780037 info@kentbrewery.com

A few pubs managed to get hold of the 12 month aged Twelfth Night (ABV 7.4%), and it will be available at the White Cliffs Winter Ale Festival. Other seasonals included Firestarter (ABV 4.9%), a smoked beer, and a porter (ABV 5.5%).

Mad Cat Brewery, Faversham info@madcatbrewery.co.uk

Having started brewing in December 2012, three ales are now in continuous production: Auburn Copper Ale (ABV 4.2%), Golden India Pale Ale (ABV 4.2%) and Platinum Blonde (ABV 4.2%). Various specials are planned during 2014 to 'keep things interesting'. The brewery will be open at weekends from Easter to the end of October for tastings, ad hoc tours and sales.

Nelson Brewery, Chatham 01634 832828 sales@nelsonbrewingcompany.co.uk

Business is sufficiently good for a delivery driver to have been recruited. Beers to ease the winter blues include: Shiver 'M' Timbers (ABV 4.3%), full bodied with

amber and crystal malts; Nelson's Blood (ABV 6%), strong and malty with mellow roast tones; and Black Jack (ABV 5.4%), a traditional old ale brewed with Fuggles and Goldings.

Old Dairy Brewery, Rolvenden 01580 243185 fineale@olddairybrewery.com

Currently bursting at the seams in Rolvenden, Old Dairy now has planning permission for a new brewery six times the size in Tenterden, near the Kent and East Sussex Railway. It will have a shop, and brewery tours will be run.

Pig and Porter, Tunbridge Wells 01424 893519 ask@pigandporter.co.uk

Having been cuckoo brewing in Kent and Sussex, Pig and Porter are now occupying the former Royal Tunbridge Wells brewery. Available from January will be a one off oatmeal stout (ABV 5.1%), and Penhurst Pale Ale (ABV 4.5% & hopped with Galaxy) – their most popular beer. 2014 will also see bottled offerings and alternative methods of dispense, such as mini casks and keykegs.

Ramsgate Brewery, Broadstairs 01843 868453 info@ramsgatebrewery.co.uk

The brewery shop will be holding regular CAMRA discount days – 10% discount on purchases – friend them on Facebook to keep up to date. A good reason to visit is a new arrival from the De Molen brewery in Holland: Live Long and Prosper (ABV 5.2%), pale and hoppy with aromas of lychees and guava. Once again, Gadd's No 3 Pale Ale is in the final of the Taste of Kent Awards.

Ripple Steam Brewery, Sutton 07917 037611 info@ripplesteambrewery.co.uk

No news to report.

Tir Dha Ghlas Brewery, Dover 01304 211666 iim@cullinsyard.co.uk

No news to report.

Wantsum Brewery, Hersden 0845 0405980 wantsumbrewery@googlemail.com

A busy Christmas period, with brewery tours and tasting sessions. Golgotha (ABV 5.5%), a smooth oatmeal stout, has been well received and will be at the White Cliffs beer festival. A new One Hop, using First Gold hops, is being brewed in January, and Yellow Tail (ABV 4.5%) is again available at the end of February.

Westerham Brewery, Edenbridge 01732 864427

sales@westerhambrewery.co.uk

Inspired by the World Cup, 2014 will feature international style monthly specials including Japanese Pale Ale, Brazilian Black Lager and Czech Pilsner. A number of Westerham's bottled beers are now gluten free, including Freedom Ale, which carries the Coeliac UK's Crossed Grain symbol.

Whitstable Brewery, Grafty Green 01622 851007

whitstablebrewer@byconnect.com

Nominated by Julian Brazier MP, Native Bitter (ABV 3.7%) is to be served at the House of Commons Strangers' Bar in late February. The Single Hop Ale series, the latest of which is Centennial (ABV 4.4%), has proved very popular and will be continued in 2014.



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27th Hail Bop.

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The National News

By Martin Atkins

National Pub of the Year The competition to find the CAMRA National Pub of the Year is nearly over, with the naming of the final four, unfortunately not including Kent Region winner, our very own Berry from Walmer. The eventual winner will be announced in February, so by the time you read this it might all be over. However, in the meantime, the successful contestants were as follows:

Swan With Two Necks, Pendleton, Lancs: made the final four also in 2012, and is described as a cosy village pub with local ales much in evidence.

Horse and Jockey, Nottingham Rd, Stapleford: known locally as the Jockey, a refurbishment in 2012 turned it into a traditional ale house.

Hope, West Street, Carshalton, Surrey: Community-owned with real cider always available, and regional pub of the year two years running.

Old Spot, Hill Road, Dursley, Gloucs. A former CAMRA National Pub of the Year famed for its range and quality of real ales.

Support to Block Loopholes A parliamentary debate has boosted CAMRA's fight to stop developers shutting pubs, and demolishing or using the buildings for other uses, often takeaways or supermarkets, without planning permission. Among the speakers was Southampton Itchen MP John Denham, who is fighting to save the 1930s Bittern, which faces conversion to a McDonalds. Backing CAMRA's campaign, which

would enhance the Community Right to Bid Scheme, Denham said: "The minister would be well advised to have a look at this matter now, otherwise, too many community groups will put their efforts into campaigns that are ultimately fruitless. Legal loopholes mean the intentions of parliament, which are supported on all sides of the house, are being thwarted."

Urging a change in planning law, he added that local authorities' inability to block a change of use is the biggest single factor encouraging links between major companies and pubcos, which have cost the country so many pubs. The Save the Bittern campaign hopes for a community buyout.

Community Ownership Success

Despite legislative shortcomings, determined communities continue to take over their locals. In Bamford in the Peak District villagers are celebrating the community's purchase of the Anglers Rest, from Admiral Taverns, who have offered support and assistance, and help with introductions to its industry contacts and network of suppliers. The acquisition, which will incorporate a café and post office, was made possible by a community share scheme, which attracted several hundred investors, 80% of whom have a Bamford address.

Meanwhile, as mentioned above, the community-owned Hope in Carshalton, Surrey has won CAMRA's Greater London Pub of the Year award for the second year running, followed by selection as super-regional winner. Three years ago it was facing the

prospect of becoming an Indian restaurant. With consistently high quality real ales, a good range of ciders plus a welcoming attitude, award organiser John Cryne said: "It just goes to show what a pub that is owned by the community can achieve...everything that is a good representation of a great British pub and a good example why more than 60 per cent of UK visitors want to visit a pub".

Pub Diversification In Herefordshire in November the county council and Pub is The Hub launched a Local Community Services Champions initiative, to showcase schemes where pubs have diversified to provide post offices, shops, libraries, internet cafes, etc. Staff from the New Harp Inn, Hoarwithy, and the Bells Inn, Almeley, explained how they went about diversification, and how this has improved the relationship with their

communities.

More Micropubs That East Kent speciality, the micropub, is continuing its expansion across the country. In Worcestershire the Little Alehouse in Bromsgrove, is the area's first, and as well as the backing of Redditch and Bromsgrove CAMRA, landlord Terry Bacon has received lots of support from the Bromsgrove District Council. With no jukebox, live music or fruit machines, he said, "we wanted to take it back to how it has traditionally been done and encourage the art of conversation." On Merseyside Patrick Moore claims he has opened Merseyside's first, the Liverpool Pigeon on Endbutt Lane, Crosby. Determined to champion local ales, there will always be one on, he says.

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A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Along with this year's New Year's resolutions (to lose weight, do more exercise, get organised, etc.) here's one for CAMRA members that is simple and requires little will power or commitment.

SUBMIT ONE BEER SCORE A MONTH

Beer scores are a vital tool to help the local branch of CAMRA to:

- Monitor the quality of real ale being served in pubs.
- Select those pubs that will appear in the Good Beer Guide.
- Decide which pubs will go into CAMRA's Pub of the Year Competition.
- Select the pubs that will be invited to join CAMRA's LocAle Accreditation Scheme.

It takes just one beer score a month for a pub to be considered for an entry in the Good Beer Guide and just a couple of minutes to submit a beer score, perhaps while supping your pint and using a PC, tablet, or phone. However, in 2013 only 40 of our 115 real ale pubs received enough beer scores to qualify. Doesn't seem fair – does it?

