

Draught Copy



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Free Newsletter

for the

Maidstone & Mid-Kent,
Gravesend & Darent Valley
and Bexley areas of Kent

Spring 2011

No. 162

LOCAL SUCCESS? LET'S HOPE SO...

In December last year, the Government announced its response to almost 200 proposals submitted under the Sustainable Communities Act. As a member of the steering group of the Local Works coalition, CAMRA has been campaigning for this Act to be a success since 2002. The Act allows councils and communities to drive the actions of central government to promote sustainability locally.

Communities and Local Government Minister Greg Clark MP announced that the Government is considering banning restrictive covenants, a proposal put to the Government under the Act.

Restrictive covenants are used by the seller of a pub to prevent the buyer from continuing to run the premises as a pub. This practice is used to restrict competition in local areas and deprives our communities of their pubs. Between 2004 and 2009 almost 600 pubs were sold with restrictive covenants.

This is a huge step forward in the campaign which CAMRA has been fighting for 30 years, and a great success for localism. It shows that Government recognises pubs are vital community assets that need to be protected. CAMRA will respond to the public consultation later this year, highlighting the damage that restrictive covenants cause to our pubs and our communities.

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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.

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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 31 March 2011 for publication in May 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

18TH WHITE CLIFFS FESTIVAL OF WINTER ALES

FEBRUARY 4—5

75+ winter and strong ales

Maison Dieu (Town Hall)

Dover

www.camra-dds.org.uk/

21ST BATTERSEA BEER FESTIVAL

FEBRUARY 9—11

150+ real ales from across Britain

Grand Hall, Battersea Arts Centre

Lavender Hill, SW11 5TN

www.batterseabeerfestival.org.uk

CHAPPEL WINTER BEER FESTIVAL

FEBRUARY 9—11

60+ winter beers

East Anglian Railway Museum

Chappel and Wakes Colne Station

Wakes Colne, Essex, CO6 2DS

www.earm.co.uk/events

LONDON DRINKER BEER FESTIVAL

MARCH 9—11

70+ real ales and ciders

Camden Centre, Bidborough St.

London WC1H 9AU

www.camranorthlondon.org.uk/lbdf

21ST SUSSEX BEER FESTIVAL

MARCH 10—12

200+ real ales, 40+ ciders & perries

Hove Centre, Norton Road

Hove BN3 4AH

www.sussexbeerfestival.co.uk

6TH BEXLEY BEER FESTIVAL

APRIL 28—30

65+ real ales and ciders

Sidcup Sports Club, Crescent Farm

Sydney Road, Sidcup, DA14 6RA

See ad on p31

Non-CAMRA—Pubs and Clubs

February 12—20

Chequers

The Street,

Laddingford, ME18 6BP

THE KENT ALE TRAIL

www.chequersladdingford.co.uk/events.php

April 14—17

Wheatsheaf

Loose Road, Maidstone

MINI BEER FESTIVAL

See ad on p4

April 22—25

Nevill Bull

1 Ryarsh Road,, Birling, ME19 5JW

EASTER BEER FESTIVAL

See ad on p37

April 22—25

Crown

High Street, Otford

EASTER BEER FESTIVAL

See ad on p35

April 22

Dartford Working Men's Club

Essex Road, Dartford

ST GEORGE'S DAY BEER FESTIVAL



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KENT BREWERIES

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Canterbury Ales	01227 732541	<i>www.canterbury-ales.co.uk</i>
Farriers Arms	01233 720444	
Goacher's	01622 682112	<i>www.goachers.com</i>
HopDaemon	01795 892078	<i>www.hopdaemon.com</i>
Kent Brewery		<i>www.kentbrewery.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.nelsonbrewery.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>

SUCCESS! Kent Brewery will now be located at The Long Barn, Birling Place Farm, Stangate Road, Birling, West Malling, Kent ME19 5JN. MD, Paul Herbert commented: *"The site is part of the Nevill Estate and the buildings do not require a Planning Application. We will be sad to leave Aldon Farm, but Birling Place Farm will enable us to do much more than would have been possible on the original site and we look forward to working in such an ideal location with easy access to all the great pubs that have supported us in our early days."* Construction begins early February.

THE KING & QUEEN - "What's On" 2011

1 New Road, East Malling, Kent ME19 6DD. 01732 842752



Sunday 9th January	Open Mic' Night	"Plug in and Play" 7.30pm
Thursday 13th January	Monthly Quiz Night	Quiz starts 8.30pm
Sunday 23rd January	Review of the Year Quiz	Quiz starts 7.30pm
Sunday 6th February	"Stand Up" Comedy Night	Ticket Only - 8.00pm
Thursday 10th February	Monthly Quiz Night	Quiz starts 8.30pm
Monday 14th February	Valentines Day	Table Bookings Recommended
Thursday 17th February	FREE LIVE MUSIC Folk, Rock & Pop Covers	Table Bookings Recommended "Gez Gold" 9.00pm
Thursday 3rd March	Spanish Tapas & Music Night	Bookings Essential
Thursday 10th March	Monthly Quiz Night	Quiz Starts 8.30pm
Thursday 17th March	St Patricks Day Band Band starts 9.00pm	Table Bookings Recommended
Thursday 24th March	FREE LIVE MUSIC A Truly Funky Soulful Sound	Table Bookings Recommended "Get Ape" 9.00pm
Thursday 7th April	FREE LIVE MUSIC Tribute to the Kings of Swing	Table Bookings Recommended Chris Rose 9.00pm
Thursday 14th April	Monthly Quiz Night	Quiz starts 8.30pm
Thurs 21st to Mon 25th April	EASTER BEER FESTIVAL	Large selection of Cask Ale
Sunday 24th April	Hog Roast 4-10pm & FREE LIVE MUSIC	Classic Covers "Glenn Barnes" 7.00pm
Sunday 1st May	BANK HOLIDAY SUNDAY FREE LIVE MUSIC	Classic Rock Covers "Usual Suspects" 8.00pm
Thursday 12th May	Monthly Quiz Night	Quiz starts 8.30pm
Sunday 15th May	LOCAL BAND NIGHT	1st Live Band starts 7.30pm
Sunday 29th May	BANK HOLIDAY BBQ PLUS 'Blues & Reggae'	Bookings Essential Tim Haine from 7.00pm
Thursday 9th June	Monthly Quiz Night	Quiz starts 8.30pm
Thursday 23rd June	FREE LIVE MUSIC Classic Covers	Table Bookings Recommended "Glenn Barnes" 9.00pm

