

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

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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.

Advertising rates: £110 / £65 / £40 for a full / half / quarter page respectively

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The copy deadline for the next issue is **Sunday, 26th July 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

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.



Ashford,
Folkestone
& Romney
Marsh



Bexley



Gravesend
and
Darent
Valley



Maidstone
and
Mid Kent



Medway



West
Kent

The Micropub Blogger comes to Maidstone



Scott Spencer in the Flowerpot

It was a real pleasure to meet Scott Spencer recently, on one of his excursions. Just over five years ago, he started up a blog, documenting his personal passions for beer and micropubs. Recently, he honoured Maidstone with a visit. Some of us met him in the Craft Brewed bar / coffee house, and went on to the Flowerpot (which is not really a micro pub, but serves excellent beer).

As he informed us, he has long been interested in micropubs and good beer, so a while ago, he took the plunge and started the blog. *"I tend to explore somewhere different every weekend, along with a few weeks away during the year,"* he explained.

He is helped in this by an unusual work schedule that allows him to take long

weekends every other week, and he spends much of his leisure time researching his next trip.

He only spent one day in Maidstone and West Malling, but managed to cover a lot of ground. Scott has written about his day more entertainingly than I ever could, so please feel free to have a look at his blog: micropubadventures.co.uk/2026/05/11/11-05-26-maidstone-and-west-malling/ to find out what he thought about us.

Scott has covered a lot of ground over the past few years, and has documented his travels extensively on his blog. He also includes excellent public transport links to find some fascinating trails and out-of-the-way micropubs and independent breweries.

Scott has compiled an excellent resource for micropub and independent brewery fans. It is one of those resources so useful that I now think it should have always been there! If you visit his blog, clicking on the "Buy me a pint" button is a great way to encourage him in his work.

We look forward to seeing him back in Maidstone (or our associated branches), and I hope CAMRA members will give him a warm welcome. In the meantime, of course, we can always keep up with him on by following his blog!

An advertisement for Malling Accountancy. It features a logo with a yellow stylized 'M' on a dark blue square. Below the logo, the text 'MALLING ACCOUNTANCY' is displayed. To the right, there is a call to action: 'Contact us for a free initial consultation'. Below this, there are five yellow buttons with black text: 'Payroll', 'Tax Returns', 'VAT Returns', 'Bookkeeping', and 'Accounts Preparation'. At the bottom, there is a dark blue bar with contact information: 'E peter.stevens@mallingaccountancy.co.uk', 'T 01732 792349', and 'W www.mallingaccountancy.co.uk'. The background of the advertisement shows a person's hands typing on a keyboard.

CAMRA fears for Pubs from Proposed Changes to Planning Rules



CAMRA is calling on the Government to rethink plans to weaken protections in the planning system in England, which it says could lead to thousands of pubs being lost forever. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is consulting on plans to change the National Planning Policy Framework.

Existing planning rules mean that local councils have to protect all pubs, as they are considered vital community facilities.

Pubs have some protections in the planning system, including the need for planning permission to be granted before a pub can be demolished or converted into houses, shops or takeaways, but under the Government's new plans, protections would only apply if a pub were the last one in a local area.

CAMRA has warned that this could see thousands of pubs converted into flats, houses, shops or takeaways by developers – even when local people want to save it as a community local. Paul Ainsworth, National Planning Policy Advisor said: *“We strongly object to these plans which could spell the end for thousands of viable pubs across England. Strong planning protections are needed to give local people the right to try to save their pub if it is under threat of demolition or conversion.*

Crucially, this must apply to all pubs so that communities can save their local even if there are other pubs in the same area.

“Without protections for every pub, we risk seeing greedy developers cash in and try to turn pub buildings into other uses like houses, shops or takeaways. This would be devastating for communities who would lose a vital part of their social fabric.”

CAMRA

Brewery Collaborations are "in" this Summer

Those on the lookout for something new for the summer will want to keep an eye out for some of the fascinating brewery collaborations taking place in the local area.

Although details were still being worked out at the time of going to press, several local independent breweries, including *Kent* and *Wantsum*, were working on a project to brew beers together, with a release date of Friday 24th July.

Meanwhile, down in Lewes, two breweries, the long-established *Harvey's* and the exciting modern brewery *Beak* are already offering customers the chance to sample their collaborative brew – a 4.5% golden ale called *Spring*.

The beer will be brewed at the *Beak* brewery, and will feature both *Harvey's* and *Beak's* yeast strains. Launch events took place at the **Royal Oak** in London and the **Brewers Arms** in Lewes,



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How to brew a World Cup beer

Head brewer *Olly Smith* from the *Kent Brewery* talked to *DRAUGHT COPY's Don Andrews* about the summer beer he is planning for football fans



Olly Smith researching his summer football beer

DC
When and why did you decide to brew a special World Cup beer? And what is it going to be called?

Olly
We've done the same in previous years. The last one was called "Na na na," from the "Vindaloo" song by Fat Les. One of the owners, Paul, and the salesman, Ray, love their music, so we try and incorporate some tunes into the names. In keeping with the tradition, we've decided to call our new beer "Sweet Caroline."

DC
What kind of beer is it going to be?

Olly
It will be a pale ale, about 4%. We are going to be using all English hops, some from Kent and some from other counties. We are going to be using English malts, too. We found some new English hops to try this year, so we wanted to incorporate as much of the English character into the beer as possible – to support our country

for one of the biggest tournaments in the world.

DC
A summer beer?