The simplest way is to log on to CAMRA's WhatPub website (<http://whatpub.com/>), search for the pub and submit your score – you will need your CAMRA membership number and password. Alternatively you can email pubs.officer@camra-dds.org.uk or text them to 07518 949587. Please include your name and membership number, pub and beer name, and any appropriate comments.

BEER SCORING EXPLAINED The CAMRA's National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) rates the quality and condition of the real ale based on a simple marking system that runs from a 0 to 5, including half-marks.

Score	CAMRA Definition	Drinker's Likely Reaction
0	No Real Ale	"Let's find another pub"
0.5	Undrinkable – take it back or can't finish it	"Surely the bar staff should have known" <i>"Disgusting, Revolting, Off"</i>
1 - 1.5	Barely drinkable or with considerable resentment.	"They'd have to pay me to drink this" <i>"Inferior, Second-Rate, Indifferent"</i>
2 - 2.5	Average. Competently kept but doesn't inspire	"OK, but nothing to write home about. Glad to finish it, and try something else" <i>"Ordinary, Acceptable, Run of the Mill"</i>
3 - 3.5	Good beer in good form. You may cancel plans to move to the next pub.	"Reasonably happy to drink this beer all night. I'll tell my friends about it" <i>"Enjoyable and Lovely,"</i>
4 - 4.5	Very Good. Excellent beer in excellent condition. You will not move to another pub.	Hmmm, I wonder if I have time for another pint or two. My friends <u>have</u> to try this. <i>"Excellent, First-Class, Superior"</i>

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 5 | Perfect, the best you'll find.
A seasoned drinker will
award this score very rarely. | "Nectar of the Gods! Wild horses
wouldn't drag me from the pub.
" <i>Superlative, Outstanding, Stunning</i> " |
|---|--|---|

Notes

- Score the quality and condition of the real ale, irrespective of whether you like the style
- Don't forget you can mark in halves. If you can't decide between, say 3 and 3.5, use the lower.
- Only score 0.5 if you take the ale back and it is not replaced or refunded with a good grace.
- Pubs with a good beer reputation should average 3.0 to 3.5 – A GBG quality pub, 3.5 plus
- 5 should only be scored when the ale is truly "out of this world", perhaps once or twice a year

Tony Wells

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RAMBLINGS & RUMBLINGS

Tues 5 Nov – Alma, Deal (*Thwaites Wainwright, Landlord, Ripple Steam Green Hop, Harvey's Best*) Distinctly improving beer range, more interesting than I recall from my last visit. Only a few punters late afternoon, but all drinking real ales I think.

Sat 9 Nov – East London: Attempted Leyton Orient Supporters' Club (GBG listed) but shut around 9pm. **William IV Leyton**, *the Brodie Tap* (*Brodie Kiwi, Steel City The Boos*). **King Harold** (*London Pride*)

Fri 15 Nov Branch Daddlums match at Crabble Mill. Fortunately exertions assisted by pints of Gadds specially laid on.

Sat 16 Nov – Wetherspoons crawl: together with AFRM Branch. **Eight Bells** (*Strathaven Claverhouse Red, Bath Foresters, + others*). **Norman Wisdom** (*Liberation EPA, Mordue Oatmeal Stout, Thwaites Lancaster Bomber + others*). **Ingoldsby** (*Mad Cat Jet Black, Wantsum Golgotha + others*) Those made of sterner stuff then proceeded to Ashford etc. Good beer quality throughout.

Sun 17 Nov – Crispin (*Crispin bitter, from Mad Cat, Doom Bar, Broadside, TEA*).

Golden Lion (London Pride) I like the idea of the board outside naming the ale they're serving plus the price and strength. Wish others would follow. But, ahem – the board outside said 'Black Sheep', but what's a real ale between friends!

Tues 19 Nov – Royal Oak Nonington (*Wantsum Dynamo, Caledonian Flying Scotsman, Land Lord*) Quiet pub at quiet time of year but good beer quality

Thurs 21 Nov – Black Horse, Densole (*No real ale*) But walker- friendly on miserable day, no-one else around

Fri 22 Nov to Crabble Mill for Paul Skelton's Pub Lecture. Real ale was available!

OH NO, DECEMBER AGAIN! First ten days or so usually OK, but from then on anything can happen!

Sat 7 Dec – Thanks to high speed trains, easily managed short walk in the Chilterns on the Ridgeway Path. **Greyhound, Wigginton, Herts** (*Tring Sidepocket, Spitfire, Landlord*). **Crown, Wetherspoons Berkhamsted** (*Tring Santa's Helper, O'hannon's Goodwill*) Then of course **Bree Louise** (*Windsor & Eton Mandarin, Dark Star Winter Meltdown*)

Sun 8 Dec – George, Belsize Park (*Windsor & Eton Guardsman*) Food disappointing, but serves me right for choosing to eat in 'upmarket' venues

Tues 10 Dec – Tonbridge For consultations with former work pal, now living in Tunbridge Wells.

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Humphrey Bean, Wetherspoons (*Long Man Long Blonde, Long Man American Pale, Hog's Back Advent*) Only entry for Tonbridge in current GBG. Original idea was for town crawl (*Ah, that kind of consultation - Ed*), but wasn't much point going elsewhere. 'Might be other pubs selling good ale' suggested my drinking partner. 'Yes, but even if there are', said I, 'We'll be paying nearly twice the price!'

Thurs 12 Dec – Royal Oak, Nonington (*Wantsum Figgy Pudding, Caledonian Flying Scotsman, Land Lord*). **Plough & Harrow, Tilmanstone** (*Late Red, Master Brew*) Xmas Ale returning soon. Timely arrival at dusk after cross country walk from previous mentioned. Surprisingly lively regulars' pub. Returning to town, made for the **Rack**, but too crowded. December OYBs* maybe. (*Once a Year Bores – species to be found cluttering up pubs at this time of year.) So on to a surprisingly quiet.....**Eight Bells** (*Essex Santa's Growler + others*)

Mon 16 Dec – Crispin (*Crispin Bitter, Mad Cat Thanksgiving, Broadside, Doom Bar*) Attempted **George & Dragon** but full of office party types sipping wine and coffee. Only barman fiddling with coffee, so didn't wait. **Market** – (*Whitstable Bay, Xmas Ale, Master Brew*) **Red Cow** (*TEA, Wells Good Stuffing London Pride, Doom Bar*) Apart from busy G&D, pubs all very quiet. Crispin and Market had 'manic' weekends apparently. Typical of this exasperating time of year. Roll on January 6th!

Fri 20 Dec – Zetland (*Late Red, Whitstable Bay, Spitfire, Master Brew*) Busy for lunch on nice sunny day, with I think, regulars rather than OYBs. Didn't eat but perched on a bar stool. **Berry** (*Canterbury GB + others*)

Sat 21 Dec – Rack of Ale (*Mad Cat Golden IPA, Loddon Hullabaloo, Pig & Porter porter, Tribute*) Almost thought better of coming here at 7pm, thinking would be packed out, but wasn't. Soon began to fill up though. **Louis Armstrong** (*Gadds 5, Gadds Little Cracker, Skrimshander*) Left at 9.30, Hordes hadn't yet descended!

Sun 22 Dec – Ship, Sandgate (*Incubus, Long Man Old Man, Summer Lightning, GKIPA, Dark Star Hophead*) **Sam Peto** (*Coachman Christmas Stocking, Bate-man's Rosie Nosey*)

Mon 23 Dec – Fox (*Butcombe Bitter, Rosie Nosey, Wells Good Stuffing, Pride of Sheffield*) Pub busy with Monday evening bingo players 'til 9.30.

Sun 29 Dec – Archer (*Brakspear bitter, Young's Winter warmer*) **Kittywake** (*Hobgoblin, Ringwood Best, Pedigree*)

Tues 31 Dec – Butcher's Arms, Herne (*Copper Top, Adnams IPA & Old*) Lunch-time session (Was tucked up in bed by 11!) First visit here for ages, to World's first micropub.

You can follow us on Twitter: @DDSCAMRA.

We'll be using Twitter to publish information about the pubs and real ale events in our branch area as well as other stuff we think you might be interested in. Let us know what you would like us to publish information about.



CHANNEL VIEW

MICRO HEAVEN As we remark elsewhere in this issue, to state that pubs are not what they were is hardly an observation of great perceptivity. It is patently obvious, with the old standard, the local boozer, back street or otherwise, starting to become something of a very rare bird. Whatever the future holds it looks like being significantly different from what we have known.

