

Draught Copy



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Free Newsletter
for the
Maidstone & Mid-Kent,
Gravesend & Darent Valley
and Bexley areas of Kent

Winter 2010

No. 161

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FLOWER POT



The Maidstone and Mid-Kent branch of CAMRA is delighted to announce that the Kent Pub of the Year 2010 accolade has been awarded to licensees David and Julie Davenport of the **Flower Pot** in Sandling Road, Maidstone. Having been crowned the branch Pub of the Year twice in succession (2009 and 2010), it is fantastic to see that their hard work and commitment have been rewarded with this regional title.

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DRAUGHT COPY

Draught Copy is the newsletter of the Maidstone and Mid-Kent, Bexley, and Gravesend & Darent Valley branches of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. It is issued quarterly, in February, May, August and November and has a circulation of 2700 copies. Opinions expressed are those of the author of the article, and need not represent those of CAMRA or its officials. All articles are by the editor unless otherwise attributed.

Our advertising rates:

£69 / £40 / £24 for a full / half / quarter page respectively.

Editor and	Tim Mathews
Correspondence:	dc@braymead.com
Postal Address:	135 Lavenders Road West Malling Kent ME19 6HR
Advertising:	Colin Mann
Email:	colinmann@cix.co.uk

If you find a pub selling short measure, missing price lists, allowing smoking in the premises, or other illegal things in pubs, please have a quiet word with the landlord in the first instance. If you do not receive satisfaction, however, please ring the Council's Trading Standards on 08457 585497 for the K.C.C. area, or 0208 303 7777 for Bexley Borough. We should demand the very highest standards of service in our pubs.

The copy date for the next issue is 24 December 2010 for publication in February 2011.

Visit our website at:- <http://maidstoneandmidkentcamra.co.uk>

Fancy going to a Beer Festival? Try one of these:

CAMRA

www.camra.org.uk/page.aspx?o=events

WOKING BEER FESTIVAL

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Woking GU22 9BA

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Cranford TW5 9PQ

See *www.heathrowbeerfestival.co.uk*

PIG'S EAR BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

November 30 – December 3

100+ Beers and Ciders

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Hackney, London E5 0PU

See *www.pigsear.org.uk*

9TH HARWICH & DOVERCOURT

WINTER ALES FESTIVAL

December 1– 4

50+ Real Ales

Kingsway Hall, 29 Station Road

Dovercourt, Essex CO12 3AL

See *www.tendringcamra.org.uk/harwichfest.html*

NATIONAL WINTER ALES FESTIVAL

JANUARY 19–22

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Manchester M40 8EA

See *www.alefestival.org.uk/winteraless/*

Non-CAMRA—Pubs and Clubs

November 4 – 6

MEDWAY BEER FESTIVAL

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Chatham ME4 6BB

50 cask ales plus ciders

See *www.medwaybeerfestival.com*

November 6 – 14

Chequers at Laddingford

WINTER PINT, PIES &

SUET PUDDINGS

9 guest ales available

November 12 – 14

Jolly Drayman

Wellington Street, Gravesend

FOURTH ANNUAL BEER FESTIVAL

See ad on p31

November 25 – 27

Flower Pot

Sandling Road, Maidstone

WINTER BEER FESTIVAL

See ad on p10

November 25 – 28

Wheatsheaf

Loose Road, Maidstone

MINI BEER FESTIVAL

See ad on p4

December 3 – 5

Lobster Pot

Swan Street, West Malling

CHRISTMAS BEER FESTIVAL

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Kent Brewery

reported by John Mills

At time of going to press planning permission is being sought for a new microbrewery within our area. Following an advert placed in a previous *Draught Copy*, Paul Herbert, the Director, has chosen a site thought to fit his requirements. The brewer, Toby, has worked at *Dark Star* brewery which produces great beer, so a similar quality can be expected.

In anticipation, Toby has been doing some trial brews to shorten the time required to get into production. Some customer sampling of these trials will provide feedback in order to improve the product. Follow developments on the website. www.kentbrewery.com

[I am delighted to see so many new craft brewers setting up in our county, The list opposite grows, issue by issue, and I have no qualms about displacing ads to make room for it. That and the recent story in What's Brewing that cask ale sales grew 5% last year in an otherwise declining beer market make for very heartening news.—Ed.]

KENT BREWERIES

Abigale	07734 342278	
Farriers	01233 720444	
Goacher's	01622 682112	<i>www.goachers.com</i>
HopDaemon	01795 892078	<i>www.hopdaemon.com</i>
Larkins	01892 870328	
Millis Brewing Co.	01322 866233	
Moodleys Brewery	01892 889877	<i>www.moodleys.co.uk</i>
Nelson Brewing Co.	01634 832828	<i>www.nelsonbrewingcompany.co.uk</i>
Old Dairy Brewing Co.	01580 243185	<i>www.olddairybrewery.com</i>
Ramsgate Brewery	01843 868453	<i>www.ramsgatebrewery.co.uk</i>
Royal Tunbridge Wells Brewing Company	01892 618140	<i>www.royaltunbridgewells brewing.co.uk/</i>
Tonbridge Brewery	01732 366770	
Shepherd Neame	01795 532206	<i>www.shepherd-neame.co.uk</i>
Swan, West Peckham	01622 812271	<i>www.swan-on-the-green.co.uk</i>
Wantsum Brewery	0845 0405980	<i>www.wantsumbrewery.co.uk</i>
Westerham Brewery	01959 565837	<i>www.westerhambrewery.co.uk</i>
Whitstable Brewery	01622 851007	<i>www.whitstablebrewery.info</i>

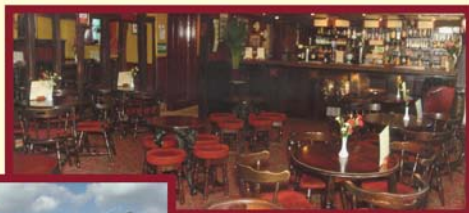
Trade paper, *The Publican*, has just reported on the healthy state of *Shepherd Neame* in Faversham. Turnover is up by 5.4% and profits by 25%. CEO Jonathan Neame is ebullient over the completion of their modernisation programme, with the new bottling line allowing Sheps to bring their packaging back in-house. The new warehouse and IT platform are also now starting to pay dividends, according to Mr Neame.

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12 – 11 Friday and Saturday

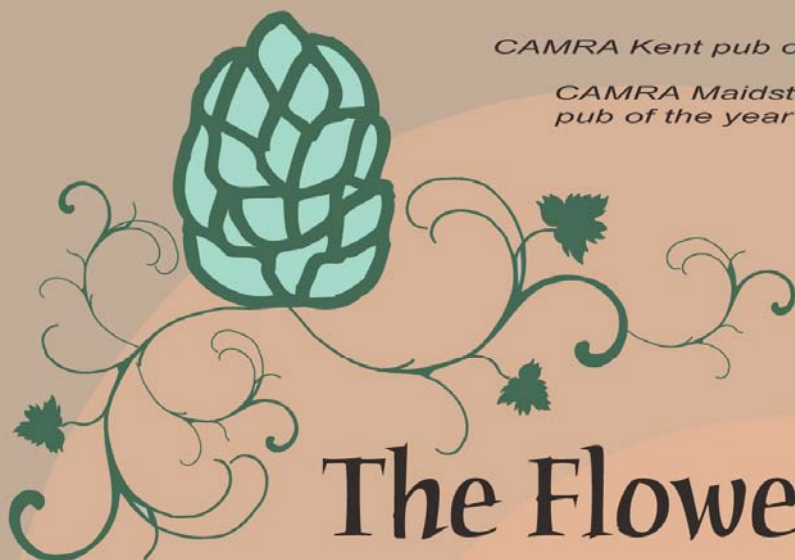
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CAMRA Maidstone & Mid Kent
pub of the year 2009 and 2010



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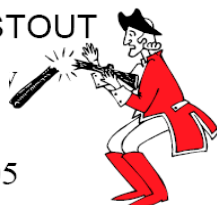
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Good Beer Guide Listed This Century