Shanklin's Pony

by Jeff Tucker

I was invited to join in a short break to the Isle of Wight. Why not, I thought. So it was that 19 of us crossed the Solent on a Wightlink ferry.....on board a London Transport Routemaster bus!

We parked the bus in Ryde bus station for a lunch stop. The **King Lud** was across the road, and was selling *Island Nipper Bitter* (3.8%, £3.00) which was very nice. *Island* is a new IOW brewery which had opened since my last visit. The *Goddards Scrumdiggity* was unfortunately past its best, so I had another pint of *Nipper*. The pub sold good value pub grub and the service was very friendly.

Back on the bus to Shanklin, where we were staying in two guest houses close to each other. The bus squeezed into the car park of the Victoria, while I was billeted in St Georges, which I would thoroughly recommend. As I was going to spending two evenings in Shanklin, I decided to visit most of the town's pubs. This can only really be done on foot, hence the title of the article.

My first port of call was the **Steamer Inn** on the seafront, which was reached by a long, steep path down from the guest house. Normally they have an *Island* beer on, but the selection that night was *Ringwood Bitter* and *Fortyniner*. I had a pint of the latter (£3.20), which was OK, and took in the nautical surroundings.

Turning right out of the **Steamer** brought me to the **Fisherman's Cottage**, which is literally on the beach, but the entrance wasn't obvious in the dark. *Goddards Fuggle-de-Dum* and *Yates Undercliffe Experience* were on offer in this quaint little pub. The latter (£3.10) was a bit malty for my taste, but well kept. On leaving, I noticed the string of oil tankers which anchor off-shore for weeks on end waiting for the wholesale price to rise.

The next pub was as far vertically as it is horizontally! After a short but steep climb, keeping right at the Shanklin Chine entrance, I found the **Chine Inn**, which is in the *Good Beer Guide*. The beer range was disappointingly just *Doom Bar* and *Landlord*, two good beers but hardly unusual (or local). The *Landlord* was £3.30 in this old pub with modern extensions in a very nice setting.

Heading inland, it was still an uphill walk initially, coming to **King Harry's Bar** (GBG) on the main road to Ventnor, in Shanklin Old Town. Again, none of the four ales was an island beer, but *Wharfebank Camfell Flame* from West Yorkshire (£2.90) was very enjoyable.

Across the road, both the **Holliers** and **Village Inn** had loud live music, so I walked downhill through the town centre to the **Plough & Barleycorn** in North Road, which only had *Old Speckled Hen* (one of my least favourite beers) and *Doom Bar* (£3.00). Not a very inspiring pub.

On Sunday, I had some time in Godshill during the day, so tried the two pubs in the village. The **Griffin** is a massive Victorian pub, but I was too late for Sunday lunch, as they had run out! *Goddards Ale of Wight* (geddit?) at £3.20 was a very pleasant 3.7% golden ale. I gave the *Old Speckled Hen* a miss.

The other pub, the **Taverners**, is an older building with several seating areas. The *Yates Taverners Own Ale* (£3.00) was a bit creamy for my taste. *Doom Bar* and *Fortyniner* were also on.

That evening, back in Shanklin, I more or less retraced Saturday's route, with some different pubs. Next door to the **Steamer** on the Esplanade, the **Waterfront Inn** was advertising 'island beers' outside, so I went into what looks like a typical small hotel or guest house.

I was amazed to find two handpumps, one offering *Island Yachtsman's Ale* (5.2%, £2.50), which was malty but perfectly good. The bar had a stylish, airy interior. The other beer was *Andwell Ruddy Darter* from Hampshire (4.6%, also £2.50). This was ruby red and tasted a bit like an old ale. I'll be going back to this place!

On the other side of the **Steamer** was the **Aqua Hotel**, also promising IOW beers, which proved to be *Yates Shanklin Pride* at £2.70 a pint, which was better than their other beers that I've tried. The furniture was a bit like you get in a club, only smarter. Sunday night is bingo night!

Back to the **Fisherman's Cottage** to try the *Fuggle-de-Dum* (£3.20), which I thought had an odd taste to it. An album of photographs informed me that the pub was virtually destroyed by fire in 1980, but has been expertly rebuilt.

The **Holliers Hotel** had a singer who was pretty good, but quite loud enough from the other bar, thank you, where she was competing with football on TV. Oh well! *Fuggle-de-Dum* (£2.90) tasted better than at the **Fisherman's**.

While in Ryde, I picked up a leaflet for Greyhound, who offer a combined ticket from London, by coach to Portsmouth, hovercraft to Ryde, then Southern Vectis bus to anywhere on the island, with prices starting at £8 each way. See www.greyhounduk.com I might try them when I can't find a Routemaster going that way!

