

# Draught Copy



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

Free Newsletter

for the

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

Summer 2011

No. 163

## 'MOST SUCCESSFUL CONSUMER CAMPAIGN IN EUROPE' CAMRA CELEBRATES ITS 40TH BIRTHDAY!



With many successes to its credit, the Campaign for Real Ale is celebrating forty years of reviving consumer interest and demand for beers with taste, a claim borne out by a membership that now exceeds some 120,000 members.

Let's raise a glass to another forty years of campaigning success!

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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 30 June 2011 for publication in August 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](http://www.camra.org.uk/page.aspx?o=events)

### **38TH CAMBRIDGE BEER FESTIVAL**

**MAY 23—28**

200+ ales, 80+ ciders/perries, plus foreign beer, wines and meads  
Jesus Green, Victoria Avenue  
[www.cambridgebeerfestival.com](http://www.cambridgebeerfestival.com)

### **KENT & E SX RAIL BEER FESTIVAL**

**JUNE 17—18**

Tenterden Town Station  
Tenterden  
[camra-afm.org.uk](http://camra-afm.org.uk)

### **KENT BEER FESTIVAL**

**JULY 21—23**

Merton Farm, Merton Lane,  
Canterbury, CT47BA  
100+ real ales, plus foreign beers  
and Kentish cider  
[www.kentbeerfestival.co.uk](http://www.kentbeerfestival.co.uk)

## **Non-CAMRA—Pubs and Clubs**

**May 5—7**

### **Flower Pot**

Sandling Road, Maidstone  
**5TH BEER FESTIVAL**  
25+ real ales and ciders (*See ad p13*)  
[www.flowerpotpub.com](http://www.flowerpotpub.com)

**May 7—8**

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**May 13—15**

### **Jolly Drayman**

Wellington Street, Gravesend  
**5TH SEMI-ANNUAL BEER FESTIVAL**  
20+ real ales and ciders  
[info@jollydrayman.com](mailto:info@jollydrayman.com)

**May 26—30**

### **Wheatsheaf**

Loose Road, Maidstone (*See ad p4*)  
**MINI BEER FESTIVAL**

**May 27—30**

### **Stile Bridge**

Staplehurst Road, Marden  
**BRIDGESTOCK BEER FESTIVAL**

**June 17—19**

### **Black Horse and Hoodens**

Maidstone Road, Borough Green  
(*see ad p29*)  
**SUMMER BEER FESTIVAL**

**June 24—26**

### **Robin Hood**

Common Road, Bluebell Hill  
**BEER FESTIVAL**  
25 ales and ciders (*see ad p35*)

**EAST MALLING BEER AND CIDER FESTIVAL.** Planning is well under way for this year's festival at East Malling Research on Saturday 3rd September from 11am. Bigger and better than last year's popular event, we will have over 90 beers, ciders and perries, varied entertainment and a good selection of food. This year, the shuttle bus service from West Malling and Aylesford stations is doubled in frequency to every 30 minutes, and will be free! We hope to see you there.



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# KENT BREWERIES

<b>Abigale</b>	07734 342278	<a href="http://www.abigalebrewing.co.uk">www.abigalebrewing.co.uk</a>
<b>Black Cat Brewery</b>	07948 387718	<a href="http://www.blackcat-brewery.com">www.blackcat-brewery.com</a>
<b>Canterbury Ales</b>	01227 732541	<a href="http://www.canterbury-ales.co.uk">www.canterbury-ales.co.uk</a>
<b>Farriers Arms</b>	01233 720444	<a href="http://www.thefarriersarms.com">www.thefarriersarms.com</a>
<b>Goacher's</b>	01622 682112	<a href="http://www.goachers.com">www.goachers.com</a>
<b>HopDaemon</b>	01795 892078	<a href="http://www.hopdaemon.com">www.hopdaemon.com</a>
<b>Kent Brewery</b>	01634 780037	<a href="http://www.kentbrewery.com">www.kentbrewery.com</a>
<b>Larkins</b>	01892 870328	
<b>Millis Brewing Co.</b>	01322 866233	
<b>Moodleys Brewery</b>	01892 889877	<a href="http://www.moodleys.co.uk">www.moodleys.co.uk</a>
<b>Nelson Brewing Co.</b>	01634 832828	<a href="http://www.nelsonbrewery.co.uk">www.nelsonbrewery.co.uk</a>
<b>Old Dairy Brewing Co.</b>	01580 243185	<a href="http://www.olddairybrewery.com">www.olddairybrewery.com</a>
<b>Ramsgate Brewery</b>	01843 868453	<a href="http://www.ramsgatebrewery.co.uk">www.ramsgatebrewery.co.uk</a>
<b>Royal Tunbridge Wells Brewing Company</b>	01892 618140	<a href="http://www.royaltunbridgewells&lt;br/&gt;brewing.co.uk/">www.royaltunbridgewells brewing.co.uk/</a>
<b>Shepherd Neame</b>	01795 532206	<a href="http://www.shepherd-neame.co.uk">www.shepherd-neame.co.uk</a>
<b>Swan, West Peckham</b>	01622 812271	<a href="http://www.swan-on-the-green.co.uk">www.swan-on-the-green.co.uk</a>
<b>Tonbridge Brewery</b>	01732 366770	<a href="http://www.tonbridgebrewery.co.uk">www.tonbridgebrewery.co.uk</a>
<b>Wantsum Brewery</b>	0845 0405980	<a href="http://www.wantsumbrewery.co.uk">www.wantsumbrewery.co.uk</a>
<b>Westerham Brewery</b>	01959 565837	<a href="http://www.westerhambrewery.co.uk">www.westerhambrewery.co.uk</a>
<b>Whitstable Brewery</b>	01622 851007	<a href="http://www.whitstablebrewery.info">www.whitstablebrewery.info</a>

This page expands yet again. This issue we welcome the **Black Cat Brewery**, which started brewing *Original*, a 4.2% ABV bitter in April. And apologies to the *Whitstable Brewery* for their apparent omission from the last issue.

# THE KING & QUEEN

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# A Potted History of CAMRA...

CAMRA, The Campaign for Real Ale was founded on 16th March 1971 by four young men from the North West whilst on holiday in the West of Ireland. The idea of a campaign to revitalise ale – CAMRA – as the organisation was originally called, struck a chord in many people's minds; so much so that soon hundreds, if not thousands of people wanted to join them.

A full time person was appointed; he happened to live in St Albans and two of the founders of CAMRA had also moved down to the area to work in the newspaper industry, so it was natural that CAMRA should set up shop in the city.

The first office was at 94 Victoria Street, in a room above a bike shop. Soon the organisation outgrew its small premises and moved to 34 Alma Road, where it stayed until 1995 when it moved again to purpose built offices in Hatfield Road. Membership has grown from the original four to over 122,072.

