

# Draught Copy



**Free Magazine**

by Maidstone and Mid-Kent CAMRA



Incorporating Ashford, Folkestone & Romney Marsh, Gravesend & Darent Valley, Bexley, Medway & West Kent Branches

**Website:** [www.mmk.camra.org.uk](http://www.mmk.camra.org.uk)

**Edition 212**



## **CAMRA AGM:**

- Torquay 2025 (Cover photo)
- St. Albans 2026 (See inside)

## **News from your Branch**

- Pub News
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- CAMRA News

# DRAUGHT COPY

Draught Copy is the magazine of the Maidstone and Mid-Kent branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. It incorporates news from: Ashford; Folkestone and Romney Marsh; Bexley; Gravesend & Darent Valley; Medway; and West Kent CAMRA branches. It is published quarterly, in March, June, September and December and has a circulation of 3,500 copies.

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If you find a pub selling short measures, allowing smoking in the premises, or allowing any other illegal activities, please have a quiet word with the landlord. However, if you need to complain about a licensed premises in your area, contact Citizens Advice, who will pass the details to your local Trading Standards service: Call the **Citizens Advice consumer service helpline** on 03454 04 05 06 (Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm). We should demand the highest standards of service in our pubs.

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The copy date for the next issue is **Sunday, 26th April 2026.**

For further information about all pubs mentioned in this publication (or indeed anywhere in the UK), please refer to CAMRA's national pub database: [www.camra.org.uk/pubs](http://www.camra.org.uk/pubs)

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sadly, any social/meeting calendar we could print is likely to be inaccurate and incomplete, so to keep up-to-date we suggest you use the QR codes below to access the branch meetings on our websites.

You can also find information on X (formerly Twitter): [X.com/mmkcampa](https://x.com/mmkcampa) (but you will need an account on X to access up-to-date information).



Ashford,  
Folkestone  
& Romney  
Marsh



Bexley



Gravesend  
and  
Darent  
Valley



Maidstone  
and  
Mid Kent



Medway



West  
Kent

# Editorial: Real Ale and Me

by Don Andrews

I can still remember my first ever pint of real ale - although I can't remember where it was and exactly when (it was a long time ago). I went into a pub after some sort of sporting event. My friends ordered pints of lager or somesuch - but I was one of those disdainful, superior teenagers who knew what adults drink, and already knew better! I ordered a pint of bitter, and was astonished to see the landlady grab hold of what looked vaguely like a relic from Nelson's Victory, and literally "pulled" a pint of brown liquid that certainly looked like bitter. I hope I didn't look as astonished as I felt. That would not have been cool!

It didn't have a head! However, I was astute enough to realise that more beer was preferable to more froth in my glass, so I didn't say anything. I went back to the table with my friends, and sampled it carefully. I have to say that I did not enjoy that first sip. However, looking cool was more important than anything, so I continued drinking. As I navigated to the depths of the pint, I realised that this stuff wasn't too bad after all. When somebody else ordered another round, I felt I had to stick with my original choice and ordered another one. What do you know! This one tasted a lot better.

A few days later, I was in the garden of a different pub, with a different group of people, a standard keg beer and a delightful young lady. The two of us strolled off to have a look at the roses and a private conversation. By the time we returned to the table, I realised that the "head" I had previously valued so highly on a beer was no longer there. The liquid had also warmed up, and the carbon dioxide had dissipated into the atmosphere. I realised that the



flavour I had previously enjoyed was an illusion caused by the cold, an excess of CO2 and an excess of advertising.

I remembered that the pub I was now in had one of those hand pump thingies - I think it was *Courage Directors* - so when the next round came around, I ordered a pint of that. It didn't have too much gas; it wasn't too cold or gassy; and the flavour lived or died on its own merits. I am sure that anybody reading this magazine knows what I mean! I never saw the girl again, by the way.

So, I have been a CAMRA supporter for most of my life, although it was only many years later, upon returning to the UK after 20 years abroad, that I decided to join.

I joined CAMRA because I have come to realise that Real Ale is an important part of British heritage, and I am delighted to now have the opportunity to contribute to the cause by editing **DRAUGHT COPY**.

(Continued on page 5)

GET YOUR  
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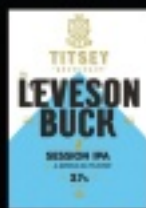
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# Editorial

## (Continued from Page 3)

There are, of course, many other benefits to joining CAMRA. I have taken part in two AGMs in towns I would otherwise probably never have visited (and have the shirts to prove it), and have thoroughly enjoyed working behind the bar at the East Malling Beer Festival.

I have taken part in several of the outings organised by the Maidstone and Mid-Kent branch, and now have a much greater understanding of Kentish buses and trains thanks to Jeff's encyclopaedic knowledge of such matters, and I am constantly amazed by the amount of work an organisation like CAMRA entails.

I am delighted to be able to offer my

### **Pubs feeling the Pinch**

As you read this magazine, hopefully in a lovely pub, spare a thought for the hospitality industry. Pubs are facing sizeable increases in wage costs, utility bills, business rates and wholesale prices, to name but a few, which goes some way to explaining why the price of your pint may have been going up in recent months.

Also, pub sales are losing out to cheap 'beer' from supermarkets, mainly poor-quality factory-made 'lagers', though those of us whose tastebuds demand quality real ales cannot get anything similar from anywhere other than a pub.

Therefore, we all need to support our pubs even more. You can't hope to experience the same atmosphere at home. Remember, a pub is for life, not just for Christmas!

*Jeff Tucker*

expertise in a battle for Real Ale and Cider that I once thought had been almost won, but I now realise is only beginning.

I hope that this issue of **Draught Copy** will offer readers the opportunity to sample some great new ales in some new pubs that perhaps they have never tried before. However, all events mentioned in this edition are to some extent provisional, so please do check all the information given on your local branch website or join the local communication networks (details vary from group to group) – as things are inevitably likely to change at quite short notice.