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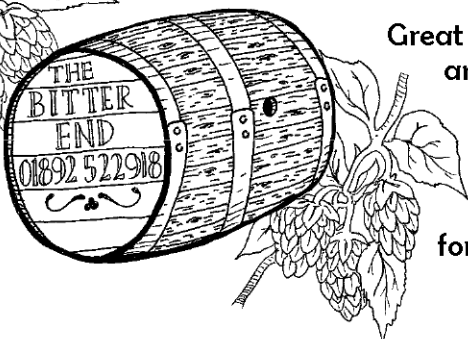


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Brewery snippets...

Abigale— Current plans are for two regular brews, *Samphire* at 4.2% and *Ridgeway* at 3.8%. There will also a golden ale for the summer.

Canterbury Ales— New brewery in Chartham, run by Martin Guy. First brew is *Millers Ale*, a 4.5% IPA.

Farriers Arms, Mersham — Now brewing on a 5 BB plant acquired from the Black Dog brewery of Whitby. First beer was Farriers 1606 at 3.7% available back in November. Using East Kent Goldings & Fuggles, it was brewed to 30 units of bitterness. Malts - Maris Otter Pale Ale & Crystal.

Hopdaemon—Has recruited a new brewer.

Larkins — Porter is now available.

Moodleys— Now operating from a farm outside Penshurst with more staff. Is producing new beers, but still all still bottled so far.

Nelson— The winter brew *Shiver M' Timbers* (4.7%) and the Christmas brew, *Santa's Salvo* (4.5%) appeared. *Midshipman Mild* (4.0%) has been brewed recently, and such has been the reaction that Piers hopes to brew it on a more regular basis.

Old Dairy— *Hop Top* (9.0%) has been seen but may be a one-off. Others are *Copper Top* (4.1%), a dark ale, *Silver Top* which is a 4.5% cream stout and *Snow Drop* 6% a slightly spiced dark ale was brewed for Christmas

Ramsgate — *Dark Conspiracy* is a new seasonal brew.

Royal Tunbridge Wells— *Dipper* (3.7%) and *Beau Nash Porter* (4.8%) are the latest additions. All beers are also available in bottles.

Shepherd Neame — *Porter* returned this winter, brewed on the pilot plant and was in short supply. *Imperial Porter* is now 10.4% and should be available for beer festivals.

Swan, West Peckham—A Porter is planned that will contain added Port.

Tonbridge Brewery— Sales of *Auburn Myth* (3.8%) are increasing. *Ebony Moon* (4.2%) is a new porter with lovely chocolate and coffee flavours. Special beers are being brewed for two pubs as house brews.

Wantsum— *Black Pig* (4.8%) is back for the winter period.

Whitstable—Winkle Picker @ 4.5% is now a permanent beer; as is the Renaissance Ruby Mild. They recently started supplying Roast Restaurant in Borough Market London with bottled beers with such success that they have literally been ordering 1000 bottles at a time!

YEW



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CAMRA Kent Pub of the Year 2010

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Saturday 11am - 11pm

Sunday 12pm - 10.30pm

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Nevill Bull, Birling – Kate & Paul seem to be finding a good set of regular customers and I can vouch that that the food portions are more than ample. The beers are changed quite regularly and some First Edition beers from *Kent Brewery* have been sampled. *Dark Star Hophead* has been very popular as a guest.

Kilbarn, Ditton – Part of the Ditton Community Centre, this was for members only but is now open to all. From the car park take the path to the right of the Centre and the bar is at the end. Currently only one real ale but will extend if more customers call. *Youngs Ram Rod* and *Brains SA Gold* have been appeared on the bar.

Horseshoes, East Farleigh – Was redecorated before Christmas and now has new furnishings. www.thehorseshoeseastfarleigh.co.uk

Red Bull, Eccles – Whilst popping in for a drink why not save fuel and collect some eggs and veggies. There is now a village shop to the rear which is open Friday & Sunday Mornings and Saturday till 4pm. Full details may be found on the website: www.theredbull.co.uk. This is a good initiative and a helpful addition to the village. Beers available are usually *Shepherd Neame Master Brew* and *Spitfire*.

Hawkenbury, Hawkenbury – For 2011, Russell will be presenting comedy evenings with three acts on the first Tuesday in the month. Tickets are £7.50. The regular beers come from the *Old Dairy Brewery* and *Skinners* plus *Lodden Gravesend Shrimpers* and additional guests appear at the weekends. www.thehawkenburyinn.com

Kings Arms, Headcorn – This has been closed for some months.

Globe & Rainbow, Kildown – On a foggy evening branch members made the long trip down here and were rewarded by the addition of the seasonal *Wychwood Hobgoblin* to the regular *Harveys Sussex Best Bitter* and *Westerham Finchcocks*. Neil produces fine dishes for the restaurant mainly using fare from local suppliers. www.globeandrainbow.co.uk

Red Lion, Lenham – The new pumps have now been installed and Cask Marque accreditation has been attained. The beers are normally *Fullers Gale's HSB* and *London Pride*, *Shepherd Neame Master Brew*, *Harveys Sussex Best Bitter* and *Taylor Landlord*. www.redlionlenham.co.uk

Walnut Tree, Loose – Andrea Tozer has taken over here and the opening hours are now: Sun-Thu 11-12, Fri 11-1.30. Food is now available daily 11-9.30, plus a roast on Sunday. Keeps *Master Brew*, *Late Red* and the current *Shepherd Neame* seasonal beer.

Ashes, Maidstone – A handpump has been reinstalled and *Courage Directors* is now available with *Courage Best* to follow.

Bar Chocolate, Maidstone – Dave Merry is trying to encourage more daytime customers and has put real ale on here again with one handpump, initially dispensing *Wells Bombardier*. There are huge TV screens for sports fans.