CAMRA has a full time staff of 16 as well as several freelancers based in St Albans. All members get a monthly newspaper called *What's Brewing* which keeps them up to date with what is happening in the brewing industry and pubs.

There are almost 200 volunteer-run branches of CAMRA that bring the Campaign to the local level.

CAMRA campaigns for a fair deal for beer drinkers and pub goers. CAMRA promotes Real ale (or cask-conditioned beer as the brewing industry sometimes calls it). This is beer that has not been filtered or pasteurised but which continues to slowly undergo a secondary fermentation in the cask from which it is served in the pub. The beer therefore has a naturally low carbonation which enhances the rich variety of flavours that you can get in the beer as opposed to the bland, fizzy metallic taste of keg beers or the new scourge, smoothflow. Smoothflow uses nitrogen to create the creamy texture which looks so good on the TV but disguises any flavour in the glass.

Over four hundred new breweries have opened since CAMRA was founded and it is these breweries which produce some of the most interesting beers available in the UK today.

CAMRA also campaigns for pubs and has been instrumental in persuading the government to extend the mandatory rate relief currently enjoyed by village shops and post offices to pub. Now provided that the pub is the only one in a village of less than 3,000 people and has a rateable value of less than £9,000 then it will be granted a 50% reduction in its business rates. The Government reckons this will benefit 8,200 pubs in England. CAMRA is pressing for similar legislation in Wales and Scotland.

CAMRA has been pressing for the introduction of a progressive system of excise duty whereby small breweries pay a lower rate of excise duty on the first few thousand barrels of beer they produce. The Treasury announced at this Budget that it was minded to introduce such a scheme.

CAMRA also wants to see a reduction of the full rate of excise duty to nearer that enjoyed on the continent, this will reduce the incentive to smuggle alcohol into the country. Currently 1.5 million pints a day are being brought in by "personal" shoppers, two thirds of which are almost certainly sold on illegally. Cutting duty would stop this bootleg trade.

CAMRA works with the industry to improve the quality of real ale sold in pubs. Its flagship publication *The Good Beer Guide* each year details the 5,000 pubs in the country that CAMRA members think serve the best real ale.

Protect your pleasure, join CAMRA today.

*Originally written by Terry A Lock, this article is reprinted by kind permission of the Huntingdon branch of CAMRA.*

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

Last year I attended the Spadework Open Weekend at their site in Offham. Not only was it an interesting visit to this very worthwhile local charity, but I also enjoyed a couple of pints of *Westerham* ale in the beer tent. I hope to do so again this year on the weekend of 7th and 8th May. For more details on the great work done by Spadework, see their website at [www.spadework.net](http://www.spadework.net). You can also find a poster for this event at [www.spadework.net/assets/pdf/open\\_day\\_2011.pdf](http://www.spadework.net/assets/pdf/open_day_2011.pdf).

Come and have a look for yourself.



# The Bell & Jorrocks

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## Brewery snippets...

**Abigale** — *Samphire Bitter* 4.1% is being supplied to about 20 pubs in the Kent area, and is proving to be popular. There is no date yet for the introduction of *Ridgeway*.

**Black Cat** — Marcus informs me he is starting brewing *Original* (4.2% ABV) on April 11th. He is running a 2.5 bbl brewery on a part-time basis, and hopes to have a golden beer for the summer. He's looking to supply a few free houses in the vicinity.

**Canterbury Ales** — Now available in 16 pubs throughout the county and have a "dedicated pump" on at the Crown, Finglesham. There are no plans to expand on the current three regulars: *Wife of Bath*, *Reeve's Ale* and *Miller's Ale*; it is more a case of seeking further outlets. All three were available at the Leas Lift Beer Festival in Folkestone. Brewing takes place every Monday at the moment.

**Hopdaemon** — Sponsored the glasses for the 18th White Cliffs Festival of Winter Ales, Dover where *Green Daemon* was the first beer to sell out, so was declared the Beer of the Festival 2011 winner. Still brewing at full capacity. The Brewery description has been updated on the website.

**Kent Brewery** — Started brewing in the new brewery at Birling at the start of April. *Pale* (4.0%), *Zingiber* (4.1%) and *Black Gold* (4.0%) have now all been produced at the new site and the results have been very well received. *KGB* (Kent Golding Bitter 4.1%) was being brewed in the middle of the month, which completes the present range. Two more beers will be added in May with plans for at least one more in June. Cider will also be available throughout the summer, produced back at Aldon Farm in Offham last Autumn. Specials are being produced for various Beer festivals around the Bank Holiday period, including *Royal Reading* (4.0%) for the Reading Beer Festival.

**Wantsum** — *Imperium* (4%ABV), a best bitter, was launched before Christmas. *Ravening Wolf* (5.9% ABV), a hoppy, strong bitter with a characteristic hop flavour was brewed for the Dover Winter Beer Festival and has also proved popular in other outlets. It will now be brewed on an "occasional" basis. A dark mild is planned for the near future. *Black Pig* will now be available throughout the year.

**Whitstable** — won Best Kent Brewery at the 2010 Taste of Kent Awards organised by Produced in Kent. The other 2 finalists were *Shepherd Neame* and *Ramsgate Brewery*.

# A Mancunian Meander

by Jeff Tucker

I hadn't been to Manchester for many a year, and train tickets from London start at £11 each way on Virgin Trains, so it seemed like a good idea—cheaper than driving. I didn't fancy staying in the centre of Manchester, so the *Good Beer Guide* threw up the **Flying Horse Hotel** in Rochdale, a £30 a night B&B, which sounded quite pleasant. It was and it wasn't—more later!

I caught the high-speed Javelin train to St Pancras, which was handy for Euston, saving a cross-town tube journey from Charing Cross laden with luggage. As I had a while between trains (contingency!), I decided to visit the GBG-listed **Bree Louise**, a stone's throw from Euston station. This pub offers 50p off a pint for CAMRA members, which was just as well, as the normal prices were £3.30 - £3.40.

*Sambrooks Wandle Ale* at 3.8% ABV was my first ever beer from this relatively new brewery in Battersea, which was very nice, followed by *St Peters Grapefruit* 4.7% (yes, it certainly was!). To the station and the fast, frequent and comfortable train to Manchester. After collecting some public transport maps and timetables from the travel office in Piccadilly Gardens, I caught a bus for the short ride to the **Marble Arch** on Rochdale Road, buying a bus day rover in the process.

This pub almost defies description, with beautiful tile work on the walls and the (sloping) floor. It is a tied pub belonging to the *Marble Brewery*, and I tried a pint of *Pint* (3.9%) at £2.35. I would have liked to stay longer, but I had plans for the evening, so it was back on the 17 bus to Rochdale.

My hotel was easy to find, in the square opposite the Town Hall. I didn't stop for a pint there, even though they had six beers on, but dumped my luggage in my room and headed for the bus station via the **Regal Moon**, a spacious Wetherspoons which used to be a cinema, fairly obviously. *Ossett Silver King* was £1.80,.

