

Draught Copy



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Free Newsletter
for the

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

Autumn 2011

No. 164

CAMRA'S EAST MALLING BEER AND CIDER FESTIVAL

With just a month to go to our second Beer Festival at East Malling Research on Saturday, September 3rd, it's not long to wait now. As we mentioned in the last issue of *Draught Copy*, we have more of everything this year: more accommodation, more food, more shuttle buses, more of EMR's excellent produce, and, oh yes, more fantastic beer and cider. See our poster on page 20 for more details.

As part of this season of "more", we will also need more staff to ensure the day's success. If you are a CAMRA member and would like to join our team for the day, then do get in touch. It doesn't matter whether or not you have worked at a beer festival in the past.

Please contact us at MMKfestivalstaffing@gmail.com or at the address on page 2.

IT WILL BE A GREAT DAY OUT.

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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 September 2011 for publication in November 2011.

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

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

CAMRA

www.camra.org.uk/festivals

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EAST MALLING BEER FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 3 (see page 20)

East Malling Research

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maidstoneandmidkentcamra.co.uk/beerfestivals.aspx

25TH CHAPPEL BEER FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 6—21

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www.thanetcamraciderfestival.org.uk

Non-CAMRA—Pubs and Clubs

August 6

Chequers

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BEER FESTIVAL PLUS VINTAGE CARS

August 19—21

Rising Sun

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6TH SUMMER GARDEN BEER FEST.

August 23—29

Wilmington Cricket Club

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www.wilmingtoncc.org.uk

August 27—29

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September 15—18

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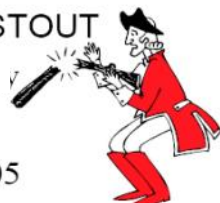
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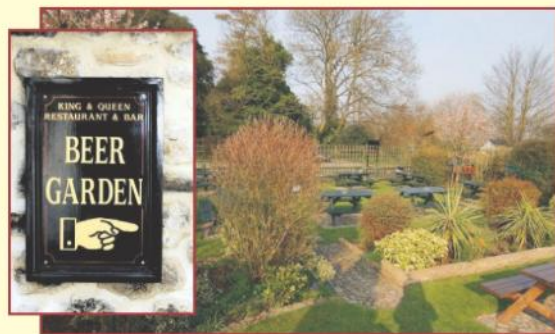
Maidstone CAMRA Pub Of The Year, 2005



KENT BREWERIES

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

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 - **Quiz Nights**
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 - **Summer Barbecues**



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

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Sunday 7th August	"Stand Up" Comedy Night	Ticket Only - 8.00pm
Thursday 11th August	Monthly Quiz Night	Quiz starts 8.30pm
Thursday 18th August	FREE LIVE MUSIC! Rock & Pop Covers	Table Bookings Recommended "Glenn Barnes" 9.00pm
Sunday 28th August	BANK HOLIDAY SUNDAY FREE LIVE MUSIC	A Truly Funky Soulful Sound "Get Ape" 8.00pm
Thursday 8th September	Monthly Quiz Night	Quiz starts 8.30pm
Thursday 15th September	FREE LIVE MUSIC! *NEW* "Lost in Swing"	Table Bookings Recommended "Les Blackburn" 9.00pm
Sunday 25th September	FREE LIVE MUSIC! Rock & Pop Covers	"Usual Suspects" 7.30pm
Thursday 6th October	*NEW* Comedy Evening	Set Menu with Live Comedy Dinner Bookings in Advance
Thursday 13th October	Monthly Quiz Night	Quiz starts 8.30pm
Thursday 20th October	Tapas Night With Live Music	Table Bookings Recommended Music from 8.00pm
Thursday 3rd November	FREE LIVE MUSIC! Blues & Reggae	Table Bookings Recommended Music from 9.00pm
Thursday 10th November	Monthly Quiz Night	Quiz starts 8.30pm
Sunday 27th November	OPEN MIC' NIGHT	"Plug in and Play" 7.30pm
Sunday 4th December	Annual Christmas Lights "Switch On" and Carols	Afternoon Event Ask For Details
Sunday 11th December	FREE LIVE MUSIC! *NEW* Rock & Pop Covers	The "Grandads" 7.30pm
Saturday 24th December	Traditional Christmas Eve "Village Pub Gathering & Carols"	Pub Closes 5pm – 6.30pm Party Starts 6.30pm 'til late

The CAMRA Guide to London's Best Beer, Pubs & Bars

The must-have guide to great beer in Britain's capital

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, published a brand new guide to beer drinking in London, Monday July 4th. *London's Best Beer, Pubs & Bars* (RRP £12.99) is sponsored by the London Brewers Alliance (LBA) and features 250 of the best pubs, bars, restaurants and shops that stock real ale and traditional foreign beers around the capital. The guide's author, noted beer writer and London resident, Des de Moor, will host a special beer tasting and book signing at the Great British Beer Festival.

When asked about the book, Des de Moor said: *'I'm delighted CAMRA Books gave me the opportunity to work on this book, which comes at a particularly fortuitous time for London beer lovers. It's been really encouraging to witness first-hand how a new generation of enthusiastic and imaginative licensees is encouraging a notably younger, more diverse and very savvy crowd to discover fine beer, both in brand new pubs and much improved old ones. I hope my book helps even more people join in the celebration by enjoying what's surely now the greatest range in Europe of the world's best drink.'*

Whether you are a visitor or a local, *London's Best Beer, Pubs & Bars* is the must-have guide to great beer in Britain's capital. The guide includes a wealth of information on London's brewing history, the thriving modern brewing scene and details of the beers you're likely to encounter across the city - from quality real ale to the very best traditionally made foreign beers. The 250 venues listed in the guide represent all kinds of licensed premises from gastropubs to specialist retailers and East End boozers to high class restaurants. Each listing features a full review, opening times, beer offering and local transport links. Des de Moor has also included his own insider advice and tips to help visitors get the most out of every outlet he has recommended.

Available now at shop.camra.org.uk/product.php?id_product=121
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Brewery snippets...

Canterbury Brewers is a 4-bbl microbrewery attached to the **Foundry** pub in White Horse lane, Canterbury. Opened on June 10th, it currently offers *Foundry Torpedo* (4.5ABV amber), *Canterbury Wheat* (4.4ABV) and *Foundryman's Gold* (4.0ABV golden bitter). www.thefoundrycanterbury.co.uk/canterbury-brewers/

Kent Brewery has been brewing at Birling Place Farm, Birling for some three months, reaching two brews per week at the end of May, bringing its second fermenter into full operation some nine months ahead of schedule. Regularly produced beers are *Pale*, *Black Gold*, *KGB*, *Cobnut* and *Zingiber*.

Moodley's Brewery—The *Royal Match* wedding ale (3.2%, bottle-conditioned) was a resounding success, almost completely selling out by the April 29th date. This was in part due to a number of features in local newspapers and magazines and even several times on local BBC TV. Yudistra is actively pursuing the purchase of larger scale brewing equipment, and is in discussion with a couple of defunct breweries.

Swan Brewery, West Peckam—Paul had brewed a commemorative 1000th brew. *Whooper* had been chosen as it was also the first brew and no longer available as a regular, however it was so well received that a subsequent brew has also been made. The summer ale will most likely be *Ginger* in about 3 to 4 weeks but has yet to be confirmed.