A big highlight of this spring will undoubtedly be the **CAMRA AGM**, which this year will be held in St. Albans between Friday 17th and Sunday 19th April. I shall be there throughout, and I look forward to meeting old friends and new ones. All members are invited to attend, and elsewhere in this magazine you can find details of the hospitality and events that have been laid on by the St. Albans branch of CAMRA.

Finally, I would like to say a big thank you to Ian Clennett, who has edited **Draught Copy** since 2017. I am in awe of the publishing machine he has created, and would like to express my appreciation for all the hard work he has put in to making this such an excellent and formidably well-organised publication.

He will still be the chair of Maidstone and Mid-Kent (MMK) CAMRA, so he is far from leaving the scene. It will be good to know that his experience and expertise is just an email away!

# Maidstone & Mid Kent Outing to Bromley



**Old Ale in a Victorian pub**

The message on the website was brief but clear: “11.27 Train Trip to Bromley,” it said, “Leave Maidstone East,” it added. The rest was easy to work out, so I decided to go along!

The CAMRA crew arrived in Bromley South just after 1200; Jeff, our fearless leader, informed us that we were heading for the **Red Lion**. This is a lovely old Victorian town-centre pub, hidden away in the backstreets of Bromley. They had a range of real beers available, but I decided to sample the *Harvey's Old*. I had a few misgivings; an old ale was perhaps an assault on the taste buds to start the day, but I've not tried it before, its 4.3% made it a sensible choice, and its strong, malty flavour was delicious - even if it didn't grow hair on my head as the Landlord claimed!

We had time to drink our pints in a leisurely fashion before Jeff ushered us onwards to the **Railway Tavern**. This is another Victorian building, on the apex of a triangle, open on two sides and light and airy. I was intrigued to find *Volden* ale, from a local brewery here. It was indeed a nice light dark brown beer, something between a bitter and an IPA. Very pleasant, I must look out for it in future.

Our next stop was The **Partridge**, a former bank with high ceilings and graceful vaulting, a tenanted *Fuller's* pub in the centre of town. I was unable to resist the temptation of a half of *ESB*, although I have mixed memories of my student days in London, and of being ambushed by its unexpected strength at 5.5%. It did indeed taste as delicious malty and fruity as ever, and it was very well looked after, both in the barrel and on the way down my throat.

We then moved on to the architectural highlight of the day, The **Star and Garter**. This is a mediaeval-looking pub with the upper stories overhanging the pavement. It proved to be a very cheerful and welcoming pub, and most of us sampled a couple of their beers. The *Verdant Lamanva* was for me the highlight, as I always like to try beers I've never tried before.

This was the end of the official trip, but one of the Bromley CAMRA members informed us that there was a new micro pub, The **Cork N Cask**, “just along the road” as he put it; there was a bus which would take eight minutes, or we could walk it in twenty.




*Continued on Page 9*



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# Outing to Bromley

(Continued from page 6)



**Friendly service in the Star and Garter**

The two of us who elected for the more vigorous option were delighted to get

## A Call Out on Behalf of the Swale Branch

Swale celebrated the branch's 50th Anniversary on Saturday 21st February 2026, at the Park Tavern, Park Road, Sittingbourne. The branch was inaugurated on 17th February 1976.

Does anybody have any memorabilia from that time: newspaper cuttings, branch minutes and diaries, photos of people or pubs, or just your own memories from November 1975 onwards, when they had their first meeting at the Fountain, Sittingbourne? If you have anything that would help them celebrate their anniversary, please email **John Kent**, 50th Anniversary Coordinator, at [swale50@swale.camra.org.uk](mailto:swale50@swale.camra.org.uk)

there before those who chose to take the bus. It did seem that we caught the pub at a rather unfortunate moment, as the cool beer cabinet seemed to be absolutely full of barrels, but only a few beers were actually on tap. I opted for the *Titsey* brewery's excellent *Gower Wolf* session bitter (4%), as again this was a beer I had never tried before.

Time to set off to Bromley South, but those of us who had booked a set time for the return train realised that we had arrived rather early, so we decided to wait in the Wetherspoon's opposite the station, **The Richmal Crompton**.

This turned out to be spacious but very busy, as I believe the local football team had been playing at home, but we were served quickly, and a pleasant pint of the *Bishop Nick's Martyr* pale ale provided a palate-cleansing end to our outing.

**Text and Photos by Don Andrews**

# Maidstone & Mid Kent Pub News

For full information on pubs, including Facebook and other media see the Camra-maintained online data at [camra.org.uk/pubs](http://camra.org.uk/pubs) which covers the whole UK. Photos: CAMRA and Draught Copy

**Chart Hills Golf Club, Biddenden:** No longer has any cask ale.



**Wings Pub & Restaurant, Headcorn:** This has opened earlier than expected under the new management. It is now known as The **Wingman** and is run by Isobel, who had worked there previously, when it was run by Bun Buddies.

Email: [thewingman26@mail.com](mailto:thewingman26@mail.com)  
Facebook: 61585147310928 Tel: 07513 256901

**Dirty Habit, Hollingbourne:** Now has planning permission for letting rooms on the upper floor..

**Chequers, Laddingford:** The eagerly awaited Pies & Puds 10-day event continues until March 8. Ten or so beers will be available to accompany the meals.

**Loddington Tap, Linton:** Has now taken over the premises previously occupied by the Musket Brewery and tap.

**Coach House, Maidstone:** Found to have ceased selling cask ale.

**Society Rooms, Maidstone:** Managed to obtain the beers from the list intended for a London JDW beer festival. Should soon be time for the Spring Festival. Romney Marsh beers are now available and will appear here in due course.