Another 17 bus took me on to Blackley, where I eventually found the **Golden Lion**, belonging to *Holts Brewery*, a superb Manchester family brewery known for their keen prices. Sure enough, the *Bitter* was £1.92. Unfortunately it was 'music night' with a bloke who looked and sounded a bit like Rod Stewart. Aaaarrggghhh! I left sooner than planned.

Heading back in the Rochdale direction, I got off the bus just north of Middleton town centre and found the **Boar's Head**, dating from 1632, and looking a bit out of place among the surrounding mainly Victorian buildings. *Lees Bitter* was £2.27.

Back at my hotel, I tried a pint of *Phoenix Arizona*, which was very nice. I couldn't get the TV to work, so I went for a walk to the nearby GBG-listed **Cask & Feather**, where an *Acorn* beer was £1.80. It was live music night, complete with expletives, so I left ASAP. On the walk back, I noticed how many shops were closed and boarded up—not a well-to-do area, by any means.

The next morning, I went down to breakfast and found the bar area locked and deserted. It was much the same half an hour later, so I went to Wetherspoons for something to eat. (I later discovered that the manager had to spend a lot of time visiting his pregnant girlfriend who was in hospital, which explained the crummy service.)

Monday took me south to the Stockport area, starting with the **Red Lion** at Cheadle, a smart spacious pub where I tried the local *Robinson's Hatters Mild* at £2.30. After returning to Stockport, I caught the hourly 364 bus to Heaton Norris, home of the famous **Nursery**, an unspoilt 1930s pub in the middle of a very nice suburb.

The other passengers had differing opinions on where I should get off, but it stopped about 50 yards away, although you can't see the pub from the bus. As well as a splendid interior with original stained glass windows featuring fruit and vegetables, and an archetypal pub landlady, it also has a bowling green. Wonderful! *Hydes* (another family brewery) *Mild* was £2.05 and the *Bitter* £2.32.

On the way back to Rochdale, I stopped off at a canalside pub, not in the GBG, which I had passed the previous day on the 17 bus. This was the **Ship Inn** at Slattocks, between Middleton and Castleton. *Lees Bitter* (£2.40) was enjoyed on the canal towpath next to a lock and with a noisy family of ducks. A very relaxing way to spend an hour in the sunshine.

Back to the **Flying Horse**, where they weren't doing food that night (manager absent), so on to the **Regal Moon**, where *Allgates Kiwi* wasn't brilliant, so I caught bus 469 to the **Cemetery Hotel** on the outskirts of town. The most interesting of the three beers was *Everards Sunchaser* (£2.00).

On Tuesday after breakfast (hooray!) I headed west, starting with the **Flag Inn** at Egerton, a village outside Bolton. I got off the bus at the wrong stop and had to ask directions from a local who said he didn't go there because it was 'too expensive'. Eventually I tracked it down, and was a bit disheartened by the *Greene King* pub sign. Luckily it sells guest beers as well. *Greene King Mild* isn't often seen so I tried a pint (£2.20) which was very nice. *Bank Top Flat Cap* was £2.35 - expensive? Not to my mind. The toilets in this pub were labelled George and Mildred!

Just on the outskirts of Bury I stopped off at the imposing **Old Blue Bell**, a *Holts* pub on a busy junction. The price list told me that *Mild* was £1.80 but the barmaid asked for £1.60. On enquiring, I discovered that it was 'happy hour' all the time - like they need it at £1.80 a pint! Bitter was £1.80 instead of the quoted £1.88.

Back in Rochdale, the **Regal Moon** offered *Thwaites Wainwright* and *Naylors Porticus* (6%). I tried the **Cask & Feather** again, which was much quieter than on Sunday night, with a poker game taking place. The three TVs were showing football (2) and *The Bill* (1), all with the sound off. *Phoenix Navy* was £1.85.

Wednesday was my 'Yorkshire day', which involved buying a return bus ticket to the county boundary, and a West Yorkshire day ticket. My first pub of the day was in Holmfirth, home of *Last of the Summer Wine*, with Ivy's cafe and Nora Batty's steps in the centre of town. Just round the corner from Ivy's is the **Rose & Crown** brewpub, tucked down an alleyway. *Nook Blonde* was £2.50 and *Barmy Bitter* £2.40, both in excellent condition.

An England world cup match was in progress at the time, and I missed out on a £1 pint by a few minutes, as they were going to offer that after England's first goal, and apparently they scored just after I left to get the bus to Halifax via Huddersfield.

A short walk from the bus stop in Halifax brought me to the **Three Pigeons** near the station, a superbly restored 1930s pub near the station, and owned by *Ossett Brewery*. Of the many beers on offer, I tried *Citra* (£2.40), *Three Pigs* (£2.25) and the 5.2% *Excelsior* (£2.65). The brewery has really done a marvellous job here.

I broke my journey back to Rochdale at Ripponden, where the **Old Bridge Inn** was down a steep cobbled lane from the bus stop. Food

featured strongly at this lovely, centuries-old pub, and I sampled *Taylor Golden Best* and *Captain Cook Sunset*, both £2.70.

Thursday was to be my last day so, after the cleaner had cooked me a breakfast (bless her!), I headed for Manchester, arriving with enough time for a drop in the **Bull's Head** opposite Piccadilly Station. This is a *Marston's* pub with a nice cosy interior and Burtonwood windows, indicating previous ownership. *Wychwood Wizard's Staff* was £2.90 and *Banks' Bitter* £2.70.

All too soon it was back home on the train(s). Now, a travel tip: Since returning, I have done a bit of digging and found that, if you book on the Virgin Trains website, and part of your journey is on a Virgin train, you can get a bargain price if you're flexible with times. For example, Snodland to Birmingham starts at £9.50, or to Manchester £14, via the high-speed line as well. A standard off-peak single from Snodland to St Pancras is over £19, so it could be worth buying a ticket to Brum and just going to London - bonkers! Anyway, I plan to re-visit Manchester sometime soon, to try some of the pubs I didn't have time for this year.

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**Angel, Addington** – Now has Free WiFi.

**Chequers, Aylesford** – At this old riverside pub Peter & Gina are promoting Wednesday Steak nights, Chicken Curry and a lager/small Wine for £6.50 on Thursdays and Sunday Roasts with Pork/Beef/Turkey (please book for this). Beers usually on are *Greene King Abbott/IPA/Old Speckled Hen* and *Taylor Landlord*.

**Lion of Kent, Bearsted** – Joe Heyburn is managing this pub previously named known as Kentish Yeoman. Unfortunately this publication will appear too late to cover the proposed May Bank Holiday festivities including a beer festival but hopefully it will have been advertised elsewhere. We are informed that the Carvery at £5-95 looks very good value and there will be a large emphasis on food as well as the beer. Four ales are currently being kept but it is hoped to increase this to six very soon. The beers at time of survey were *Greene King IPA*, *Harveys Best Bitter*, *Hop Back Summer Lightning* and *Wychwood Hobgoblin*. All at very reasonable prices. New telephone number is 01622 631472.

