

# Draught Copy



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

**Free Newsletter**  
for the

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

Spring 2012

No. 166

## THE CRAFT BEER CONUNDRUM

There seems to be a burgeoning swell of opinion on the merits of craft beer. Initially, we were under the impression that the term was simply synonymous with real ale, but it appears not to be so. In fact, craft beer seems to be a broader and looser classification of not only cask ale but also those beers that are brewed with passion by artisans whose aim is to deliver a product with taste, without, necessarily, the tight restrictions of process and dispense approved by CAMRA.

The Campaign is taking note of this and has set up a working group to report on the phenomenon and make recommendations on whether our definitions and acceptance need to be changed to accommodate the implications of the craft beer 'movement'. A report is due in to the National Executive in February.

See editorial article on page 7.

### Inside this issue:

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## DRAUGHT COPY

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

### **Our advertising rates:**

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

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

The copy date for the next issue is 31 March 2012 for publication in May 2012.

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

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

## **CAMRA**

*www.camra.org.uk/festivals*

### **19TH WHITE CLIFFS FESTIVAL OF WINTER ALES**

**FEBRUARY 2-4**

Maison Dieu (Town Hall)

Biggin Street

Dover

75 strong, winter ales (none less than 5% abv), mostly from small independents and micro-breweries.

### **CHELMSFORD BEER FESTIVAL**

**FEBRUARY 1—4**

Triangle Club, Essex Cty Council

Duke Street CM1 1LX

Over 130 beers and ciders

*www.chelmsfordcamra.org.uk/wbf/index.html*

### **22ND BATTERSEA BEER FESTIVAL**

**FEBRUARY 8—10**

BAC (Battersea Arts Centre)

Town Hall Road, Lavender Hill

150 kils of real ale, traditional ciders and perries, country wines and continental beers.

*batterseabeerfestival.org.uk/*

### **28TH LONDON DRINKER BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL**

**MARCH 7—9**

Camden Centre

Bidborough Street

London

*www.camranorthlondon.org.uk*

### **22ND SUSSEX CAMRA BRANCHES BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL**

**MARCH 8—10**

Hove Town Hall

Norton Road

Hove

150+ real ales from across UK, 60+ real ales in Sussex LocAle Bar, 40+ ciders/perries, huge variety of bottled beers + country wines

*www.sussexbeerfestival.co.uk/*

### ***Non-CAMRA — Pubs and Clubs***

**April 20**

**Dartford Working Men's Club**

Essex Road, Dartford

**ST. GEORGE'S DAY BEER FESTIVAL**

25+ real ales and ciders

**April 21-23**

**Crown**

High Street, Otford

20+ real ales and ciders

*www.crownpubotford.co.uk*

**April 28—29**

**Chequers**

Laddingford

Annual Beer Festival

**May 3—7**

**Flower Pot**

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According to our sister newsletter, *Sussex Drinker*, **WJ King** from Horsham in Sussex has become the first brewery in the world to put their head brewer in every pub! Seeing the opportunity with new technologies that are being adopted by our customers, WJ King has added a unique QR code to the pump-clip and bottle label of each of its beers. Customers can now scan these codes with their camera-enabled smart phones to play a video of Head Brewer Ian Burgess talking about that specific beer and the ingredients that it is made from. Said Ian, *"we wanted to ensure that the customer really understands what they are drinking and allow them to make an informed choice of what styles and flavours they like most. Being able to see me in the brewery talking about each beer will hopefully help them to develop their palate and understand a little bit about the art of the brewer."*

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For those readers who are wondering what on earth a QR code is, here is one that'll take your smartphone directly to the CAMRA MMK Branch website.

QR Apps are available for both Iphones and Android-based smartphones.