**Bull Inn, West Malling:** Ed Austin is currently looking after the beer while Trevor is recovering from an operation.



**Cellars Alehouse, Maidstone:** Held a well-attended Green Hop festival in mid-January, and a Titanic brewery Tap Takeover and Meet the Brewer event in February. Other similar events will be announced in due course

**Malling Jug, West Malling:** The Mon-Thu price reduction to £3.50 from 12-3.50 pm for all beers is still in place at the time of going to press.

*Text: John Mills  
([DraughtCopy.Editor@outlook.com](mailto:DraughtCopy.Editor@outlook.com))*

*Photos: CAMRA website, Draught  
Copy editors*

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# Medway Branch Local News

Just before Medway CAMRA's GBG voting meeting, I and another Medway member visited some outlying pubs in the Medway area that don't get visited very often.



First on the list was the **Red Dog at High Halstow**. It was good to see the pub had a real log fire on a cold winter's day, which although adding a certain smoky quality, gave the pub a definite charm. Three beers were available: *Iron Pier Brewery's Ebenezer* and *Comet*; and *Sharps' Twin Coast*. Both of us enjoyed the offerings from *Iron Pier* brewery which were in excellent condition.



The second pub on the list was the **Horseshoe and Castle at Cooling**, again with a real log fire for restaurant visitors. The only offering here was *Shepherd Neame's Master brew bitter*, which was very good, as it had been on our previous visit, and we enjoyed it with some suitable pub food.

Next on the visiting list was **The Stone Horse at Higham**. They had four beers on tap: *Fuller's London Pride*; *Timothy*

*Taylor Landlord*; *Sharps' Doombar* and *Harveys' Best*. We both elected to sample the *Harveys'* offering, which we found to be in good nick and enjoyable.



Lastly, after a walk along muddy roads under darkening skies, we arrived at our last hostelry of the day the **Crafty Fox at Wainscott**. Three ales were on offer: *Grainstore Ten Fifty*; *Mighty Oak Gorgeous George*; and *Kent Brewery Session Pale*. Both the *Grainstore* and the *Mighty Oak* offerings were excellent. All in all, a good day's drinking, visiting some of the outlying pubs in the Medway area, not visited very often, but still worthy of consideration for the 2027 Good Beer Guide.

**The Dewdrop in Twydall**, Gillingham is closed at present and is awaiting a new licensee before it reopens.

**The Past and Present, Gillingham** had its own answer to Dry January by reducing the price of its ales by 50 pence a pint to just £4.00.

**The Prince of Ales in Rainham** will be holding a beer festival with around 12 ales from the 12th to 15th March.

Contact **Kae Mendham**: email  
[kmendham@aol.com](mailto:kmendham@aol.com)

Photos from CAMRA's pub database

# Gravesend and Darent Valley News and Events

Activity had been seen to be winding down at **No Frills Joe in Greenhithe**, with no brewing carried out since last summer, and it seems the business has now closed. This would have just left the bar in Ramsgate trading but a report in late January shows that as having closed too.

On the other hand **Iron Pier** have added some outlets in Gravesend. At the **Goose** their *Bitter* and *Perry Street Pale* have of late replaced *Wychwood Hobgoblin Gold* and *Adnams Ghost Ship* on handpump.



**The Windmill Tavern**

At The **Windmill Tavern**, the regular *Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter* has also been supplemented by *Bitter* and *Perry Street Pale*, with a recent appearance of *19th Century Porter* in place of the *Bitter*. At the **Invicta Bar** one of the three hand pumps now regularly serves an Iron Pier beer, usually *Perry Street Pale*, though others have been seen. This pub also started holding fortnightly quiz nights in January.

Things are changing in Luddesdown. The **Lion** is now closed for about 6 months for what will obviously be a n extensive refit. The pub was bought a while ago by Silverhand Estate, a local vineyard, and they've already spent quite a bit of money there. For instance, a wine and farm shop has been opened on part of the site. The village has now acquired a redundant red telephone box and this is

located in the car park of the **Cock**. The plan is to install a library in it. This pub is currently a free house with a number of regular real ales but was previously tied to *Ind Coope*, who presented landlord Andrew Turner with an award for the excellence of his *Draught Burton Ale*. Not too far away there seems to have been an improved range of real ales at the **Cricketers in Meopham**, with *Canterbury Ales' The Miller's Ale*, *Iron Pier Perry Street Pale* and *Titsey Gower Wolf* all available on a recent visit.

The **Pig and Pickle at Seal Chart** (once the Crown Point Inn) is a sizeable pub and its new owners are understandably rebuilding trade carefully after its long closure. A visit shortly after it reopened found a work in progress here. There was one real ale available, *Timothy Taylor Landlord*, but we can hope for more to come.



**The Chequers at Heaverham**

Further into the corner of our area we have heard little of the **Chequers at Heaverham** but it had closed by the end of September. This pub forms part of an estate and the owners were understood to want to take over the running of it from the previous management by *Shepherd Neame*.

The **Cotton Mill** at Swanley keeps on growing and we shall eventually have to stop calling it a micropub. Plans have now been approved for a further

extension to provide more seating and an extra entrance. It is hoped to start work on this in the spring. New furniture has been fitted recently and the covered outside seating area has proved popular. In the same general area, at The **Jolly Miller** in South Darenth the price of a pint of real ale has been reduced to £4.10 on Mondays to Fridays.

There is some news of Dartford pubs. The **Wat Tyler** should have reopened by the time this appears after its lengthy repairs, as the scaffolding had been removed by mid-January. Graham Rowe was one of the people who spotted this.

The **Woodman in East Hill** was reported to be for sale as a pub. It had been converted to housing but it seems this was done without planning permission. The photo shows an earlier time when it sold beers from *Reid & Co* and *Allsopp's*.