**Nevill Bull, Birling** – Kate and Paul now keep a pump solely for a beer from the *Kent Brewery* that is situated less than a mile away.

**White Hart, Claygate** – The restaurant has been re-fitted and the current licensees now offer food cooked on grillstones at your table by yourselves so you may have it just warmed or cremated to your liking. This cooking method has been around for many years but is not often seen. *Sheps* beers are the standard *Master Brew* and *Spitfire*.

**Horseshoes, East Farleigh** – has added a monthly rotational guest beer: *Sharps Doom Bar* was a recent offering. *Harvey's Sussex BB* and *Timothy Taylor Landlord* remain on the other 2 pumps. Specially discounted food offers can be found on its website: [www.thehorseshoeseastfarleigh.co.uk](http://www.thehorseshoeseastfarleigh.co.uk).

**Victory, East Farleigh** – New licensees here have re-furbished it and food is now available.

**Chequers, Goudhurst** – Closed and for sale.

**Early Bird, Grove Green** – A *Sheps* tied house near a large grocery store, offering *Master Brew* plus the seasonal ale.

**Black Pig, Hawkhurst** - This is the new name for what was formerly the Kent Cricketer. Mark & Lucy from the Bull, Benenden have taken this on with new managers Anna & Grant looking after it. It has had a good re-fit and now, as at the Bull, there will be a good selection of food offered. Beers available are *Dark Star Hophead*, *Harveys Best Bitter*, *Larkins Traditional* and one from *Old Dairy*.

**Kings Arms, Headcorn** – Rumoured to become an Italian restaurant.

**Park Gate, Hollingbourne** – Re-fitted early March. A dozen guest beers will be appearing over the next few months. See the website for a list: [www.vintageinn.co.uk/theparkgateinnhollingbourne/offer/springale2011](http://www.vintageinn.co.uk/theparkgateinnhollingbourne/offer/springale2011). The regulars are *London Pride*, *Harveys Best* and *Spitfire*.

**Peacock, Iden Green** – Standing just off the Goudhurst/Cranbrook road this old Shepherd Neame house has a large car park and garden just right for the summer. Beers offered are *Sheps Master Brew*, *Kent's Best*, *Bishops Finger* and the seasonal ale.

**Chequers, Loose** – will be the venue on Spring Bank Holiday Monday (30th May) for the annual village Duck Races in the Loose stream alongside the pub, starting at 2pm. *Doom Bar*, *London Pride*, *Spitfire* and *Harveys Sussex* will be available throughout the afternoon.

**Swan, Loose** – has now remodelled its restaurant to offer eat in or take away Tandoori style food. There is also a shell fish stand in the car park.

**Ethos, Maidstone** – This has now closed and has been put up for sale.

**Swan, Maidstone** – Events include a day at Lingfield races on 9 April and a trip to France on 9 June. A street party will be held on 29 April 12-2pm and a Garden party for the adults from 6pm where Ian Gallacher, a Frank Sinatra tribute artist, will perform from 8pm. *Bishops Finger* has replaced *Late Red* whilst the regulars *Kents Best* and *Master Brew* remain.

**Queens Head, Mereworth** – Now has new management for a year. Use it or lose it.

**Hop Pole, Nettlestead** – Graham Hammond has taken over as license here and it has a new look with much of the furnishings replaced. There was just *Harveys Best* on when the branch visited but more will be added as demand increases. The popular carvery meals continue to be served.

**White Horse, Sandway** – A large pub/restaurant south of Lenham that has had restricted opening hours. Stocks beers from the nearby *Whitstable* brewery, *Pearl Of Kent* and *Renaissance* were available at last visit.

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**Bull, Snodland** – Andrew Boyle has taken over as licensee. There is a guest ale and *Courage Best* is still being sold at a bargain price.

**Railway Tavern, Staplehurst** – Re-opened following a re-fit. No news on this yet.

**Swan, Sutton Valence** – I have just been informed that apparently there are new licensees here. There is also a website under construction: [www.swansuttonvalence.co.uk](http://www.swansuttonvalence.co.uk).

**Tickled Trout, West Farleigh** – This large restaurant/pub is now for sale.

**Lobster Pot, West Malling** – A complete makeover has been done, making it almost unrecognisable. The bar has been moved back and there is a new stone floor. The wood panels and practically everything else have been covered in *eau-de-nil* paint, making it much lighter inside but this may not to everyone's taste, being rather clinical in atmosphere. There seems to be an emphasis on cocktails. Food is now available and music is played on Thursday and Saturday evenings. The dartboard has gone, as has another beer pump, now leaving only three with *Sharps Doom Bar*, *Taylor Landlord* and *Black Sheep Best* or *St Austell Tribute*.

**George, Yalding** – Some of us serendipitously made an unscheduled stop here one evening between scheduled visit pubs and found *Adnams Bitter* and *Gunhill* were on the bar and very good too. This was a surprise as it was the opening night following a re-fit. It has been given an updated look with the latest trend in black ceramic floor tiles rather than carpet. Hygienic but not forgiving on dropped glassware. The restaurant is again in use and the meals looked very inviting. It has a large river frontage and is well worth visiting.

## RIFLE VOLUNTEERS

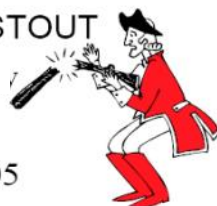
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I'm writing these notes at the end of March, which means that we can announce the winners of the Gravesend & Darent Valley pub and club of the year for 2011, as voted by members of the local branch and I'm pleased to say that all eligible current *Good Beer Guide* listed pubs scored at least one point. By a quirk of fate the gold, silver and bronze positions went to the same three pubs but all in a different order. The Club of the Year 2011 was won yet again by the **Dartford Working Men's Club**, which does not seem to have any serious challengers. Perhaps you know otherwise?

The **Bull** at Horton Kirby, which won the Pub of the Year award for the last three consecutive years, has been placed third this year. This does not reflect a lowering of standards at the **Bull**, which is still highly recommended for top quality food and beer, still hosting quiz evenings, speciality fish and curry evenings, beer festivals and a always displaying a most impressive range of real ales. Rather it seems that members feel that a change is as good as a rest and the scoring this year was very close, especially between the winner and runner-up.

The runner-up is the **Jolly Drayman** in Gravesend, moving up from a creditable third position last year. Congratulations to Kate and Charlie, who have improved this pub to the standard of the old days of the 70's, 80's and early 90's, when it was ever present in the *Good Beer Guide* from the first issue in 1974. I believe that the **Jolly Drayman** has appeared in more *GBG* issues than any other pub in Kent and long may it last. Four handpumps dispense a changing array of real ales from many breweries, often including beers from the much revered *Dark Star* brewery in Sussex. The semi-annual beer festivals, with over 20 ales, in May and November are proving popular and the runner-up presentation is taking place at this year's festival during the evening of Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May – lucky for some!