Tonbridge Brewery—Demand is now outstripping supply, so the brewer has gone full-time now. This should allow 6 or 7 4-bbl brews per month, equating to about 100 firkins. If demand continues to rise, separate storage facilities will be sought, which will free up brewery space for a third fermenter and allow output to increase to 150 firkins a month.

Westerham Brewery—Coming up is *Helles Belles*, a properly lagered German Helles bier brewed to the recipe from Markus Lotz of Bavaria and hopped with Spalt Select and Hallertauer Perle hops. Now producing the first of a new range of Hop Rocket beers with the *Hop Rocket American Pale Ale*. This will have masses of Cascade, Centennial and Chinook hops from the USA loaded into the Hop Rocket for a flavour take off. The new season *Summer Perle* is currently being given the Hop Rocket treatment and the results are amazing.

Whitstable Brewery—Recently opened a new outlet in Whitstable, the **Forge**. *Faversham Creek* is being brewed again due to demand

A Trip to the Black Country

by Jeff Tucker

It was time to revisit some classic Black Country pubs which I hadn't been to for many years, so I decided to base myself in Bilston, which seemed fairly central. I found the Rosewood Lodge guest house, which turned out to be a good value, fairly basic but clean and friendly place in a quiet residential area.

I had bought a Plusbus ticket, a £2.50 add-on to my £10 train ticket from Snodland to Birmingham, which gave me travel on buses and trams for the rest of the day. My first visit was to Wolverhampton, where I eventually located the **Great Western**, hard to find behind the station. This is a lovely, traditional pub full of railway memorabilia, owned by *Holden's*, but also selling guest beers.

Batham's Bitter, from the family brewery founded in 1877 in Brierley Hill, was an excellent 4.3% golden brew, and was £2.80. *Holden's Mild*, also from a local brewery, dating from the 1920s, was superb and only £2.20.

I next caught a 558 bus, which took a bit of searching as the bus station was closed for redevelopment, to Sedgley, where I found a Wetherspoon's, **The Clifton**, where sirloin steak was on special offer at £3.99 - I got the last one! *Warwickshire King's Champion* was £2.15.

A walk of a few hundred yards up Bilston Street brought me to another classic pub, the **Beacon Hotel**, brewery tap for *Sarah Hughes Brewery*, established in 1921. This superb Victorian pub was very busy for a Sunday night, and it was difficult to find a seat in any of the many rooms. It was a noisy place, but there was no music, just conversation.

Sarah Hughes Surprise (5.0%) was £2.55 - a golden beer which was a bit creamy for my taste. I next tried the famous *Ruby Mild* (£2.65), a 6.0% beer which is sometimes seen in Kent at beer festivals or enlightened free houses. I noticed that all beer was served in jugs - no straight glasses. The brewhouse and fermenting room were opposite the gents, just past the conservatory, which was full of plants but no seats!

All too soon it was time to catch the next bus, the 545 back to Bilston. The **Olde White Rose** is a popular free house which sells 12 real ales, offering a 10p discount to CAMRA members. *Barnsley Acorn Bitter* was £2.40, and pretty good. The last bus back to the B&B was at just after 11pm.

The next day, after a hearty breakfast, I spent most of the day visiting a couple of museums, after which I set off for West Bromwich, where there are two *Good Beer Guide* pubs almost opposite each other in the High Street, but quite a step from the town centre. The **Old Hop Pole** offered a few national beers and *Wye Valley HPA* at £2.50. This was a nice, pale beer, but the pub didn't appeal to me, somehow.

Across the road is *Holden's Wheatsheaf*, a traditional two-bar local selling the whole range. I tried the **Special**, a 5.0% beer priced at £2.40, which was rather nice. My food stop was again the local Wetherspoon's, the **Billiard Hall**, opposite the bus station. This had three beers from *Black Hole Brewery* of Burton. I had the *Bitter* (3.8%) which was £1.99, with my roast dinner. I noticed that most of the meals were at least £1.00 less than we pay locally.

Back in the **Olde White Rose**, I tried *Leeds Pale*, £2.40, which was not to my taste, and *Warwickshire Darling Buds*, £2.45, which had a musty taste. Oh well. This pub now offers accommodation, by the way, and a good-value lunchtime carvery every day.

The following day I bought an all-day bus ticket (£3.80) covering all buses in the West Midlands, and had a good ride round! Later in the afternoon, from Dudley, I caught the frequent 243/244 bus to Netherton, where I sought the **Olde Swan**, better known as Ma Pardoe's, built in 1863 along with a brewery on site.



The bar was very cosy, with an organ in one corner and canal paintings on the walls, and I noticed that there were no pump clips, the beers being chalked up on a blackboard. I sampled the *Original*, a 3.5% light mild, at £2.00, which was a bit thin, and *Entire* (4.4%) at £2.40, which had more flavour. A lovely pub!

The bus back to Dudley dropped me off at the **Lamp Tavern**, whose address is High Street, but is situated a little way beyond the end of the shops. This is one of only 11 *Batham's* tied pubs, and does B&B. I entered the public bar, which was a bit busy, and bought a pint of *Mild* (£2.23), and took it through to the lounge bar, which probably wasn't the done thing, as I noticed that beers were 10p dearer in that bar, a practice which used to be common nationwide.



The *Mild* was excellent, as was the *Bitter*, which was £2.55 in the lounge. I noticed that the toilets were labelled *Wenches* and *Chaps*. Political correctness obviously hasn't reached these parts. Good! The atmosphere wasn't helped by rap music courtesy of Radio 1, however.

Walking back to the town centre, I found the **Full Moon** (Wetherspoon's), where it was steak night, which I washed down with *Limestone Foundation Stone* (4.5%, £2.15) from *Stone* in Staffordshire.

On the bus to Sedgley I passed the **Britannia** at Upper Gornal, another classic *Batham's* pub, which will have to wait until my next trip up there. In Sedgley, the **Bull's Head** in Bilston Street, a *Holden's* pub, offered a seasonal beer, *May Becknott* at £2.10 for an excellent 4% beer. Since the 2011 GBG, the pub has added a Thai restaurant in the back bar, which seems to be franchised out.

The bus to Bilston stops outside, but ran early, so I missed it (email sent!). Never mind, the **Beacon Hotel** was only a few yards up the road, so I tried the 4% *Pale Amber*, £2.45, which was very nice. It was good to see people of all ages in this superb pub.

I left in good time to catch the next bus to Bilston, where I decided to try the other *GBG* pub in the town, the **Trumpet** in the High Street, which is at the far end from the bus and tram interchange. It proved to be worth the walk, as this *Holden's* pub has live jazz seven nights a week. The pub was packed out at 9.30, though nobody seemed to be under 50, and the band were very good.

Holden's Mild was £2.30 and very enjoyable. I sat next to some people who had come all the way from Telford for the jazz. Musical instruments were hanging from the ceiling and on the walls. All in all, a superb place to finish my trip to the Black Country. I'll be back.

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The Wheatsheaf's Mini-festivals

by Brian Johnson

If you are a real ale drinker and your local pub serves good beer, then you are a lucky person. If your local also regularly holds real ale festivals, then you are indeed a very fortunate person. My local, the **Wheatsheaf** in Loose Road, Maidstone has been holding beer festivals on a regular basis for several years now and Rossa Kenny, the landlord, has continued this in 2011. A festival was held in April and another at the end of May, where, as previously, there was a collection of eight ales from a wide geographical area.