Maidstone CAMRA Pub Of The Year, 2005



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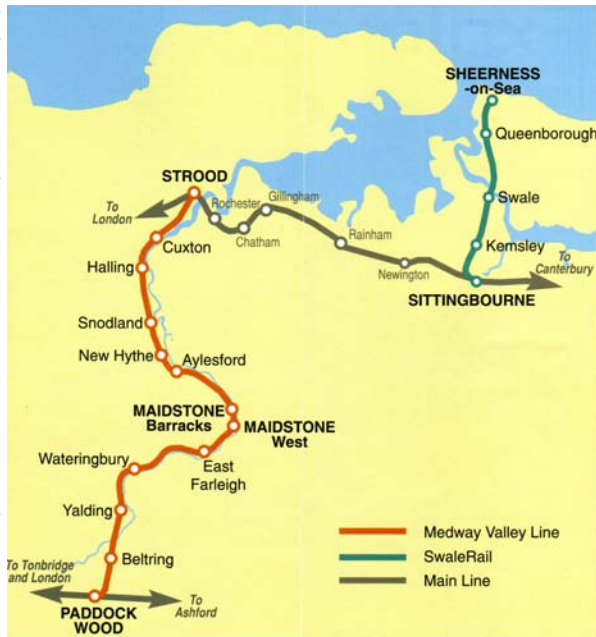
By Train to the Pub

by Jeff Tucker

I normally write about catching buses to pubs so, for a change, here is one about pubs near to railway stations, in this case on the Medway Valley Line. The line, which is quite picturesque in places, running alongside the River Medway, connects Strood in the Medway Towns to Paddock Wood, via Maidstone. The northern part has a half-hourly service during the day on Mondays to Saturdays, with a hourly service on the southern section. Trains runs hourly throughout on Sundays. Evening trains run until quite late.

Starting in Snodland, the nearest pub is the **Bull**, on the corner of High St and Malling Road. It sells *Courage Best* at a bargain price, and often has a stronger guest beer. Turning right out of the Bull, you soon come to the **Monk's Head**, which usually has one or two *Shepherd Neame* beers on.

The next station southwards is New Hythe, where the **Bricklayers Arms** is a short walk away. This pub has recently been refurbished and sells *Courage Best* and a more interesting guest beer. It has a bar billiards table, which is nowadays quite a rarity.



Aylesford station is quite a way from the village, which is reached by crossing the historic bridge now closed to motorised traffic. Turning left soon brings you to the **Chequers**, which has two or three beers on, and lovely views of the river from the rear patio.

Turn right out of the Chequers, pass the bridge and take the first left to get to the **Bush** in Rochester Road, where *Fullers London Pride* and *ESB*, and *John Smith's Cask* are sometimes joined by a guest beer. This pub has an upstairs function room available for hire without charge.

Maidstone Barracks station has no pubs nearby, but a footbridge to Maidstone East station brings you to a good selection of pubs, too numerous to mention. Similarly, a short walk from Maidstone West leads to the lower High Street.

The first station on leaving Maidstone West is East Farleigh. A more delightful setting for a station in Kent would be hard to find. The **Victory** is one of the closest pubs to any station on the line, but supplies of real ale were sporadic at the time of writing until the cellar is sorted out. Worth a try, though.

A short but tiring uphill walk across the river bridge leads you to the **Bull**, which offers *Harveys Best* and *London Pride*. Further afield is the **Fox** on the outskirts of Maidstone. Take the footpath opposite the **Victory**, which comes out in the housing estate which is Fant. Turn left here and walk uphill for a short while to the **Fox**, which sells five beers in superb condition, including at least one *Goacher's* ale.

The next stop is Watlingbury, with the **Railway** pub just across the road. Two real ales are normally on sale here. A walk up the hill to the main road, turning right at the lights, brings you to the **Watlingbury Hotel**, a Chef and Brewer establishment. Real ale choice does not seem to be as exotic as in some of their houses.

Yalding station is another which is situated some way from the village. Turning right from the station and taking the first lane on the right takes you to the **Hop Pole** at Nettlestead Green, but beware of the traffic! One or two beers are normally available here.

The opposite direction has a pavement! The first pub you come to is the **Anchor**, a popular riverside pub reached by a footbridge. *Courage Best* and *Directors* are the regular beers here.

Crossing the adjacent road bridge and following the road round to the left soon brings you to the village centre, and the **George** pub. The landlord here has been manning the pumps for over 30 years, longer than anyone else in our branch area. Two beers are usually on offer in this traditional village local.

Turn right from the **George** and cross the River Beult to reach the 15th century **Walnut Tree**, renowned for its food, and jazz evenings. There are four beers on, including *Timothy Taylor Landlord* and usually a *Westerham* beer.

The most remote station on the line is **Beltring**, with no other buildings within sight. Turn right out of the station and walk along the quite busy lane until reaching a green footpath sign on the right. Turn down here and it comes out next to the **Chequers** at Laddingford, a delightful 15th century oak-beamed pub which is at the heart of village life. Four beers are usually on, including *Adnams* and *Harveys*. A beer festival is held in late April.

Trains on the line continue to Tonbridge on Mondays to Saturdays, but the line officially ends at Paddock Wood, where the **John Brunt VC** pub is a short walk (turn left at the end of the station approach). This pub has improved in recent years, with up to six beers on.

All of the above pubs feature in the local CAMRA pub guide, which was awarded CAMRA Local Guide of the Year in 2009. Priced just £4.99, the *Gateway to Kent Pub Guide* can be purchased in local pubs, bookshops and other outlets. It is also available by post at £6.49 inc. P&P from: Gateway Guide, 251A Upper Grosvenor Rd, Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2EJ. Cheques payable to 'Gateway Guide'.

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Little Gem, Aylesford – Reported as closed.

Nevill Bull, Birling – Joe and Kay have now retired after 9 years at the helm here. We welcome the new licensees, Kate & Paul. They have a new menu and an ever-changing "Specials" board, focussing on fresh fish. They want to add more real ales as their trade grows and are open to suggestions from real-ale fans.

Cock, Boughton Monchelsea – *Shepherd Neame* have taken over from *Youngs* here and recent reports show the beer quality to be even better. Dave and Jo remain in charge. Currently stocking *Master Brew* plus 3 others from the *Sheps* range.

Walnut Tree, East Farleigh – Don and Glyn have live music on Thursdays which pulls in good support. *Shepherd Neame Master Brew* plus two others are on the bar. Also takes beers from the *Sheps* pilot plant when available.

King and Queen, East Malling – The Kings Room has been redecorated. Recently I found the excellent *Tonbridge Blonde Ambition* had returned and I had just missed the quickly consumed *Auburn Myth* from the same local brewer. *Royal Tunbridge Wells Royal Best* was also guesting on the bar. *Fullers HSB*, *Harveys Sussex* and *Sharps Doom Bar* are the regulars.

Walnut Tree, Eccles – Had a For Sale sign up in the middle of September.

Bell & Jorrocks, Frittenden – There is now a new chef, Steve Ayre, who has added some interesting dishes to the menu. Lunches are served Wed-Sun and evening meals Fri-Sat. Sean has replaced *Black Sheep* with *Woodfordes Wherry* as a regular. *Adnams Bitter* and *Harveys Sussex Best* remain with a guest beer. Two ciders are also offered, currently *Weston's Stowford Press* and *Thatchers Katy*. www.thebellandjorrocks.co.uk

Chequers, Goudhurst – Justin Di Marco is now running this pub restaurant. Guest beers when I visited were two from *Cotleigh, 25th Anniversary* and *Barn Owl*, with *Wells Bombardier* as well.

Vine, Goudhurst – New licensees have updated this pub and brightened it with some fresh paint. The restaurant has been replaced with a games room and TV screens are in all areas. Three beers from *Westerham* were on the bar when I visited, *Grasshopper*, *Summer Perle* and *British Bulldog* with *Finchcocks* waiting to go on the fourth pump.