Regular readers will have deduced that the winner is the **Cock Inn** at Luddesdown, which had finished runner-up to the **Bull** for the previous three years. Andrew and Denise Turner have owned the **Cock** for the last 25 years or so and have kept a quintessentially traditional English

country pub, where good beer, lively conversation and a home from home (without children) atmosphere are paramount. Andrew is proud that such a “beer-led” pub can survive and prosper in a market that has become predominantly “food-led”. The Pub of the Year presentation is taking place during the evening of Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May, which is always a “Mild Month” at the **Cock**, as *Goacher’s Real Mild Ale* is a regular feature, alongside *Adnams Bitter*, *Broadside* and *Lighthouse* and others. Please come along to make this presentation as successful as the Adnams “*Meet the Brewer*” evening in January.

I shall unashamedly take this opportunity to promote two other “beer-led” traditional English country pubs, neither of which sells any hot food at present. The **Old House**, Redwell, Ightham Common, described at length in the winter 2010 issue, is the only pub in the area serving real ale direct from the cask by gravity dispense, a dying art these days, and is an essential target for the discerning drinker. Six beers were on sale during a recent visit, including *Cambridge Moonshine Chocolate Orange Stout*, at 6.7% ABV, a bit of a mouthful whichever way you read or drink it.

Secondly the **Vigo**, Wrotham Road, Fairseat, was mentioned in the previous issue as a recently re-opened pub and I’m pleased to report that the new landlords are coping well. There was a slight hitch when a local resident lodged a complaint about the live music, suspended for a while, but we’re glad to hear the music is back on song, as it were, featuring Blues, Rock and Jazz. *Goacher’s Mild* and *Gold Star* have joined the beer range. The daddlums table is in regular use every other Sunday evening and all comers are welcome to join a team and learn to play. I did and was soundly beaten.

The **Vigo** is one of five pubs to be awarded CAMRA LocAle accreditation at our February open meeting, to join the seven outlets in the branch area (six pubs and one club) already listed. Can you name them all? Have you drunk in them all? If not, why not? The LocAle scheme recognises licensees who stock local beers, from breweries within 30 miles (give or take) regularly and in good condition, so get your thinking (and drinking) caps on.

The other four new LocAle pubs are, in alphabetical order; the **Black Horse and Hoodens** in Borough Green, the **Crown Point** at Seal Chart, the **Fox & Hounds** at Romney Street, and the **Rose** near Northfleet



station. We are always on the lookout for pubs selling good quality local beers. There are now twenty breweries in Kent!

The **Black Horse and Hoodens** is now a very reliable real ale outlet, which now has four handpumps, one of which is dedicated to *Old Dairy Red Top* from Rolvenden, and interesting changing beers on the others, with *Woodforde's Wherry* proving popular. The **Fox & Hounds** also has four beer dedicated handpumps, the local beer being *Tonbridge Auburn Myth*, and is a regular outlet for *Biddendens* real cider. Both these pubs now support the CAMRA members discount scheme.

The **Rose** in Northfleet regularly sells *Millis Gravesend Guzzler* and other *Millis* beers in good condition. *Millis Brewing*, located at St.Margaret's Farm near South Darenth, is the only brewery in our branch area, and a selection of John's beers can also usually be found at the **Bridges** in South Darenth and the **Three Daws** in Gravesend, and from time to time at other pubs including the **Four Lymes** in Hawley and the **Rum Puncheon** in Gravesend.

The **Crown Point** at Seal Chart is a prime example of a food-led pub which also sells good beer, emphasising Kentish ales by taking beers from *Nelson*, *Westerham* and *Whitstable* breweries on a regular basis. Other restaurant-style pubs in our area, recommended for their beer range and quality, include the **Green Man** at Longfield Hill and the **Lion** in Farningham, both part of the Vintage Inn chain, with access to a good portfolio of real ales, including the multi award winning *Thornbridge Jaipur*, one of my personal favourites. The **Moat** at Wrotham Heath is a reliable outlet for *Hall & Woodhouse (Badger)* beers and the recently refurbished **Cricketers** by Meopham Green, now a Whiting & Hammond pub, principally an up-market restaurant, has five handpumps serving ales mainly from established regional breweries.

Returning to my theme of pub quizzes we've been informed that the **Pied Bull** in Farningham, which sells up to four ales from regional breweries, hosts a curry and quiz night on certain Monday evenings. The **Rum Puncheon** in West Street, Gravesend, hosts an open quiz on the last Wednesday of each month and regularly offers six real ales on handpump, including *Adnams Mild* and *Royal Tunbridge Wells Royal Bitter* on a recent visit. The Dartford Independent Quiz League was won this season by a team representing the **Queen** in South Darenth, which sells

*Greene King Abbot* and *Morland Original Bitter*. The usual quiz champions from the **Stage Door** in Dartford, which sells *Shepherd Neame Master Brew*, *Spitfire*, and seasonal beers, finished as runners-up. Tenant Richard O'Keefe has left the **Stage Door** and moved to the **Cinque Arms** in Rye and his long term assistant Paul is currently running the pub hoping to finalise the tenancy.

Five members of the branch entered a CAMRA team in a rather unusual football quiz, held at the **Ascot Arms**, Central Avenue, Gravesend, on the 17<sup>th</sup> March. The question master was none other than Liam Daish, manager of Ebbsfleet United football club, and former Republic of Ireland international player. More than twenty teams packed out this large estate pub helping to raise funds for the club via the quiz entrance fees and various raffles. CAMRA G&DV finished fifth in the quiz and members were lucky enough to scoop four raffle prizes. *Fuller's London Pride*, *Greene King Old Speckled Hen* and *Ringwood Fortyniner* were the beers available on handpump. However I also succumbed to purchase a pint of *Guinness* at £2.50, after all it was St.Patrick's Day!

In the previous issue we commented favourably on the re-opening of "*the Alma*, opposite Swanscombe station, an area notoriously lacking in choice and quality of real ale". Sadly, this pub closed again shortly after our visit, apparently due to a licensing problem. Allan, one of just a handful of known CAMRA members resident in Swanscombe, has given us a run down on the pubs in the neighbourhood. The **George & Dragon**, Galley Hill end of the High Street, has re-opened after months of closure, but no sign of real ale. The **Alma** has re-opened again selling only keg beer (*Tetley Smooth*) and lagers at present but has plans to use the handpumps again, possibly selling *Greene King IPA* and *Shepherd Neame Spitfire*. The third pub in the High Street, the **Wheatsheaf** has had a new lick of paint but is unlikely to sell real ale. The **Morning Star** in Church Road remains closed, future uncertain. The **Sun** in Swanscombe Street is under new management and the **Pavilion Sports Club** in The Grove is open but not selling real ale. The **Rising Sun**, known as the **Top House**, Craylands Lane, is the only guaranteed outlet for real beer in the area.