BEER	ABV	BREWERY
<i>King's</i>	3.9%	<i>Mighty Oak, Essex</i>
<i>Odyssey</i>	4.0%	<i>Hopback, Wiltshire</i>
<i>Stone Faced</i>	4.0%	<i>Lymestone, Staffordshire</i>
<i>Tom Brown's Bitter</i>	4.0%	<i>Dorset Brewing Co.</i>
<i>Copper Top</i>	4.1%	<i>Old Dairy, Kent</i>
<i>Brill Stream</i>	4.3%	<i>Vale, Buckinghamshire</i>
<i>Gold Top</i>	4.3%	<i>Old Dairy, Kent</i>
<i>Sherpa Tenzing</i>	4.5%	<i>Mighty Oak, Essex</i>

The beers were set up ready for the Thursday evening with four on hand pumps and the rest served straight from the cask. A hog roast was also available on the Sunday. Knowing we wouldn't be able to consume eight pints in one session, my drinking partners and I went along on both Thursday and Friday evenings. This allowed us to sample at least a pint of each and decide our own favourites. After much discussion the general consensus was that *Mighty Oak King's* was our preferred ale, being rich, golden and thirst quenching. Although not strong at 3.9% it had plenty of flavour, which I feel is a mark of a good session beer. However, it was a close contest and prompted quite a lot of sampling!

Rossa informed us that he would be serving only Kentish beers over the weekend of Father's Day in June. We thought that there might again be some *Old Dairy* beers. However, they turned out to be *Pale* and *KGB* from the *Kent Brewery*, in Birling, as well as *Original* from *Black Cat* in Groombridge and *Samphire Bitter* from *Abigale* in Ashford.

All four were unknown to us and so it was with great interest and enthusiasm that we approached our first encounter with them. Again we gathered on the Thursday evening to make sure that we could appreciate them at an early stage of their presentation. All of them turned out to be most enjoyable and it is particularly satisfying that our local breweries are producing ales of such fine quality. We finally decided that the *Samphire*, a mid-dark brown bitter with a fully rounded flavour, was our overall favourite by a small margin.

I look forward to having another chance to try these beers and many others at future mini-festivals at the **Wheatsheaf**; and at our own Beer Festival on September 3rd at East Malling.

Contact: John Mills 01732 840603 or email jandj@larkfield98.freeserve.co.uk

Old Plantation, Bearsted – The lease is for sale at this beamed pub in an estate just north of the A20. Serves *Harveys Sussex Best Bitter*, *Sharps Doom Bar*, *Flowers IPA* and a guest ale.

Lower Bell, Blue Bell Hill – The patio/smoking shelter has been extended to provide additional space. Jam nights are held on Mondays and live bands play at weekends. Beers are supplied from *Greene King* including *Abbott* and *IPA* plus a guest ale. www.lowerbell.com

Nevill Bull, Birling – Now have two guest beers and the regular ale is selected from the splendid *Kent Brewery* just up the road. The *Skinners Betty Stogs* and *Taylor Landlord* are particularly popular. The restaurant has had a facelift with the false chimney being removed and the floor has been sanded and varnished.

King & Queen, East Malling – Over the Easter period some members were pleased to indulge in some of the 20 plus (mainly Kentish brewed) ales put on during the Beer Festival. *Goachers 1066 Old* being the most highly rated and far too easy to over indulge but beers from *Kent*, *Whitstable* and *Westerham* were also very popular. Has as regulars the *Westerham 'House beer'* known here as *Prince of Ales*, *Harveys Best Bitter* and *Sharps Doombar* plus one guest that was *Black Sheep Best* recently.

Bell & Jorrocks, Frittenden – Sean & Rosie Croucher provide good hospitality here in this village institution that is well worth finding. If you enjoyed (or maybe missed) the April Beer Festival, there is usually another in September. Regular ales *Adnams Bitter*, *Harveys Best Bitter* and *Woodfordes Wherry* were on at our last visit as was the guest *Old Dairy Spring Top*. www.thebellandjorrocks.co.uk

Hop Bine, Frittenden - Closed again.

White Horse, Headcorn – A friendly and welcoming pub with a pool table and large screen TVs showing sports events. *Youngs Bitter*, *Wells Bombardier* and *Courage Best* were found on the bar when we visited.

Woodcock, Iden Green (Benenden) – To find this hidden pub from Iden Green follow the sign via Standen Street into Woodcock Lane and in a short while it is on the right with a car park just past on the left. This little gem is in walking country, has a large garden and keeps *Greene King*

beers. We enjoyed the excellent *XX Mild Abbot* but it also had *Morland Original* and *Ruddles Best*. www.thewoodcockinn.com

Chequers, Laddingford – Charles & Tracey held their customary April Beer Festival in May this year due to a certain Royal Wedding taking place. The weather was again kind and a very varied selection of ales was available, many of them not seen before. Unfortunately the branch members attending were unable to sample all the beers between them in the time available before the bus arrived but those that we did were all very good. www.chequersladdingford.co.uk

Crown & Horseshoes, Langley – This Admiral Taverns pub reopened on 25th June under the management of Geoff and Angie. Two cask ales are on offer, which on a recent visit were, *Greene King IPA* and *Harveys Best Bitter*. Traditional pub food and snacks are now being served both lunchtime and evenings. The new opening hours are Mon-Fri: 12-3, 5-11, Sat: 12-11, Sun: 12-10. The phone number is now 01622 861958.

Wheatsheaf, Leybourne – There are now three new pumps on the bar dispensing Cornish beers. *Sharps Doom Bar* and *Cornish Coaster* were on we visited, backed up with guest *St Austell Tribute*. Sheila still provides good value home-cooked food except on Tuesday evenings when darts prevail.

Hare & Hounds, Maidstone – This Admiral Taverns pub is currently closed and For Sale.

Wheatsheaf, Maidstone – Rossa Kenny has held a couple of mini beer festivals recently which were well received so we may be seeing more during the year. The normal fare is *Courage Best*, *Sharps Doombar* and at least one guest ale. www.thewheatsheaf-maidstone.co.uk

Stile Bridge, Marden – The now customary Bridgestock Beer and Music festival was again held over the late May Bank Holiday with over 30 ales being available during the weekend. Another is planned for August Bank Holiday. The website has also been revised: www.stile.co.uk

Queens Head, Mereworth – A visit here found a warm welcome from new licensee Terry Conroy. Several pints of the regular *Sharps Doom Bar* and *Wells Bombardier* were consumed as well as the guest ale *Cotleigh 25th Anniversary*.

Bricklayers, New Hythe – Dave and Tracey have now obtained Cask Marque accreditation. There are two ales available here *Courage Best* and

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a guest, *Wells Bombardier* on my last visit but I had just missed the *Ringwood Boondoggle*, which had proved very popular.

Kings Arms, Offham – Derek has been changing the guest ale recently and it was *Youngs Bitter* that went down well on a scheduled branch visit. The current regular ales are *Shepherd Neame Masterbrew* and *Wells Bombardier*. The popular quiz is held on alternate Wednesday evenings. A small beer festival will be held on August Bank Holiday weekend.