First & Last, Maidstone – A pleasant wedge shaped pub in Bower Place, just off the Tonbridge Road, well worth seeking out. Excellent *Taylor Landlord* was found here together with *Adnams Bitter*, *Ringwood Best* and the guest *Black Sheep Best Bitter*.

Fox, Maidstone – We visited the Beer Festival put on by Mandy & Duncan at the end of November and found the *Oakham Inferno* and *Elgoods Greyhound* particularly good. Normally you will find *Goachers Best Dark*, *Shepherd Neame Spitfire*, *Wadworth Henrys IPA* and *Youngs Bitter* plus a guest

Pilot, Maidstone – David Till now opens all day on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays serving a range of *Harveys* beers in good condition.

White Horse, Maidstone – This is a popular weekend music spot on the London Road that usually has on *Fullers London Pride*, *Greene King IPA* and *Sharps Doom Bar* plus a couple of guest ales. Food is available daily and fortnightly quiz evenings are held. Check the Facebook page.

Ye Olde Thirsty Pig, Maidstone – Peter has had some beers in from the *Kent Brewery* which went very well. There are often unusual beers available here at very competitive prices.

White Horse, Otham – The local residents tried to buy this when it was put up for auction but their bid was unsuccessful. Fortunately the new owner intends to re-open the pub rather than build on it, so hopefully a good result for all.

Chiltern Hundreds, Penenden Heath – My first visit following a pleasing refit found guest ale *Hobsons Town Crier* with regulars *Courage Best* and *Taylor Landlord*.

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Pride Of Kent, Staplehurst – Re-opened in December having been closed since July.

Railway Tavern, Staplehurst – Closed in December following the departure of previous lessees. It is now subject to some general cleanup and decoration. A new lessee should soon be in place.

North Pole, Watlingbury – A warm welcome will be found here, not just from the owners, Zoe and Lee Wopling, and the staff but also the large log-burning fire. Good food is offered and you will not leave unsatisfied. On the beer front there are usually the splendid *Tonbridge Ebony Moon* and *Auburn Myth* plus up to two guests.

White House, West Farleigh – Here there are a dart board and pool table, indoors and outside there are petanque pitches. Jan serves both *Goachers Fine Light* and *Best Dark* on gravity.

Farm House, West Malling – Still keeping *Harveys Best* on but now take the second ale from small breweries in Kent & Sussex. *Dark Star Porter* and *Old Dairy Red Top* were on the bar in December – both in good order.

Lobster Pot, West Malling – The exterior has been repainted and new signage and lighting installed. The interior is due for a refurbishment at end of January and will require an enforced closure for three weeks. The number of handpumps has been reduced from six to four. Unfortunately the pre-Xmas beer festival was postponed due to the weather conditions preventing beer deliveries but another will be held at a later date.

Did you know that you can find recent issues of *Draught Copy* online at <http://maidstoneandmidkentcamra.co.uk/aboutus.aspx>?

RIFLE VOLUNTEERS

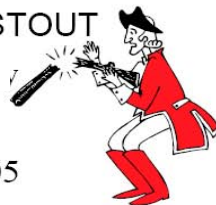
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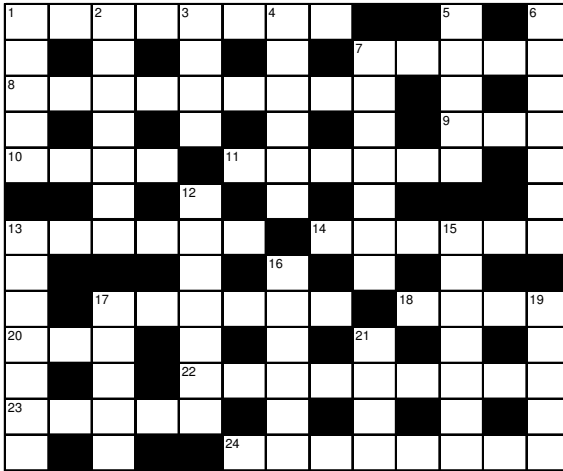
Maidstone CAMRA Pub Of The Year, 2005



The Draught Copy Crossword No. 2

compiled by MICK NORMAN

Solution in next issue



17 across's 1 down, 9 and 13 down (two of them colloquially) were enjoyed in 22 and many other parts of 21 in the 1980s.

Across

- 1 Ramshackle lodgings for hop harvest, perhaps (8)
- 7 Raleigh? Off with his head - change required! (5)
- 8 Seven eels wandering in search of refreshment (9)
- 9 Communist drug gets in the way (3)
- 10 It's twelve, whichever way you look at it (4)
- 11 Ten bra collection leads to witty exchange (6)
- 13 Nissan estate content is most reasonable (6)
- 14 Preacher to die, by the sound of it (6)
- 17 Former brewer appears strange in brown (6)
- 18 Old King to bring back tat (4)
- 20 Golfer's target is half a birdie! (3)
- 22 Cathedral city, or backing one with its wall still intact (9)
- 23 No change in reproductive organ (5)
- 24 Holy man years for repairs (8)

Down

- 1 Environmentalist gets genre wrong (5)
- 2 Possess German song? Quite the reverse - relax! (3,4)
- 3 Carib extract produces butter (4)
- 4 Flanders' and Swann's tradesman, who set off a chain reaction (6)
- 5 Former Beatle finds sailor located in Southern Region (5)
- 6 Odd rent arrangement to be stamped on (7)
- 7 Tree carrier no longer to be seen in pub (7)
- 12 Model (Sue) and Ray to forget love in mouth of river (7)
- 13 South African member's concerned with biblical character (7)
- 15 Extend sentence (7)
- 16 Accountant lent out surgeon's knife (6)
- 17 Clinical experiment may be carried out by jury (5)
- 19 American, rubber knackers! (5)
- 21 Clark's first-class county (4)

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www.gdvcamra.org.uk

Last time I started on a high note with some very encouraging pub news and I'm pleased to report that my "wishful thinking" from the previous issue has brought some more gratifying pub news. In mid-December we heard from a very reliable source that the **Vigo** at Fairseat, one of our most prestigious former *Good Beer Guide* pubs, has re-opened. The **Vigo** is located on the main A227 road between Meopham and Wrotham and I've often driven past during nearly four years of its closure, wondering whether anyone would resurrect the pub as a going concern. It would have been a prime choice for a consortium of dedicated local customers, or even a local brewery, to buy and run the pub, but those options have been on the back burner. There had also been precious little interest from private buyers to convert the building into a private house.