Expressing his thoughts on the subject recently has been Martyn Hillier, owner of the country's first micro pub, the Butcher's Arms at Herne, and inventor of the concept. Speaking to the January edition of CAMRA's newspaper *What's Brewing* he predicted that large chains selling off pubs would lead to an explosion of micropubs, with the UK very possibly seeing tens of thousands of them.

Martyn who opened the Butchers Arms in 2005, claims disposal of pubs will clear the way for smaller operations to flourish. Responding to news of Marston's selling off 202 properties, he likened it to lumberjacks going into the forest: "Woodmen go into the forest and find large, old oaks which aren't growing very well, but they're cutting out the light for all the smaller trees beneath them. By chopping them down and clearing the canopy, it allows sunlight to get down to the saplings below and they're going to have a chance to flourish."

Martyn urged tenants in pubs being sold or closed to consider opening a micro-pub, rather than taking on another traditional house. He said: "I obviously feel sorry for those licensees who find themselves losing their homes and businesses, but micropubs are a great op-

portunity for them. They have the expertise, they have the licence, they know the locals, and regulars will follow them to the new pubs. It's a case of finding a suitable property and doing some relatively simple paperwork. All they're doing is getting rid of a bad landlord."

The micropub concept, a small pub exclusively serving real ale, no lager or wine, with no music, fruit machines or food, has seen an explosion in the last couple of years as we in East Kent can amply testify. Although Martyn opened the Butcher's Arms in 2005 it was after his address to CAMRA's AGM in Eastbourne in 2009, that things really took off. Since then around 40 have set up and another five were due to open by the end of 2013.

Elaborating on the prospect of tens of thousands appearing across the country Martyn said: "There are more than 1,000 microbreweries in the country and there's no reason there can't be 10 micropubs for each of them. There were just four microbreweries in Kent 25 years ago and now we have 25 – the same sort of explosion will happen with micropubs, but I think it's going to happen quicker – it's easier and cheaper to set up a micropub than a brewery."

Sounds ambitious? Well, do the calculations. At the moment in East Kent we have about fifteen. As well as the Butchers Arms there are half a dozen in Thanet, a couple each in Whitstable, Herne Bay and Folkestone, and others in Deal, Dover and Wye. A matching increase in micropubs to what we have

seen for microbreweries would raise the current East Kent total to sixty for a population of something under half a million. Multiplied across the UK's 60 million plus population and we end up with something over ten thousand micropubs.

Of course it all might be a flash in the pan, and the style does not suit everyone, requiring a certain conviviality, as might be found along the bar counter in an old fashion public bar. In fact the micropub has about it very much of the old style public bar – lots of talk and chat and downing of pints. Very different from the favoured option of the pubcos and large brewers where food plays a dominant role.

However, at the moment there are no signs of any slowing of the pace. Our Branch's own two micropubs show every indication of being in rude health. Deal's Just Reproach, now over two years old, has established itself as an essential part of the town's drinking environment, while as we point out in Local News, in Dover the Rack of Ale has set off with express like speed to confound all speculations. The micropub is the most radical and original concept to be seen in the pub industry for decades. We applaud the enthusiasm of its pioneers and wish them every success.

A CERTAIN TIME OF YEAR It's that time of year again – or more correctly by the time you read this, it was that time of year a month or two back. That time of year, when wandering round to your local for a pint or two in the evening, you find the whole place occupied by strangers. Forget that quiet table by the window, handy for reading the paper, or the comfy corner at the end of the bar, they will have already been taken by those who got there before

you. Is it maybe, you wonder, the night of the pub's Christmas draw and pay out of Christmas Club, or has the landlord donned a Father Christmas outfit and is offering everyone free beer? This year, it might even have crossed your mind that this was the vanguard of the expected influx from Romania and Bulgaria. Of course, it is none of these, but a sighting of that rare species, the once a year pub user. Across the country, in their hundreds of thousands, they emerge blinking from their burrows for the annual festive revel – as they will next year, and the next year, and the year after that, and the year after that, because the pub will always be there waiting for them, won't it?

KEY KEG A recent development in the keeping and dispensing of beer has been Key Keg. The following is a brief outline of its main characteristics:-

- Unlike cask ale, no air comes into contact with the beer, so it remains at its freshest for weeks.
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Essentially it is bottle conditioned ale in a larger format. Reports so far suggest that flavour can be very good but beers tend to be cold and rather gassy.



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BREWING IN VICTORIAN DOVER

A tour of Messrs Leney's Dover Brewery in 1888

The original from which the following has been adapted, appeared in the Dover Express and East Kent News, Friday, 20 April, 1888. and was a report by one of the paper's staff of a conducted tour of the brewery premises, whose site was roughly approximate to that occupied subsequently by the now closed cinema/nightclub in Castle Street and multi-storey car park at the rear.

"A good sample of the commercial enterprise of Dover is afforded by Messrs. Alfred Leney and Co's Phoenix Brewery, which is situated in Dolphin Lane, a few paces from the Market Place. It is the boast of this firm, that their Dover Ales, which are widely celebrated, are brewed from malt and hops only, and as it is their custom to purchase both hops and barley of East Kent growth, it may be truly said that they do their best to keep trade in the district."

The brewery was a substantial operation, using annually some hundreds of pockets of hops and its furnaces burning between 700 and 800 tons of coal and coke. It also undertook its own malting in four large malt houses within the brewery site, which during the malting season from September to May, consumed "several thousands of quarters of barley". It was with the malting activities that the tour commenced, and the Express reporter was taken round by Mr. A. Leney, junior, who took particular interest in that part of the business.

The malt houses were distributed around the site, and described as abutting on Castle Street, adjoining the east end of the brewery, occupying the former Poulter's brewery in Russell Street, and lying between St. James' Place and the Gas Works yard. The last being described as "so well arranged that the whole process is seen at a glance, and of this one I shall give a more particular description."

The Phoenix Brewery 1890



The barley arrived by farmers' wagons, and was hoisted to the top of the malt house, where the malting process started by steeping it in water. After forty to sixty hours it was thrown in a deep heap on the floor for couching – the generation of heat and sweat to induce germination. The following day it was spread over a marble-like polished cement floor where the appearance of tiny rootlets indicated that germination had commenced. The grain was turned and spread, and when the maltster judged that the right stage had been reached, germination was checked

by kiln-drying, followed by storage in large bins in the top storey.

The reporter then moved on to the actual brewing process, shown to him by the brewer Mr. Hall. Starting in a large room facing the Market Place, the malt was crushed by steel rollers, having already been sent past a fan to clear away the malt dust, and passed over powerful magnets to remove bits of metal, nails, etc. When about 50 quarters had been processed it was let down by



hoppers into the mash tuns on the floor below, where it was mixed with water – the whole lot being agitated mechanically by rakes fixed on revolving arms. When sufficient infusion had occurred the liquor, or wort, was run off and the remaining grain infused again, but at a higher temperature, to extract more from the malt, until sufficiently exhausted it was cleared away and disposed of as animal feed.

The wort was then pumped into heated coppers, and hops added – a boiling fountain in the centre of each vessel circulating the liquid to bring out their full flavour – and then to the cooling room, large and airy with ventilating shutters and a northern aspect, to ensure cooling was rapid to prevent the chemical change that would cause acidity, or foxing. Traditionally carried out in shallow vessels, these had recently been replaced by two patent refrigerators, which each cooled 40 barrels of hot wort per hour, by running it over a series of pipes filled with cold water: the heated water not being wasted, but carried by pipe over Dolphin Lane to scald the casks in the cask yard.

Transferred to yet another room, and into large square vessels, yeast was added and fermentation commenced, the temperature being maintained at 50 - 60 degrees, by a coil of copper tubing containing cold water immersed in the wort. When fermentation was complete, the yeast on the top was extracted: part being retained for future brewing, but most to be sold – local bakers taking some, while a considerable portion, having been put through a yeast press to remove liquid, ended up on the continent in the form of a stiff curd.