# KENT BREWERIES

<b>Abigale</b>	07734 342278	<i><a href="http://www.abigalebrewing.co.uk">www.abigalebrewing.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Black Cat Brewery</b>	07948 387718	<i><a href="http://www.blackcat-brewery.com">www.blackcat-brewery.com</a></i>
<b>Canterbury Ales</b>	01227 732541	<i><a href="http://www.canterbury-ales.co.uk">www.canterbury-ales.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Canterbury Brewers</b>	01227 455899	<i><a href="http://www.thefoundrycanterbury.co.uk/">www.thefoundrycanterbury.co.uk/</a> <a href="http://canterbury-brewers">canterbury-brewers</a></i>
<b>Farriers Arms</b>	01233 720444	<i><a href="http://www.thefarriersarms.com">www.thefarriersarms.com</a></i>
<b>Goacher's</b>	01622 682112	<i><a href="http://www.goachers.com">www.goachers.com</a></i>
<b>HopDaemon</b>	01795 892078	<i><a href="http://www.hopdaemon.com">www.hopdaemon.com</a></i>
<b>Hop Fuzz</b>	07850 441267	<i><a href="http://www.hopfuzz.co.uk">www.hopfuzz.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Kent Brewery</b>	01634 780037	<i><a href="http://www.kentbrewery.com">www.kentbrewery.com</a></i>
<b>Larkins</b>	01892 870328	
<b>Millis Brewing Co.</b>	01322 866233	<i><a href="http://www.millisbrewing.com">www.millisbrewing.com</a></i>
<b>Moodleys Brewery</b>	01892 889877	<i><a href="http://www.moodleys.co.uk">www.moodleys.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Nelson Brewing Co.</b>	01634 832828	<i><a href="http://www.nelsonbrewery.co.uk">www.nelsonbrewery.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Old Dairy Brewing Co.</b>	01580 243185	<i><a href="http://www.olddairybrewery.com">www.olddairybrewery.com</a></i>
<b>Ramsgate Brewery</b>	01843 868453	<i><a href="http://www.ramsgatebrewery.co.uk">www.ramsgatebrewery.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Royal Tunbridge Wells Brewing Company</b>	01892 618140	<i><a href="http://www.royaltunbridgewells&lt;br/&gt;brewing.co.uk">www.royaltunbridgewells brewing.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Shepherd Neame</b>	01795 532206	<i><a href="http://www.shepherd-neame.co.uk">www.shepherd-neame.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Swan, West Peckham</b>	01622 812271	<i><a href="http://www.swan-on-the-green.co.uk">www.swan-on-the-green.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Tonbridge Brewery</b>	01732 366770	<i><a href="http://www.tonbridgebrewery.co.uk">www.tonbridgebrewery.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Wantsum Brewery</b>	0845 0405980	<i><a href="http://www.wantsumbrewery.co.uk">www.wantsumbrewery.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Westerham Brewery</b>	01959 565837	<i><a href="http://www.westerhambrewery.co.uk">www.westerhambrewery.co.uk</a></i>
<b>Whitstable Brewery</b>	01622 851007	<i><a href="http://www.whitstablebrewery.info">www.whitstablebrewery.info</a></i>

To view our current menus and upcoming events, please visit our website  
**[www.kingandqueeneastmalling.co.uk](http://www.kingandqueeneastmalling.co.uk)**

or follow us on twitter  
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Operating under the same ownership for 10 years and with our key team members being with us for many of those years, these really are the reasons we are able to ensure the very best standards in all that we do at the King and Queen, in well kept, relaxed surroundings that are open all day, every day!

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## THE EDITOR'S DILEMMA

Increasingly these days, I am tripping over the term *craft beer*. I was not sure what it meant precisely, so I turned to Google and came up with a definition that is reproduced in the front page report. My reason for being a CAMRA member is that I love the taste of real, living ale, a beer style that used to be the mainstay of the British drinking public, but one that some 40 years ago was severely under threat. CAMRA was formed specifically to fight that menace, and, thank goodness, has succeeded, spectacularly so. It is not difficult these days to find cask-conditioned ale, or even bottle-conditioned beers, with a wide variety of styles and tastes.