Some friends of mine called in on Christmas Eve to check the news and reported that Andy Forrest and Valerie Hobbs, a couple new to the pub trade, have taken on the **Vigo**. The real ales, served in lined glasses, were *Goacher's Best Dark Ale* and a house beer, *Vigo Bitter*, also brewed by *Goachers*, both in good condition, and additive-free German beers, *Rothaus Pils* and *Kueppers Koelsch* were also available. Andy was doubling as a band member, which was performing jazz-orientated and non-intrusive music in the old saloon bar. The old public bar now contains a piano and, I'm relieved to say, the old daddlums table, a prominent and important feature of the **Vigo**, still takes pride of place in its usual corner and some of the old books about beer and pubs are still there. There will be live Blues and Rock music on Friday and Saturday evenings and traditional Jazz on Sunday lunchtimes, and they hope to serve food in future and open the garden later to accommodate the live bands outdoors. By the time you read this article Andy & Val will have had a few weeks to settle down and hopefully started to rebuild a good regular client base which the pub deserves.

Another pub which had been closed, albeit only for a few weeks in the summer and autumn, is the **Alma**, opposite Swanscombe station, an area notoriously lacking in choice and quality of real ale. A few of us called in during November, and were welcomed by Patrick the new tenant, son of the former licensee of the **Old Wick** in Bexley. *Greene King IPA* was on

offer with *Fuller's London Pride* waiting in the cellar. Patrick seems enthusiastic about real ale and hopes to build up a regular following, intending to introduce more diverse beers, as the **Alma** is totally free of tie.

Several pubs in our area are in the process of closing, re-opening and changing hands in these difficult market conditions and it can be tough to keep track of all the changes, so were pleased to hear from landlords as well as customers with information. Mick Burroughs, the new governor at the **Jolly Millers** in South Darenth contacted us just before Christmas and he is keen to attract more real ale followers. The pub currently sells *Courage Best*, *Wells Bombardier* and one or two rotating guest ales, a range which Mick is hoping to extend. All three pubs in South Darenth village; the **Jolly Millers**, the **Queen** and particularly the **Bridges** sell a reasonable selection of beer and are just the sort of local hostelrys which need our support to survive and prosper in these difficult times.

Our CAMRA Pub of the Year, the **Bull** in the adjacent village of Horton Kirby is a prime example of how to attract customers by offering excellent quality food, superlative beers, good hospitality and entertainment, which is all down to the hard work and commitment of the licensees and their staff. Garrett selects his beers from the best microbreweries all over the country and I'm pleased to report that there is now a new microbrewery fairly nearby, operated by two of his customers Paul Herbert and Toby the brewer, who has worked at *Dark Star*. The *Kent Brewery* has still to find authorised premises and is currently based at the *Larkins Brewery*. It should come fully on stream in early 2011, using mainly locally sourced ingredients. The pilot beers were excellent, especially the *Zingibier* at the **Bull**. I've also enjoyed the *Kent Pale* at the **Jolly Drayman** and the *Kent Porter* at the **Crown & Thistle**, both in Gravesend.

Local beers from Kent breweries are finding their way more regularly into our local which is good news for local drinkers and the CAMRA LocAle initiative. The **Rose**, a former *Shepherd Neame* tied house, in Rose Street, Northfleet, not far from Ebbsfleet football ground, now stocks two *Millis Brewery* beers regularly, alongside *Shepherd Neame Spitfire*. I've enjoyed both *Gravesend Guzzler* and *Kentish Red* on my way to or from the football.

Royal Tunbridge Wells Brewery Sovereign, a tasty blonde beer at 3.8%, has been spotted at the **Plough** in Ivy Hatch and the **Amazon & Tiger** in

Harvel, the latter also selling less regular *Greene King* beers, *Royal London* and *St. Edmunds Ale*, during our impromptu visit on New Year's Day, having been diverted from the main road, which had acquired a hole the size of a double-decker bus, near Meopham Green.

Another pub in the Meopham area re-opened (again) recently is the **Golden Lion** at Luddesdown, a few hundred yards down the hill from the legendary "**Cock at Luddesdowne**". The **Golden Lion** was reportedly stocking *Greene King IPA*, *Ruddles County* and *Sharps Doom Bar* and the pub will have a hard task competing with the excellent range of real ales, ciders and lagers established at the **Cock**.

Returning to the theme of local beers in local pubs, the **Black Horse and Hoodens** at Borough Green deserves a special mention. The landlady, Alison Pilkington, has expanded the real ale availability from two handpumps to four in just over a year, selling an impressive range of good quality beers from many regional and local breweries in the process. Cask ale sales here are fast approaching lager sales by volume, an encouraging trend also reported by other pubs. There is an increasing emphasis on supplying beers from Kent and *Old Dairy* beers are favourites. *Red Top* should become a regular beer and my personal favourite at the **Black Horse** was the *Copper Top* beer for autumn.