The **Royal Victoria and Bull** has shown a considerable improvement in beer quality of late.



**The historical Woodman**

A recent branch visit found *Sharp's Doom Bar* accompanied by *Courage Directors*, replaced during the evening by *Greene King Abbot* at a decent price. The unusual bar construction reflects its previous life as a coaching inn. Graham Rowe also rates The **Stage Door** for a visit before or after the theatre.

*Text and photos by Adrian Moss*

## Quiz Night on Monday

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### Pub Information

The **Greyhound**, Charcott continues to offer up to four well kept ales from Kent and Sussex breweries, with the occasional visitor from Surrey, but sometimes a rarity from further afield will appear, brews from *Blue Bee* and *Three Brothers* have featured recently.

The **Fountain** (*Harvey's*) in Cowden has seen a recent change as bar manager Toulah has moved on. But three well-kept brews from *Lewes* are still available, including a welcome seasonal ale.

Horsmonden's **Gun and Spitroast** closed in late January 2026. It's future is unknown.

It was good to see the Markbeech **Kentish Horse** appear in the 2026 Good Beer Guide – thoroughly deserved. *Harvey's Sussex Best* and *Larkin's Traditional* are the regular ales, plus a regularly changing guest ale. Brews from *Lakedown* feature from time to time and *Harvey's Old Ale* is popular.

*Larkins Traditional* and *Timothy Taylor Landlord* can be found in the **King Henry VIII** situated outside the popular Castle at Hever. Lunches were very good.

The **Brown Trout** in Lamberhurst closed on 1 February 2026. Future plans are unknown.

A new craft beer and burger bar, **Sip and Slide** has opened in Camden Road, Tunbridge Wells. As well as the craft beer there were two cask beers from the *Long Man Brewery* when we visited shortly after opening.

**Never Say Never** (formerly **Hilden Manor**) opened at the end of January 2026 in Tonbridge. The pub is now part of the Elite Group. *Harveys Sussex Best* and *Larkins Traditional* were available in the early days.

*by Dave Moore*  
([campaign@westkent.camra.org.uk](mailto:campaign@westkent.camra.org.uk))  
Look for news or impromptu socials on our WhatsApp groups and keep in touch - send us your mobile number to sign up



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**Ragged Trousers, Tunbridge Wells** now has three handpumps serving *Harvey's, Tonbridge Trad* and *Landlord* at last sighting

**Tyber's Bar, Tunbridge Wells** is closing. A Facebook announcement said that it marks the beginning of something new without disclosing any details.

**Green Duck Emporium, TW** has closed down after 6 years as an event space and bar.



**South Park Tap, Sevenoaks** has extended its hours and now opens 5-9pm on Wednesdays.

**Grasshopper on the Green, Westerham** is under new management.

**Bottle House, Smart's Hill**, is closed for a short break to make improvements



**Kentish Hare, Bidborough** was one of four Kent pubs to make it into the Estrella Damm Top 50 Gastropubs for 2026, coming in at number 21.

*Text: Dave Moore, images from CAMRA Pub database*

## Regular Events

**Fuggles Beer Café:** Both pubs have frequent events so please check our website (below) and put them in your diary.

**Westerham Brewery Tours & Tastings** take place weekly on Saturday mornings at 11.30am.

**Nevill Crest & Gun, Eridge Green** has pub walks on the first Saturday every month. Be at the pub for 9.30am for a cuppa, bacon rolls and fruit before the start. Dogs welcome.

More details and updates on these and other events can be found on the West Kent web site:  
<https://westkent.camra.org.uk>

# Who will be in the next Good Beer Guide?

At the time of going to press, beer and cider drinkers throughout Kent are waiting with bated breath to see which of our local pubs and clubs will be honoured with a mention in the 2027 edition of CAMRA's highly prestigious **Good Beer Guide (GBG)**.

How does a pub qualify? It all starts with individuals logging beer scores on the CAMRA website <https://camra.org.uk/pubs> (See page 26 for more information). The process began on the first day of 2025, when beer scores began to be collated. These were analysed, and presented to CAMRA members at a special meeting.

Pubs were ranked according to their average beer scores over the year and the consistency of such scores. From here, a long list of pubs was whittled down to a short list that the meeting agreed were worthy of consideration. Members left this meeting with exhortations to visit some of the pubs with

lower numbers of scores to confirm or reject the initial assessment.

At the next branch meeting, CAMRA members were updated on the selection progress and given the opportunity to vote for their personal preferences for the **Pub of the Year (POTY)** and **Club of the Year (COTY)**.

At the time of going to press, the potential **GBG** entries were being readied for the national database, and the **POTY** and **COTY** votes were being collated. CAMRA members from other regions are then invited to study the data, visit the leading candidates to make the final decision.

By the time of the next edition in June, the **POTY** and **COTY** for Maidstone and Mid-Kent area should be known, but do, please, keep scoring beers on the <https://camra.org.uk/pubs> website. The selection process for the 2028 Good Beer Guide is already under way!



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- Paulaner Lager
- Bexley Arnsberg Lager
- San Miguel
- Amstel
- Motörhead Roadcrew

**Ciders:**

- Hawkstone Cider
- Biddenden Bushels Cider

**On the Pumps**

**Kentish Ales on rotation including**



# Meet the Landlord

## Ye Olde Thirsty Pig

**In this issue, we meet up with Spencer and Angela Nichol of Ye Olde Thirsty Pig Ale & Cider House in Maidstone.**



renovation of the ancient grade II listed building, which Spencer owns.

*"I've worked on a significant number of listed building renovations, so applied my skills and knowledge to lovingly restore the historic character and ambience of the building. Centuries old crafts, together with using sheep wool and horsehair as insulation, ensure that our customers can enjoy a totally unique experience in Maidstone,"* said Spencer.