But, in the wider global sphere, as well as within these shores, there are beer products available that do not fit the specific description of real ale. I find myself drawn to some of the Belgian beers, such as the lambics and geuze beers, for example. One of my favourite Belgians happens to be *Rodenbach*, which only recently I discovered is pasteurised before being bottled. Now, should that fact disqualify this drink from giving me taste satisfaction? I would hope not!

As CAMRA's membership has grown (now at almost 133,000), so, I believe, should its remit. Just as it has taken to campaigning for real cider as well as real ale, I'm starting to be of the opinion that its umbrella should encompass craft beer too. Such a move would not lessen the Campaign's vigilance and support for real ale, but would make it open to a wider membership. It would be folly to throw away the potential benefits that stem from innovation and development of technique. Our 'enemy' is still the liquor produced by huge factories in great volume with questionable ingredients and no regard to taste or health.

I realise that in some quarters, possibly, I could be taken to task for these opinions. Such is the editor's dilemma. I would be fascinated to learn what you, our readers, think. Do please write or email your views (to one of the addresses on page 2) so we can pick up the discussion in the next issue.

# The Bitter End

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## Brewery snippets...

**Abigale**—The current range of beers, all brewed on a constant basis, is:

- *Ridgeway Pale Ale*, 3.8% ABV
- *Samphire Bitter*, 4.1% ABV
- *Nailbourne Bitter*, 4.5%

*Bramling* will be brewed on an occasional basis only.

There are no plans to produce a winter or other seasonal ale owing to a shortage of casks which is currently limiting production. 5-litre mini-casks will be available in both bright and live versions. These have previously all been filled bright, but experiments have shown that these containers can withstand the pressure of live beer.

James is producing a special beer for the winter Leas Lift Beer festival on 24/25 February. It will be a Porter with an ABV of around 4.5%.

**Canterbury Brewers**—opened in June 2011 and currently brews ten beers:-

- *Foundry Torpedo* – 4.5% - An amber ale
- *Foundry Man's Gold* – 4.0%
- *Canterbury Wheat* – 4.4%
- *Street Light Porter* – 5.8%
- *Canterbury Haka* – 4.1%
- *Bigglestone's Brown Ale* – 3.8%
- *Foundry Steam* – 5.4%
- *Foundry Black* – 4.9%
- *Foundry Red Rye* – 5.6%
- *Helles Lager*— 4.1%

**Goachers**— *Gold Star* was overall winner at the Kent Beer Festival.

**Hop Fuzz**— Launched their first two beers at the White Hart in Hythe back in October: *Golden Ale* and *Mango Ale* (*Golden Ale* infused with Mango). Also provided *Golden Ale* and *English Ale* for the Folkestone racecourse beer festival.

**Kent Brewery**—Throughout September and October, Kent Brewery achieved sales of over 230 casks per month. Hot on the heels of its autumn beer, *Harvest Moon* (4.5%), the *Porter* (5.5%) that sold so well last winter has been reintroduced. This was the first beer that was produced back in October 2010 for Trevor's Beer Festival at the **Bull** in West Malling. The brewery was pleased to be able to supply Trevor again last year, marking one full year of trading.

The brewery is now producing a house beer for the **Bull** at Horton Kirby

(3.7% golden ale) and was asked to produce one for the **Paper Moon** in Dartford. The brewery continues to supply a number of festivals and extend its number of outlets served. Hay on Wye is the farthest west so far.

**Nelson**—The bottling shed is now operational and sales were strong in the run up to Christmas as many orders were received from supermarkets and specialist bottle shops. The old bottling room within the brewery is to be turned into a shop.

The Christmas season saw two brews available: *Purser's Pudding Ale* 4.00% ABV was heavy on chocolate malt and had ginger, orange and rum additions. *Santa's Salvo* 4.5% ABV also appeared again.

*Thunderer* 4.2% ABV, a golden ale with citrus and floral aroma and a soft, bitter after-taste, is the start of a monthly seasonal offering. The beer is named after a warship that was involved in the Battle of Trafalgar. February should see *Defiance* 4.5% ABV out.