Oak & Ivy, Hawkhurst – Unfortunately only a couple of our members were able to attend the Beer & Music Festival this year due to other commitments; however, they reported an excellent event once again. Easy to get there on an Arriva number 5 bus. Usually offer *Harveys Sussex Best* and a *Dark Star* beer plus 1 or 2 guests.

Dirty Habit, Hollingbourne – Now features a guest beer but the web site does not make any mention of which beers are available but provides a long list of wines. Remember there are far fewer calories in beer than a glass of wine. www.elitepubs.com/the_dirtyhabit

Wealden Hall, Larkfield – Good reports on the beer here with regulars *Harveys Sussex Best* and *London Pride* joined with a guest - *Skinners Cornish Knocker* on my last visit. I had to look hard at the website to find the opening times (in the Menus tab, at the end of the A La Carte, in the section <PDF> *A La Carte / Set / Bar Snacks / Wine List*. There was no mention of beer (or wine) there at all, so perhaps the website is being re-worked. www.thewealdenhall.co.uk

Red Lion, Lenham – The pumps were due to be replaced in August but I have received no reports recently.

Bull, Linton – has expanded its dining room to include an extra 24 covers as their Sunday carvery continues to increase in popularity. Licensee Bob Garrett, who runs the historic village pub with wife Kim, said: "*The kitchen had been part of the old Linton post office and at some stage became part of the pub. We had the wall knocked through to accommodate the extra covers. The 96-cover carvery runs from noon on a Sunday until 9 pm*".

Chequers, Loose – *Taylor Landlord* has been replaced by *Sharps Doom Bar* and this is selling well. The remaining regulars are *Fullers London Pride*, *Harveys Sussex Best* and *Shepherd Neame Spitfire*. On Boxing Day, the pub will be, as usual, hosting 2 or 3 sets of Morris Dancers who will be performing (weather permitting) in the road outside from around midday. This event is always very popular and is supported by many of the local villagers.

Walnut Tree, Loose – has changed its opening hours to: Mon-Thu 4-11.30, Fri 12-11.30, Sat-Sun 1-11.30. It is now offering *Master Brew* and the current Sheps seasonal beer.

Cricketers, Maidstone – Reported as closed.

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Dog & Gun, Maidstone – A large refurbishment has been undergone here, the horseshoe bar has been removed and a new bar placed against the wall. There is now a raised area where bands play regularly. The kitchen has also been upgraded. A *Shepherd Neame* house serving *Master Brew* and *Spitfire* together with another one or two regular or seasonal ales. Also takes brews from the pilot plant.

Flower Pot, Maidstone – Dave has had the pub repainted in cream and green. *Goachers Gold Star* remains as the regular whilst the other five pumps may have beers from around the country. *Acorn*, *Dark Star*, *Newby Wyke* and *Thornbridge* are particularly popular breweries often seen.

Fox, Maidstone – Duncan & Mandy are holding a beer festival Nov 20 and 21. Support from the Barming/Hartnup St area will be particularly appreciated. The *Goachers Best Dark* is always good here, and on a September visit the *Goachers Real Mild* was available as a guest. The other regulars are *Youngs Bitter*, *Wadworth Henrys IPA* and *Sheps Spitfire*.

Pilot, Maidstone – David is now selling Old Rosie cider as well as up to five *Harveys* ales. *Armada*, *XX Mild* and *Sussex Best* are regular with either a seasonal or another from *Harveys* range. Well worth the short walk up Upper Stone Street.

Swan, Maidstone – Jackie now holds Cask Marque accreditation. A quiz is held on alternate Wednesdays. Other events have included a Folkestone Races trip and a forthcoming trip to France on Oct 30. In August, *Swan County Road Ale*, an own label beer from *Sheps Pilot* brewery was on the bar. This was a version of the *Four Tenants Ale* that is available to both tenants and public. Contact *Shepherd Neame* to discuss your own version or share a brew with others.

Walnut Tree, Maidstone – On Thursday nights comedians have been taking to the stage for the last 20 years. *Goachers Fine Light* is a regular beer and *Courage Best* was also on when last visited.

West End Tavern, Marden – It seems *Westerham* beers now appear as guests alongside regulars *Harveys Sussex Best* and *Shepherd Neame Spitfire*.

Stile Bridge, Marden – The August Bank Holiday beer and music proved a good event once more. The four current pumps are due to be replaced by a new 6-pump unit. *Shepherd Neame Master Brew* has now been replaced by *Adnams Bitter*. *Westerham Bridgestock* remains as the house beer. There will usually be two or more guest beers.

Duke of Wellington, Ryarsh – *St Austell Tribute* is now on the bar replacing the *Sharps Doombar*. *Westerham Grasshopper* remains but I suspect *Summer Perle* will soon be out of season and another will appear. www.dukeofwellingtonryarsh.com

Yew Tree, Sandling – Matt & Liz keep a fine pint of *Shepherd Neame Master Brew* and *Spitfire* here, with a third seasonal ale on the bar. Quiz night 8pm Tuesdays. Wi-Fi is available if required. There is now a table booking system on the website, so you can pre-book a table at your chosen time slot. www.yewtreesandling.co.uk

Lord Raglan, Staplehurst – Half a mile north of Cross in Hand on Chart Hill Road, this pub deserves a visit. Use the Arriva number 5 bus that runs hourly from Maidstone and Hawkhurst. *Goachers Fine Light* and *Harveys Sussex Best* are regulars and there is a guest ale. Andrew provides good food and a friendly venue.

Plough, Trottiscliffe – No longer up for sale. Now offering 3-course meals on Tuesday-Thursday evenings for £10 and pensioners may purchase 2-course lunches Monday-Friday for £6. The 3 well-kept regular beers here are *Harveys Sussex Bitter*, *Adnams Bitter* and *Broadside*.

North Pole, Wateringbury – Re-opened on Saturday 2 Oct. There have been considerable changes here with the addition of a restaurant to the rear which effectively doubles its size. However, meals may also be taken in the bar. The toilets have been moved and there are now wheelchair facilities provided. Zoe & Lee Wopling have put in an enormous amount of work themselves here and the results look impressive. Initially the bar will have *Flowers IPA* and *Original*, with a third taking *Tonbridge Blonde Ambition* to be followed by *Auburn Myth*. Customer feedback will help dictate what beers are available in future.

Wateringbury Hotel, Wateringbury – The new manager, Bob Louch, told me the stillage was due to be replaced and hopefully the beers should improve under the new regime as well. *Adnams Bitter* and *Greene King IPA* were on the bar.

Bull, West Malling – Trevor is putting on a beer festival the last weekend in October so that we may help celebrate his 50th birthday. An additional 12 beers will appear on stillage and Trevor promises some unfamiliar brews for us. Normally, you will find *Youngs Bitter* on the bar and three guest beers from the pubco's current range.

Farm House, West Malling – Now serve *Dark Star Hophead*. *Harveys Sussex BB* remains on its other pump. The pub has also produced an excellent set of 4 leaflets detailing walks in the West/East Malling area starting from the pub, which are available free of charge in the bar.

Lobster Pot, West Malling – Simon and Fiona Godfrey have taken on the lease and have made improvements here. The six pumps are constantly in use and the beer in excellent order. The Bank Holiday beer festival was well supported.

Scared Crow, West Malling – *Adnams Best* was reported to have returned to the bar. Personally, I much prefer this to the *Youngs Bitter* recently seen as a replacement; readers may disagree. Tina usually has a guest ale as well.

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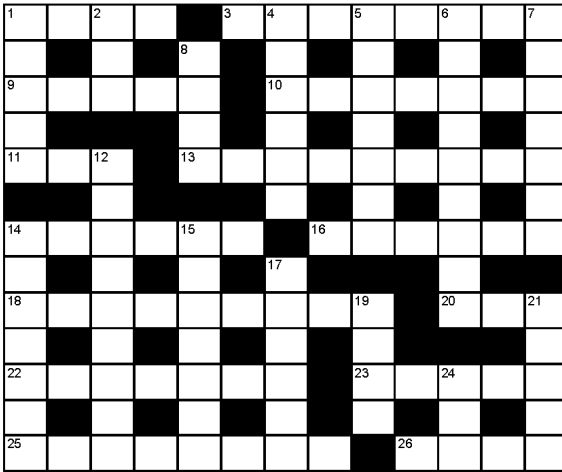
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The First Draught Copy Crossword

compiled by MICK NORMAN

Solution on page 44



[Many thanks to Mick Norman for supplying us with this crossword entirely unsolicited.