We regret to announce the definitive closure of the former *Good Beer Guide* listed *Greene King* house, the **Chequers** in Ightham. According to local newspapers the pub has been sold to Niche Developments, who intend to convert the building into two cottages and the barn into a single dwelling. In Southfleet, the parish council and the pub owners seem determined to ensure that the Grade II listed **Black Lion** in Red Street is

restored, following the arson attack in early 2009, but certain legal and insurance matters are yet to be resolved.

In Dartford, Chris Smith has moved back to the **Paper Moon** from the **Flying Boat** and these Wetherspoons pubs are jointly promoting a visit to *Hog's Back Brewery* on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May. At the time of writing the *Wetherspoons World's Biggest Real Ale* (50 real ales) and *Cider* (9 ciders, 1 perry) *Festival* is in full flow and thoroughly recommended. During the rest of the year both pubs stock beers from our local brewers and more brewery visits and "Meet the Brewer" sessions are anticipated.

The **Foresters** in Great Queen Street, Dartford, now sells *Brains Reverend James*, *Timothy Taylor Landlord* and various *Old Dairy* beers as regularly rotating guest beers, and I was knocked out by the *Skinners Cornish Knocker* during a quiz night in February. Paul has had his eyebrows shaved for charity raising £300 and the total amount raised by the **Foresters** for Cancer Research so far this year is £3,200. The annual sponsored walk along the Darent Valley Footpath will take place over August Bank Holiday, followed by a BBQ. All sponsors and participants are welcome, volunteers should be of a stalwart nature as deviations from the path to the many hostelries along the way are anticipated!

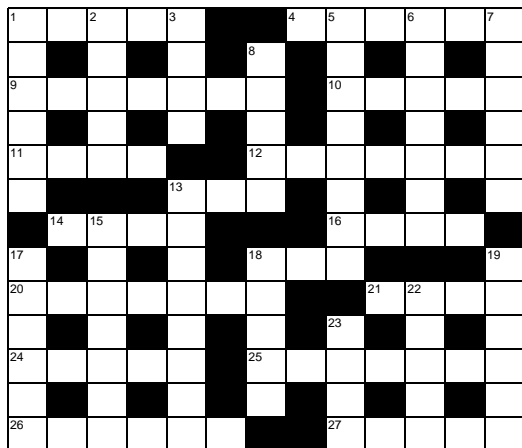
The handpumps at the **Two Brewers** in Lowfield Street, Dartford, are back in action again offering *Old Speckled Hen* and *Sharps Doom Bar Bitter*. Further along Lowfield Street, away from the town centre, the former **Windmill** is undergoing refurbishment and is expected to re-open as **Madisons**, whatever that entails. Maybe they'll have a square garden?

Yet again I shall end up at **Dartford Working Men's Club**, which hosted an inaugural Jazz evening one Thursday in March. Hopefully the *Jazz Club* will become a monthly feature. The weekly Tuesday *Folk Club* is still going strong. Another innovation is the Thursday lunchtime serve-yourself carvery, excellent value at £4.95, which has become a firm favourite among certain members, the burgeoning *Carvery Club*. Lyn's catering is also available other lunchtimes (12-3) except Sundays and Mondays, and I can personally recommend the all-day breakfast. On the beer front, the current ales are displayed on a running band at the bottom of the television screens, which is very useful, as long as Nick remembers to keep it up to date!

News just in: Sad to relate, the **Bull** at Horton Kirby closed its doors on Sunday, April 10th. Garrett and Lynne have retired to the Cotswolds.

# The Draught Copy Crossword No. 3

compiled by MICK NORMAN



*Solution to Crossword No. 2  
in issue No. 162*



## Across

- 1 Brewery finds Double Diamond full of gas? On the contrary! (5)
- 4 Brewery is factory first (6)
- 9 Gold provided cooling agent for aperture (7)
- 10 Housewife, German imposter (5)
- 11 Island found over the sea (4)
- 12 Brewery poets? (7)
- 13 Speak, perhaps (3)
- 14, 17 Brewery experimenting with best ale, having lost direction (4, 6)
- 16 Advantage may bring the batsman a boundary (4)
- 18, 2 Brewery with ancient creamery (3, 5)
- 20 Nasty rat dies, resulting in outbursts (7)
- 21, 3 Brewery slow to despatch (4, 4)
- 24 Brewery product exposed to the sun? (5)
- 25 Angered - must be upset (7)
- 26 Important chap? (6)
- 27 Brewery in Devon is warmer, so Cockneys say (5)

## Down

- 1 Sleek magazine? (6)
- 2 See 18 across
- 3 See 21
- 5 Told journalist attending school comes first (8)
- 6 Member swallowing a wine , then departing (7)
- 7 Cruelty shown by Heads of State allowing death in such misery (6)
- 8 What follows Beer, according to our friends in Medway (5)
- 13 Pupils in hospital department taken in by lusty types (8)
- 15 Old film star with no backing for weapon (7)
- 17 See 14
- 18 Willow rose I crossbred (5)
- 19 Part of Forsyte Saga directed in Moroccan city (6)
- 22 Brewery product is undemanding (5)
- 23 Threesome found at junction above South American city (4)

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Each year between Christmas and New Year Bexley CAMRA members and others embark on a “Twixmas” social (copyright Vic Beale), starting at the **Robin Hood & Little John** in Bexleyheath at noon, eating and then progressing to other local hosteleries. This year 17 people attended, including the West Kent Area Organiser, all the way from Sevenoaks, with the tour finishing in Crayford. See you Twixmas 2011?

Burns Night was celebrated once again at the **Robin Hood & Little John**, with Scottish ale and whisky at reduced prices, plus the lovely attraction of Caterina’s haggis, neeps and tatties.

The branch had decided at a meeting in 2009 that a pub could not win the branch Pub of the Year in consecutive years, so last year’s worthy winner, the **Crayford Arms**, was excluded from the 2011 competition. In all, eleven different pubs received votes and we appreciate the members who took the trouble to vote.

In third place, the **New Cross Turnpike** in Welling, a pleasant J.D.Wetherspoons establishment on the main road which, thanks to manager Jason, normally offers an excellent selection of drinkable ales.

Again the runner-up is the **Black Horse** in Albert Road Bexley, a back-street local that sells *Courage Best* plus two changing guest ales and good lunchtime food.

And the winner is the **Robin Hood & Little John**, so once again congratulations to the Johnson family, Ray, Caterina and son Tony, for the high standard they continue to maintain. Normally eight real ales are available, including two guests and the home-cooked lunchtime food (not Sunday) is recommended.