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The enterprising Mark and Fiona at the **Crown** in Otford now have two house beers produced by Kent breweries. The 4% *Crown Ale* is a blend of two *Westerham* beers, and a new beer, *Three in a Bed*, which I've yet to sample, from *Tonbridge Brewery*, celebrates the five mens and two ladies darts teams based at the pub. www.crownpubandrestaurant.co.uk, the **Crown** website, is extensive and informative about their many facilities and attractions. The next beer festival takes place over the Easter weekend of 22nd to 25th April.

Another of my themes is quiz nights and I'm pleased to report the two new teams in Dartford have joined the local League (playing Monday nights), namely the **Bird in Hand** in Dartford Road and the **Ivy Leaf** in Darenth Road (not Darenth Lane – my typing error in the last issue), where Jim also hosts an open quiz on Sunday evenings. The **Ivy Leaf** sells good pints of *London Pride* and *Doom Bar*, and the guest ale is often a pleasant surprise, on one occasion being the excellent *Old Dairy Gold Top*, which has also been on sale at the Foresters in Dartford.

For entertaining evenings I thoroughly recommend the weekly open quiz evenings held at the **Malt Shovel** in Dartford on Mondays, at the **Cock** at Luddesdown on Tuesdays, and monthly at the **Bull** at Horton Kirby on the first Wednesday. I've yet to compete in the weekly quiz on Thursdays, which is also curry evening, at the **Fox & Hounds** at Romney Street, near Otford, having discovered the quiz on a *Draught Copy* delivery round. *Harvey's Bitter*, *Skinnners Betty Stogs* and *Hog's Back TEA* are the regular real ales at the **Fox & Hounds**, which also sells real cider from *Biddenden*.

Following the email recommendation of friend and fellow CAMRA member Keith Molloy I recently visited a pub I'd never been to before, namely the **Ascot Arms** in Central Avenue, Gravesend. Keith wrote "*This sort of standalone estate type is sadly a dying breed as out of town pubs nationally are closing at an ever alarming rate*" and also mentioned that the landlord is a very keen supporter of real ale. I called in after the Ebbsfleet match on New Year's Day and was pleased to find the pub quite busy and three real ales on display, being *Greene King IPA*, *Old Speckled Hen*, and *Ringwood Fortyniner*. I chose *49er* and was even more impressed when the barmaid drew off some beer, without being prompted, as mine was possibly the first from that pump that evening and in very good condition. This is a typical large estate pub with a single bar, separated into distinct areas, one with a pool table, a raised area with two

dartboards, and five flatscreen TV's dotted around, two behind the bar. It has a large garden and, I noticed, a weekly quiz advertised for Tuesdays. CAMRA has neglected this style of pub in the past as estate pubs and roadhouses have not usually been associated with good quality real ale. The **Ascot Arms** is a pleasing exception and deserves our support.

The Gravesend and Darent Valley Christmas social was held at the **Flying Boat** in Dartford town centre. We are indebted to Chris Smith, the assistant manager, who arranged to segregate a comfortable area for CAMRA and take our beer orders personally at this busy and popular Wetherspoons establishment. Chris had arranged to supply no less than seven different beers from *Dark Star Brewery*, all at £2.25 a pint, and his efforts were greatly appreciated. The attendance was not as good as predicted, partly down to the heavy December snow and poor transport conditions for out of town members. Those attendees thoroughly enjoyed themselves and difficulties walking home were more down to the "Star" than the snow and ice. The **Flying Boat** has CAMRA LocAle accreditation and Chris intends to resurrect the innovative local brewery trips and "Meet the Brewer" evenings which became popular whilst he and Kelly were managers at the **Paper Moon**.

Speaking of innovations, Nick Byram of the **Dartford Working Men's Club** has come up with another bright idea. He intends to install webcams focussing on the ales on the bar, which can be accessed on personal computers and laptops so drinkers can find out which beers are on sale and which are coming soon. My friend Mick Allen listed more than 450 different beers from over 150 breweries during his 2010 visit, so the webcam has potential for even wider appeal. Previous innovations at the DWMC have included the "real ale gallon challenge" when each member was invited to drink one pint of each different beer from the then eight pumps during the course of a day. Some did it quicker – much quicker – and the idea was knocked on the head by the anti-binge-drinking lobby. Now there are fifteen handpumps at the Club and up to five different ciders and perries – now twenty pints in a day might cause some concern!

Another innovation, this time the idea of Vic Beale, was the third pint carousel, which is still on offer at the Club and popular with members of the Tuesday Folk Club. This entails a wooden circular pallet (carousel) which holds five third pint glasses, suitable for tasting selected beverages. Why not combine the two ideas and set the challenge at four carousels, being twenty different thirds? That's less than seven pints!

I can also remember the Belgian Beer fridge, which contained 25 different Belgian bottled beers each served, Belgian style, in their own individual promotional glasses. Unfortunately, this being England, too many glasses went astray. Nevertheless I think a few foreign bottled beers wouldn't come amiss behind the bar and possibly speciality foreign lagers on the "T" bar. Any other bright ideas anyone?

Of course, I nearly forgot. It was Nick's idea to run periodic Friday beer festivals in the function room, which now take place roughly on a quarterly basis with a minimum of 25 ales and ciders. The next one is planned for Good Friday 22nd April, and, as the **Dartford Working Men's Club** is effectively a permanent beer festival, will continue in the main bar through St. George's Day April 23rd, Easter Sunday, Easter Monday until the beers run out, probably around the Royal Wedding Day 29th April. Now there's an idea for a tie-breaker quiz question. How many different beers will be brewed to commemorate "Wills and Kate"? It makes you drink, doesn't it?