We look forward to publishing subsequent puzzles from you – Ed]

Across

- 1 Classic Burton brew was bloody awful smelly stuff initially (4)
- 3 Get down, Charles! (8)
- 9 Old brewer that is outside the mainstream (5)
- 10 Opine: "We've got enough runs" (7)
- 11 Blimey - flying west is fabulous bird! (3)
- 13 Posh, confused mate is entertained by festival in Central America (9)
- 14,16 Ah! Let Tom ride away - he'll find you a room (6,1'5)
- 18 Bosun down - impracticable to proceed due to wintry weather (9)
- 20 Cotton matrix component (3)
- 22 Mag ran a dodgy setter's device! (7)
- 23 Terrier lad is reserved (5)
- 25,26 Tasty Maidstone brew is old MG. Car, eh? (8,4)

Down

- 1 Smoker finds 'right one' in pub! (5)
- 2 Earthy expression (3)
- 4,17 Much missed session beer from Swale Brewery when Tendulkar and co are touring? (7)
- 5 Shakespearian order in arithmetic? (7)
- 6 Updated an error in its original state (9)
- 7 Clipping features Mrs Sharples engaged in hard work (7)
- 8 Bird almost backs into shipping hazard (4)
- 12 Army officer inhales joint at a butcher's! (9)
- 14 Some emus tangle with feral horse (7)
- 15 Concerning genesis or second coming (7)
- 17 See 4
- 19 Booking time (4)
- 21 Toasting Mr Seagoon in sepia (5)
- 24 Oik falls in pond (3)

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Let's start on a high note with some very encouraging pub news. The **Old House** at Ightham Common re-opened on 16th August and looks set to continue much along the same lines as before with several ongoing improvements. Nick Boulter has taken over from his brother Richard as licensee and has worked very hard, with a little help from his friends, during the two month period of closure to clear most of the $\frac{3}{4}$ acre garden and tidy the house up a bit. Nick is acutely aware that the building is listed in the CAMRA National Inventory and is not intending to make any significant structural alterations to the pub, other than removing a partition wall in the tap room, making room for more beer on stillage. Indeed the old carpet in the main bar has been lifted and removed to reveal the century old wooden parquet floor which extends across the ground floor into the lobby and parlour.

Some of the old chairs have gone and one period table has been lovingly restored and re-varnished. Nick intends gradually to acquire furniture in keeping with the original style wherever possible and a chaise longue is on order to replace the tatty armchair and settee in the bay window, the frame of which is itself in serious need of sympathetic repair. Nick showed me some photographs of the **Old House** from the late Victorian and Edwardian eras and hopes to recreate and embellish some of the original features, including replacing the sign over the doorway and the pub sign down the hill to the right, both long since vanished. The white picket fence and cottage garden may reappear and there will definitely be a pub garden with smoking area and tables outside the bay window in the parlour.

During our visit in September, three beers were available direct from the cask: the permanent *Loddon Shrimpers*, *Milk Street Mermaid Bitter* and *Oakham Inferno*. As both the beer suppliers have been retained, the selection of beers could be extensive, with four or five beers on rotation available at any one time. Nick also intends to introduce real cider sourced from a local Kent producer. At the moment the pub will still keep the former opening hours from 7pm weekday evenings and all day from noon Saturday (to 11pm) and Sunday (to 10.30pm), but hours may be extended as custom increases. This venture really deserves to succeed,

so come along for a pint or several and support CAMRA's Beer Drinkers and Pub Goers Charter that "*recognises the social, economic and cultural importance of well-run community pubs, which provide a safe and sociable environment for the consumption of alcohol among friends and are an essential community meeting place*".

Unfortunately most of the pubs closing these days do not have the chance of a new lease of life. In the previous issue we mentioned the **Colyer Arms** in Betsham and the application to demolish the building for housing. Dartford Borough Council had refused planning permission to redevelop and the developers, Hillreed Homes, have appealed against the refusal. The branch's objection to the original application will be taken into account by the Planning Inspectorate in deciding the appeal. Further representations may be made if individuals wish. The loss of amenity argument is further strengthened by the closure of the nearby **Wheatsheaf**, Westwood Lane, Southfleet, which has structural problems.

The **Vigo** at Fairseat, a regular *Good Beer Guide* entry, which closed over three years ago, is still up for sale. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has decided not to confer listed status, following an application by the branch Pubs Officer. This is as per advice from English Heritage, and is essentially because not enough of the original fabric of the building survives to justify listed status. We have been informed that the Boulter family bought the aforementioned **Old House** (formerly Watney) at auction on the same day in 1970 that the Ashwell family bought the freehold of the **Vigo** (formerly Whitbread), which is a curious anecdote forty years on. The **Vigo** is crying out for a wealthy benefactor or dedicated co-operative to buy and restore the pub in 2010/11 – just wishful thinking – those lottery numbers may come up!

There are a number of pubs in area that have re-opened recently, but sadly not in the same (re)mould as the **Old House**. The former **Plough** in Stonebridge Road, near Ebbsfleet football ground, has been extensively altered and refitted in restaurant style, with two handpumps (no clips displayed at time of visit) and is now called the **Cosmopolitan**. The home end of the football ground has already been referred to as the "Cosmo" end. Hopefully this outlet will sell real ale regularly, but thirsty beer drinking football fans, home and away, are always welcome at the **Rose**, up the hill near Northfleet station, a reliable *Shepherd Neame* house.

The **New Inn**, on the junction of Milton Road and King Street in Gravesend, was until fairly recently a traditional corner pub displaying

windows etched with Rigden's Fine Ales, Stouts and Porters, reminding us of bygone days. The bygone pub is no longer recognisable and the establishment has re-opened as "Coyotte Ugly" and appears more like a lap-dancing/strip club than a pub, so I'm told, with garish bright lights and tacky fittings. "Coyotte Ugly" is not a typing error – we don't know what it means either! It doesn't sell real ale; I was rather hoping for a misprint and find *Wolf Coyote* on sale at the bar, but wolf whistles are a more likely call.

The **Market Tavern**, formerly the **Chase**, in Gravesend High Street, is undergoing redecoration at the moment and will be re-opening as the **Coco Lounge** but will definitely not be selling real ale. The prospective landlady who will be in charge of the bar was at the **Terrace Tavern**, a pub which had difficulty selling ale in sufficient quantity or quality, partly because of its immediate proximity to the renowned **Crown & Thistle** free house. However, the **Terrace Tavern** is set to become Bed and Breakfast accommodation, of which there is a shortage in a "heritage" town the size of Gravesend.

Staying in Gravesend, we've heard that the boards and metal grills have been taken down from the **Railway Tavern**, a former pub awkwardly located on a road island, part of the awkward, town centre one-way

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system. The letting agent appears to deal in residential rather than commercial properties and we don't know the future of this building. Any offers? Not far away in Windmill Street, the **New Troc**, formerly the **Trocadero**, has re-introduced real ale, offering *Courage Best* in good condition.

Hopefully, readers will not have missed the fourth real ale festival at the **Jolly Drayman** in Wellington Street, Gravesend which takes place on the weekend of 12/13/14th November, where 16 beers and 2 ciders will be on sale in the function room, along with 4 ales on handpump in the bar, and several reserves will be waiting in the cellar. This is a favourite venue for the local branch and our Annual General Meeting will be held in the function room on Wednesday 1st December. Please come along – to the beer festival at least.