The experience isn't confined to the interior, as a heated, enclosed Beer Garden greets you at the

**B**uilt around 1430 – 1440 "The Pig" is possibly Maidstone's third oldest building, with its quirky, uneven floors and doors, nooks and crannies, providing an unrivalled experience in the County Town. A true champion of Kentish beers, sought-after local mead, together with an unusual selection of lagers and ciders (including Jeremy Clarkson's *Hawkstone* lager and cider!), Ye Olde Thirsty Pig offers something quite different from other venues.

Located on the crossroads of Knighttrider Street, Mote Road, Lower and Upper Stone Street, the wonky-beamed building is unmissable and surrounded by a decent choice of public car parks – most of which are FREE after 6.00pm.

Formerly the Minstrel Wine Bar, Ye Olde Thirsty Pig was re-launched by Spencer in 2013, after an extensive

end of a short passageway.

*"We've exciting plans for the Beer Garden, which will be implemented shortly in readiness for the Spring, making it a welcoming area for social gatherings. We plan a significant upgrading throughout, as well as replacing and extending the roof,"* added Angela.

Well-behaved dogs and children are welcome, with Pizzas being served on Friday and Saturday evenings. A series of events are planned, many as fundraisers for the British Heart Foundation and the Folly Wildlife Rescue Trust.

Give yourself a treat by stepping back in time at Ye Olde Thirsty Pig.

Check out [www.thethirstypig.co.uk](http://www.thethirstypig.co.uk) for Opening Times, other information and history.

**Text and Photo: Tony Williams**

## Branch History

# Mild Rebuke (from 1976)

(Digitally) leafing through an old copy of *Draught Copy* from August 1976, I was interested to see that some of the concerns of CAMRA have changed so little over the years... and how few of the breweries have survived.

**Draught Copy** FREE: AUGUST 1976  
The Campaign for Real Ale Maidstone & Mid-Kent

**Mild Rebuke** In 1960, mild ale had the lion's share of the beer market. 12 years later, this share had more than halved, whilst that of lager had gone up six-fold.

Why? Well, in 1974 alone, Whitbread spent only £100,000 less on advertising Heineken than they spent on all their other brands put together. An estimated £3 million is spent advertising the leading five brands of lager each year on television alone.

In contrast, mild, brewed at the same strength as most British lagers and therefore just as light and refreshing (but tastier and 4 or 5p a pint cheaper) gets no advertising. And in this media-conscious age there's no surer way to kill a product off in a competitive market. Keg beer owes much of its success to the fact that it appeared at

the same time as commercial Tv: Mild, with its lower profit margins was a natural loser.

Yet *Theakston's Old Peculier*, a strong mild ale, is being promoted to such good effect that in two years the product has achieved national distribution - remarkable for a small Yorkshire brewery with only ten tied houses.

In the South-East *Charrington* and *Whitbread* produce mild only in filtered and pressurised form; *Courage's Dark Mild*, a prizewinner at this year's Brewex, is gassed up in all but one of their 50 pubs in the Maidstone area. *Shepherd Neame*, to their credit, not only brew their Mild traditionally, but serve it live and real in 75% of their houses.

In 1960, mild ale had the lion's share of the beer market. 12 years later, this share had more than halved, whilst that of lager had gone up six-fold.

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Perhaps if mild were given brand names such as "Champion" or "Powerhouse" and promoted on TV by husky Nordic lumberjacks, it too would rise in popularity, and lose its image as a drink for OAPs and country yokels. Of course it would cost more, but who cares if its fashionable?

Or can we, the beer drinkers, save a drink that only ten years ago took 45% of the draught beer sales? We could, with a little effort. Next time you order, remember mild. Otherwise it may soon become just a memory.

*Original Article by Dave Wilman*

(According to the Bank of England's inflation calculator, £1 in 1976 would be worth £6.80 in January 2026)

# Rifle Volunteers



Alex welcomes customers old and new to the Rifle Volunteers.

Traditional public house serving Goachers Ale and local cider. Fortnightly fun quiz, beer garden.

## OPENING TIMES

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## BEER EVENTS

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**EASTER WEEKEND** – Award-Winning

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**EARLY MAY BANK HOLIDAY**

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**SPRING BANK HOLIDAY** Tap Takeover

**AUGUST** – The Nelly's First Beer Festival

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# AGM News - April in St. Albans 2026

With CAMRA's Members' Weekend coming up from 17-19 April, I'm thrilled to share the launch of a project that our South Herts organising team has been building especially for you: the St Albans: City of Ale website — now live at <https://stalbanscityofale.org.uk/>.



Rather than everyone huddling in one hall, we want you to get out and explore St Albans' vibrant, welcoming pubs, clubs and venues — many of which have something special lined up just for this occasion.

Already featured are lively festivals, tastings and events across a range of great venues. More are being added all the time. There's something for everyone, whether you're a passionate cask ale fan, a modern craft beer enthusiast, a cider devotee or just looking forward to a fun spring weekend in a beautiful, historic city.

We can't wait to welcome you to St Albans: City of Ale in April!

St Albans: City of Ale events are open to members and non-members alike.

To register to attend Members' Weekend please go to: <https://camra.org.uk/members-weekend>

By Emily Ryans, Chair, Local Organising Committee  
([val.langford@camra.org.uk](mailto:val.langford@camra.org.uk))

## Calendar: March to May

*All events are provisional. Please check with relevant websites on the day*

### March

**Sat 7, 11.40:** Bus to Chequers, Laddingford – Pies & Puddings (MMK).

**Wed 4 20:00:** Social, Three Pillars, Compass (Gravesend)

**4-15:** Wetherspoon's Spring beer festival

**Thu 12, 18.00:** Aylesford Walkabout

(MMK), starting from the Chequers 12-15' Beer festival in the Prince of Ales, Rainham (Medway).