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Welcome to 2011 and what has the beer drinker to look forward to? First of all, since 4th January, VAT at 20%, from the autumn an “anti-bingeing tax” on beers and lagers over 7.5% alcohol by volume and a reduced tax on beers under 2.8% ABV (I’ve only drunk three different real ales at that gravity – ASDA bitter/lager doesn’t count) and from January 2012 licensed premises that stay open after midnight will have to pay a fee.

It appears that Bexley Beer Festival this year (see advert on page 31) will coincide, on the Friday, with the wedding of HRH Prince William and Catherine Middleton (aka Bill & Kate) which has been declared a bank holiday, so if you have the day off and don’t want to watch it on television (other media sources are available) but still wish to be seen as a royalist then come along and drink some beer that is bound to be wedding themed (although perhaps not *Daleside Old Legover*). If not, then why not come on Thursday night, open from 5pm, and enjoy the Celtic charm of Fiddlefit, then have a lie-in on Friday and come back for the all-day session on Saturday.

Our October meeting, held at the **Tailors Chalk** in Sidcup, began with free samples of *Hogs Back Traditional English Ale (TEA)* and *Autumn Ale*, courtesy of Nick Burke, their Area Sales Rep, as part of a “Meet the Brewer” event arranged by the pub. Nick gave a short talk on the history of the brewery, established in 1982, informing us that the 4.2% ABV *TEA* is their most popular beer, accounting for over 50% of its output and that their beers are more malty than hoppy. Ales from *Westerham Brewery* were also on offer that night.

The **Furze Wren** in Bexleyheath was visited for our November meeting to coincide with the JDW Autumn Beer Festival, which listed 50 real ales, 9 ciders and one perry. Beers on offer that night included *Highwood Brewery Tom Wood’s Vanilla Orchid*, *Everards Coppernob*, *Lion Stout*, a 5% stout brewed by *Marstons* on behalf of the *Lion Brewery* of Sri Lanka, amongst others, all in excellent condition.

December’s meeting, although scheduled for the **Black Horse** in Bexley, was switched to the **Railway Tavern** in the High Street due to the

appearance of flurries of snow. In this nice, friendly, comfortable pub that deserves its *Good Beer Guide* status for 2011, three beers were available – *Courage Best*, *Oakham JHB* and *Wickwar BOB*.

In Upper Belvedere the **Fox**, ex-GBG, now has four real ales on offer, *Wells & Young's Bitter* and *Special, Sharps Doom Bar* and a monthly guest ale, all priced at £2.80 per pint.

Another former GBG pub looking set to re-open fairly soon, hopefully by the time you read this, is the **Royal Oak** (aka Polly Clean Stairs) Mount Road, Bexleyheath which closed following the death of longstanding landlord Len Smith.

Also in Bexleyheath, the **Bricklayers Arms** in Mayplace Road West, after many months hidden from view, adding a new roof and a change of layout, is set to re-open as a licensed Chinese Restaurant called Chinagaga.

The **Nordenfelt Tavern** in Erith is being partly demolished and converted to flats. Once owned by *Watney, Combe and Reid*, it was named after the nearby Maxim Nordenfelt Gun and Ammunition Company in an area known locally as the "Pom Pom". It had been a pub for over a hundred years although I can never remember it selling any real beer.

In Foots Cray High Street, planning permission has been sought to change the **Red Lion** from public house (class A4) to function hall (*sui generis*). Also the **Pheasant** in Belmont Road, Northumberland Heath could be turned into flats if planning permission is granted.

The **Blue Anchor** in Bridgen Road, Bexley closed for a makeover and re-opened on Thursday 4th November under the stewardship of landlady Karen McKie. Now called the **Anchor**, there is a bigger emphasis on food, served daily from noon until 9pm. Opening hours are: noon – 11pm, Monday to Thursday; noon – 11.30pm, Friday and Saturday; noon – 10.30pm on Sunday. It has Cask Marque accreditation and is selling *Greene King* beers – *IPA*, *Ruddles County* and *Old Speckled Hen*, all at £2.25. Free WiFi access is also available.

Another new landlady, Helen Farmer, took over the **Foresters Arms** in Upper Wickham Lane, Welling on the 17th November; alas, since the fire and re-build a few years ago, no real ale has been available.

In Long Lane, Bexleyheath stands the **Yacht**, the first "Flaming Grill" branded pub in the South East, owned by Punch Taverns, who have

spent £180,000 on the transformation and hope to have another 80 of their pubs similarly re-branded by the end of the year. Sue and Jason are the managers and the pub is open from 11.30am – 11pm Saturday to Thursday and 11.30am to midnight on Friday, with food served daily from 11.30am to 9.30pm. 158 covers are available. Inside the pub is a large open fireplace with screwed down models of silver yachts and on the walls are framed pictures of local scenes from a bygone era. Last year the **Yacht** won the Best Cellar Award for the South East from trade paper the *Morning Advertiser*. It also has the Beautiful Beer Platinum Award and a Cask Marque accreditation; not forgetting a CAMRA LocAle sticker for selling *Fullers London Pride*; *Shepherd Neame Spitfire* and a guest ale are also available. Bexley CAMRA Branch award LocAle material to pubs regularly stocking beer from breweries no further than 35 miles away, provided the beer is consistently good.

December saw Bexley Council launch a “Drunks not Welcome” campaign, complete with posters, to reinforce its successful PubSafe Scheme throughout the borough, a system whereby pubs use a radio system to communicate with each other so if someone causes trouble or is drunk they can be easily and instantly be identified and refused entry.

Helen Rogers, our lovely membership secretary, mentioned that Bexley Branch membership, which does fluctuate, is certainly over 350 with the largest sector being in the 51-60 age range (including me). If you have joined CAMRA recently why not come along and meet us? Our meetings are listed in *What's Brewing*, *Draught Copy*, *London Drinker* and the branch website www.camrabexleybranch.org.uk.