By now most of you will have purchased your copy of the 2011 *Good Beer Guide*. Gravesend & Darent Valley Branch have 18 pubs listed. This is more than usual as two of our reserves were included to replace other pubs in different parts of Kent, which had closed between the selection and the proofreading stages. Fortunately the **Old House** closed after the proofs in May and re-opened before publication in September so it holds its place, consecutively since 1995.

An article in September in the *Dartford and Swanley Reporter* randomly mentioned some of these pubs and focussed on the two in Dartford town centre, the **Malt Shovel** and the **Paper Moon**, the latter appearing in the guide for the first time since 2003. The article contained some inaccuracies, and we wish to stress that re-inclusion in the guide was mainly due to the enthusiasm and innovation of the previous husband and wife management team, Kelly and Chris Smith, keeping the beer in tiptop condition. As with all Wetherspoons outlets, the managers change quite frequently and the pubs need to be carefully monitored with regard to consistent beer quality.

Chris Smith is currently the Assistant Manager at Dartford's other Wetherspoons pub, the **Flying Boat**, where significant improvements have been noticed with regard to the availability, quality and range of beers, particularly from microbreweries in Kent, finding favour with the CAMRA LocAle policy. The branch is holding its Christmas social here on Friday 10th December, to which all members and guests are welcome. Kelly is currently on maternity leave from the **Paper Moon** having had a baby daughter on 20th September. Congratulations!

The other Dartford GBG pub is the **Malt Shovel** in Darenth Road, a Wells & Young's tied house, another favourite CAMRA haunt. Neil the landlord would like to point out that all seven pumps will feature a different beer during November. The five regular ales are *Young's Ordinary*, *Young's Special*, *Young's London Gold*, *St.Austell Tribute* and *Butcombe Bitter*. From 30th October the other two pumps will be sporting *Marston's Wychwood Hobgoblin* and *Mauldon's Broomstick*; from 6th November these will be replaced by *Sharp's Doom Bar* and *Hydes Hubble Bubble*; from 13th November *St.Austell Dartmoor Best* and *Wadworth 6X* are coming. *Young's Winter Warmer* will come on stream later in November.

Following the Fastrack bus route a few hundred yards further along Darenth Lane, you will encounter the **Ivy Leaf**. Jim the landlord has been at the pub for a couple of years now and is a keen supporter of real ale, having previously been the landlord of the then *Good Beer Guide* listed **Victoria** in Belvedere. The regular beers are *Fuller's London Pride* and *Sharp's Doom Bar* with guest ales at weekends, such as *O'Hanlon's Yellowhammer* and *Skinners Betty Stogs Bitter*. The **Ivy Leaf** hosts open quiz evenings every Sunday, and Jim has applied to enter a team in the Monday Dartford Independent Quiz League. Tuesday is Open Mic night, food is served Tuesday to Friday lunchtimes and Sky Sports TV is available, this being a comfortable place to watch live football matches. The **Ivy Leaf** is also the closest good real ale pub to Dartford football ground at Princes Park, and is on a direct route from the town centre and railway station.

The sponsored walk from Farningham to Dartford, organised by the **Foresters** in Dartford was well supported and raised £1,500 for Cancer Research. The pub is looking for darts players on Monday nights. Small parties and gatherings can be catered for by arrangement on 01333-223087 (Chris). A sponsored haircut held on Saturday 11th September at the Stage Door in Hythe Street, Dartford raised approximately £1,000 for Cancer Research. Charity events, darts teams, quiz teams are all fundamental activities of good traditional pubs and we should give our custom to the pubs that support them

Quizzes – that's just reminded me – the monthly open quiz night at the **Bull** at Horton Kirby now takes place on the first Wednesday night of each month, (no longer Thursday as stated in 2011 GBG). Thursday night is now the fish and chip supper combined with a beer evening which I can highly recommend. The **Bull** continues to be the prime outlet for

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More quizzes – in my opinion the most entertaining one is the longstanding Tuesday evening quiz at the **Cock** at Luddesdown, another CAMRA favourite home from home. *Adnams Lighthouse* is now a regular beer at the **Cock**, and Andrew is planning another *Adnams* “Meet the Brewer” evening in the New Year. Watch this space!

Other regular open quiz nights are held on Mondays at the **Malt Shovel** in Dartford, Wednesdays at the **Malt Shovel** in Eynsford and Thursdays at the **Moat** at Wrotham Heath. Please let us know about other places with regular events. We’d like to publicise your pub, especially if it sells good real ale.

The branch has held meetings recently in the Ightham/Borough Green area. We’ve already mentioned the **Old House** and there other good calls in the area. The **Crown Point Inn**, a large roadhouse just off the A25 at Seal Chart, has become extremely popular with diners, their carvery is good value and the Diamond Club deal looks interesting. On the beer front they now have three handpumps showcasing Kent beers from *Westerham* and *Nelson* and other small breweries such as *Cotleigh*, *Hog’s Back*, *Loddon* and *Skinnners*. Well worth a visit.

The **George & Dragon** in Ightham village is a very attractive **Shepherd Neame** house, where I remember drinking 4-4-2, one of the better football-themed beers, during the World Cup. The other pub in the village, the **Chequers**, a *Greene King* tied house is still open but is currently up for sale.

In September we visited the **Royal Oak** in Wrotham Heath and just missed out on the only real ale, *Jennings Cumberland*, so we adjourned quickly to the **Moat** for a pint of Badger. Our next port of call was the **Blue Anchor** at Platt, a *Greene King* pub offering IPA and *Ruddles County*. As we were running early we made an unscheduled stop at the **Black Horse** at Borough Green and came across the best range and quality of beers that evening, with *O’Hanlon’s Firefly*, *Rudgate Viking* and *Woodforde’s Wherry* on sale. The beer range rotates and we shall certainly arrange a scheduled stop in the next few weeks.

On my travels I encountered a beer I’d not heard of called *Cheque Mate* at the **Chequers** at Heaverham, near Kemsing, a *Shepherd Neame* tied house.

Funny I thought and, on enquiry, Jenny and Richard told me that they had got together with three other *Shepherd Neame* landlords to brew a special beer at the 5-barrel-length microbrewery plant in Faversham. The beer was a light summer ale at 4% ABV and very palatable, so tasty that their four firkins sold out in less than a week. What a good idea and one which *Shepherd Neame* is keen to promote. Now I remember the 2Kents festival at **Dartford Working Men's Club** and the **Bull** at Horton Kirby last November had a special beer brewed in the same scheme.

Finally we shall end up at the **Dartford Working Men's Club** – I usually do! By the time you read this you may have missed the 2010 CAMRA Club of the Year Presentation and the *Boggarts* Brewery "Meet the Brewer" on the 27th October and the Halloween Beer Festival on 29th October. Never mind – there's always Christmas, and with 15 handpumps at the DWMC the beer festival is permanent!

Hoppy days and Happy New Year from the Gravesend & Darent Valley branch.

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CAMRA Continues to Press for Reform of Beer Tie

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is continuing its campaign to secure reform of the beer tie despite the announcement on October 14th by the OFT, Office of Fair Trading, that it will take no action. This is despite considerable evidence providing reasonable grounds to suspect anti-competitive behaviour by the large pub companies.

The inaction of the OFT, whose responsibility is to ensure markets work well for consumers, is all the more remarkable given that the Commons Business Select Committee and the Government recognise that a competition problem exists and are working to find a fair solution.

Mike Benner, CAMRA Chief Executive, said: *"CAMRA's initial reaction to the OFT's decision is that it is based on a blinkered and selective consideration of the evidence. The OFT has squandered an opportunity to support a process of industry self regulation to improve competition and benefit consumers. Today's OFT decision does nothing to change the fact that the Business Secretary, Vince Cable MP, has publicly stated that the pub companies are on probation and that they will face legislative action if they fail to reform by June 2011."*

"The OFT recognises the concerns of tied pub landlords but has failed to recognise the impact of these on consumers. It is extraordinary that the OFT appears to have dismissed as irrelevant the treatment of tied pub landlords by the large pub companies. A balanced and fair relationship between tied pub landlords and the large pub companies is crucial to ensuring the pub market works well for consumers."