Orchard Spot, Otham – Mainly noted as a nite spot and wedding venue but reports received of interesting guest ales appearing here in the bar at the rear. *Acorn Barnsley Gold*, *Bays Best* and *Tring Side Pocket for a Toad* have all been seen recently. www.theorchardspot.co.uk

White Horse, Otham – Now run by Kathleen Smart as a free house and opens at 11am until late. Reports indicate *Courage Best* and *Sharps Doombur* served here as being in good condition. Pending installation of a landline, the phone number. is 07747 652952.

New Swan, Sandhurst – Sadly, John Parsons has now closed up here and the future is uncertain.

Railway Tavern, Staplehurst – A sudden heavy downpour on leaving the rail station led our correspondent to pop in here for shelter. He found some comfort as there were two pumps on with *Harveys Best Bitter* and *Old Dairy Red Top*, which was pronounced as very good.

Swan, Sutton Valence – This is now being run by Jeremy, Fiona & Adam Hinchliffe. Beers reported were *Harveys Best Bitter* and *Youngs Bitter* as regular plus a guest. www.swansuttonvalence.co.uk

Black Horse, Thurnham – A long overdue visit along the Pilgrims Way found *Old Dairy Copper Top*, *Taylor Landlord* and *Westerham Grasshopper*. This restaurant/pub is open all day and also has 30 en-suite rooms.

Tickled Trout, West Farleigh – This popular restaurant/pub was reported as for sale in last issue. I am happy to inform you that it was subsequently withdrawn from sale and is still being run by David and Rita Drewett.

Swan On The Green, West Peckham – Two new brews were found here a new version of Mild and a Milk Stout. Both were well appreciated, as were the regulars *Cygnets*, *Fuggles* and *Trumpeter Best*. *Whooper* was due to be brewed again as the 1000th brew. This was the first beer that Paul, the brewer, did when he started.



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Remember the footnote to this article in the previous issue! “*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.*” This news came as a shock to us all and we still don’t know fully the reasons why Garrett and Lynne departed so suddenly after spending more than five years turning the **Bull** from a mediocre pub into a proper community local and arguably the best real ale pub in the area, becoming the local CAMRA Pub of the Year 2008/9/10 and overall Kent winner in 2010.

Fortunately the closure was short-lived and the **Bull** re-opened on Good Friday 22nd April under new manager, Susanna Godden, who had previously managed the **Hope** in Carshalton, which had been a very recent winner of the South West London CAMRA Pub of the Year competition, so she has a reliable background in real ale. I’ve only visited the pub once since the change, sampling *Oakleaf Maypole Mild* in May, but didn’t meet Susanna. My CAMRA colleague John Harris visits regularly and tells us that the pub is back on stream, with beers in good condition, sampling at the time of writing *Whitstable Oyster Stout*, *Dark Star Summer Solstice* and *Hophead*.

Thatcher’s Traditional cider is available direct from the cellar and Susanna is intending to stock the local *Magic Bus* ciders. New stillage in the cellar will allow room for more than four beers on handpump in future as trade increases.

As we remember, Garrett scoured the country finding unusual (often very strong) beers showcasing many interesting small breweries, hardly known in this area. Susanna is interested in stocking more local beers, which will find favour with the CAMRA LocAle scheme, and I noticed the excellent *Kent Brewery Pale Ale* and *Zingiber* whilst supping my mild in May. By the time you read this the kitchen will have been refitted and food will be available but it will be a tough act to follow Lynne’s wonderful gastronomic delights and Garrett’s ridiculous laugh. However a different style and new pub ambience should be greeted with enthusiasm by former and new customers alike. The telephone number remains 01322-862274. [*The report mentions a new website; however, it appears to be unavailable: www.thebullathortonkirby.co.uk. — Ed.*]

That's enough **Bull**, let's take the story to the **Cock** at Luddesdown, Gravesend & Darent Valley branch Pub of the Year 2011, which came up against three other pubs challenging for the West Kent Pub of the Year award. This title was successfully defended by the 2010 Kent winner, the **Flower Pot**, in Sandling Road, Maidstone, a shining example of how to turn a run-down (formerly keg only) corner pub into a beacon for real ale. The East Kent Pub of the Year is the **Berry** in Walmer, an unpretentious terraced back street pub. Have you spotted the theme? Pubs don't need to close down at an alarming rate, despite the current economic and social circumstances. With good management, good beer, good food, good facilities and a welcoming atmosphere, even the most basic boozier should be able to attract reliable customers and continue to thrive and prosper.

However some pubs are bound to close and it is with great regret that we report the recent demolition of the **Colyer Arms** at Betsham, near Southfleet, following a successful appeal to Planning Inspectorate against Dartford Borough Council's refusal of planning permission for redevelopment. This pub had a chequered recent history but was listed in the *Good Beer Guide* in the 1990s and even hosted a branch Christmas social. The unusual pub name commemorates Captain Thomas Riverhead Colyer-Fergusson, son of the then owner of Ightham Mote, who was killed in WWI, aged 21. The pub sign, bearing his portrait, seems to have disappeared in the rubble.

Betsham is now a dry village, compounding the loss of its only shop and petrol station. Nearby Southfleet has also currently lost the **Wheatsheaf** at Westwood (structural damage) and the **Black Lion** (arson attack) although it is conceivable that one or both may re-open. The only pubs there within a mile or so radius of Betsham are the **Ship** (free) and **Manor Barn** (*Shepherd Neame*) in Southfleet and the **Royal Oak** (free) at Bean, all of which sell real ale.

In June, another pub in our area suffered extensive fire damage. The **Wheatsheaf** in Kemsing village was almost razed to the ground, with only the chimney stacks standing proud above ground floor level. The building is currently unsafe and is surrounded by metal barriers; the future looks bleak. At least there is a pub directly opposite, the **Bell**, selling *Greene King* beers, and **St.Edith's Club**, just along the road. Other options nearby are the *Shepherd Neame* tied **Chequers** at Heaverham and the **Rising Sun** at Cotman's Ash, a remote free house, offering beers from small breweries, both former GBG pubs and still worth visiting, the latter being a favourite venue for branch Christmas socials.

The **Rum Puncheon** in West Street, Gravesend, has recently installed two new pumps, increasing the range of beer from six to eight, proving that there is a strong demand for real ale in the right environment. *Skinners, Rudgate, Hogs Bac, Kent Brewery* and *Royal Tunbridge Wells* are regularly featured breweries and the choice and quality are always good. This pub was formerly a run-down Truman's house which has been invigorated by sympathetic management. The **Rum Puncheon** is the sister pub to the **Park Tavern** in Eltham, which has also expanded its range to eight handpumps. *Loddon Ferrymans Gold* and *Hullabaloo* were in tip-top condition when I called in, as were the *Skinners Heligan Honey* and *Acorn Barnsley Gold*.

After unseasonably warm spring months of March and April, summer has come upon us with downpours in June. Let's hope July and August will fare better for our regular round of outdoor pub and club beer festivals. Colin and Sue at the **Rising Sun** at Twitton, near Otford, are hosting yet another garden event from 19th to 21st August, with 3 beers on handpump in the bar and up to 12 ales, cider and perry on stillage in the garden. Friday night is steak night throughout the year, so steaks are on the menu on the Friday evening, with a hog roast on Saturday evening and ploughman's lunch on Sunday. Jeff and Fran will be the hosts at the **Fox & Hounds** at Romney Street, near Shoreham during their established August Bank Holiday event from Saturday 27th to Monday 30th August, with up to 20 real ales, plus cider and perry, in a large tent in the large garden. As usual there will be plenty of hot food and plenty of live music. The third regular August event, organised by Colin Wight, is the annual cricket week beer festival at **Wilmington Cricket Club**, near Dartford, running from Tuesday 23th August to Monday 29th August, once again offering an interesting selection of 20 real ales and cider and raffle prizes. The branch will be holding a social here as usual on the Friday evening. Please let us know about local festivals we may have omitted to promote.