Brewing now complete the beer was casked and stored:

“When the cleansing process has been finished the brewing is practically done, and subsequently the manufactured article finds its way into innumerable casks, filling an almost interminable underground area of which outsiders could hardly form any idea. Here in ‘cool grot’ is kept the stock-in-trade, and by the aid of artificial light may be seen the long rows of casks, barrels and hogsheads filling the space underneath the brewery. Following on, we go down a passage intersected with short headings running in both directions, also full of barrels, and farther away still under the malt house we come to a vast area stored in the same way. Turning in another direction we come to another. In the passages there are smooth iron

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rails laid, down which the barrels are slid to their destination. While I was wondering how many barrels could be stored away in these recesses we came upon the clerk of the cellars at his desk, and in a few seconds he was able to tell us that the quantity in store at that time was 3,000 barrels."



The reporter then went on to describe the "stowed piles of fragrantly perfumed hop pockets, all bearing the Kent brand" in the hop loft; the brewery's water, "pronounced by some as equal to Burton water" and obtained from deep artesian wells driven down through a hundred feet of chalk to "a most copious and perfectly pure supply" from a flint bed; and the two modern steam engines which provided the brewery with power.

The visit finished via the counting house, and across Dolphin Lane to the cask yard, where were gathered the empties as they returned from customers, and where each cask is scoured and scalded. On the Castle Street side of the yard was the cooperage, where casks were repaired, and across the lane the stables where were kept twelve horses employed in the vans in use at Dover. There were also four at Folkestone and four in London.

He concludes:

"Thus it will be seen that the establishment of Messrs. Leney and Co. is a very important local industry, which finding work for a large number of employees, and generating considerable trade places the Phoenix Brewery as another of those thriving businesses which helps to increase the commercial prosperity of Dover."

Many decades after Leney's disappeared, the brewery name lives on with these two limited edition model railway wagons produced by Carriage & Wagon Models. The one on the left is now sold out and examples are appearing on Ebay. However, a few remaining examples of the one of the right are still available at £13.95
<http://www.carriageandwagonmodels.com/gun-brewery---folkestone-van-546-p.asp>





A VISIT TO WALES AND THE WEST

**Martin Atkins describes a recent visit to Wales
in search of Britain's unspoilt pubs**

Last year's annual autumn trip to visit a few of the remaining unspoilt public houses was set for early November. The composition of the group has varied over the years, but a regular member was the late Roger Marples, whose accounts of such trips has featured in previous editions of *Channel Draught*. In relating the 2013 trip I hope I can reasonably match Roger's excellent observations and descriptions.

The 2013 group comprised myself, Dave Green and his son Mike. Dave and I left Dover at 7am on Friday and having picked up Mike from Maidstone, it was straight on to the M20, M25 and M4 heading for Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire in the far west of Wales. The end of the M4 came at about midday, our journey having taken us across the Severn and into rain, and our immediate concern was to find a good pub and some good ale.

After one or two misdirections and some tortuous wet and winding lanes, our requirements were supplied by the Cennen Arms in the small hamlet of Trap, on the edge of the Black Mountains. Noted for its National Inventory wood and glass surround to the bar, it does not exactly conform to the "divisional" class, but satisfied our need for a drink, a rest and a bite to eat. Through the bar window we looked out at Carreg Cennen – a ruined Medieval castle about half a mile away which sits atop a steep hill very much in the manner of those described in the early chapters of the *Hobbit* as having been built for no good purpose at all. There was just one real ale available, but very good, Slumbering Monk from the revived Joule's brewery of Market Drayton, and we stayed for a couple of pints.

Our evening destination being Fishguard, several hours away, we left Trap sometime after 2pm and headed north and west. We stopped for a short break late afternoon at Boncath and the Boncath Inn. Again a fairly standard village pub but older than its outside might suggest with inside heavy wooden beams and a flagstone floor. We were the only customers but the landlord told us that he'd just got rid of a wedding party who were expected back that evening. Beers were Abbot and Doom Bar, and we all settled for the latter, although now a shadow of its former self of ten or twelve years ago, and no match for our earlier beer from Joule's.

We arrived at Fishguard just as it was getting dark and found our lodgings on a steep hill in Goodwick on the far side of the bay. Later than we intended we quickly settled in before calling a taxi to take us to our evening's main destination, Bessie's (aka the Dyffryn Arms), about five miles away through more winding country lanes, in the isolated hamlet of Pontfaen.

Bessie's is of a style sometimes called parlour pubs, and consists of a single room set around with chairs and low tables with beers served via a hatch with sliding glass doors in one wall. There is just one draught real ale, Bass, which to everyone's best knowledge has ever been the case, the beer being drawn off into a

glass jar as required from barrels behind the hatch – that evening by a young woman who seemed very possibly a relation. Bessie, whose exact age is uncertain, sat in the main room next to a wood burning stove to which from time to time she would pay attention with a poker or add additional logs.

Draught Bass is a rarity these days and can often be disappointing, but Bessie's was in perfect condition and very good. We found seats not far from the serving hatch and had barely sat down when we were joined by a local beef farmer who remembered Dave from an earlier visit. They were soon in deep conversation discussing among others things the qualities of badger meat, and drinking glasses of raw egg. In total there were about ten to a dozen

people in the room and not much space for many more, and welsh was being spoken as much as English. I said to the beef farmer that I always associated Welsh speaking more with central and north Wales. He said: "Oh they're just.....," and I'm not sure of the word he used, but I don't think it was particularly complimentary.

We had arranged a taxi back at 11.30, Bessie having said we could stop until midnight. However from mid evening the pub emptied, and having consumed considerable quantities of Bass, and not wishing to outstay our welcome we rebooked it earlier – sufficient to allow us to call in at a pub near to our lodgings. I forget its name but we found there Felinfoel Double Dragon, and observed with some regret it starting to fill up around normal closing time – our earlier beer consumption and the following day's driving schedule necessitating an early night.

Saturday, and after a hearty breakfast we were away at about 9.30 heading back to England and the Boat at Ashleworth on the Severn, where we arrived early afternoon. We had hoped to get there on last year's spring Beery Boater trip but never made it; and if the river was in the state we found it that day, the moorings indicated by just a couple of posts sticking out of the water, we could not have stopped anyway.

The pub, however, proved excellent. At the end of a lane which goes nowhere else other than a few houses, a church and a farm, it sells half a dozen real ales and a number of ciders – and appears to draw plenty of custom, including walkers and cyclists. The building itself is another example of external appearance disguising considerable age. Inside there are oak beams and flag-stoned floors and the room, off the bar, where we sat, contained an old cast iron range and bread oven.

Beers were on gravity and all from micros, and at least three were changed during our stay. Several came from the Bristol Beer Factory, and other breweries included RCH, Abbeydale and Crouch Vale. Various snacks were available among which the pasties seemed particularly in demand: I enjoyed a 'Tinminers' – traditional



pasty one end, and apple the other. We stayed till about 4pm before leaving for our night's stop at Upton on Severn.

Lodgings found in the main street, and bags deposited, we took in sustenance at a nearby curry house before taking a taxi to that notable cider establishment, the Monkey House at Defford. Wishing to go on later to the Three Kings at Hanley Castle we arranged for the taxi driver to come back and take us there at 9pm and then return us to Upton at the end of the evening.

The Boat, Ashleworth



The Monkey House is unique. The main building is an old half timbered thatched cottage from which cider is dispensed straight from the barrel via the open top half of a stable type door – a shelf across its width acting as a bar top. Behind are the barrels of cider, and the ceramic tankards of regular customers. Benches and seats are available outside in the garden, or inside in the adjoining former bakery. The weather having turned decidedly chilly, and the rain we had avoided all day having finally caught us up, we opted for the second and squeezed into a corner recently vacated – the chairs and benches around the edge of the room otherwise fully occupied.

We tried both the medium cider and the dry, the latter produced specifically for the Monkey House, and which by general opinion we considered the better. Some way through our stay a gentleman of considerable proportions joined the group. He appeared a regular, and brought with him a pork pie to match his own size, a bag of batter scratchings, and a can of coke. The first two he handed round, the coke he drank himself, suggesting that perhaps he had been warned off cider.

Our taxi driver being delayed we were somewhat late at the Three Kings, where as chance would have it, a beer festival was in full swing. There being no seats in the small front bar, we found space in the crowded back bar where entertainment was being provided by a three piece country/folk outfit called the Malvern Hillbillies. Some 35 micro brewed ales were available, most set up on stillage in a small side room, and all but the four strongest priced at a very competitive £2.60 a pint.