The **RH&LJ** will go forward to compete against other London branch pub winners. In 2011, for the first time ever, the CAMRA National Pub of Year is located in London. Congratulations to the to the staff at the **Harp**, Chandos Place, Covent Garden and well done to landlady Bridget “Binnie” Walsh, who has run this excellent small pub for 16 years. The long narrow building, near Charing Cross, has eight handpumps and

proudly displays a vast selection of pump clips to illustrate the ever changing range of guest ales, which complement the regular beers from *Dark Star*, *Harvey's* and *Sambrooks*. Visit the tiny upstairs room, if you can squeeze in.

The **Yacht**, Long Lane, Bexleyheath, mentioned in the previous issue, was the venue for our January meeting, serving *Fuller's London Pride*, *Shepherd Neame Spitfire* and *Wells Bombardier* in good condition. Unfortunately no interesting guest beers were on sale that evening but thanks to the management for supplying food for the meeting. On a visit to distribute this very magazine, *Titanic Steerage*, a 3.5% session ale was available along with a brew from *Beartown*, plus the *Sptitfire*, so the **Yacht** is definitely worth a speculative call.

February saw us in Footh Cray to visit the **Seven Stars**, which now has a Monday Folk Club from 8.30-11pm with singers and musicians heartily welcomed. *Pressed Rat and Warthog*, neither a group nor indeed a pub snack, was available as the guest ale alongside *Courage Best* and a pump clip, turned round, promoting *Fuller's London Pride*. The *Pressed Rat* (and indeed) *Warthog*, is brewed by *Triple FFF* of Alton Hampshire, and was a very useful find, perhaps especially for the Folkies as it is a hoppy and bitter mild. Although not a traditional mild, you could even call it a "black bitter", whatever - it's a lovely drink. It's also the name of a Cream (perhaps the most famous trio in rock music) song being the "b" side of their single "Anyone for Tennis" on the Polydor label.

In early March the **Belvedere**, in Lower Belvedere, was visited and on the bar we found the military twosome, *Wells Bombardier* and *Sheps Spitfire*, both enjoyed by all. Since re-opening after a fire the place is much brighter and fresher. Many thanks for the sandwiches and crisps for our gathering.

Having re-opened with limited opening hours and then closing for good, the former Good Beer Guide listed Shepherd Neame owned **Old Wick** in Vicarage Road Bexley looks set to become four self-contained two-bedroom flats if the planning application is successful. Ukulele club the "Ukulaviations" have moved from the **Old Wick** down the hill to the **Coach and Horses** in North Cray Road, and so if inclined you can listen or take part every other Monday.

In Sidcup High Street, the long since boarded up **Black Horse** could soon become a Waitrose Convenience Store, the chains first, while the above floors would become an 84 room Travelodge Hotel. If the planning

application is successful work will begin in the autumn with a view to opening the store by Christmas 2011. The plans aim to retain the front facade of the pub as the entrance to the new hotel.

When our excellent Pubs Officer, Ian Wright and our lovely Membership Secretary, Helen Rogers, went to see Cinderella (oh yes they did!) at Erith Playhouse, during the interval they popped into **Potion** (ex **White Hart**) next door and discovered two handpumps recently installed, with one selling *Sheps Spitfire* which was, so I'm informed, quite drinkable. And no, Ian and Helen were not playing the Ugly Sisters.

The **Royal Oak** (Enterprise Inns) in Mount Road, Bexleyheath, has reopened selling *Timothy Taylor Landlord*, *Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter* and *Young's Bitter*. Not far away the **Crook Log** (Toby Carvery) now has two ales on offer, *Fuller's London Pride* and *Greene King IPA*.

March 16<sup>th</sup> 2011 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the setting up of CAMRA (originally the Campaign for the Revitalisation of Ale) thought up by four journalists on holiday in Ireland. To celebrate we thought we would meet up in Upper Belvedere, with five out of six pubs in the "village" selling real ale, and give the local natives a chance to see and talk to members of CAMRA. Eleven intrepid members started from the **Eardley Arms** where *Courage Best*, *Wells Bombardier* and *St.Austell Tribute* greeted us. Then we crossed over the road to the **Prince of Wales** for a choice of *Courage Best*, *Young's Bitter*, *St.Austell Tribute* or *Westerham British Bulldog*. A short walk took us to the **Victoria** in Victoria Street, a pleasant corner local which was at the forefront of real ale in the early years of Bexley branch, now selling *Shepherd Neame Spitfire*, *Harvey's Sussex Best Bitter* and *Sharps Doom Bar*. A quick tally-ho and were we in the **Fox** sampling *Courage Best*, *Sharps Doom Bar*, *Young's Bitter* and *Young's Special*. The finale was the **Royal Standard** with *Courage Best* and *Directors* and *Wychwood Paddy's Tout*, evidently a stout put on for the following day St.Patrick's Day celebrations. All in all, seventeen beers were available in five pubs, eleven of them different – not bad. On 16<sup>th</sup> March 1971 the **Victoria** would have been selling *Charrington IPA*, and possibly *Draught Bass*, the **Prince of Wales** and **Eardley Arms** might have stocked *Courage Best* (as today) but that would have been about it for real ale in Upper Belvedere, so we must count our blessings. Thank you to Ian Wright for organising the tour and wielding the stopwatch.

One final thought: the best pub in Britain is the "**Harp**" (national Pub of the Year winner); the worst pub in Britain must be the "**Fiddle**" – it's a Vile Inn!



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# The Robin Hood Beer Festival 2011

24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> June



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## Pussy(s) in the Wells

by Andy Osborne

Tunbridge Wells is known for many reasons but real ale is probably not the first thing that *springs* to mind, but that was the reason why a group of us from the Maidstone area spent a day there exploring some of the excellent real ale pubs.

Our first destination in the spa town was the **Opera House** situated in the centre of town; there were a few hoardings left around, which we thought had probably been advertising a recent operatic performance in this Wetherspoon's pub. We were pleased to see nearly every pump had a beer available with no *Available soon* clips to catch you out. The choice of ales featured was *Dark Star Original*, three ales from *Hog's Back*: *TEA*, *HBB* and *OTT*; *Tempress* and *Purser's Pussy Porter* from *Nelson* plus the regular *Ruddles Best*, *Spitfire* and *Abbot Ale*. A few of us started with the *Tempress* and were very pleased with it, as we were with most of the others subsequently tried all bar one of the beers from *Hog's Back Brewery*.

We next had the choice of walking for about 10 minutes or a short bus ride to the next stop-off, the **Royal Oak**, which was having a 3-day beer festival. A couple of young guys behind the bar were keen to show us the beer list and also the interesting selection of bottled ales. On the day of our visit, this *Good Beer Guide* pub had *Larkins Porter*, *Six Hop Ale*, *Over the Moon* and *Golden Gate* from the *Dark Star Brewery*, *99 Red Baboons* from *Blue Monkey*, *Harveys Sussex Old Ale* and *Otley's O Garden*.