By the time you read this the July festival at the **Dartford Working Men's Club** will have taken place. However, as we've said many times, **DWMC** is a permanent beer festival with 15 handpumps in the main bar, serving a multitude of beers of varying styles and strengths, all currently priced at £2.35 per pint. The function room is used for the quarterly "festivals" which has a further 3 handpumps and access to another 12 or more casks on stillage in the cellar, 30 beers or so are on sale. We've mentioned the 5x1/3rd pint glasses on wooden carousels before but an innovation at the April event was the introduction of 3x1/3rd pint glasses in round plastic

trays specifically for the beer festival. This meant that an imbiber could sample 30 beers and only drink 10 pints (over the long weekend, of course). Ironically 3 third pints cost £2.35 and 2 half pints cost £2.40. Nick is keeping the running beer list banner on the TV screens more up-to-date, but his spelling leaves something to be desired: “*Sheperd & Neame Spifire*” indeed! Three errors in four words but all the real ales, including the *Spitfire*, are always in superlative condition and that’s what matters!

Also in Dartford, Chris and Kelly Smith are both back at the helm at the **Paper Moon** in the High Street and this Wetherspoons pub is on the way back to its former glory. One interesting addition is the introduction of a dartboard (many pubs have removed these) to give the pub a more traditional feeling and Darts Fun Nights are envisaged, with competitions and cash prizes – beware of flying arrows! There has also been a return to old style black display boards, in particular over the bar opposite the main entrance, displaying current and forthcoming guest beers. The **Paper Moon** is proud to promote beers from Kent and *Wantsum Brewery* from Hersden near Canterbury was showcased in June. I sampled and enjoyed *Dynamo* and *Ravening Wolf*. At the time of writing Chris was finalising the very local *Millis Brewing* beer list for the July showcase. On Saturday August 27th Kelly is organising a Mexican theme night featuring Mexican food and cocktails as well as tequila. Any decent Mexican beers?

This time we shall finish with updates to comments regarding two pubs in Dartford from the previous issue. Firstly we can confirm that Paul Lynskey has now acquired the tenancy of the **Stage Door** from Richard O’Keefe, who has taken over the tenancy of the **Cinque Ports Arms**, also a *Shepherd Neame* pub, near the station in Rye. Paul has worked with Richard since he took over from Geoff Byram, so there is a good pedigree.....or should we say.... good *Spitfire*, *Best* and seasonal beers. Secondly we should not listen to rumours (unless it’s the Fleetwood Mac album). The **Windmill** in Lowfield Street did not re-open as “Madisons”. The pub was refitted as a funeral parlour, Dartford Funeral Services, so the pub can be described as well and truly “dead”. As virtually every building on the opposite side of this part of Lowfield Street, including the former **Plough**, is boarded up, awaiting demolition (courtesy of Tesco) the funeral connection seems depressingly apt.

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Monday 3rd – Crib Night – and Learn To play Crib

Tuesday 4th – Men's League Darts Night

Wednesday 5th – Charity Quiz (In aid of Help for Heroes)
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Thursday 6th – Ladies League Darts Night

Friday 7th – 12 noon Beer Festival opens in the garden
Traditional English Fayre served 12-3. Hogroast from 7pm
with Alibi, a female fronted Rock Band from 9pm

Saturday 8th – Beer Shed opens @ 11am with Traditional pub Fayre
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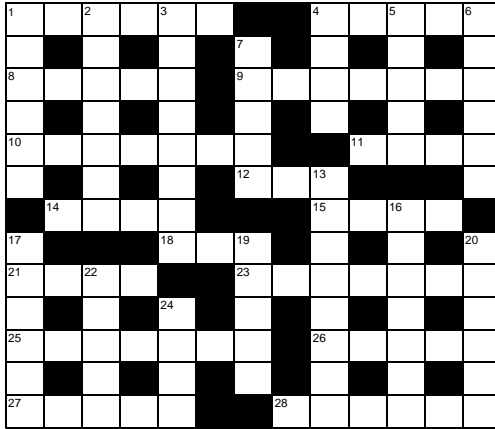
This is a great chance to see a core part of E.L.O. and E.L.O. II (and now The Orchestra) in an intimate setting exploring musical ideas both old and new.

Entry via Ticket Only – These will be released in September.

The Draught Copy Crossword No. 4

compiled by MICK NORMAN

Solution in next issue



*Solution to Crossword No. 3
in issue No. 163*



Solvers may find it helpful to refer to the excellent *Gateway to Kent* Pub Guide, details of which are available from www.camrawestkent.org.uk/gateway-to-kent/

Across

- 1 Beer may be insubstantial (6)
- 4 Oddie's bird parts (5)
- 8 Old car - Hunter or Galaxy, perhaps (5)
- 9,18 Blotto reps gather in West Malling pub! (7,3)
- 10 Involves offal right away (7)
- 11 Champion Luddesdown pub (4)
- 12 Thus vomit, apparently (3)
- 14 Continent - as 1 across initially (4)
- 15 Lager is acrid, lacking head (4)
- 18 See 9
- 21 Polish pub in Horton Kirby (4)
- 23 Ask for paper space first (7)
- 25 Reveal sexual identity? Result is quite the reverse (7)
- 26 English *Sun* confused - direction to follow (5)
- 27 Academic or benefactor (5)
- 28 Maybe Royal, since despatched (6)

Down

- 1, 18 across Maidstone pub may have room for Little Weed's associates (6,3)
- 2 Aposite reforms may be hard to give up (7)
- 3 Disadvantage may assist you on the golf course (8)
- 4 Degree by small person (4)
- 5 Game of chance involves non-drinker locked in toilet (5)
- 6 Beat walkout (6)
- 7 Good girl is often full of ale! (5)
- 13 Auditors heard in Laddingford pub (8)
- 16 Repeat publication concerning progeny (7)
- 17 Route may be shown in orange in another country (6)
- 19 Principle works both ways (5)
- 20 Upright, but on the way down, losing direction (6)
- 22 Language derived from within No 10 (5)
- 24 Nasty smell, always reminiscent initially of wild animal (4)

A Drinker's Tale (Anon.)

Here is a piece about most pubs in the Dartford area about 40 years ago:

It was a glorious day when the **Sportsman** arose with the **Rising Sun** over the **Windmill**, under the **Walnut Tree**, to shoot the **Eagle**, which looked to him like a **Phoenix**.

Rose of the **Three Tuns** sat beneath the **Royal Oak**, entwining the **Ivy Leaf**, where the **Prince of Orange**, who rode on a **White Horse** gave a **Salutation** or **Royal Exchange** to **Alexandra** who wore the order of the **Rose & Crown** on the **Kings Head** and spoke of **Victory** at **Cressy**.