The pub was CAMRA National Pub of the Year in 1993 and runner up in 1998, and dates in part from the 16th century. It has a somewhat ramshackle air, and has eschewed much of the adornment and modernisation that so much of the industry feel obligatory. For the last hundred years it has been run by the same family. We stayed the rest of the evening until collected by our taxi and returned to our lodgings.

Another hearty breakfast, Sunday, and the return trip to Kent, with a planned stop lunchtime at the Black Horse, Checkendon, not far from the Thames at Goring, though several hundred miles in style from the traditional Thames Valley pub. We

arrived sometime after midday, our journey interrupted and delayed by a number of Remembrance Sunday services encountered along the way, and found the pub already full of customers prepared to take a little time and trouble.

The pub lies deep in the countryside along a narrow lane with few other habitations, and the normal traveller would be unlikely to come across it. Again it is of considerable age with

flagstoned floors and wooden beams,

and comprises several rooms. The excellent West Berkshire Brewery provides much of the beer: that day Old Father Thames, a pale ale at 3.4% ABV, and our choice, Good Old Boy a well balanced 4.3% ABV traditional bitter. A third beer came from the local Rebellion Brewery. We stayed for an hour or so, but perhaps not as long as we might have liked, the hire car needing to be returned that evening. On leaving we found an ancient Rudge motorbike had been parked outside, presumably being given its Sunday outing by one of the pub's customers.

And that was about that. Further delay by another Remembrance Service in Pangbourne, and having dropped Mike off in Maidstone Dave and I got back to Dover shortly before 6pm and just in time to return the car.

Mike Green admires a vintage Rudge motorbike outside the Black Horse, Checkendon



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GOACHERS

A look at the Kentish pioneer micro-brewery

CAMRA's Beer magazine recently took a look at the early days of micro-brewing and what happened to its pioneers. One such locally was Goacher's of Tovil on the edge of Maidstone.

Goacher's, as many Kent real ale drinkers will be aware, celebrated its 30th birthday last year. It was one of about 30 micro breweries that started in 1983 and is one of the few that is still in existence. Its creator, Phil Goacher, who still runs the operation, spoke to Will Hawkes about the early days.

The original brewing equipment is still in use and was put together by himself and a stainless steel engineer, both of whom had just been made redundant and were taking their first steps running their own businesses. Having established a brewery he then had to brew the beer, something he had been doing as a home brewer for many years, and perhaps more challengingly find a market. This was the era when despite the growing number of free outlets, the trade was still dominated by a handful of nationally operating breweries, each with their own jealously guarded tied estates. And of course there were mistakes. Phil recalled how, in trying to save "a few quid" they used valves not intended for brewing. They worked fine but could not be sterilised properly, and had to be replaced.



Phil Goacher

Phil's first beer was Maidstone Ale (4.1% ABV), quite bitter and dark, somewhere between a bitter and a dark mild in colour, and was designed during his home brewing days. For a year it was their only brew, and was then joined by Fine Light (3.7% ABV). Maidstone Ale was renamed Best Dark and Phil's recollection is that for many years these remained their only two beers, although some of us seem to remember drinking Goacher's 1066 Old Ale in the mid 1980s. Best Dark and Fine Light are still produced: the latter an easy drinking quaffing ale of excellent flavour, and the former, probably more of an acquired taste, but a very satisfying pint.

"We're astonishingly conservative," said Phil, whose initial motivation was partly driven by the wish to maintain Maidstone's brewing tradition, and commenting on their seeming reluctance to expand the range, he added, "We've never introduced a beer unless it was for an anniversary, I think we've got six or seven now. Most breweries seem to have lots these days before they've even brewed one."

The early years, though, were not easy, and the introduction of Gordon Brown's small breweries tax relief in 2002, was a watershed. "Until progressive duty came in we were just getting by. We were scraping around to find money to pay the VAT. Because we're comparatively small, there wasn't a lot of leeway. Then progressive duty came along and suddenly it was: 'Wow! We're making some money!'"

However, Phil sees progressive duty as a mixed blessing. The number of small breweries might be multiplying but the number of outlets is not. In fact with the current rate of pub closures, and large breweries buying up good free trade, it is actually dwindling he reckons. Although some current trends are optimistic. "One bright spot in Kent, and I think it's peculiar to Kent, are these little pubs that have started up – the micropubs. They all specialise in locally produced beers. Now micros have their own outlets! It's quite staggering. That's what we needed."

Phil is 69 and expects to hand over to his son Howard within the next year. It is difficult, though, to envisage that his brewing days will end there. Fundamentally he enjoys brewing, even when he has to get up at 6am to go to the brewery: "There's a satisfaction that goes right back to my home brewing days," he said. "When the fermentation looks good I'm happy – when it looks dodgy, I'm oooohhhh!"

Those brewers who really love brewing will always have a fighting chance, he suggests. "Brewing has been very kind to us. Even when it's hard you're your own boss. I'd do it all over again. Would I do it differently? I wouldn't change much. There have been headaches, but it's been very enjoyable."

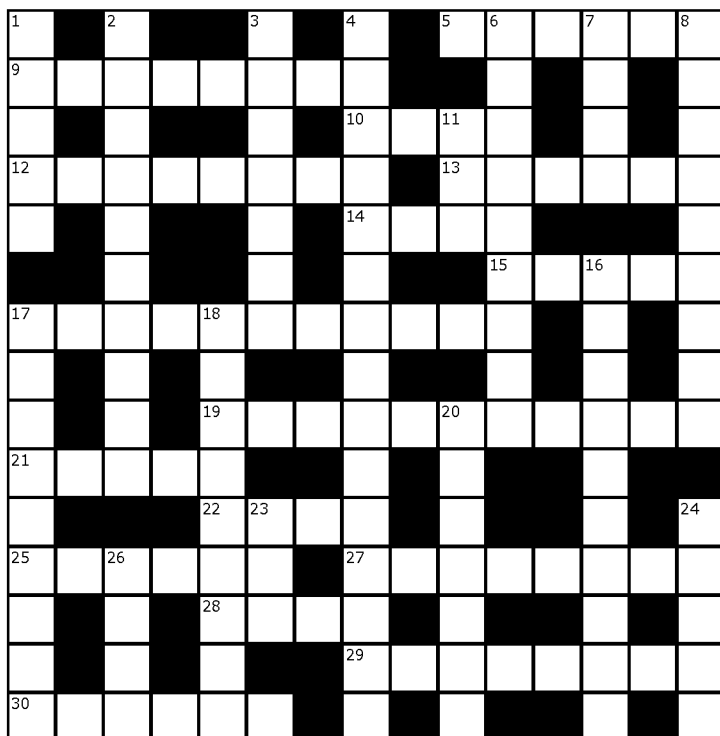
The 2014 Good Beer Guide describes Goacher's as follows:-

A traditional brewery that uses only malt and Kentish hops for all its beers. Phil and Debbie Goacher have concentrated on brewing good wholesome beers without gimmicks. Two tied houses and around 30 free trade outlets in the mid-Kent area are supplied. Special is brewed for sale under house names. Seasonal beers are available.