We were met here by some local CAMRA members, some of whom we knew fairly well, having worked together on our award-winning pub guide, *Gateway to Kent*. One of the bottled beers is worth mentioning here, namely *Sink the Bismarck!* from *Brewdog*. I can't say for certain, but I believe the name is a result of wresting the title of strongest beer away from a German brewery with a strength of a whopping 41% abv. This is achieved by freezing the beer four times as well as adding more hops etc. One brave soul bought a 25ml shot for £4 and several of us had a miniscule taste, or a share of the fumes may be more accurate! The **Royal Oak** sells food and also had curry on for the beer festival; alas only a vegetable version was left on this the last day.

Next up was another GBG entry, the **Grove Tavern**, which we reached after a ten minute walk; this is the oldest and possibly the friendliest pub in town if our visit was anything to go by, a particular favourite with the locals and our local CAMRA members. *Rudgate Jorvik*, *Timothy Taylor Landlord*, *Harveys Sussex* and *Rother Valley Boadicea* ales were at the bar. I believe I had the *Jorvik* first and it certainly did not disappoint. I couldn't help but notice the volume of noise from people's conversations; a bit later on the landlord of the pub brought round some glasses of *Cinnamon Whisky* and although I am no whisky fan I found this to be very drinkable. After a very enjoyable spell here, we had, reluctantly, to move on,

The **Ragged Trousers** in the Pantiles area had, I recall, *Harveys Sussex*, *Sharp's Doom Bar* and *Larkins Traditional*. I opted for the *Traditional* and it was up to the mark. This is a fairly new real ale outlet and seemed fairly popular, having stripped wooden tables, dark wooden chairs and pictures all over the walls, if I remember right.

Sadly we had neither time nor capacity to get to all the places on our list, but were very happy with those we did.

When it was time to make our return journey, the Maidstone party split into two groups and three of us had a last stop off at the **Lobster Pot** in West Malling. This pub, which is well known for its real ale, has recently been closed for an extensive refit and looked very smart, opening up just the day before our visit. I plumped for *Timothy Taylor Landlord* which was in fine form; other choices were *Black Sheep Ale* and *Sharp's Doom Bar*. The only disappointment was the reduction to three handpumps but we hope this is only a temporary situation and will increase as trade picks up again. This had been a very enjoyable day and I would like to thank the organiser and all others involved.

DARTS

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## Sussex Branches Celebrate Their 21<sup>st</sup> Beer Festival

Earlier this year, I went down to Brighton and Hove to attend the big beer festival of the South. Held in the customary venue of Hove Town Hall, it has become my favourite of the calendar, even though I'm the staffing director for our own East Malling Festival. In fact, this was my fifth consecutive year working there.

What always impresses me is the seemingly effortless smooth running of the event. For six sessions over three days, punters flood in and are confronted with one of the widest selections of beers, ciders and perries in the country – over 220 ales, alone. It is a big venue with two large halls: the downstairs one houses the Sussex Bar, showcasing the fantastic diversity of the county's beers, while upstairs the larger hall hosts four bars selling other great products from around the country. There is even a bottled beer stall in the foyer.

2011 marked the 21<sup>st</sup> festival, and a special logo was commissioned for the tee-shirts and glassware. As usual, it was a splendid occasion, and my thanks go to Ingrid Sharp, Alison Mitchell (my counterpart) and the other organisers for a really class act.

Oh, and my favourite beers of the festival? The top spot has to go to the *Ramsgate Brewery* for their wonderful, one-off special brew, *Bock!*. The depth of flavour and finish were among the very best I have ever tasted – Thank you, Mr Gadd, would you please do it again sometime? Others that I recommended to people I served included *Kissingate Ruby XXI* (specially brewed for this festival), *White's Franklin's Dry Hop*, *Fyne's Jarl*, *Holdens Mardy Maud*, and *Hambleton's Cockey Jockey*.



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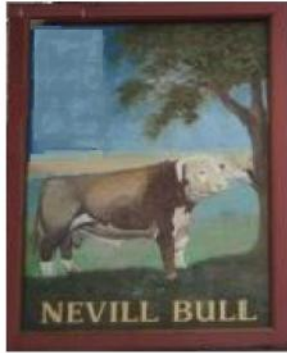


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# CAMRA BRANCH MEETINGS

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)

## MAY

- 5 **MMK** (Maidstone Mild in May) **Society Rooms**, then **Flower Pot**
- 7/8 **MMK** **Chequers**, Laddingford and **Flower Pot** (beer festivals)
- 11 **BEX** **Robin Hood & Little John** (PotY Presentation)
- 12 **MMK** Branch AGM, followed by (*OBM*) **Bush**, Aylesford
- 13 **GDV** **Jolly Drayman**, Gravesend – PotY runner-up presentation
- 15 **MMK** Sunday Ramble - West Malling, Bus 151 at 11.12 to **Freemasons**  
Birling/Ryarsh/Wheatsheaf/West Malling
- 19 **MMK** (Mild) **Woodcock**, Iden Green
- 25 **GDV** **Cock**, Luddesdown – PotY winner presentation
- 26 **MMK** (Maidstone Mild in May) **Pilot**, then **Rifle Volunteers**

## JUNE

- 2 **GDV** **Rum Puncheon**, Gravesend (*OBM*)
- 2 **MMK** Bat & Trap, Benenden, 7.30, then **King William IV** and **Bull**
- 4 **MMK** Bus Trip to **Six Bells**, Woodchurch and **Farriers**, Mersham
- 8 **BEX** **Crayford Arms**, AGM
- 9 **MMK** **White Horse**, Headcorn, then **Bell & Jorrock**s, Frittenden
- 11 **MMK** MENCAP fête in Mote Park, Maidstone
- 16 **MMK** **Kings Arms**, Offham, then **Plough**, Trottiscliffe
- 22 **GDV** **Railway Inn**, Sole Street; **Railway Tavern**, **Cricketers**, Meopham
- 23 **MMK** Evening Ramble 7.30 Yalding War Memorial to **White House**
- 30 **MMK** **Walnut Tree**, East Farleigh, then **Horseshoes**

## JULY

- 7 **MMK** Bat & Trap, Aylesford Rec, 7.30, then **Bush** and **Chequers**
- 9 **MMK** Kent Regional Meeting, **Malling Town Club**, 11.30
- 13 **BEX** **Black Horse**, Bexley (PotY 2<sup>nd</sup> place Presentation)
- 14 **GDV** **Hope & Anchor**, **White Swan**, Ash, then **Black Lion**, Hartley
- 14 **MMK** **Bull**, East Farleigh, then **Royal Paper Mill**, Tovil
- 21 **MMK** **King & Queen**, East Malling, (*OBM*)
- 23 **MMK** Petanque at the **Stile Bridge** 1-5pm
- 27 **GDV** **Malt Shovel**, Dartford (*OBM*,)
- 28 **MMK** **Black Pig**, Hawkhurst, then **Eight Bells**

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