"The OFT's own analysis recognises that tied pub landlords on average pay around £20,000 more for their beer every year as a result of being tied and unable to purchase beer on the open market. CAMRA, unlike the OFT, recognises that higher costs imposed upon tied pub landlords will inevitably be passed onto consumers through higher prices, under investment and pub closures."

Dr. Rick Muir, author of the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) groundbreaking *Pubs and Places* Report said: *"ippr research shows community pubs are not just places to drink, but are also places where people meet friends and neighbours and where local clubs hold meetings and events. Community pubs are the embodiment of the "big society" principle yet many risk being squeezed to death as a result of restricted competition. The OFT has failed to stand up for individual pub landlords and ultimately it will be consumers who suffer as yet more pubs close."*

Contact: *Martyn Nicholls* on 01322 527857 (H)
or *Graham Austin* on 07939 145429 (M)
or email contacts@camrabexleybranch.org.uk
www.camrabexleybranch.org.uk

Bexley's sixth attempt at a beer festival will again take place the week after Easter, Thursday evening through till Saturday 28-30 April 2011, at the same venue, **Sidcup Sports Club**, Crescent Farm, Sydney Road, off Main Road, Sidcup DA14 6RA. Again to be organised by the experienced Alan Boakes and his faithful team of helpers (a bit like Santa Claus and his elves; so he does exist!). We look forward to seeing you all.

In Northumberland Heath, the **Duke** re-opened, after a refit, selling *Courage Best Bitter* at £2 per pint, plus *Black Sheep Bitter*, now replaced by *Greene King IPA*. Just down the road in Brook Street, you'll find the **Brewers Arms**, which retains the old external green tiling of *Truman's Brewery*, a name that has been revived in the form of *Runner* at 4% currently brewed at *Nethergate Brewery* in Essex; the brand was acquired by two entrepreneurs who worked at Brick Lane (Truman London Brewery, opened 1666, closed 1989) who are seeking an East London site to continue brewing beers, based on old recipes. Of course the old 1970's advertising slogan "You can taste the hops in Ben Truman" brings to mind the old joke: "What is the difference between a dead frog and a pint of Ben Truman?" Answer: "There are more hops in a dead frog". Further along Brook Street is the **Duchess of Kent**, where *St.Austell Tribute* and *Wells Bombardier* were on offer at the August branch meeting, the *Sharps Doom Bar* having just run out, and the food was welcome.

Our July meeting at the **Black Horse** in Bexley included the presentation of the runners-up prize for the Pub of the Year 2010. Our chairman, Martyn Nicholls, presented landlord, Julian Buckley, with a framed certificate being their third runners-up award in a row, while we all enjoyed *Sharps Doom Bar*, *Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter* and *Courage Best*. The third place certificate was presented to Kath at the **Rose** in Bexleyheath Broadway by our Pubs Officer, Ian Wright, on a warm June evening whilst drinking *St.Austell Tinnners*; also on the bar were *Greene King IPA*, *Sharps Doom Bar* and *Harvey's Best*.

The winner this year, the **Crayford Arms**, raised over £350 for the Royal National Institute for the Blind after a Saturday charity event at this popular *Shepherd Neame* pub. However for 2011 the pub has to sit on the

sidelines, as branch rules no longer allow pubs to defend their title. Remember only Bexley branch CAMRA members can vote and voting forms will be sent out in January. Last year a total of thirteen different pubs were voted for, when of course, you couldn't vote for the previous defending champion, the **Robin Hood & Little John**, which will be eligible again for 2011.

September saw Albany Park visited for a meeting in the **Albany**, a large imposing pub opposite the far less imposing railway station. *Fuller's London Pride* was the only real ale on sale, at £3.35 per pint, *Wells Bombardier* not being available that day. We were made to feel very welcome and enjoyed the sandwiches, thank you. Branch members really appreciate welcoming pubs which cater for us.

The **Golden Lion** in Bexleyheath Broadway, selling *Wells & Young's* beers, held two successful charity nights to raise cash for Help the Heroes and Breast Cancer. Its former stable mate, **RSVP** near the Clock Tower (opposite the **Furze Wren**), which installed three handpumps then closed soon after in April 2009, is to become **Cribs**, a Caribbean Chicken Diner. The **Drayman** which opened as a "non-alcoholic bar" on the eve of the football World Cup, lasted as long as England did in the competition and is now closed again. The **Yacht** pub in Long Lane, Bexleyheath, made it into the final eight of the Best Cellar category in the Great British Pub awards run by the *Morning Advertiser*, having won the South East category of the competition.

The **Style and Winch**, ex-**Boundary**, ex-**Plough** in Northend Road, Erith is set to become a Tesco Metro store after the existing pub building is enlarged. The comment made in a previous edition about the **Temple Belle** in Dartford, now selling more real ale as a Tesco Metro than as a pub, probably holds true for the defunct **Style and Winch** pub (itself renamed after a defunct Maidstone brewery).

Music is now on the agenda at the **Seven Stars** in Foots Cray, with Crayside Folk holding sessions there every Monday evening from 8.30pm. The **Old Wick** (*Shepherd Neame*) in Vicarage Road, Bexley hosts the *UKulaviators* Ukelele Club every other Tuesday night.

Ian Wright, our esteemed Pubs Officer, opened proceedings at the **New Cross Turnpike** for J.D.Wetherspoon's Local South-Eastern Ales Festival. This included *Beer Miles* 4.5% brewed by *Arundel* and named after the JDW regional manager.

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Police closed the **Cross Keys** pub in Erith on Sunday 15th August after revellers entered the pub on horseback, inviting complaints from residents, as it appeared the situation had gone out of control. The licensee has lost his licence after the Bexley Council Licensing Subcommittee saw the CCTV footage. Sadly the **Chequers** pub in Picardy Road, Belvedere, has been demolished for a housing estate. Currently we have eight pubs in the branch area still closed, future uncertain.

On a brighter note one of the perks of working at a CAMRA beer festival is the staff outing. In September the Bexley workers trip visited *Dark Star Brewery* and some hostelrys. We called in before noon at the **Lamb** in Lamb's Green near Rusper in West Sussex where the home-cooked menu looked inviting with homemade jams, marmalade and chutneys in evidence. The beer range was inviting with local beers at sensible strengths; *Dark Star Hophead* 3.8%, *Pilgrim Templar* 3.8%, *Langham Hip Hop* 4%, *Weltons Old Cocky* 4.3% and *Biddenden Cider*.

Our official lunchtime stop was a short distance away at the **Royal Oak** at Friday Street, the CAMRA South-East Pub of the Year 2009 and finalist in the National competition. The **Royal Oak** is a quaint low-beamed

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country pub, once belonging to *King & Barnes Brewery*, and now an enterprising free house. Seven real ales, three ciders and two perries were on sale. Dark ale enthusiasts enjoyed *Red Rock Dark Ness*, a 4.5% dark mild from Devon. The other beers available that day were *Otter Amber*, *Butcombe Brunel IPA*, *Surrey Hills Ranmore*, two from *Hammerpot* (*White Wing* and *Meteor*, and *Dark Star Hylder Blonde* (flavoured with elderflower). The apple and pear beverages were *Mr.Whiteheads Newtons Discovery* 3.8% (hardly cider strength), *Thatchers Cheddar Valley* 6%, an unpronounceable *Welsh Pyder* 6%, *Hecks Perry* 6.5% and *Broadoak Perry* 7.5%. We much appreciated the spread of local bread and cheeses, especially the *Sussex Crumble*, and were made to feel very welcome, despite the 28 of us being crammed into a small room owing to a double booking.