**Wed 18 20:00:** Social, Foresters, Malt Shovel, then Wat Tyler or Ivy Leaf (Dartford)

**Thu 19, 19.30:** Nevill Bull, Birling, then Duke of Wellington, Ryarsh (MMK).

**Fri 20 – 21:** CAMRA North Sussex Branch, Spring Equinox Beer Festival, Denne Road, Horsham, West Sussex. 40+ ales, ciders, etc.  
**21 – 22:** Spa Valley Railway, TW – Winter Ales Festival, 50 ales, about 25 ciders

### April

**Fri 3, 10.30:** Good Friday Ramble to Frittenden (MMK). Details to follow.

**Wed 8, 20:00:** Open business meeting, Jolly Drayman (Gravesend)

**9-11:** CAMRA Isle of Man Beer Festival,

Villa Marina, Douglas, Isle of Man. 120+ ales, 50+ ciders, fruit wines, meads, etc.

**Fri 10, 18.00:** Bell & Jorrocks, Frittenden (MMK). - beer festival.

**Thu 16, 16.00:** Walnut Tree, Loose, then Chequers (MMK).

**Fri 17–Sun 19:** CAMRA AGM in St. Albans (National)

**Thu 23, 19.30:** Lord Raglan, Staplehurst, then Stile Bridge (MMK).

**Sat 25, 11.40:** Bus to Chequers, Laddingford, Beer Festival (MMK) to be confirmed.

**Thu 30 20.30:** MMK POTY Winner, to be announced

### May

**Fri 8–10:** Bexley Beer festival (Bexley)

**Fri 8, 12.00:** Bexley Festival visit (MMK).

**Thu 21 20.30:** Business Meeting, and MMK Club Of The Year

**22–25 May:** Spring Beer and Cider Festival at Woolton Farm, Canterbury.

**Sat 23 12.00:** MMK/MED/GDV Joint Social, 10:50, Strood

**Fri 29 16.00:** Olde Thirsty Pig, Maidstone (MMK).. Pizzas on sale from 17.00

## Feature

# Treasury help for pubs – too little, too late says CAMRA chair



**Ash Corbett-Collins, CAMRA chairman**

**R**esponding to the Treasury's announcement of extra help for pubs in England with business rates, Ash Corbett-Collins, CAMRA Chairman said:

*"This short-term announcement is not the 'permanently lower business rates' that pubs were promised. While it is positive that the Chancellor has listened and announced extra discounts for pubs facing the threat of closure, it is short-sighted to think that today's statement will give publicans the certainty they need."*

*"The plan to review the unfair way pubs are assessed for business rates is welcome, but this leaves pubs in the same situation as they have been for years - still facing a long wait for promised, and fundamental, reforms to make the system fairer."*

*"CAMRA will keep campaigning to get the Government to support great pubs and independent breweries so they can compete*

*against online businesses and cheap supermarket booze."*

On changes to licensing hours and relaxation of planning rules, Ash said:

*"Letting pubs stay open for longer or extending their premises is not going to solve the fundamental problem where otherwise viable businesses face being taxed out of existence. Licensees are already limiting their opening hours and can't afford to invest in their buildings. The Government should fundamentally review the tax burden on pubs and independent breweries from things like VAT and alcohol duty to see if those systems can be made fairer, to give our locals a fighting chance against cheap supermarket alcohol."*

**CAMRA Press Release 27/1/26,  
photo from <https://camra-stock.camra.org.uk/>**

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# News from CAMRA

## CAMRA's hybrid Conference



CAMRA members who are unable to attend the annual conference in person may be interested to know that this year's even will be hybrid – so that everyone can watch along and vote, whether that's in person at the Members' Weekend, from the comfort of their own homes or from elsewhere.

From Friday 17 to Sunday 19 April Conference business on Saturday and Sunday will be accessible to all Campaign member through an online registration option.

You can watch AGM on Saturday via livestream and AGM voting is open to all members online in advance.

Registration for the conference is exactly the same whether you plan to attend the weekend in person or virtually: please go to <https://camra.org.uk/members-weekend> and make your choice. You will not be able to register for both! You'll need to click to unregister yourself if you want to change how you're taking part.

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Twitter, Facebook, Instagram icons and a jester cat illustration.

## Feature

# How do you "score" a beer?



The National Beer Scoring System (NBSS) is a 0-5 (0 = No cask ale available) point scale for judging beer quality in pubs.

It is an easy-to-use system that has been designed to help CAMRA branches in selecting pubs for the Good Beer Guide and monitor beer quality by encouraging CAMRA members from anywhere to report beer quality in any pub in the UK.

If you are a CAMRA member, we want you to tell us about the quality of beer in the pubs you visit. If you are not a member, why not join Europe's most successful consumer organisation?

## What Do the Scores Mean?

**0: No cask ale available:** This can be because the pub never has it or it's run out

**1: Poor:** Beer that is anything from barely drinkable to drinkable with considerable resentment.

**2: Average:** Competently kept, drinkable pint but doesn't inspire in any way, not worth moving to another pub but you drink the beer without really noticing.

**3: Good:** Good beer in good form. You may cancel plans to move to the next pub. You want to stay for another pint and may seek out the beer again.

**4: Very Good:** Good Excellent beer in excellent condition.

**5: Perfect:** Probably the best you are ever likely to find. A seasoned drinker will award this score very rarely.

Although a date had not been decided at the time of going to press, there are plans afoot within the MMK branch to run a Beer scoring education event. Keep an eye on the MMK website for further details!

*Information from  
<https://camra.org.uk/>*



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## Beer Travellers

# Travels in Czechia (Part 1)

### Day 1

We were greeted by a lovely sunny day in Prague, after clearing the airport we caught an Autobus which turned into a trolley bus on its route. After a further two modes of transport being a metro train and a tram we finally arrived at our Hotel Wilhelm a few kilometres outside the City centre.