Olly
Yes, it should have slightly floral fruity notes, the kind you get from these modern British hops. They're not too intense, they're nicely balanced – I think that's a really important word. It plays nicely into the atmosphere of the season, when you're out in the sun or in a beer garden, and you want something that's a bit lighter, a bit fresher in taste. And just really fresh and enjoyable.

DC
And what happens if England get knocked out in the early stages?

Olly
Let's hope it doesn't happen - but you can still enjoy the beer!



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Exotic foreign Lagers? Buyer Beware!



A pint of lager (image by Chat GTP)

Are you drinking a pint of foreign lager? Chances are that you're not! A high percentage of foreign-sounding lagers are made in huge computerised beer factories in the UK, owned by large global conglomerates.

For example, *Cruzcampo*, *Fosters*, *Heineken* and *Birra Moretti* all come from Manchester. Maybe *Moretti* is what the Italians call Manchester? *Poretti* comes from a bit nearer Italy: Northampton, along with 'Danish' *Carlsberg*.

Several mass-produced lagers have had their strength reduced over time, to significantly reduce the beer duty payable. For example, a pint of *Grolsch* in the Netherlands is 5% ABV, but the UK version is a mere 3.4%. How can it claim to be the same beer?

There are a handful of foreign lagers on sale in the UK that are actually brewed in their country of origin: *Budweiser Budvar*, not to be confused with the 'American' *Budweiser* (from South Wales, since you ask), is brewed exclusively in Czechia, by a brewery proud of its heritage.

Have you ever wondered why pubs often have a guest real ale, or even a beer festival, but these rarely feature lagers? What would be the point?

I used to work with someone who drank *Fosters*, and our team often socialised in the pub. When it was my round, I sometimes used to ask the bar staff to put a pint of *Heineken/Carlsberg/whatever* into a *Fosters* glass. He never queried what he was drinking. If it's in a *Fosters* glass, it must be *Fosters*!

I sometimes ask lager drinkers why they don't drink real ale. They usually say that they tried it once, but they didn't like it. That's like trying cheddar and saying that you don't like cheese.

There is such a range of colours and flavours when it comes to real ale. Many pubs will offer you a taster of any beer, so that you can find out which styles appeal to you.

I tend to avoid stouts, but love some hazy or cloudy pale ales, for example.

Everybody has different tastes.

British 'foreign' lagers are a bit like baked beans – there's not a huge difference between brands. However, many local, independent breweries across the UK produce their own lager, which you could try as a stepping stone to amazing locally brewed cask.

People often 'convert' from lager to real ale, but I don't know anyone who has done the opposite. There's a whole world of flavours out there for you to try. **Real ale** is not injected with carbon dioxide (a waste product of the human body!) to give it some character, it is lovingly brewed with top-quality ingredients, designed to excite the tastebuds.

A good place to start your journey is the **East Malling Beer & Cider Festival** on **Saturday 5th September** (see the ad in this issue).

Jeff Tucker



**Maidstone & Mid-
Kent CAMRA**

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September
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Opp. Aylesford Station (10:35)



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Meet the Landlord

The Fox and Goose

In this issue, we meet up with Ken Williams (no relation!) of the Fox and Goose, in Maidstone.



Ken, Hannah and Jan of the Fox and Goose

Hidden in the middle of the sprawling Grove Green housing estate, is a calm oasis in ancient Weaving Street, which is where you will find a warm welcome at the traditional, family-run, Fox and Goose pub.

Husband and wife team of Ken and Jan, daughter Hannah and supported by local staff, ensure that the old, beamed pub, is the hub of the community, offering something for everyone, as Ken explains:

"I've been in the licenced trade for more years than I want to admit, but that does mean that I have seen huge changes and in sharing my experience with Hannah, has enabled her to organise a whole raft of entertainment, ranging from Quiz Nights, Reggae, Country, Caribbean music events, to our popular Boot Fairs, and a whole lot more."

Due to its close proximity to Vinters Park Crematorium, the pub is regularly the venue for Wakes, with Jan and Hannah working sympathetically with families to

accommodate the occasion.

"As a true family pub, we all work as a team towards a common goal, Jan rules the kitchen, working many hours to make sure that every meal is special and believe me, she is very fussy. Hannah now heads up front of house. She's a brilliant organiser and ideas person, leaving me to manage stock and generally do as I'm told! We have a huge Beer Garden that hosts a variety of events and given that we are within walking distance of thousands of local families, Hannah makes sure that we cater for all tastes and ages."

Ken added.

Ken's significant experience in the trade, ranging from wine and spirits representative, catering, beers and minerals rep, trouble-shooting manager, to running numerous pubs, has stood the Fox and Goose in good stead during these difficult times and with the advent of Summer, the large Beer Garden comes into its own for a family respite haven in busy times. At the time of visiting, the Fox & Goose offered Fuller's London Pride, Harvey's Best Bitter and Goacher's Light: Ken has always been keen on supporting local breweries.

Text and Photo by Tony Williams

Check out

www.foxandgooseonline.co.uk or call 01622 – 737675 for Opening Times, events, menus and other info.

Pub News



The Holy Goat, Tonbridge – Formerly the **Somerhill Arms** in Pembury Road opened at the beginning of April 2026. It has been fully refurbished and is part of the **St Johns Yard** pub group. There are two hand pumps with just *Harvey's Sussex Best* available at present.



The Crown in Shoreham has reopened after being taken over by a local couple. It is open every day. They have a new menu featuring hearty pub classics. Three real ales are available from National breweries. *Dark Star Hophead*, *Young's London Original* and *Adnams Southwold Bitter* were on for my visit, and were all in good condition.

There are some great walks around the village and with the **King's Arms** and the **Samuel Palmer** nearby it makes Shoreham a nice place to visit.