Last year, real ale sales kept growing whilst other alcoholic beverages behind the bar saw a decline. However, it is the pub, so we are regularly reminded, that's on its last legs – but a long way from being legless. Years ago the pub was the centre of people's worlds; they played darts, dominoes, pool, watched live music and met there before going on to the cinema, theatre, football match or whatever, or just popped in for a chat with friends and real ale was very much part of that world. Nowadays people can smoke, drink the same lager more cheaply at home, microwave their own meal and watch live sport on their large screen TV's or play games on their computers. Then there's the internet, texts, emails, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and whatever, so nobody actually needs to meet anyone any more. Real ale is part of real life and the pub is the best real environment for drinking and socialising. Please continue to support the pub. Its very existence depends on us – the customers.



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East Malling Festival set for September return

Following the success of the inaugural East Malling Beer and Cider Festival in 2010, members of Maidstone and Mid Kent CAMRA are already making plans for the 2011 event. A date has provisionally been set for September 3, with the Festival returning to the popular East Malling Research venue. Jeff Tucker, Chairman of MMK CAMRA, said: *"We were delighted that last year's Festival was so well received, with many visitors telling us they looked forward to coming back in 2011. We'll be working hard in the coming months to put arrangements in place to ensure this year's event is bigger and better than ever."* Further details of timings, admission costs and transportation will be announced in due course.

Schooners to sail into pubs

by **Iain Loe** (CAMRA HQ)

The Government has announced that draught beer in pubs will be able to be sold in two-third pint glasses, sometimes known as "schooners". The measure, along with others enabling pubs to sell measures of wine smaller than 125ml, will be introduced through a statutory instrument which will be laid before Parliament in the coming months. Currently draught beer can only be sold in third of a pint, half a pint, pint or multiples of half and a pint measures.

Science Minister David Willets said that the Government wanted to offer flexibility and scrap laws banning certain measures of drink being sold.

Opinions on the relaxation of the permitted beer measures on CAMRA's Facebook page have varied from the laudatory to the dismissive.

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The Nevill Bull

Easter beer festival

22nd to 25th April

From noon

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I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association

I enclose a cheque for _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Applications will be processed within 21 days

MMK—Draught Copy

12/10

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Enjoying Real Ale & Pubs

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Instruction to your Bank or

Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Please fill in the whole form using a ball point pen and send to:
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This Guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer.

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society Service User Number

To the Manager Bank or Building Society

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder

Branch Sort Code

Bank or Building Society Account Number

Reference

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FOR CAMRA OFFICIAL USE ONLY

This is not part of the instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Membership Number

Name

Postcode

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Please pay Campaign For Real Ale Limited Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Campaign For Real Ale Limited and, if so will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date

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- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.
- If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd asks you to.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

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)

FEBRUARY

- 3 **MMK** West Malling Walkabout, start **Farmhouse**
- 3 **GDV** **Crown**, Otford, **Fox & Hounds**, then **Chequers**, Farningham
- 9 **BEX** **Seven Stars**, Foots Cray (*OBM*)
- 10 **MMK** **White Rabbit**, Maidstone, then **Flower Pot**
- 10 **GDV** **Black Horse**, Stansted, **Green Man**, then **George**, Meopham
- 16 **GDV** **Old House**, Ightham Cn, **Black Horse**, then **Bull Hotel**, Wrotham
- 17 **MMK** **West End**, Marden, then **Unicorn**
- 23 **BEX** **Crayford Arms** (GBG 2012 selection meeting)
- 24 **GDV** **Jolly Drayman**, Gravesend, GBG 2012 selection meeting
- 24 **MMK** **Bull**, Sissinghurst, then **Raffles**, Cranbrook
- 26 **MMK** Bus Trip to Tunbridge Wells, depart Chequers 10.10

MARCH

- 3 **MMK** **White Hart**, Claygate, then **Walnut Tree**, Yalding
- 9 **BEX** **Belvedere**, Belvedere, (*OBM*)
- 10 **MMK** **New Swan**, Sandhurst, then **Oak & Ivy**, Hawkhurst
- 10 **GDV** **Painters Ash**, **Battle of Britain**, Northfleet, **Ascot Arms**
- 17 **MMK** **Red Lion**, Lenham (*OBM*)
- 23 **GDV** Eynsford walkabout; **Castle**, **Five Bells**, **Plough**, **Malt Shovel**
- 24 **MMK** **Cock**, Boughton Monchelsea, then **Mulberry Tree**
- 31 **MMK** **North Pole**, Wateringbury, then **Rising Sun**, East Malling

APRIL

- 2 **MMK** Train Trip to Eynsford & Farningham, dep Maidstone East 11.18
- 7 **MMK** **George**, **Ten Bells**, Leeds, then **Crown & Horseshoes**, Langley
- 13 **BEX** **New Cross Turnpike**, Welling, (*OBM*)
- 14 **MMK** **Pepper Box**, Ulcombe, then **Park Gate**, Hollingbourne
- 21 **MMK** **Muggleton**, Maidstone, then **Druid's Arms**
- 22 **GDV** 7pm: **Dartford Working Men's Club** St. George's Beer Festival
- 22 **MMK** Good Fri. Ramble to **Cock**, Luddesdown, meet Cuxton Stn. 10.20
- 23 **GDV** 1pm: **Crown**, Otford, Beer Festival social
- 28 **MMK** **Queen's Head**, Mereworth, then **Swan**, West Peckham
- 28-30 **BEX** **Bexley Beer Festival**, Sidcup Sports Centre
- 29 **GDV** 1pm: Celebrate Royal Wedding Day at **Bexley Beer Festival**

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