- **Real Mild Ale (OG 1033, ABV 3.4%)** Rich, flavourful with moderate roast barley and generous helping of chocolate malt
- **Fine Light Ale (OG 1036, ABV 3.7%)** Pale, golden brown bitter with a strong, floral, hoppy aroma and aftertaste. A hoppy and moderately malty session beer.
- **Special/House Ale (OG 1037, ABV 3.8%)**
- **Best Dark Ale (OG 1040, ABV 4.1%)** Dark-coloured but light and quaffable in body, with hints of caramel and chocolate malt.
- **Crown Imperial Stout (OG 1044, ABV 4.5%)** Good, well-balanced roasty stout, dark and bitter with just a hint of caramel – lingering, creamy head.
- **Gold Star Strong Ale (OG 1050, ABV 5.1%)** Strong pale ale
- **Old 1066 (OG 1066, ABV 6.7%)** A CAMRA beer of the year in 2012

CROSSWORD

BY TRISHA WELLS



A mostly straightforward crossword this time

Across

5. Doing the job in the mean time (6)
9. Coastal city in N.E. Libya (8)
10. Audiological equipment not working (4)
12. Represented (8)
13. "In unbeatable; in victory unbearable." Churchill on Lord Montgomery (6)
14. Stolen goods (4)
15. Official proclamation (5)
17. One who males music using a keyboard (5,6)
19. Tool for gauging size (4,7)
21. It takes two! (5)
22. Circumstance (4)
25. Became friends again (4,2)
27. Mutinied and made one sick (8)
28. Eye problem (4)
29. One plate (anag.) (8)
30. Go by, as time does (6)

Down

1. Place of residence (5)
2. Antirrhinum (10)
3. Excursion (3,4)
4. Weight gained (6-3,6)
6. Canteen (9)
7. Member of Monty Python (4)
8. "A lively expectation of favours to come." Sir Humphrey Appleby, *Yes Prime Minister* (9)
11. Fuss and bother (3)
16. Protection from the cold (10)
17. Map on time (anag.) (9)
18. Multi-limbed Cephalopod molluscs (9)
20. Raise a Dalek (7)
23. Plump (3)
24. Poisonous snake (5)
26. Opera star (4)

Answers on Page 61

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THE 'PRINCE OF WALES'

Birmingham

Martin Atkins pays tribute to this popular Birmingham city centre pub

There was a time when the vast majority of pubs seemed to conform to very much a single format: public bar with bare floorboards a few chairs and the odd table, a carpeted and better furnished saloon bar, and no sign of food beyond crisps, pickled eggs and pork pies. No need to say that things have changed, but some pubs seem to have emerged from the refurbishment jungle comparatively unscathed. One such, which has defied

both the worst excesses of such "modernisation", as well as the recent haemorrhaging of pub business, that has seen so many consigned to the licensed trade's equivalent of the knackers yard, is the Prince of Wales, Cambridge Street, in the centre of Birmingham.

A stone's throw from the heart of the city's now cleansed and spruced up canal system, it has long been known to the Beery Boaters, who visited it once again on last Autumn's trip (see page 50). Their earliest recollections, though, of both it and the adjacent canals were very different: the former part of a down at heel 19th century terrace, and the latter variably described as a muddy ditch or stinking hole.

For many years it was run by the lovely but formidable Irish Nancy. On one notable trip in the mid 1980s, our intrepid canal enthusiasts arrived at the Prince of Wales late one spring evening, having struggled up Aston and Farmers Locks as the gloom descended. The pub, by then standing alone in an area otherwise de-



molished and awaiting the construction of the International Conference Centre, was crowded, almost to overflowing. They managed to squeeze into the back bar, but it appeared not quite the average night. Among the customers in the other bar was spotted England test cricketer Bob Willis.

"What time do you close, Nancy?" asked one of the Beery Boaters as the first round was ordered. "Sure, 'tis half past ten", she replied. At a quarter to eleven beer was still being served and still more at eleven. Closing time was once again enquired about, to which Nancy replied: "I make an exception on two nights a year, one is St. Patrick's Night and the other is my birthday, and sure, it's not St. Patrick's Night!" Nancy left the Prince of Wales some fifteen to twenty years ago, and for a while run another pub some streets away on the other side of the canal. Apparently she still visits the Prince of Wales from time to time.

Subsequently, attempts have been made to modernise the Prince of Wales – the two bars were knocked into one, and more recently the outside has been painted a kind of sepia grey and the bar given some fancy decoration including a variety of ornate lampshades. However the essence of the pub remains. With wooden settles alongside the windows and a selection of half a dozen or so real ales, featuring normally mild, it attracts a wide spread of custom of all ages and types. One of Britain's great pubs.



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'BIRMINGHAM CALLING DANNY BOY'

The Beery Boaters End of Year Trip and Stag Reunion 2013

Normally the September/October Beery Boaters' Canal Trip is a one-boat affair, but back in 2003 we were accompanied by a very good friend, 'Shep' (John Shepherd), who, about to take the very serious step of engaging in Holy Matrimony, decided to have a final fling as a single man by cruising the Birmingham Canal Navigations with a boatload of his friends, otherwise known as sympathisers. It was Bernard Miles who said, in his rustic monologues, that 'Marriage be a blessing to a few, a curse to many and a great uncertainty to all!'. Be that as it may, Shep and Leslie have had a very happy ten years together and to celebrate he decided that he'd like an anniversary repeat voyage. So, leaving his good lady behind and rounding up as many of his original crew as he could muster, he accompanied us again around the canals and pubs of Birmingham and the Black Country.

Our starting place was the Anglo Welsh Tardebigge base on the Worcester & Birmingham Canal on Saturday 28th September – Shep and his crew on the good ship Danny Boy, and the Beery Boaters on Hanbury, a sister craft to Hatherton which we had hired several times in the past from Great Haywood. Unfortunately we were somewhat down on the numbers expected and there were just four of us on our 68ft nine berth boat.

With just 3 miles and no locks, there was no great rush to start, which was fortunate because those of us travelling by car got lost in the lanes around the boatyard. We eventually left at 4pm, Danny Boy with just Chris and Mark on board, as Shep and the rest of his crew were travelling by train and would meet us at Alvechurch, our planned evening stop. Our preferred pub the Weighbridge, beside the canal, however does not open until 7pm, and we were a couple of hours early, so, having met the others, we



walked into the village to the Red Lion. It seemed a lot further than on previous occasions, but I suppose that my legs worked better then! Suffice to say, some of us got a taxi back to the Weighbridge! However, the Red Lion, despite being a large roadhouse-type pub and very busy, sold Wadworths and some surprisingly good beer from the Purity brewery.

Needless to say, the Weighbridge was as good as ever with an excellent range of beers as well as ciders and perries. This was also going to be our last night's venue the following Friday, and knowing from past visits how popular meals are there, we booked a table in advance.

Sunday morning was the usual uneventful trip into Birmingham, with little of interest apart from West Hill Tunnel and the Cadbury factory at Bourneville; no locks and only one canalside pub (reserved for the return leg), although Dave was happy as a railway line kept us company for quite a few miles. We were tied up in Birmingham City Centre almost spot on twelve, and duly went to the nearby Prince of Wales, an old favourite pub since my first visit way back in 1982, memories of which were revived by some old newspaper photos shown to us by the bar staff (see page 47).



We stayed put in the Prince of Wales until 3pm, when, in bright sunlight we set off for Tipton, our evening's stop, along Brindley's Old Main Line via the three locks at Smethwick. An uneventful cruise saw us tied up at Coronation Park at 6.30, not far from the statue of William Perry, alias the Tipton Slasher, the 19th century canal boatman who became bare-knuckle champion of England. As usual our first call was at the Fountain, just across the canal, and of old William Perry's HQ. Although now a Bank's pub it has of late started offering up to four ales from other brewers. Following this we made our way to The Pie Factory, a left-over from the small and iconic Mad O'Rourke's chain of pubs. Not only has it been left over, it's also been left severely alone, still festooned with plaster pigs' heads and the like, advertising the Best Tarts in Tipton, serving 'Lumphammer' ale, and providing hearty meals, in which we naturally indulged. The Pie Factory closed at ten-thirty, but some of us got another pint in at the Fountain before returning to the boats.

Monday morning and a clear sky, and away just after 7.30, for a few hundred yards to Tipton Junction, where a sharp right turn took us onto the New Main Line and down the three Factory Locks. We were now retracing the previous afternoon's direction but at a lower level until we turned right at Dudley Port Junction, to pass under the Old Main Line and into Netherton Tunnel at about 9am. At 3027 yards it takes about half an hour to complete, and at the far end we moored at Windmill End facilities to water up – below us at the foot of the embankment another former Mad O'Rourke's pub, the Little Dry Dock, now sadly in the process of being converted to flats.



Continuing once again we reached Park Head (or Blowers Green) junction by 10.50 Here the Dudley No. 2 Canal meets the Dudley No.1 with, to the right, the older and much shorter route from Tipton via the Dudley Tunnel, now unfortunately unavailable owing to its restricted bore and prohibition on using internal combustion engines. Then past the Merry Hill shopping centre to the top of Delph Locks just before 12 midday.