We were quite merry on arrival in the afternoon at the *Dark Star Brewery*, which has a brand new home on a trading estate at Partridge Green, off the A24 south of Horsham. We were welcomed by one of the partners, Paul Reed, who gave us a short talk about the brewery, accompanied by a tub of Hophead, to keep us lubricated. *Dark Star Brewery* originated in the cellar of the **Evening Star** pub in Brighton in 1994 and moved to farm

buildings at Ansty near Haywards Heath in 2001. With ever increasing popularity of their excellent award-winning beers, the 15-barrel plant was not sufficient. They relocated to the unit at Partridge Green in December 2009, which has good access to brewing water and main road connections and triple the brewing capacity at 45 barrels. The equipment is modern and shiny, reminiscent of our outing to the new *Thornbridge Brewery* last year, and we're pleased to report that excellent beers are produced at inauspicious looking functional surroundings. *Dark Star* is not a traditional English brewery and sources ingredients from all over the world, using many American hops, creating different styles and flavours with impressive results. We wish them every success. The brewery is open to customers to collect supplies in take-away containers and a number of us duly obliged and various styles of shirts with *Dark Star* logos were also purchased.

Our port of call on the way home was the **Bull** at Horton Kirby, Kent Pub of the Year 2009 and a fervent supporter of *Dark Star* beers. The **Bull** also specialises in esoteric beers from microbreweries, often at the high end of the gravity scale, with *Brewdog 5am Saint* at 5%, *Saints & Sinners* at 6% and *Thornbridge Halcyon* at 7.7%, on sale. A number of hardy souls were released for a final session at the **Dartford Working Men's Club**, another *Dark Star* outlet, and the rest stayed on the coach home to Bexley. We extend our appreciation to Jackie, the coach driver, for her patience during the trip.

I would like to wish Colin Aris of Thanet CAMRA and, until recently, CAMRA East Kent Area Organiser, the best of luck with his new venture of running a new alehouse in Ramsgate, having planning permission to convert a convenience store into a pub and naming it the **Conqueror**, after a paddle steamer on which his grandfather served, sailing out of Ramsgate.

As it's nearly Christmas, a big thank you to Bob Belton for his help in typing the notes from my indecipherable writing and his embellishments to the text (and blame him for any errors).

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from all in Bexley Branch.

CAMRA'S EAST MALLING

2010



BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

FESTIVAL SUCCESS!

by Jeff Tucker

Maidstone and Mid-Kent CAMRA had been without a beer festival since 2007. We had been at the same location for 21 years, but proposed changes in the commercial relationship made it impossible for us to continue there. We therefore looked around for another suitable venue, preferably one which would allow us to expand in future years.

After much site visiting and negotiation, we opted for East Malling Research, maybe not the easiest place to find, but a lovely setting and all the space we could wish for. An organising committee was formed, ably chaired by Ian Clennett, and planning commenced.

To run a beer festival, we first have to draw up a budget and fill in Health & Safety documents, before getting approval from CAMRA HQ to go ahead with the event. This was duly achieved, and we were off! People were assigned to various roles, and a date of 4th September was set.

Being the first event at a new venue, we were unsure what sort of attendance to expect, so we scaled it down slightly compared to the 2007 event. Things such as beer judging were dropped for year one. We realised that we wouldn't necessarily get everything right first time.



On the day, an army of CAMRA volunteers turned up to serve the beer and sell glasses, tokens, products and membership. A bus service was laid on to bring customers in from Aylesford and West Malling stations, as East Malling station is a bit of a trek on foot.

A good selection of food was offered, including burgers, a Hog Roast, German sausages, crepes, rolls and ploughman's lunches.



Popular Radio Kent presenter Roger Day kindly offered to perform the opening ceremony. Coincidentally, his son's friend was a member of one of the two bands we had throughout the day - Hi Jets and Wasted Aces.

We soon realised that we were going to be inundated with visitors, with a steady stream coming through the gate in the first few hours, including a group of 50 on a coach from Thanet. The weather was dry and mainly sunny, luckily, and people were able to spread out on the grass.

One consequence of our success was a shortage of toilets, with long queues soon forming. We were able to order four more at short notice, which proved quite a relief!

We will soon be having a review meeting to discuss what we should do differently next year, but most people congratulated us on running a fantastic event, so there are some things we don't need to change.

Keep an eye on *Draught Copy* or the Maidstone CAMRA website for the date and other details of next year's event.



Pictures by courtesy of Ray Ingles

First In Last Out

on the buses with Andy Osborne

Autumn was approaching when I set off early one morning to meet some like-minded beer enthusiasts on a bus trip to Hastings. Maidstone town was the central meeting place where seven of us caught a No 5 to Hawkhurst; we left slightly late and the driver's timing was impeccable, meaning that we also arrived slightly late. A quicker than expected walk took us to the stop for the 305 to *Hastings* and on arrival there we had a pleasant walk in the sun through to the High Street in the old historic part of the town.

A short way along was the **First In Last Out** pub, so called because it was the first pub you would encounter as you entered Hastings and so the last as you were leaving. It has been dispensing beer since at least 1896 and is the home of the *Filo* brewing company, which started in 1985. Stepping inside, it has a deceptively large bar and an attractive, central, open fire. Four ales were on offer being *Crofters* and *Gold* from their own brewery plus two guest ales: *Dizzy Blonde* from *Robinson's* and *Gales Seafarers Ale*, those sampled being in good order. The brew-pub is unsurprisingly in the *CAMRA Good Beer Guide* and has beer festivals most bank holidays. On the day of our visit, it had a stand on the beach with 10 beers, which I am sure was a welcome addition to the annual Hastings Wine & Seafood Festival. The beer garden at the back is now fully enclosed, conservatory style, with blinds and air conditioning units; the pub sells organic freshly cooked food and tapas at different times, but not all sessions.

The **Jenny Lind** is a slight double-back down the interesting High Street with its variety of little shops towards the Coast, and is also in the *Good Beer Guide* (as indeed are all pubs on our itinerary). *Sharp's Doom Bar*, *Deuchars IPA*, *Greene King Bonkers Conkers*, *Courage Directors* and *Theakston's XB* were all on at the bar, and in good form. One sign in the pub made me smile, the one that stated *Beer Garden Upstairs*. but which investigation found to be true. There were other interesting items, such as an old petrol station forecourt pump which stood in the corner, perhaps not surprising as the adjacent building was the Hastings Historic Museum.

An easy stroll from here took us to the town centre where we awaited a 340 to take us to our next port of call, Westfield, and in particular the **Old Courthouse** and local CAMRA region winner in recent years. *RCH*

Smooth East Street premium bitter, *1648 Signature* and *Harvey's Sussex* were on offer as was a warm welcome. Most of our party decided to eat here, as the food was homely and very good value, and it proved to be very enjoyable. The pub is situated in the centre of the village and has a local community focus. The main bar has low ceilings and an open fire, and traditional pub games can be played such as Bar Billiards and Darts.

We had to re-board the 340 to continue our journey, but we had a lengthy wait and some of us had all but given up and, knowing there was not another bus for some while, had re-entered the pub and were in the process of ordering another beer when we heard a shout as it appeared, and we had to make haste back to the stop. Apparently, there had been a medical emergency aboard the bus. We travelled the short journey to Newenden and **The White Hart**, which was last year's runner up in the local CAMRA branch and is only a short walk from Northiam station (Kent and East Sussex Steam Railway). This is a lovely 500-year-old oak-beamed Inn, just inside the Kent border. The featured ales included *Skinners Betty Stoggs*, *Rother Valley Level Best*, *Goacher's Fine light Ale* and *Harvey's Sussex Best* and, despite the obvious charms of the pub, we decided *en masse* to take our beers to the large garden and enjoy what may turn out to have been the last day of summer. Petanque was being played at the rear of the garden. This is similar to bowls but played on what looked like Hastings beach instead of finely mown grass, with smaller metal balls used.

All too soon it was time to move on from this very peaceful spot. Back once again on a 340 to finish this leg to Tenderden where there was just time for a swift half-pint in the nearby **White Lion Hotel**. I chose *Wychwood's Bountiful* from a choice of three; we sat outside in the large front courtyard where we could see our next connection arrive.