The Brookers Oast, Beltring faces closure as owners Whitbread have announced plans to close its remaining Beefeater and Brewers Fayre outlets and focus on the Premier Inn chain.

The Man of Kent, Little Mill, East Peckham is currently closed and seeking new tenants.

A tenancy for offer sign appeared on the **Man of Kent, Tonbridge** but it later transpired that it should have been attached to the other **Man of Kent, Little Mill**.



The Brown Trout, Lamberhurst may be due to reopen some time soon, as a new licensee is looking to acquire it.

Dave Moore

Photos from CAMRA website

Events

Fuggles Beer Café, Both pubs have frequent events so please check here : <https://fugglesbeercafe.co.uk/events> and put them in your diary.

Westerham Brewery Tours & Tasting take place weekly on Saturday mornings at 11.30am book here: <https://westerhambrewery.co.uk/whats-on/westerham-brewery-tour-and-tasting>

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

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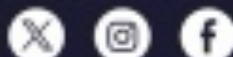




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Gravesend and Darent Valley Local News



The Cotton Mill
Photo: Tony Crawley

Our branch Pub of the Year for 2026 is the **Cotton Mill in Swanley**, for the second year running. The two runners-up are the **Compass** and the **Three Pillars**, both in Gravesend. The award was presented to the **Cotton Mill** just before the copy deadline for this

edition, at a lively party featuring musical entertainment plus *Adnams Bitter* and *Ghost Ship*, *Bristol Beer Factory's Hit The Burners* and *Tiny Rebel Lemonade Stand*.

Just too late for the previous edition we heard that the planning application for redevelopment of the **Black Horse at Stansted**, which would have included an unviable-looking small bar in a housing development, had been rejected by Tonbridge & Malling Council, by a unanimous vote. Although this doesn't guarantee the pub's reopening, it does mean the possibility remains.

The **Lion at Luddesdown** is still likely to be undergoing its refit as this edition appears. However, to compensate for its absence there is a popup bar at owners Silverhand Estate's vineyard. A recent report had it selling *Iron Pier Bitter*. On the other hand work is under way to convert the **King's Arms at Meopham** to a Turkish restaurant.

Two pubs in Wrotham underwent changes in March and thanks go to Ken Baines and Jon Pierce for reports here. John and Karen, having run the **Rose & Crown** since 2017, retired at the end of the month. Katy and Darryl who have taken over, are new to pubs but early indications are reported as good. On the other hand the **George & Dragon** closed again early in the month. Stonegate advertised for new tenants and it was reported as open again in May.



The Rose & Crown. Photo: Adrian Moss

Further up the A20, the inevitable planning application for housing development at the **Gamecock at West Kingsdown** duly appeared.

By Easter two pubs in Dartford had reopened. The **Wat Tyler** has come back to life after its rebuild following a car crashing into the bar. A visit soon afterwards found *St Austell Tribute* plus one other beer. The former, we can now say, **Long Dog** reopened



The Long Dog
Photo: Adrian Moss

as a community-led bar in March named the **Phoenix**. Not to be confused with the previous Phoenix in Lower Hythe Street, which closed some years ago. The previous central table structure, which could have been the least comfortable pub seating in the town, has now been removed, leading to a much more open-plan design. As I write, demand for real ales is being gauged.

Adrian Moss

Pub Update

For full information on pubs, including Facebook and other media see the Camra maintained online data at camra.org.uk/pubs which covers the whole UK.



Lower Bell, Aylesford. Licensee Spencer has negotiated a free-of-tie lease with Greene King and will be able to buy non-GK beers from May. *Greene King IPA* is likely to remain on tap at the bar, though we will have to wait to see what other options will be found



Dirty Habit, Hollingbourne. There was a long-awaited opening in early May, following the extensive restoration and updating of the facilities after the disastrous fire in October 2022.

Park Gate, Hollingbourne. *Bass* has proved to be an extremely popular guest beer here. This much neglected beer is currently undergoing a revival, but not been seen in these parts for many years.

Loddington Tap, Linton. Now has more customer space following changes, allowing spreading into the former brewing area.



Cherry Tree, Maidstone. Have had a large-scale refit with fresh paint, furniture replaced and all new carpets, courtesy of returning licensee Paul Wratten. Paul sold the business in 2017, but had enjoyed managing it then, so has come back again. Darts are immensely popular here: three dartboards are available, as well as a pool table. Several TVs show other sports events. *Harvey's Sussex Best* is on the bar.

Chequers, Laddingford. Charles and Tracey have announced that they will retire in September after 30 years at this popular, community-focused, country pub. All regular events will continue as scheduled for the rest of the period. The large rear garden allows various events to be held during the year. Normally have *Harvey's Sussex Best* plus two other beers on the bar

Coach House, Maidstone. The new licensees, Jess and Shane, have put cask ale back on the bar in the form of *Fuller's London Pride*. See Facebook for music and other event details. The pub is open daily 12-12 at present.

Stag, Maidstone. The lease has been terminated and the premises closed by Stonegate, who are now seeking new management for this normally busy town-centre pub.

(Continued on page 27)

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

Monday: 6pm - 11pm

Tuesday - Saturday: 12pm - 11pm

Sunday: 12pm - 6pm

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Marden Village Club



National CAMRA Club of the Year 2022 and 2023



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- Regular charity fundraising events throughout the year for small local charities
- CAMRA members welcome

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Marden Village Club wins Club of the Year



(Wantsum Black Prince mild was a highlight for many), and the club frequently features stouts, porters and milds.