The reason for us being here, of course, was to pay the obligatory visit to Batham's brewery tap the Vine, aka the Bull & Bladder, but, as we were going back the same way later, we had to turn the boats. We knew that we could turn at the bottom of the flight, but going down, and back up, eight locks didn't seem to make sense. We on Hanbury, thought we would try what looked liked a winding hole (turning place) a few yards back, although it's not marked on the map, and no doubt rightly so, for we got ourselves jammed across the cut. Meanwhile Danny Boy, ahead of us, following local advice had managed to turn in the pound after the second lock down, and return to the top. Once unstuck we followed suite and with both boats tied up and pointing in the right direction just above the lock moorings we set off on foot for the Bull & Bladder, about a quarter of a mile away.

And as usual, it was well worth the walk and effort, for the excellent beer and substantial meals. We must have spent two and a half hours there, setting off back towards Windmill End at around 4pm., Hanbury minus its boat pole which had been purloined by the Boyos of Danny Boy to replace the one which they had managed to lose the previous afternoon. The sharpness of the turn at Blowers Green Junction (no doubt aided by the afternoon's ale consumption) caused Hanbury to amuse, then alarm, a bunch of youthful anglers drowning their worms right on the bend. Less than a couple of hours after setting off we tied up at Windmill End, almost opposite where we had taken on water that morning.

Another long walk, this time into Netherton and the Old Swan, more commonly known as Ma Pardoe's. Unfortunately, instead of taking our normal route, someone asked a young lady dog walker for the easiest route. She must have given the scenic route which, as it was now dark, was not just longer but no-one appreciated much! However, we did get there, another superb pub, and we stayed until around 11.30, Hanbury's crew with their walking difficulties, even without the benefit of ale, once again getting a taxi back as near to the boats as possible. Arriving back at Hanbury at midnight someone found the dregs of my rum bottle, well, dregs when it was done with. *(Much like my rum bottle on the first night – Ed).*

Away at 7.30 Tuesday morning (no 6am starts on the End-of-the-Year Trips – it's still dark then, anyway!), and retracing Monday morning's waters as far as Tipton Junction, we then continued onwards towards Wolverhampton. Grey but no rain, and by 11.35 we were tied up in the basin at the top of the locks, and on our way to the Great Western, another great pub where most of us stayed, although some later wandered off to the Posada and the Lych Gate. The usual excellent Holdens and Bathams beers plus eats, as we were a bit unsure about meals at that evening's stop above Walsall Locks.

Our route lay down the Wyreley & Essington Canal, known popularly as the 'Curley Wyreley', owing to its twisting course and sharp bends, although no locks: using the Walsall Canal was not an option, closed for work on Walsall Locks, but even if open would have meant more miles, plus



eight locks down and eight locks up. We set off at 3pm, or Hanbury did as some of the Danny Boys were still absent. Unable to turn in Wolverhampton Basin, we reversed back to the adjacent BW yard and winded there, although a bit of a pig with boats moored in the basin and a strong breeze. But we made it, despite hoots of derision from those Danny Boyos who had returned.

It's eight twisty miles from Horsley Fields Junction in Wolverhampton to Birchills Junction above Walsall, and when we turned right along the first couple of hundred yards of the Walsall Canal the light was fading fast. We needed to turn round for the morning, but found the far side of the winding hole just above Walsall locks occupied by a semi-derelict boat. With the alternative of reversing back to the junction we gave it a go and, with much polling and cursing, managed to get Hanbury pointing in the right direction, but with its extra foot of length, we had doubts whether Danny Boy would. However it did, after arriving eventually in darkness, their later start having been compounded by the need to clear several propfulls of rubbish. All tied up and pointing in the right direction we went in search of liquid refreshment.

The nearest pub was the New Navigation, next to Walsall top lock. It used to be M&B and keg only, and had been closed on our previous couple of visits. However it was open again, and on investigation found to have one handpump installed, and selling quite a nice stout from the Backyard Brewery of Walsall, apparently the New Navigation's usual supplier. Very much a locals pub, we stayed for one or two before continuing another couple of hundred yards to the Rose & Crown to make comparison with our recollections from 2009.



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And very good we found it. Still a Black Country Brewery house with eight hand-pumps supplying their own and guest beers, and again no food, but as before, the landlord didn't mind us obtaining our own from the Chinese along the road, and even supplied plates and cutlery. Closing time seems to depend on how long the customers require beer. In our case we left the pub shortly after 1am.



Wednesday lunchtime beer was set for the Manor Arms at Rushall, canalside and another superb CAMRA heritage pub. As the crow flies, it is about two miles from the top of Walsall Locks, but as the duck swims, as we did by water, the journey increases to over eleven miles. We were now in open country, although there were a lot of traces of bygone industry, there being once many coal mines along our route. We stopped at Brownhills, to top up with water, and purchase supplies, and then off again shortly

after 11am, turning right at Catshill Junction onto the Daw End Branch. A left turn currently just takes you to a dead end at Chasewater Reservoir, but will, when restoration of the Lichfield Canal is complete, provide an additional useful link to the Coventry Canal.

Along the Daw End Branch the bends seem even tighter, and there are stretches of high reeds leaving just a narrow track of water to navigate. Also, in places, mining subsidence has left the canal high above the surrounding land. We arrived outside the Manor Arms at about 1pm, and there being no bollards or rings, used our mooring pins for the only time on the trip. Another enjoyable session ensued, no food, just pork scratchings, etc., but plenty of beer from the Banks's and Marston's range. Known also as the Pub With No Bar, because it hasn't got one, there are six handpumps fixed to a shelf on the wall. And we were particularly impressed that the young lady serving us, who we formed the impression was the landlady's daughter, remembered us from our previous visit four years earlier.

Away at 3 pm in bright sunshine. After a mile the Daw End Branch becomes the Rushall Canal which, being more recent (mid 19th century) is very straight. It also has locks, nine on our route to the junction with the Tame Valley Canal, into which we turned right at about 5.50, to the accompaniment of some serious rain.

A lock on the Rushall Canal

Then followed what I consider the most dreary bit of canal in the country (*perhaps vying with the Limehouse Cut and the stretch alongside the road coming into Middleswich – Ed*). After accompanying the M6 for a while together with the odour of a nearby sewage farm, it crosses the River Tame on a narrow aqueduct, and runs dead straight for three miles, sometimes on an embank-



ment but mostly, it seems, in a cutting. At least it no longer contains the quantity of rubbish it once did. Darkness had fallen by the time we turned left into the Walsall Canal at a 6.45, and headed for the Ryder's Green Flight. Rain had now stopped which was fortunate for Danny Boy whose propulsion had also stopped, necessitating man-hauling into the bottom lock. On investigation half a tracksuit was found wrapped round the propeller. Removed, we carried on a short distance in low water and evil-smelling mud, to tie up together just before Great Bridge canal bridge at 7.30.

It's a bit of a walk from the canal to any pub in Great Bridge, and the two crews went their own way. The four of us on Hanbury headed to the Crown, in Sheepwash Lane, but finding it permanently closed, continued to the Tamebridge, a recent addition to the GBG, and a good local with four real ales from small breweries. Interestingly, this was once a canalside pub as the adjoining bridge over the embryo River Tame, also once crossed the Haines Branch of the Walsall Canal, and as this closed as late as 1969 it might have been possible to moor outside it within the last fifty years. Remains of the old arm are still visible in places although no traces at the junction just below Ryder's Green bottom lock. Some of the other crew walked a longer distance to the Rising Sun, a former CAMRA National Pub of the Year, to find some of its old glory regained after a period in the doldrums.

Thursday dawned and we made an even later start than usual, as we planned to spend the rest of the day in Birmingham city centre. After cleaning rubbish off the propeller, Hanbury set off up the remaining 7 locks (the last of the trip) at 8am with Danny Boy behind, to clear the top at 9.15. By 11.30, Hanbury was mooring in the

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same place as on Sunday, with Danny Boy initially tied up behind on some railings, but having to move when told by the steerer of a passing trip boat in Bernard Cribbins fashion: "You can't moor it there, moor it elsewhere!" Just before departing for the Prince of Wales we received a visit from a chap who introduced himself as the 'Chaplain to the Waterways'. The rain also paid us a somewhat longer visit and kept reappearing for the rest of the day.