A **Black Boy** drove up in his **Coach & Horses** and told them he had cut off a **Bull's Head**. The **Bull** had been caught by the **Foresters** and had been taken to the **Fulwich Hotel**. The **Two Brewers** called a **Jolly Waggoner**, who had caught a **Bird in Hand** at the **Railway Tavern**, when a **Rifleman** rushed from the **Coachmakers Arms** to shoot a **Tiger** that had escaped from the **New Town Tavern** and gone down by the **Smiths Arms** to the **Hufflers Arms**.

The **Watermans Arms** waved wildly as the **Tiger** plunged into the creek to be swallowed by the **Dolphin**, which was caught by a **Fisherman** off **Long Reach Tavern** when, **Who'd have Thought it**, **Eleven Cricketers** arrived and some **Jolly Millers** with a **Fox and Hounds** and an **Oddfellow** from the **Kentish Arms** with a **Plough** and a **Malt Shovel**. A **Star** from the **New Inn** rang **One Bell** at the **Masons Arms** and asked the **Woodman** to settle everything at the **Crown & Anchor**.

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

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www.camrabexleybranch.org.uk

Let's first congratulate Helen Rogers, our Membership Secretary, for being elected onto the Procedures Committee at CAMRA's AGM in Sheffield. Congrats also to Andy Wheeler, our Treasurer, for becoming a granddad for the first time – all the best to Luke, our future new member?

So beer at or below 2.8% ABV will have its taxation halved, while beers at 7.5% and above will be increased by a quarter. CAMRA intend to try to increase the threshold for beer eligible for the lower duty to 3.5% thus overturning the current EU ruling.

A good place to hold our April meeting was the **New Cross Turnpike**, one of our J.D.Wetherspoons outlets, as it coincided with their beer festival. Situated in Bellegrave Road, Welling, it is Bexley's second oldest JDW, opened in September 1998, previously having been a bank.

The meeting started with a talk by local brewer John Millis, from *Millis Brewing* in South Darenth, who informed us that he is now supplying JDW's outlets within a thirty mile radius of the brewery. They had asked him to produce a golden ale and, although John would not brew it exclusively for Wetherspoons, a new version of *Kentish Gold*, now at 4.6% is being brewed and was available at the Bexley Beer Festival. John doesn't use American hops in his beers, just good old English varieties! He has a 10 barrel (360 gallon) brewing plant, but because of a lively yeast only gets 36 firkins (9 gallon casks) per brew length. He mentioned that dry hopped beers need 10 days before the infusion takes effect.

Our Pubs Officer, Ian Wright, then presented the Pub of the Year second runner-up certificate to the manager, Jason Batty, who was really pleased. After the meeting Jason brought out a selection of curries for the sixteen of us to sample and told us about "Ale Wednesday" their local initiative, when all selected guest ales are just £1.99 a pint. Beers on the bar included *Millis Gravesend Guzzler* and *Kentish Best*; *Batemans All Seasons*, *Freeminer Deep Shaft* and *Oakham Taipan*.

In May the meeting was arranged to support CAMRA's Mild Month, held at the **Robin Hood and Little John** in Bexleyheath. On offer were

Harvey's Sussex XX Mild (dark mild) and *Harvey's Knots of May* (light mild) both 3% and priced at £1.95 a pint. Our main reason for being there was to crown them Pub of the Year for the eleventh time. Martyn Nicholls, our Branch Chairman, extolled the virtues of this wonderful friendly welcoming pub serving quality real ale with great service.

Flaming June saw us visit the **Crayford Arms** for a well attended AGM, held in the upstairs function room. After a vote, our Pub of the Year winner can now reign supreme for three consecutive years, overturning an earlier decision whereby the PotY winner was excluded from the following year's competition. Many thanks to Sharon for the excellent spread of food provided for the AGM. The seasonal *Early Bird*, named after a hop variety grown in Ospringe, and the new hoppier fruitier *Canterbury Jack* were the favourites among the range of well-kept *Shepherd Neame* beers.

June also heralded the Bexley village brothel creep [*steady on!*—Ed.], starting in the **Black Horse Inn**, Albert Road, an ex-Courage house with the cockerel twice in evidence outside, on its own and in the square red sign. *Timothy Taylor Landlord*, *Adnams Bitter* and *Sharps Doom Bar*, all at £3.30 per pint invigorated us as they all in excellent condition. The pub now opens at 2.30pm on weekdays. On to the **Kings Head**, a *Greene King* tied house with *IPA*, *Abbot* and the spring/summer seasonal *Ale Fresco* at 4.3%. Andy suggested we drink this outside! Across the road to the **Railway Tavern** where *Slaters Premium 4.4%* and *Haka 5.2%* (brewed with New Zealand Mottawaka hops) greeted our taste buds. Again the quality was excellent at the **Railway Tavern**, which offers the widest range of beers from different breweries (excluding Wetherspoons outlets) in Bexley branch area. Several mild ales from regional and microbreweries were available in May, including *Acorn Darkness*.

Although Ian failed to notify the government, police, fire, ambulance or coastguard services, our social progressed peacefully and was enjoyed by all. No one vomited or urinated in the street, assaulted any member of the public, burnt a copy of the Daily Mail or needed to attend A&E.

The *Shepherd Neame* owned **Prince Albert** in Bexleyheath has drastically cut its weekday opening hours and now opens Mon-Thu 5-11, Fri-Sat noon/midnight30, Sunday noon-11pm. Every other Thursday is curry night, 7.30-9.30pm, all you can eat for £6.95. Just down the hill in Watling Street, the **Woodman**, now owned by the Brakspear Pub Company is selling *Wychwood Brakspear Oxford Gold*.

In Upper Belvedere the **Prince of Wales** is now selling *Westerham British Bulldog*, *St.Austell Tribute* and *Young's Bitter* as regulars and now offers a guest ale, selling at £2.50 a pint between 1pm and 4pm weekdays. *Dark Star Partridge* and *Westerham Helles Belles* have also been enjoyed. **Ye Olde Black Horse** in Halfway Street, Sidcup, is now a John Barras establishment selling *Greene King IPA*, *Fullers London Pride* and *Courage Best*.

Councillors refused planning permission to turn the **Red Lion**, Foots Cray High Street, into a function hall claiming it would create "congestion and disturbance". The first application by Adam Jarrett to convert the **Old Wick**, Vicarage Lane Bexley, into 3 two bedroom houses and 1 one bedroom flat was turned down, quickly followed by a second application with slight alterations. Plans have also been submitted to convert the **Pheasant**, Belmont Road, Northumberland Heath, into 9 flats with associated parking.

In Bexleyheath Broadway, the **Ivory Lounge** announced a re-launch on 30th April as it could now remain open until 1am every Friday and Saturday, and then closed unexpectedly, reasons uncertain. Tesco has applied for permission to alter the locally listed building in Bellegrove Road, Welling, latterly the **Inferno** pub, to create a new shop front, a service yard and install an ATM. In Erith, the **Cross Keys** was for sale in July by public auction.

Stonegate Pub Company, based in Birmingham, has acquired 53 London pubs from Mitchells and Butlers including two pubs in the Bexley branch area, the **Danson Stables**, Danson Park, Welling and the **Red Barn** next to Barnehurst station. We await news regarding all the above developments with interest.

Finally, I know that every pub does its bit for charity but three of our local pubs deserve a special mention for their recent activities:

Firstly, the **Royal Oak** (Northumberland Heath) raised £3578.50 for *Help for Heroes*.