The club was renovated in 2017, and was designed to offer a light, airy and welcoming interior.

On the evening of our visit, CAMRA members sampled most of the beers on offer, and returned a very favourable verdict.

Ian Clennett presents the COTY award to Simon Banfield Club embodies the idea of a club at the heart of

Members of the Maidstone and Mid-Kent (MMK) branch of CAMRA who attended the branch business meeting on 22nd May at the Marden Village Club, witnessed the presentation of this year's Club of the Year (COTY) Award to club manager Simon Banfield.

This was hardly a new experience for Simon, as the club has won this award many times before, and even went on to win the National Club of the year award for two years running - in 2022 and 2023.

The Club mainly exists for the benefit of its members, of course, but CAMRA members are welcomed, too.

This Grade II listed community hub boasts six real ales, four of which are guest beers generally sourced from local microbreweries. Dark beer can always be found on at least one pump

its local community. It organises charity events and hosts various sports teams, and many members were vocal in praising the club for being almost a second home. Above all, of course, visitors have scored its beers very favourably on the CAMRA website (see separate article in this edition with news about beer scoring)

In his acceptance speech, Simon thanked all of the people who had contributed to the club's success and the CAMRA members who had supported the club by rating its beers so highly, but wished there could be more competition for this award.

On the other hand, given that Marden has achieved notable success at a national level, too, perhaps it just sets a standard which other clubs might seek to emulate.

Photo and text: Don Andrews

West Kent CAMRA Pub of the Year Awards 2026

The results of the West Kent Pub of the Year Awards were released recently, with the **Nelson Arms**, Tonbridge winning the overall Pub of the Year award and the **Halfway House**, Brenchley getting runner up.



Matt and Ben from the Nelson Arms receiving the Certificate from Tony Shea, Branch Chair

In addition to the main award there are also Town and Village Awards. The Tunbridge Wells Town Pub of the Year was **Fuggles Beer Cafe**.



Alex Greig (Fuggles) receiving the Certificate from Tony Shea, Branch Chair

The Sevenoaks Town Pub of the Year went to the **Anchor**.



Barry from the Anchor receiving his Certificate from Tony Shea, Branch Chair.

The Tonbridge Town Pub of the Year was **Fuggles Beer Cafe** (yes, they have a pub here too).

The Village Pub of the Year went to the **Dovecote Inn**, Capel.



Simon, Lindsey and staff receiving their Certificate from Don Croker.

Text and Photos by Dave Moore




Beautifully Refurbished Traditional Community Pub in the
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A pale golden juicy IPA, Creekside offers bursts of tropical fruits courtesy of a combination of four hops.

With hints of orange and peach, it is the perfect pint to enjoy all year round, with a light, refreshing finish.

Calendar of Events – June to August

Please note: all events are provisional. Please check with relevant websites on the day of the event

June

3rd, 20:00: Open business meeting, **Foresters (Dartford) GDV**

Thu 4, 15.15: Visit to **Larkin's Alehouse**, Cranbrook. Bus 5 at 14.27 **MMK**

5th – 6th - K&ESR / AF&RM CAMRA Real Ale and Cider Festival, Tenterden Town Station, free entry for CAMRA members. kesr.org.uk & afm.camra.org.uk **AFRM**

Sat 6th, 10.15: Bus 12 to **Tenterden KESR Beer Festival** **MMK**

5th - 7th: Crystal Palace Beer Festival by Craft Beer Folk. <https://craftbeerfolk.co.uk/crystal-palace-beer-festival/>

Thu 11th, 19.30: Social at **Ringlestone, Harrietsham**, then **Pepper Box** **MMK**

11th – 13th June: Kingston Beer Festival, Kingston Workmen's Club and Institute, 25 Old London Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, KT2 6ND kandl.camra.org.uk/

12th – 13th: Beer on the Vine at Sevenoaks Vine Gardens, run by Sevenoaks Round Table. Real ales, craft beers, ciders, music, BBQ www.sevenoaksroundtable.co.uk/2026/02/15/beer-on-the-vine-2026-is-on-save-the-date/

Thu 18th 18.30: Visit to the Angel, Addington, then Kings Arms, Offham **MMK**

Fri 19th – Sun 21st: The **Frog and Toad in Gillingham** will be hosting their summer solstice beer festival. **Medway**

19th – 22nd June: CAMRA Cricket Tent at the 174th Canterbury Cricket Week. Marquee for CAMRA members and their guests with several real ales, food, watch Kent v Middlesex County Championship. Cricket "Week" also includes 2 T20 matches, (Men's on 26th, Women's on 28th) but there won't be a CAMRA marquee for those. More details tbc. Contact Gill Keay to volunteer.

Fri 24th–28th: the Flower Pot, Maidstone, will be hosting its 20th Anniversary Beer and Cider festival. **MMK** will have a social here on Friday 26th from 1700.