One more stop was planned on this last journey back to Maidstone. Out of three options to choose from, we found ourselves in the **Wheatsheaf** near Loose, as it was holding one of its regular beer festivals. This spacious inn dates back to 1830 with a licensed structure before that. The pub is a recent and very welcome addition to the GBG. It has a lot of sporting interests and a large screen TV to watch them on, and there is a pleasant outside seating area. *Elgood's Cambridge Bitter* and *Courage Best* were available at the bar, with an additional eight ales in the festival, from *Wolf*, *RCH*, *Skinners*, *Moorhouse*, *Loddon*, *O'Hanlons* and *Triple FFF* breweries, making an altogether superb end to the day.

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SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD ON PAGE 24

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

My wife, Jane, was the lucky winner of the word search competition in the Spring issue of *Draught Copy*. The prize was a weekend in a cottage next to the **Brewery Tap** hostelry aka "The Shed" in Wroxham, Norfolk. We arrived on Friday evening 8/10/10 with 2 extra tasters, our son, Jack, and his girlfriend, to begin our arduous weekend of sampling the 50 or so real ales brewed at Norfolk breweries. By Sunday evening, our duty done, we concluded that there was no overall champion due to the vast range and our continual changes in preference.

No beers were priced over £2.95 pp most were £2.60, 70, 80, with the *Shed Bitter* (4.2) best value at £2.30 and also Jack's favourite, full of flavour.

We didn't sample them all, but all that we did try were in excellent condition. Our appreciation was assisted by the delivery of Indian and Chinese takeaways for which we were provided with plates and cutlery for a nominal charge of £1 per head. The ladies appreciated the candle lit tables and vases of flowers. The weather was surprisingly clement for October and we were able to sit out on the decking watching the swans and boats glide by. The pub mooring was vacant during our visit.

The one disappointment, particularly for a home brewer like me, was that the Brewery Tap brewing experience was not available. The 4 of us were comfortably accommodated in a Peninsula Cottage with a view of the river. Tracey, the general manager, was extremely welcoming and efficient. We were given helpful advice about the beers and the menus from Tracey and bar staff Mathew and Alan. We are most grateful to John Frankland for generously donating the prize. We will definitely revisit the Shed/Brewery Tap whenever we are in Norfolk, we go most years. A holiday in the Broads was well accompanied by some lovely beer.

Best wishes,

Rob Jones (CAMRA member and home brewer)

[Rob did supply a full list of the beers available, but lack of space here prevents us from printing it. The breweries represented in the list are: Bees, Beeston, Grain, Humpty Dumpty, Icen, Spectrum, Tipples, Winter's, Wolf, Woodfordes, Wroxham Brewery Tap, and Yetmans. —Ed.]

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CAMRA BRANCH MEETINGS

CAMRA branches arrange socials and trips throughout the year. Non-members are welcome to come along to our meetings. If you would like more information, or would like a lift (if possible), please ring the local branch contact—see **Local News** sections.

BEX = Bexley, **GDV** = Gravesend and Darent Valley, and

MMK = Maidstone & Mid-Kent (*OBM* = Open Business Meeting)

NOVEMBER

- 3 **BEX** **Crayford Arms**, Crayford (Special General Meeting)
- 4 **MMK** **Hawkenbury**, then **Bell**, Staplehurst
- 6 **MMK** Roland Trip to Dark Star Brewery - *fully booked*
- 10 **BEX** **Furze Wren**, Bexleyheath (*OBM* and Wetherfest)
- 11 **MMK** **Bull**, West Malling (*OBM*)
- 13 **GDV** 1pm **Jolly Drayman**, Gravesend (beer festival)
- 18 **MMK** **Chequers**, Goudhurst, then **Globe & Rainbow**, Kilndown
- 18 **GDV** **Old House**, Ightham Common, then **Crown Point**, Seal Chart
- 20 **MMK** Bus Trip to Robertsbridge, Salehurst and Hawkhurst
- 25 **MMK** **Swan**, Loose Rd, then **Wheatsheaf** (beer festival), Maidstone

DECEMBER

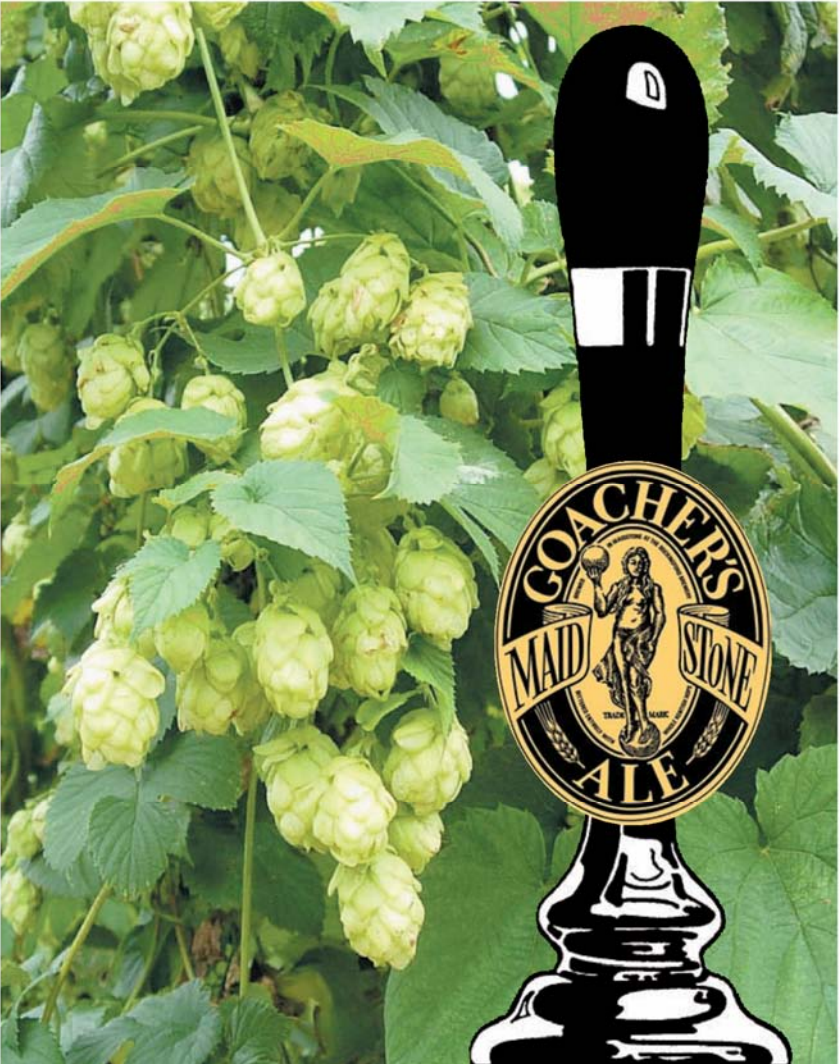
- 1 **GDV** **Jolly Drayman**, Gravesend (Branch AGM)
- 2 **MMK** **Pepper Box**, Ulcombe, then **Park Gate**, Hollingbourne
- 8 **BEX** 8pm **Black Horse**, Bexley (*OBM*),
then **Greek Taverna** Xmas Meal
- 9 **MMK** **Red Bull**, then **Lower Bell**, Eccles
- 10 **GDV** Christmas social – **Flying Boat**, Dartford
- 16 **MMK** **Nevill Bull**, Birling, then **Duke of Wellington**, Ryarsh
- 23 **MMK** **Fox**, then **First & Last**, Maidstone
- 30 **MMK** **Bull**, Linton, then **White House**, West Farleigh

JANUARY

- 6 **MMK** **Woolpack**, Benover, then **Chequers**, Laddingford
- 7 **MMK** *Goacher's Old* evening, **Rifle Volunteers**, Maidstone
- 12 **GDV** **Dartford Working Mens Club** (*OBM*)
- 12 **BEX** **Yacht**, Bexleyheath (*OBM*)
- 13 **MMK** **Stilebridge**, Marden (*OBM* & GBG selection)
- 15 **MMK** Bus Trip to Rye
- 20 **MMK** **Hop Pole**, Nettlestead, then **Railway**, Watlington
- 27 **MMK** **Wheatsheaf**, Leybourne, then **Wealden Hall**, Larkfield

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