Secondly, the **Charlotte** (Crayford) £2776.50 also for *Help for Heroes*, and

Thirdly, the **Crayford Arms** (Crayford) £1350.00 for *Smiley Feet*.

Well done to all those concerned with the organising and running of the events.

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SIXTH BEXLEY BEER FESTIVAL — APRIL 2011

Once again held at Sidcup Sports Club, and clashing with the Royal Wedding on the Friday, the festival sold out at 3pm on the Saturday afternoon, four extra ciders had been obtained, but alas no extra beer. Our sincere apologies to anyone who travelled and found the event closed later that day.

Starting with 67 firkins (the amount we sold last year after a re-order) of varying British beers, including 17 Wedding Ales, we had no idea whether we would be busier than the previous year or whether the Bank Holiday would leave



us short of customers. As it happened, Thursday evening was very well attended and then Friday, thankfully a nice weather day, saw us overwhelmed – in total 1,047 people attended.

Fruit beers were very popular with *Skinner's Ginger Tosser* selling out first, followed by *Hornbeam Lemon Blossom*, *Salopian Lemon Dream* and *Kissingate Cherry Mild*. In the warm weather the lighter beers, *Blindmans Buzz Light Beer* and *Gertie Sweet New World Pale Ale* disappeared very quickly; *Hog's Back Royal TEA* was the first nuptial ale to fall. The public vote winner was *Highland Orkney Blast*, with three joint seconds – *Kissingate Cherry Mild*, *Concrete Cow Cloven Hoof Vanilla Stout* and *Deeside Talorcan Stout*. The joint favourites in cider/perry category were *Magic Bus Kriek*, *Bus* and *New Forest Dry*.

We would like to acknowledge the following people: Stuart Birch, manager of the **Harvest Moon** in Orpington, for arranging the Wetherspoons sponsorship; Robert Wicks MD of *Westerham Brewery* for sponsoring the glasses again and supplying eight excellent beers; Chris Cooter of *Magic Bus* for our follow-up cider order and producing a special wedding cider with elderflower, coconut and rum added (the Malibu effect); Paul Simons for the loan of his Dutch Shuffle Board and donation of ten bottled beers and Keith Mayer for the loan of his home-made Shut the Box game.



Special thanks to Graham Austin, staffing officer and booker of bands; Vic Beale, the bar director, cellarman Mr.T; site manager Pat Ward; treasurer Andy Wheeler; two Bexley newcomers Chris and Tom and all the other CAMRA volunteers for donating their time and energy to make the festival another success story.

And last of all we extend thanks and gratitude to Alan Boakes, our festival organiser. In August he is marrying the lovely Karen. All the branch members wish you lots of happiness with your new hobby!

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The Best of Times — The Worst of Times

Key extracts from CEO Mike Benner's speech at CAMRA's AGM in Sheffield

A happy 40th anniversary to you all.

I was honoured, particularly honoured, given that I was only 5 years old in 1971 and hadn't quite found a taste for real ale, to attend a party with CAMRA's pioneers on our official birthday, 16th March and it struck me how surprised many of our pioneer campaigners are to see how big and powerful CAMRA has become today. Few of them it seems thought for a moment back in the early seventies that 40 years on CAMRA would have over 122,000 members and a turnover of nearly 5 million quid in a marketplace with nearly 800 real ale brewers.

It's thanks to the inspiration and passion of our founders and pioneers and the thousands of committed members that have followed that we are well placed and well-armed to face the massive challenges before us 40 years on as THE consumer champion for community pubs and real ale.

I was thinking of the influence CAMRA's campaigning model has had on the world. Our model, our way of doing things has inspired the population and there are today dozens of groups - Campaign for Real Education, Real Bread, Real Farming, Real Books, Real Pet Food (I've tried it and it doesn't go with real ale), Real Recycling and so the list goes on.

My good friend, Roger Protz, wrote in the *Good Beer Guide* last year '*it was the best of times it was the worst of times*'. I think this sets the theme for my report to you this year. On the one hand real ale is doing pretty well, but on the other, community pubs are stuck in a huge and unprecedented crisis.

With hundreds of small brewers, dozens of new brewers every year, thousands of pubs stocking real ale for the first time, thousands of regular beers, renewed interest in an exciting range of beer styles, thousands of new drinkers - real ale is leading in a declining beer market, giving the UK beer industry some hope - a light at the end of the tunnel.

A key concern for many CAMRA members over the years has been about real ale's image, particularly with younger people, yet research shows that this has changed. Last year there was a 17% increase in the number of 18-24 year olds recruited as real ale drinkers - those old fashioned stereotyped images of real ale have faded away. Real ale is trendy, dynamic and a product for today. Much of that success is undoubtedly down to the work of our army of volunteers over the years.

Despite a strong market performance in 2008 and 2009, I do expect to see a drop in real ale's fortunes in official figures for 2010 expected in October. The wider beer market is really suffering and in long term decline and while real ale is the star in that sector, this is no time for complacency and we must continue on our mission to keep real ale on top. So, *'the best of times'* in many ways.

For pubs though, *'the worst of times'* is probably about right. Pubs have been bombarded from all angles - further hikes in beer tax, the VAT increase, the onerous tie agreements of some pubcos, an accelerating price driven shift to drinking at home, a lack of investment to improve pub amenity, weak planning protection, decreases in alcohol consumption... and so it goes on. A perfect storm, it's been called and that more or less sums it up.

25 pubs are still closing every week and 4,500 pubs have been lost forever, in the last three years. Too many people in the industry think 1000s - tens of thousands - of pubs need to close in order to create a viable market place for those left standing. This is wrong. Pub closures kill local communities and further erode our society. Our own research shows that people are not willing to travel far to visit pubs, so when the local closes, their regular pub-going days may come to an end too. As people get out of the habit of using pubs, the whole industry - the whole of society - will suffer. We must never sign up to that defeatist and mistaken view.

Via our campaigning on the Sustainable Communities Act we have secured a commitment from the Government to consult on a ban on restrictive covenants to stamp out the practice of stopping pubs being pubs when sold. An unscrupulous and anti-competitive act. After a campaign launched at GBBF last year, we have secured a 50% reduction in excise duty on beers below 2.8% and encouraging signs that the Government will support our calls to the EU for this to be increased to 3.5%.

In stark contrast to a commitment to be a pub friendly government the 2011 budget failed to abandon the illogical and ineffective escalator on excise duty and a 7.2% increase on beer tax was the devastating result. The average tax on a pub pint will now hit over £1 with a much bigger impact on pubs than supermarkets. This, coupled with an increase in VAT to 20% is a further direct attack on the on the pub and a remarkable own goal promising to take even more people out of the responsible sociable environment of pubs into drinking cheap supermarket beer at home and alone.

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National Cask Ale Week 2011

NATIONAL Cask Ale WEEK

National Cask Ale Week is a campaign organised between CAMRA and Cask Marque. The main objective is to get more people trying real ale and encourage more pubs to organise real ale events throughout the week. This will, hopefully, lead to more trade for pubs.