27th – 28th June: The Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway - Steam & Beer Music Festival, live music railway200.co.uk/activity/railway-200-steam-beer-music-festival

July

Thu 2, 18.00: **Dirty Habit, Hollingbourne**, then **Sugar Loaves, Windmill** **MMK**

3rd – 5th July – 6th: Spirit of Tenterden Festival, includes a real ale festival tent. Free entrance to community festival. Food, drink, live music, arena, family fun, dog show. Fri 2-10pm; Sat 10-10pm; Sun 11-5pm

3rd – 5th – The 14th Sandwich Folk & Ale Festival sandwich-folk-and-ale.org

Sat 4th, 11.27: Bus 5 to Linton Church, walk to **Loddington Tap**, arriving at about 12.00 **MMK**

Wed 8th, 12.10: Bus 7 then 222 to **Dunks Green**, then walk to **Rose Revived** (Bus 7 returns to Maidstone). **MMK**

Sun 12th: St Lawrence CE School, Stone Street, TN15 0LN – Beer & Rodeo Festival

Thu 16, 19.30: **Woodcock, Iden Green**, then **Bull, Benenden** **MMK**

Fri 17th – 18th July: London Craft Beer Festival <https://londoncraftbeerfestival.co.uk>

Fri 24th, 16.00: **King's Head, Sutton Valence**, then **Queen's Head**. Bus 12 at 15.25 **MMK**

Fri, 24th: Details were not available at the time of going to press, but look out for collaborative efforts between local independent breweries, including Kent, Wantsum and Iron Pier.

Sat 25th July: The Fountain, Cowden – Beer Festival, live music, BBQ, from noon.

Thu 30, 17.00: **Swan on the Green, West Peckham**. Bus 7 to Mereworth School at 16.09, then a mile walk.

Fri 31st July – 2nd Aug: Reigate Beer Festival by Craft Beer Folk <https://craftbeerfolk.co.uk/reigate-beer-festival/>

August

Thu 6, 18.00: **Black Horse, Thurnham** **MMK**

Sat 8, 12.00: **Duke of Wellington Beer Festival**. Guided walk from W. Malling, times TBA.

Thu 13th, 20.30: **Red Lion, Lenham**, **MMK Business Meeting**,

Fri 21st, 16.30: Visit to the **Good Intent, West Farleigh**, then walk to **Bull, Barming**. Bus 23 leaves King St Greggs at 16.07. **MMK**

Sat 29th: Visit to **Three Tuns Beer Festival Lower Halstow**, bus departs King St, 11.30 **MMK**

Sat 29th – 31st Aug: **East Kent Railway Beer & Cider Festival:**

Medway

Pub News

The **Angel in Rainham** is temporarily closed. The owners of the pub have announced they are closing the pub, months after stepping back from their sister pub, the **Rising Sun** in Rochester. The latest information from the Rising Sun is that there are new tenants but the pub no longer serves real ale: they claim the pub has no demand for it.

Although not now a Medway CAMRA pub, drinkers in Rainham may like to know that the **Three Sisters** has been voted by readers of Kent Messenger Online in the top ten pubs in the county under the Kent and Medway food and drink awards 2026. Congratulations go to Liz and her team at the **Who'd a Thought It in Rochester** at winning Medway CAMRA's pub of the year 2026. A worthwhile winner, well-deserved as it came a close second last year; in second place was last year's winner the **Prince of Ales in Rainham**, which instead scooped the Medway cider pub of the year award. The **Kings Arms in Upper Upnor**, placed third.

Continuing the theme of the **Prince of Ales**,



The Prince of Ales

the pub recently showcased their tenth-anniversary beer festival from the 12th to 15th March with ten real ales on offer. A visit to the pub on Friday 13th was not an unlucky day for the drinkers packing the pub. I really enjoyed the *Bristol Beer Factory MilkStout* which went down very well. From past beer festivals to one to look forward to. The **Frog and Toad in Gillingham** will be hosting their summer solstice beer festival from Friday, 19th-21st June.

Kae Mendham

Quiz Night on Monday

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12 – 11 Friday and Saturday
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Beer Travellers Travels in Czechia (Part II)

Day 3

Another beautiful sunny morning. We had to change trains at *Colin* for *Podebrady* and a walk to the local brewery which was packed with diners.

We then had a bus and a train or it may have been the other way round to arrive at the *Libertas* brewery in *Uvali*, a very modern and stylish brewery slightly devoid of character possibly due to its newness, which may also have been the reason for no dark beers being available, I plumped for their *APA* which was nice.

Another bus took us to *Ricany* and a warm welcome was received at the *Ricansky Pivovar*, I opted for a dark beer called *Baba Jaga 13'* which was very nice and popular amongst others, we had time to spend here and after a repeat order of the *Baba Jaga*, I copied others and ordered the summer ale: unexpectedly the staff or management brought out a large plate of freshly cooked potato crisps and some garlic aioli which was much appreciated and enjoyed. We had asked the staff where the stop was for our next bus journey as it was a fair walk, and sure enough there was a significant hill at the end of the mile plus walk which got a few whinges. The bus arrived promptly to take us to our final destination for today in *Kostelec*, the



Cernokostelecky Zajezdni was a short walk from the town square and was obviously a very old establishment and had a brewery museum which we didn't investigate: lots of us went for a dark beer called *Cerna Svine Tmavy* which had a Black Hog on the glass that accompanied it and was gorgeous. The food menu didn't have an English edition and so it was hard work working out what was what but by knowing a few words and listening to others talking I ended up with a Pork Schnitzel and potato salad which was very good and far better than it may sound. The next beer choice was another pilsner called *Vycpana Vydra* and was also very good.

By Andy Osborne

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Maidstone and Mid Kent CAMRA Pub of the Year 2026



The Presentation Ceremony. photo: Don Andrews

The Maidstone and Mid Kent branch of The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) has announced that Cellars Alehouse in Maidstone has been awarded the prestigious branch Pub of the Year 2026 and Cider Pub of the Year 2026. These accolades recognise the pub's outstanding commitment to quality real ale, cider, and community spirit. Cellars Alehouse has long been

celebrated for its welcoming atmosphere, expertly kept ales and dedication to supporting local breweries. The pub offers a carefully curated selection of traditional and contemporary real ales and ciders, ensuring that every visit presents a unique experience for enthusiasts.