Our organiser was obviously worried about our fitness during our visit (bless him) and managed to find a hotel that had 80 steps to walk/climb from the tram stop to get to the hotel. After checking in and having a shower I met with the others at the nearest tram stop and a short ride to the Restaurant **U Klastera**,

"*Sedm velkých piv, prosím,*" which I believe is seven large beers please) was the request to the barman/ owner we had all chosen the *Klaster 11'* which was readily drunk and enjoyed. We were expecting a few miscommunications over our stay but the first was between our party when we all thought we had decided to have another beer but somehow we managed to get the bill brought out!



Oh well. A short walk from here we arrived at the **Klasteri Senk**, part of the Brevnov Monastery close to Prague Castle: they were quite busy in the

restaurant but we managed to secure the back-up table as I would describe it – but we were happy to just to get in. Some typical Czech cuisine on the menu, and I opted for the Confit duck with two types of dumplings with red and white cabbage. It was delicious, as were the two brewery beers that helped it down, the second a stronger dark ale, equivalent to UK 6% beers.

I was reflecting on how I am always happy to return to Czechia with the very reasonable priced and quality food and drink, and the low cost of travel, especially for seniors.

On leaving here fully sated, we returned to the area of our hotel and visited a **Bernard** pub quite close to it. I first had an unfiltered pale session beer followed by a second strong dark beer of the evening as a nightcap.

### Day 2

Another bright sunny day beckoned through the window, but our first trip was to the restaurant and the hotel breakfast, which was pleasant enough: the expected continental breakfast, with scrambled eggs, jumbo hot dogs and some sort of beans in a tomato sauce, boiled eggs, pastries, and yoghurt – obviously not all on the same plate, although there is always someone that thinks otherwise.

We caught a tram from the local stop followed by an underground train took us to the Main Railway station for Prague for a reasonably long journey and a change at Decin. It was a very pleasant scenic journey which largely followed a river though poppy fields and hills, due to some single track use for maintenance the delay meant we missed the connection at Decin.

*(Continued on page 34)*

# Travels in Czechia

Continued from page 33



A hastily arranged plan B (or was it C?) was to walk to the **Kapitan Pivovar** brewery now which was originally planned for later in the day. A 15 minute walk unfortunately took us a bit longer and I hold my hand up to part of the blame, after coming out of the wrong side of the station.

The Kapitan brewery was incorporated into a shopping centre and although it had a wonderful beer hall and restaurant we chose to sit outside for the first beer or two in the sun. Back at the station we caught a train to Ceske

**Kamenice** and a 5 min walk to the **Pizzeria Pivovar Kartouch**, some slight confusion as it had a different name outside the pedestrian entrance, but was soon confirmed we were at the right place. I opted for what they told us was a traditional ale but was actually a wheat beer.

After a 2nd unremarkable beer it was time to start our return journey to Prague as far as Usti. The **Pivovar Hotel Na Richte** was an impressive large brewery building.

It was time to eat and the majority went for the beef goulash with dumplings, a small sprinkling of chillies made a very tasty meal – drunk with first a Pilsner called *Mazel 12'* and then a super dark ale called *Prokop 12'*. The final deed of the day longish train Journey back to Prague and the hotel.

*Text and Photos: Andy Osborne*

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# Beer Travellers

## Walking - or Skiing - in France

Last year, I took the opportunity to have a week in *Bourg Saint Maurice* in the *Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes* region in south-eastern France.

To be honest, I wasn't expecting anything in the way of decent beer, at all. It was a pleasant surprise, therefore, to come across not one, but two craft breweries close to the town, located next door to one another in a small industrial park off *Rue de l'Edelweiss*.



### **Inside Brasserie du Petit St Bernard**

**Brasserie du Petit St Bernard** was started by New Zealander Pat Wilkie, back in 2014. Brewed using German equipment, the beers are available on draught and cans in the tap room, **Charly's Factory**, conveniently found at the bottom of the *Les Arcs* funicular at one end of Bourg Saint Maurice Railway Station, the ideal venue after a day's walking or skiing in *Les Arcs* (the old tap room at the brewery is no longer open).

I have been told that Charly's Factory will be getting refurbished with a new

name at the end of the 2025 ski season. Current beers are *Free Rider* 3.8% (*Session Blonde*), *Sunny Side Up* 4.8% (*NZ Pale*), *Boondigga* 5.0% (*Hazy NEIPA*), *Bouquetin* 6.0% (*IPA*), and *Weissberg* 5.2% (*Wheat Beer*). Pasties, sausage rolls, and platters are also served. Occasionally, cask beer may be available in the form of *Fyne Ales Jarl*, as the owner of *Fyne Ales* is a regular skier at the resort, and brings a couple of pins each time he visits.



### **The Tap Room of Les Neves**

**Les Neves Micro Brewery** was started by Louis Meulien in 2020, and the tap room is bang in front of the brewery. There may sporadically be a food truck outside during opening hours. After spending over eight years in Canada, he took the plunge by opening the brewery in Bourg, with the aim of weaning the locals and tourists away from the mass produced beer market. The beers are brewed on a 10hl plant, and they are currently brewing *Toupinne* 4.5% (*wheat beer*), *Chouia* 5.5% (*pale ale*), *Nuet* 4.5% (*stout*), *Sapi* 3.5% (*pils*) *Retour Est* 6.5% (*IPA*) and *Coupe De Foehn* 7.0% (*NEIPA*).

I'd suggest checking the opening times of both of the above, as they are dependent on winter/summer seasons.

Happy skiing/walking in the Haute Savoie!