After the Prince of Wales we made a tour of the city centre pubs, notably the Post Office Vaults, the Wellington, the Shakespeare, the two groups subdividing into smaller groups whose paths would cross from time to time. Martin and I finally arrived back at the Prince of Wales, just as the adjacent Symphony Hall was emptying at about 10.30. The pub was full and live music being performed, but we managed to squeeze in for a last pint (or two) before returning to the boats about midnight, although the Prince of Wales would be open for another couple of hours.

Friday and the last full day. With just four hours cruising to the Weighbridge that evening there was no reason to hurry. We could take in the Hopwood House, and maybe the Crown, a half mile before the Weighbridge, en route. Hanbury set off at 10 am, passing Danny Boy still tied up by Gas Street Basin and shouting goodbyes to one of their crew who was leaving in Birmingham. Sunshine and showers, and quite windy with leaves blowing from the trees, we were at Kings Norton Junction by midday, followed shortly by Wast Hill Tunnel. Out of the tunnel at 12.40 we were soon moored outside the Hopwood House just as the heavens opened.

To our minds, the House had improved a lot over the years, with now at least six handpumps supplying a range of beers from Banks's and Marston's, plus a comprehensive food menu. We found seats by a window overlooking the canal and saw Danny Boy pass, then reverse and tie up alongside Hanbury. With both crews in the pub we ended up staying for the rest of the afternoon, eventually leaving about 5pm, the rain having stopped and the sky clearing.

Just a couple of miles and we were soon moored opposite the Weighbridge, and a very enjoyable last evening followed. Most of one small bar having been reserved for us with a long table for both crews to sit together. As usual, the beer and food at the Weighbridge were superb.

Saturday morning, and cloudy with patches of clear sky. Hanbury set off at 7.50 with Danny Boy's crew showing signs of stirring. Shep and the other train travellers were to leave Danny Boy at Alvechurch – the station being only a few yards from our moorings – and Chris and Mark would return the boat. An hour later and we were back at Anglo Welsh at Tardebigge. And so endeth the 2013 End-of-Year Trip.

PS. Hanbury now had its proper boat pole back, but the boatyard staff were their usual obliging selves and didn't charge anyone for the loss of the one from Danny Boy, despite its absence being pointed out to them.

Jim Green

Podge's

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LAST KNOCKINGS

Churchill's Watering Holes Following the piece in our summer edition doubting stories of Churchill drinking in the First and Last during World War II (the Albion as it would have been then) we have received the following letter from a reader in Llanelli.

I read your Channel Draught while having a few pints in the Red Lion. Regarding Churchill's Watering Holes, my father saw the Prime Minister in the Albion during 1940. He was with RAF Radar at St. Margarets, and went for a pint in the Albion. He saw W. C. with two officers in the lounge bar, but was sworn never to mention it when back at base. In 1960 my dad worked at Dover Borstal, and he showed me the pub while out walking, and this just stuck in my memory.

Many thanks for the information, *Channel Draught* stands corrected. Any other recollections of Churchill, or any other of our wartime leaders, using local pubs gratefully received.

Nothing Changes In his fascinating analysis of our mores and culture, *Tickling the English*, Irish comic Dara O'brian includes various observations on our drinking habits. Writing about excessive 18th century gin drinking he points out that laws seeking to control consumption often had no more effect than succeeding "in creating prohibition and the sale of gin under 'medicinal guise'. It was sold in bottles with the instructions 'Take 2-3 spoonfuls of this 4-5 times a day or as often as the fit takes you.'" Sounds familiar? Among the variety of intoxicating and mood altering substances now available are so called legal highs, sold officially for all kinds of purposes other than getting the purchaser high – which of course is exactly what they are used for.

Gin drinking did not start to fall until the Tipping Act of 1751, which saw a measure of licensing introduced. Control succeeded where prohibition failed.

Today illegal drugs are easily available, and anyone can get almost anything they want. Legal drugs might consist of all manner of things whose side effects are barely understood, and their variety runs ahead of government attempts at control. Across the World, drugs are a billion dollar industry and billions are spent on enforcement, much to no avail, and murder and violence has become endemic over



large parts of countries where drug trafficking takes place. As US prohibition showed, the greatest beneficiary is crime. Uruguay has just made legal, limited consumption of marijuana, and in the USA the state of Colorado has followed a similar path, and others are thinking about it. Is our stance against almost all drugs other than alcohol, nicotine and caffeine really achieving the desired result? Is it not time to consider licensed control?

The Demon Drink Dara also took some hearty swipes at the official approach to alcohol, from Lloyd George's WW1 restrictions which curtailed opening hours and beer strength, and curiously banned rounds, to Tony Blair's attempt to introduce Mediterranean café culture as a replacement for northern European drunkenness. For teetotal Lloyd George, the subsequent plummet in beer consumption from its pre-war levels, was probably considered a result (it did not start to recover until the 1960s). The country was "fighting Germans, Austrians and Drink," he said, "and as far as I can see the greatest of these foes is drink."

By contrast the country shows no inclination to go anywhere near café culture. The 24 hour drinking introduced in 2005, was intended to herald in this revolution by allowing people to drink when they wanted, and end the need to down umpteen pints before time was called. However, a few years later it was found to have made effectively no difference, other than shifting the peak level of violence an hour later. The government definition of "binge drinking" – four pints for men and three for women – drew comment as well. "That's not much, is it?" was most people's response on being told the official level, which in Irish terms, approximated to half a session or a third of a complete rip.

Through a Glass Darkly There was a time when most beer glasses came in two styles: chunky and barrel shaped with dimples on the outside, and a handle, often called jugs, or thinner with no handle and straight sides, tapering towards the base, with a slight bulge a quarter of the way down, presumably to assist with grip as inebriation increased. Recent years, however, have seen a plethora of different shapes, from straight sided with no bulge (the oft preferred beer festival glass) to a whole variety of branded glasses dedicated to a particular beer – the general trend being upwards, i.e. taller and narrower. All fine and dandy, and some very sophisticated elegant shapes, designed to "enhance the experience" – but not perhaps, the convenience of the bar staff tasked with doing the washing up. OK for a large bar with mechanised washing and drying facilities, but a problem for hand washing in smaller establishments for anyone with hands much larger than a child's. Maybe a solution may lie with recourse to those domestic sprites, brownies, who by tradition, in return for food being left out, would undertake household chores overnight. So, may we suggest to any landlord who has a problem with these new style glasses, that they are left unwashed at the end of the evening with a small measure of alcohol in each.

Old Wort



National Contacts

Nationally CAMRA can be contacted at:
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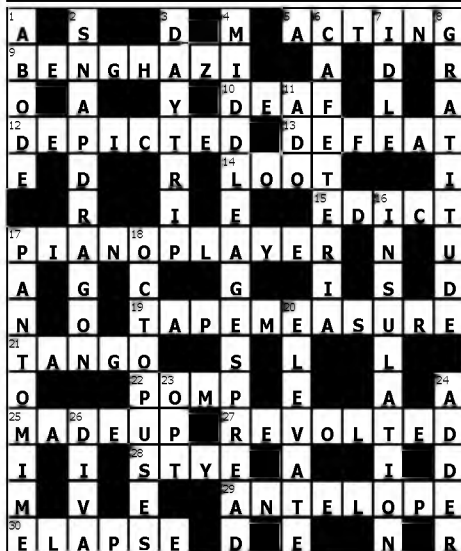
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And Finally.....Nuns with a thirst

An Irish publican has been prosecuted after police found dozens of nuns drinking illegally on his premises, several hours after closing time. Christy Walsh, who runs the bar in Listowel, County Kerry, has been fined a total of 700 euros (£605) after his pub was raided twice in one night. He had helped to organise a charity event in the town in which hundreds of people dressed up as nuns.

Some 1,436 'nuns' had gathered in a sports field in Listowel where they were officially counted, setting a new Guinness World Record. The 'sisters' had to observe a strict dress code which included a habit, a veil, black shoes and black socks or tights.

However, in the early hours of the following morning, well after pub closing time, police entered Mr Christy's bar on two separate occasions and found 51 'nuns' on the premises. The officers first came in to the pub at about 01:45a.m., 45 minutes after closing time and found 30 people dressed as nuns. Their second visit was at about 04:10a.m., when they observed 21 'sisters' were still drinking at the bar. The publican said he was disappointed by the decision to proceed with the prosecution. However, he appeared philosophical about it, adding that the event, which was approved by local clergy, had raised around 26,000 euros (£22,500) for charity.

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