CAMRA's Pub of the Year award is highly competitive, with pubs judged on several criteria, including beer quality, atmosphere, service, community focus, alignment with CAMRA values and also for its friendly, knowledgeable staff and an inviting

environment that makes every patron feel at home, highlighting the pub's role as a

hub for local community activity. For locals and visitors alike, this announcement signals that Cellars Alehouse is a must-visit destination for anyone looking to enjoy expertly crafted beers and ciders in a warm, friendly setting.

Ian Clennett

MMK Pub News (continued from page 16)

First & Last, Maidstone. The exterior has been repainted with the name now displayed in large letters that stand out clearly. Darts are popular here and live musicians may be engaged to perform. This is a small wedge-shaped building which has an intriguing history. *Timothy Taylor Boltmaker* or *Landlord* are the usual beers. See Facebook for event details **FB: 19firstandLast**

Malling Jug, West Malling. The Mon-Thurs price reduction has had to be increased due to inflation. The pint prices are now £4 from noon until 4pm but still represent excellent value for the quality of the beers that are stocked there.

Boathouse, Yalding. Closed in January to upgrade the facilities and refit. New licensees should be in place as you read this.

John Mills

Beer Travellers

An Independent Austrian Brewery



In January 2026, I visited Bad Kleinkirchheim in Southern Austria, the first time I'd been in Austria since the 1980's, and popped down to the local supermarket for some bottled beers. All of the old favourites were there: *Villacher*, *Puntigamer*, *Zipfer*, *Fischer*, *Edelweiss*, plus more. There was one change; they were all now part-owned by *Heineken*, and all now equally bland. Having a quick look on Google maps, I came across a local brewery reachable on the Post Bus, about 9km away, website (www.shilling.at)

The next day I set off for *Shilling Brewery and taproom*, located close to Radenthein, on the site of an old bus garage. The taproom is only open on Friday evenings, but the 'Garden Rest' restaurant opposite is open Wednesday to Sunday (check times, <https://www.gartenrast.at>) and serves the full range of beers from the brewery, plus a selection of bottles from around Europe. The brewery itself, run and owned by Uli, has been operating since late 2013. The beers on offer are *Hell 5.2%*, *Granat 5.3%*, and *Nock Ale 4.6%*; your correspondent sampled the complete lineup. Chatting with Uli, he told me that the hops used come from Northern Austria, and that the beers are available within about a thirty-kilometre range of the brewery - in fact, I've just sampled one close to our accommodation in Bad Kleinkirchheim.

There is also a biennial beer festival, where a broad selection of beers from far and wide are available.

Mick Allen



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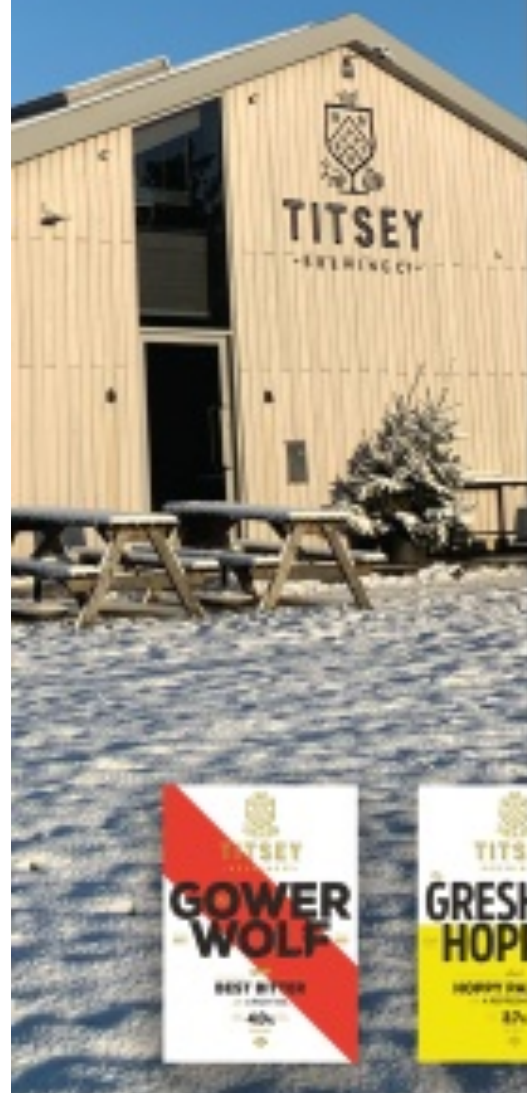


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National CAMRA News

Beer Scoring is changing

There are tens of thousands of pubs across the country serving cask beers, and many of those serve really good pints.

How's your cask beer?

Rating	Description	Your reaction
Excellent	Exceptional and clear (if needed) cask with fantastic aroma, flavour and head characteristics	Quoted 'round your front' and comment on cask manager!
Very good	Well-improved cask with good appearance, good retention and eating and drinking qualities	Very good 'round' and/or service comment to staff to commend
Good	Very acceptable, good retention, aroma, appearance	Thanks but not commended. No comment in future unless for high standard consistency
Acceptable	Unremarkable and ordinary with no noteworthy characteristics	Your efforts to have another cask of this is welcome and appreciated
Poor	Unacceptable cask	Thanks but no thanks, but your effort is appreciated
Undrinkable	Unacceptable cask, flat with dropping head, no foam, appearance and off-flavour	No comment for it is condemned and consider using the public to rate it off

For lovers of a decent pint, it's important to be able to find them. CAMRA's Good Beer Guide has been the 'bible' for finding the very best ones since 1974 and continues to be relied upon by tens of thousands of people. CAMRA's online pub guide camra.org.uk/pubs can also help because beer quality is indicated by the '3 Pints' symbols that CAMRA members can see when logged in. Pubs and clubs that serve really excellent pints, and serve them consistently well, can be potential candidates for the Good Beer Guide.