*Text and Photos by Mick Allen*

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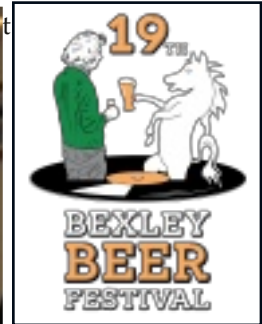
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# Peter Trout



he nicest men you could wish to meet and a friend to many of us.

Most of you will have met him through his involvement with Bexley CAMRA as he was co-organiser for

## **Peter Trout**

all of the Bexley Beer Festivals and represented Bexley CAMRA at many Regional Meetings over the years.

**A** CAMRA stalwart for many years, Peter Trout sadly passed away on Saturday 18th October. He was one of

## **Free Entry to CAMRA Beer Festivals**

From January 2026 CAMRA members get free entry to CAMRA beer festivals. With well over 100 festivals on offer, CAMRA takes beer and cider lovers on a journey through the soul of British brewing. From festivals held in medieval towns and heritage buildings to huge outdoor events, and even on Jesus Green in Cambridge, there's something for everyone!

The new offer applies to CAMRA-run festivals (but *"In Association"* events may differ). So that's another reason to encourage your friends to join the campaign!

He had also been involved as a cellarman at a number of other CAMRA beer festivals over many years, including the much-missed Kent Beer Festival in Canterbury. Peter's funeral was held on Thursday 27th November at Eltham Crematorium, and his wake at Dartfordians Sports Club, the home of our recent beer festivals.

The logo is a homage to Peter: we all remember him with his green (sometimes grey) jumper (with holes). He was a great lover of 60's/70's music and was a great collector of LPs (especially vinyl). Of course he was a great lover of real ale, always drinking halves (or less).

*Andy Wheeler*  
*Bexley CAMRA*  
*Beer Festival Organiser*



Along with 10 ales and 18 ciders, we have a selection of wines, gins and soft drinks and award winning Scotch eggs and pork pies.

## RYE'S MICROPUB

Tower Street, Rye,  
East Sussex TN31 7AT  
Tel: 01797 224110

### PUB OPENING TIMES

Mon - Fri from 2pm  
Sat & Sun from  
12pm



Serving our Best Bitter, IPA, Pale & Porter along with a local lager, ciders, wines, gins & soft drinks.



### TAPROOM OPENING TIMES

Fri 3-7pm, Sat 2-7pm  
Sun 1-5pm

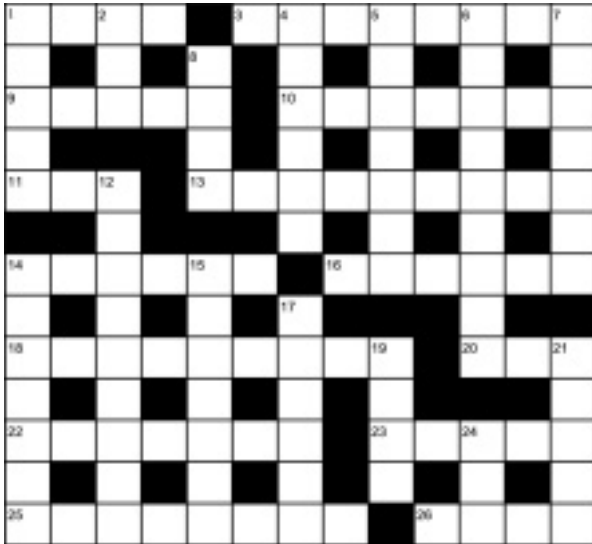
### BREWERY & TAPROOM

The Old Dairy, Rye Road, Playden,  
(opposite the old Peace & Plenty) East Sussex TN31 7UL

# Crossword No. 47

devised by  
Mick Norman

Win a £10 Voucher!



For the chance to win a pristine £10 drinking voucher, please send your completed grid with your name, postal address and email address to our compiler:  
**Mick Norman**  
Nursery cottage,  
Norwood Lane  
Meopham DA13 0YE  
to arrive by Monday, 30th March 2026.

A photocopy/scanned copy can also be emailed to  
mlr\_norman@yahoo.com

## Across

- 1 Every other barrister is an ass in 22 (4)
- 3 Tardis, for example, sounding like an angry parasite (8)
- 9 pp 22's former no 2 (5)
- 10 Darts champion with a smaller beer gut? (7)
- 11 Tide in retreat as our local football team starts (3)
- 13 Breaks down after incredibly close laps (9)
- 14 Enjoy catsup in 22 (6)
- 16 Garden implements - without hesitation a David Bowie album (6)
- 18 Endless Havana lace produced by snowfall (9)
- 20 Maybe pig's organ? (3)
- 22 Bernstein composition has designs on Greenland (7)
- 23 Sozzled MP ruts endlessly in the Oval Office (5)
- 25 See 1D
- 26 22's faucets fight back (4)

## Down

- 1,25 'Elp Pa find this on the dessert menu? (5,8)
- 2 Heavenly body in Murdoch's unsavoury publication (3)
- 4 My call: tumultuous but in a peaceful way (6)
- 5 Shocking power cut around end of year (7)
- 6 Contract for short period, back after steel treatment (9)
- 7 Laughs during rehearsals, producing dead bodies! (7)
- 8 Small car - without rear end? (4)
- 12 Brokers first real deal composed for Humperdinck or 15 perhaps (9)
- 14 Trap Ade - make another alteration (7)
- 15 Air hops fermented for singer Helen (7)
- 17 Rubbish in the Home Counties results in abrasion (6)
- 19 Cafe at Sevenoaks providing food (4)
- 21 Mutated spore round the boxing ring (5)
- 24 Alternately, Russia is the land of 23 (3)

## Solution to Crossword No. 46

Congratulations to

Nick Goodwin of Tonbridge

Who sent in the first completed answer to the crossword published in Edition 211

Your voucher is in the post!







EST. 1983

# GOACHER'S

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**G**  
EST.1983