1st-9th OCTOBER 2011

National Cask Ale Week aims to:

- ✓ Encourage **non-real ale drinkers** to try real ale for the first time
- ✓ Encourage **experienced real ale drinkers** to visit real ale pubs throughout the week
- ✓ Encourage **non-real ale pubs** to stock real ale for the first time
- ✓ Encourage **pubs** to organise a number of real ale events to increase trial and improve their trade

Toer de Gueuze—a Pilgrimage

At the end of April, your editor was pleased to join Chris (Podge) Pollard's Belgian Beer Tour, celebrating the *Toer de Gueuze*. What a fantastic trip that was! I joined the coach at M20 J4 just after 7am on the day of the Royal Wedding; by lunchtime we were already in the little town of Gullegem, having a fine meal at a microbrewery-cum-restaurant, 'T Rusteel. To save space, I'll refer you to the Belgian Beer Board site for details of their fabulous *Netebuk* beer: http://belgianbeerboard.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=326&Itemid=88888997

Our base was going to be a 4-star hotel in Aalst, but we weren't about to go there directly—oh no! This was the first of four action-packed days, and we still had two breweries to visit first. *De Ranke* in Dottignies welcomed us with an informative tour of their backstreet brewhouse. A fine portfolio of six beers there, with their top one, *Noir de Dottignies*, coming out at 9%ABV! www.deranke.be

Back on the bus and we were off to a motorcycle showroom in Dendermonde, as was. It is now the gleaming new home of the *Dilewyns Brewery* and we got to wander around it and taste its products before it had even officially opened. Beautiful beer was enjoyed there. For more information see www.vicaris.be and be prepared to read Flemish!

By now, time was getting on and so we made our way to the hotel. Once installed, three of us nipped around the corner to a great little pub, the **Kastanjehof**, at Keizersplein 12. We greatly enjoyed exploring their more than ample beer list. And so to bed.

Saturday, we just had three breweries to visit. *De Glazen Toren* is in a small residential street in Erpe-Mere, and is run by three friends who decided to turn their hobby into a business. The brewhouse is tiny, not much bigger than a large, double garage—which I suppose it was, really. I tasted and took home some *Cuvée Angélique* (8.3% ABV). An angelic beer, to be sure! www.glazentoren.be/home-eng.htm for more information.

It was obviously the day for micro—even nano—breweries, as *Den Tseut* in Oosteklo is basically a shed in a pretty back garden. We could only look inside two at a time. And so we sat in the sunshine on garden benches enjoying their wonderful hospitality with several glasses of excellent ale being brought round with refreshing regularity. Their (Flemish) website is at <http://huisbrouwerijdentseut.weebly.com/index.html>. We also paid a visit to the somewhat larger *Van Steenberge Brewery* (<http://vansteenberge.com/en>), which in some ways reminded me of the old Ram



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Brewery that Youngs used to have in Wandsworth, with its mixture of old buildings, modern industry, and a slightly rustic and peaceful air in the grounds.

I woke up on Sunday morning with a slight degree of apprehension. The *Toer de Gueuze* is a biennial celebration of the art of the *Lambic* brewers and the blenders of their beer to create the wonderful style of *Gueuze* beer. *Lambic* beer is liquor that uses wild yeasts for its fermentation; none is pitched into a fermenter. Instead, large casks are left slightly open, and it is a wonderful sight to see them frothing over. Naturally, young *Lambic* beer has very little condition and is a bit of an acquired taste. However, once aged and blended with other *Lambics* and other vintages, it becomes *Gueuze*, a beautifully sour and tasty drink with just a hint of fizz.

But back to the *Toer*, where all nine breweries and blenders throw their doors open to the public between 10am and 5pm and a lively party atmosphere prevails. Podge set his sights on us visiting all of these establishments, hence my trepidation. Would we do it? Those producers taking part were: *Hanssens*, *Drie Fonteinen*, *Oud Beersel*, *Boon*, *Timmermans*, *Lindemans*, *De Cam*, *De Troch* and *Mort Subite*.

Well, we did it. Almost. Had we not had a major (sat-)navigation error on the Brussels ring road, we would have. As it was, we missed out on *De Troch*, but on the way we sampled all manner of young and old *Lambics*, *Gueuze* and fruit beers. Space does not permit me to elaborate on the specifics, but it did prove to be a memorable (and exhausting) day out.

And so Monday rolled around, our last day. On our way to the tunnel we called in at a huge beer warehouse outside Ghent, **Dranken Geers**, where we had the opportunity to buy pretty well anything we had encountered on our trip. In Ghent itself we visited *De Gruut*, the town brewery, which does something fairly rare in the industry, brewing without hops. Instead, they use various herbs for flavouring and bitterness. Certainly, the two beers I had (or was it three?) vindicated their judgment: superb! See www.gruut.be/En_Beginpagina.aspx.

We even found time for a stop in the delightful border town of Veurne for a couple of hours free time. Geoff, Dave and I sat outside a café on the centre square, enjoying various brews and reflecting on the excellent time we had had. My thanks go to them for their friendliness and camaraderie, to Steve, our reliable and professional coach driver, and to Podge and Siobhan for organising such a great holiday.

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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)

AUGUST

- 4 **MMK** Maidstone Walkabout, **Bower Inn**, then **First & Last**
- 11 **MMK** Bat & Trap, Bearsted, 7.30, then **Oak on the Green** and **Old Plantation**
- 11 **BEX** **Duchess of Kent, Northumberland Heath (OBM)**
- 18 **MMK** **Red Lion**, Biddenden, then **Three Chimneys**
- 18 **GDV** **Rising Sun**, Cotman's Ash; **Chequers**, Heaverham; **Bell**, Kemsing.
- 21 **MMK** Sunday Ramble E/W Farleigh meet E.Farleigh Station 11.10
- 25 **MMK** **Duke of Wellington**, Ryarsh, then **Angel**, Addington
- 26 **GDV** **Wilmington Cricket Club Beer Festival**, Oakfield Park,
- 27 **MMK** Bus Trip to Penshurst area, dep. Maidstone Chequers 10.22
- 29 **GDV** **Seaside Crawl**; 12.30pm – Deal & Walmer, *details to be confirmed.*
- 29 **BEX** 12 Noon – **Seaside Crawl - Details from GDV Branch Contact**

SEPTEMBER

- 1 **MMK** **Rising Sun**, East Malling, then **King & Queen**
- 3 **MMK** **EAST MALLING BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL**
- 7 **GDV** **Black Horse**, Borough Green; **Harrow** then **Old House** (Ightham Common).
- 8 **MMK** **Chiltern Hundreds**, then **Yew Tree**, Sandling
- 8 **BEX** **Albany**, Albany Park (*OBM*)
- 15 **GDV** **Three Daws**, Gravesend (*OBM – venue to be confirmed*)
- 15 **MMK** **Lord Raglan**, Staplehurst, then **Stilebridge**
- 22 **MMK** **Bell & Jorrocks**, Frittenden, (*OBM*)
- 29 **MMK** **George**, Yalding, then **Walnut Tree**

OCTOBER

- 6 **MMK** **Olde Thirsty Pig**, Maidstone, then **Pilot**
- 8 **MMK** Vintage bus trip (*details to follow*)
- 13 **MMK** **Hawkenbury**, then **Kings Head**, Sutton Valence
- 13 **BEX** **Tailors Chalk**, Sidcup
- 20 **MMK** **White Horse**, Sandway, then **Red Lion**, Lenham
- 27 **MMK** **Peacock**, Iden **Green**, then **Star and Eagle**, Goudhurst

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