To help identify them, CAMRA members score their pints whenever they have the opportunity. Their scores help local branches determine candidates for the Guide, and

these can change year on year because the standards are high. Serving live cask beer requires skill in the cellar and attention by bar staff all the time. Competition for a place is stiff because only 4,500 places are available.

Up until now, the scoring system has used a numbering system of 0 to 5. But there are problems with this. It requires memorising the criteria for each score and using them consistently, but memories can be variable. Some people genuinely struggle with numbers, so they don't take part. It becomes open to individual interpretation with resulting inconsistency between scorers. There's also the potential for individual bias and a reluctance to 'award' high scores.

We all know when we are drinking a good pint that's been well-kept, and we also know when a pint is very good or excellent – who cannot resist telling everyone else about it! And likewise, a pint that is simply OK or, hopefully not often, undrinkable.

So, to make things easier for everyone, a new intuitive ratings system is being introduced, which is more descriptive of the beer being drunk. Each of the new ratings has a description and a likely reaction to help you pin down the most appropriate rating. Ratings can be recorded on CAMRA's online pub guide camra.org.uk/pubs by all CAMRA members so start rating your beer now.

If you're not a CAMRA member but would like to rate your beers then head over to camra.org.uk/membership.

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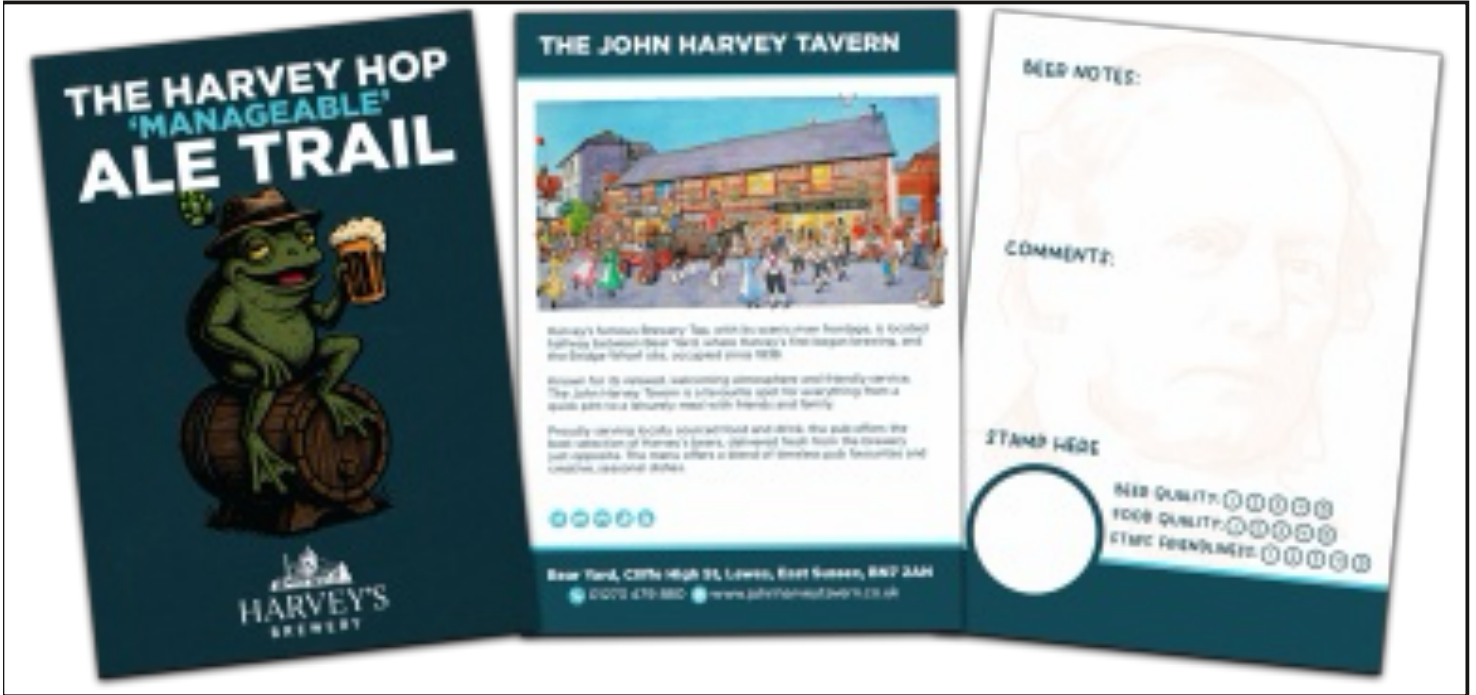
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Brewery News

Join the hopping : The Harvey Hop 'Manageable' Ale Trail



Write to Harvey's Brewery to get your personal passport

It is still not too late to complete the Harvey Hop: 'Manageable' Ale Trail – not a race, but a chance to savour the journey, discover new favourite pubs, enjoy great beer, and earn a unique reward at the end of it all.

To take part, visitors will have to go to each of the ten Harvey's-managed houses before 31st August 2026 and enjoy a pint of Harvey's beer at each one. Present your official Harvey Hop Passport to a member of bar staff, and they'll endorse your visit with a stamp.

Once you've completed all ten stops, take your stamped booklet to Brewery shop in Lewes to claim your exclusive Harvey Hopper award.

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Kent County Pub of the Year 2026 Competition

The Kent Area POTY results 2026 are now in. The winners are:

East Kent: **The Haywain, Bramling** (Canterbury).

Mid Kent: **The George, Bethersden** (AFRM).

West Kent: **Nelson Arms, Tonbridge** (West Kent).

Congratulations to the winners! It's great to see their hard work and dedication recognised. The other finalists, they should be rightly proud of their achievements in reaching the Area stage of the Kent competition. I'd also like to express my personal and sincere thanks to those members who gave up their valuable time and effort in judging the area stage.

East Kent Area:

Canterbury: The **Haywain**, Bramling.

Thanet: The **Royston**, Broadstairs.

DDS: **Just Reproach**, Deal.

Mid Kent Area:

AFRM: The **George**, Bethersden.

MMK: **Cellars Alehouse**, Maidstone.

Swale: The **Elephant**, Faversham.

West Kent Area:

West Kent: **Nelson Arms**, Tonbridge.

GDV: **Cotton Mill**, Swanley.

Medway: **Who'd Ha' Thought It**, Rochester.

Tony Wells,

Kent County Pub of the Year Coordinator

In Memoriam... Kae Mendham

We have just received sad news about the current Medway CAMRA Chair, Kae Mendham, who sadly passed away on 9th May.



Kae had been an active member of Medway branch since its formation in the early 1970s. As well as being Branch Chair, Kae was also a former Regional Director and Kent Treasurer. Our condolences go out to all her friends and family at this sad time.

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Crossword No. 48

devised by
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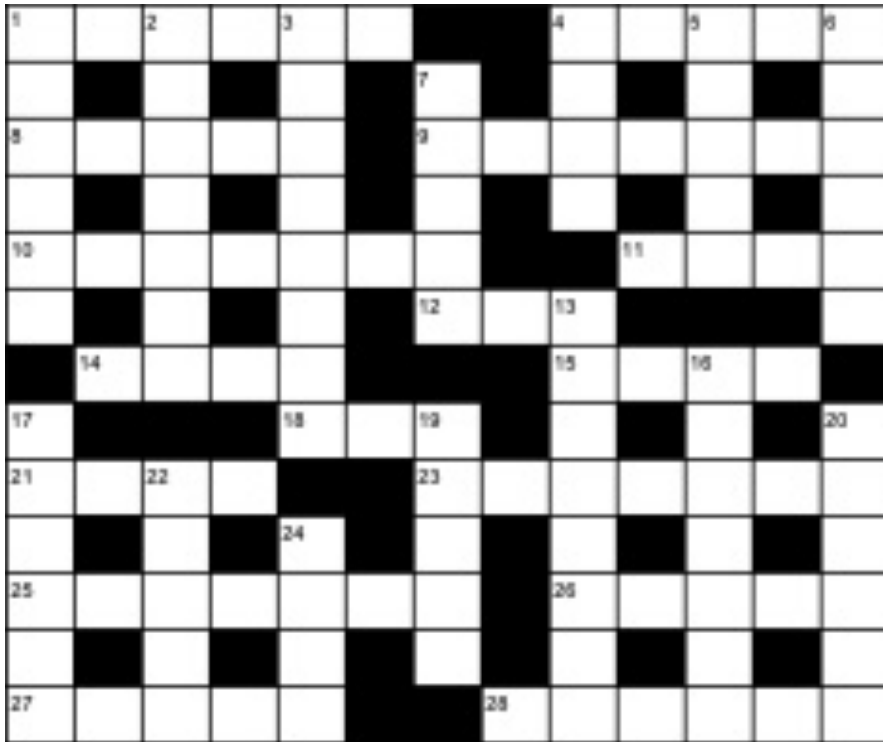
Norwood Lane

Meopham DA13 0YE

to arrive by Sunday, 26th July 2026.

A photocopied/scanned copy can also be emailed to

mlr_norman@yahoo.com



Across

- 1 Bird play at that game, we hear (6)
- 4,27 Policeman needs 8 for the late 23 28 and England superstar (5,5)
- 8 Get up during Paris elections (5)
- 9 Bitterness resulting from wayward Curran over (7)
- 10 Marsupial expert on practical cats? (7)
- 11 Headless scrounger in the past (4)
- 12 Author suitable for reading in the toilet, according to The Listener? (3)
- 14 I'm mostly hot - that's my view! (4)
- 15 Time flies for this romantic pair (4)
- 18 Stupid egg? (3)
- 21 Tobacco for the bird (4)
- 23,28 Batman actor agreed about food for football club (4,3,6)
- 25 So deep, I revised the instalment (7)
- 26 8 and two cubed amount to the same (5)
- 27 See 4
- 28 See 23

Down

- 1 12 with tat brewed for the brew (6)
- 2 28 initially the same (7)
- 3 Somehow I save Ron from antipathy (8)
- 4 Dog's favourite china, perhaps (4)
- 5 Ex-PM, a man of colour (5)
- 6 Full, fast delivery from Northern bowler? (6)
- 7 Old whore set off with politician (5)
- 13 Mathematician with a German beer mug (8)
- 16 Tire - an essential car component (7)
- 17 Mystifyingly, 'e set me in high regard (6)
- 19 Robin's announcement on X, perhaps (5)
- 20 Hopelessly misled, but looked happy (6)
- 22 To Vietnam I go, in search of my Spanish friend (5)
- 24 Late boxer (no man) gives warning on the golf course (4)

Solution to Crossword No. 47

Congratulations to

Jeff Tucker of Maidstone

Who sent in the first completed answer to the crossword published in Edition 212

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