**Old Dairy**—The brewery has won the tribunal against Heidsieck to continue trading using the name *Red Top*. A lager, *Czech Mate*, has been added to the regular brews, all of which were available at the Tenterden Folk Festival, and a *Russian Imperial Stout* in cask and bottles is currently available.

**Swan**—Seven green-hopped beers were brewed for the brewpub's mini festival in early October. Since then a sweet milk stout has been made.

**Tonbridge Brewery**—Looking to expand and hopefully find larger premises.

**Wantsum**—Work on the adjacent unit has now been completed and has freed up the existing unit entirely for brewing.

Brewing of *Black Pig* has been resumed for the winter period.

*Fortitude* has been re-launched and sales of it are going well. Bottled beer sales also continue to go well.

**Whitstable**—Apparently Whitstable had their busiest Summer ever, which they are very pleased about. The awards they won at the SIBA competition in July (2 Gold Medals for *Native* and *East India Pale Ale*, plus the Overall Champion of the South East) have helped increase their sales even more. *East India Pale Ale* in 500ml bottles (filtered) is now available.



CAMPAIGN  
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# 7th Bexley Beer Festival



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12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> April 2012

**Sidcup Sports Club**  
Crescent Farm, Sydney Road,  
Sidcup DA14 6RA

**65+ Beers & Ciders**

**Souvenir glass, Snacks**

Updates available nearer the date on [www.camrabexleybranch.org.uk](http://www.camrabexleybranch.org.uk)

**Admission:**

Thursday 12 April

Friday 13 April

5pm-11pm

Saturday 14 April

5pm-11pm

11am-5pm

11am-11pm

(While stock lasts)

£2.50, CAMRA members £1.50

£2.50, CAMRA members Free

£2.50, CAMRA members £1.50

£2.50, CAMRA members £1.50

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# Afternoon Delight

by Colin Mann

Regular *Draught Copy* readers may recall seeing an advert a year or so ago, seeking suggestions for premises in which to base a microbrewery start-up.

Fast forward to mid-summer, and not only had suitable premises been identified, but the fledgling *Kent Brewery* kindly hosted an afternoon branch meeting for Maidstone and Mid-Kent CAMRA at its Birling Place Farm base.

The rural location between the villages of Birling and Snodland and lack of direct public transport meant that some 20 local members arrived via a variety of means, a number choosing to take advantage of the glorious summer sunshine to walk from adjacent villages, stopping off *en route* at local hostleries!

Welcoming arrivals was Director Paul Herbert, who set up Kent Brewery with Toby Simmonds. Whereas Toby's background is in brewing, having previously worked for *Dark Star Brewery*, Paul came from the digital publishing world. "I brew the beer, and Paul sells it," is how Toby sums up the division of responsibilities.

Having originally considered locating *Kent Brewery* in nearby Offham, planning issues forced Paul and Toby to find another suitable site, but in the meantime, Toby set about perfecting a range of beers using plant at *Larkins Brewery* in Chiddingstone.

In mid-January, a deal was done to move into the site of a former plastics factory at Birling Place Farm, with work to fit out the building getting under way in February. This proved to be a daunting time for Toby, whose dream of running his own brewery was now fast becoming a reality. "Having designed and specified what I wanted, I had to make sure it worked," he told Branch members.

The compact nature of the building and healthy turn out for the social meant that groups of some half dozen were shown round the brewing end of the business, while others were free to chat with Paul or among themselves in a reception area at the front. Work on transforming the room into a bar style had been completed only hours before, and if some of the furniture seemed familiar, that's because it came from the Nevill Bull in Birling!

Naturally a selection of Kent Brewery beers were available to sample, with Toby proudly offering the select gathering a chance to try *Clerkenwell Pale*, the new house brew at **The Craft Beer Co** in Clerkenwell. As that will be its only outlet, we were indeed honoured!

As the afternoon progressed, some members chose to make their way home on foot to the nearest public transport, no doubt sampling further *Kent Brewery* products at the aforementioned **Nevill Bull**, while others made their way to Snodland, where a beer tent awaited at a cricket and jazz festival.



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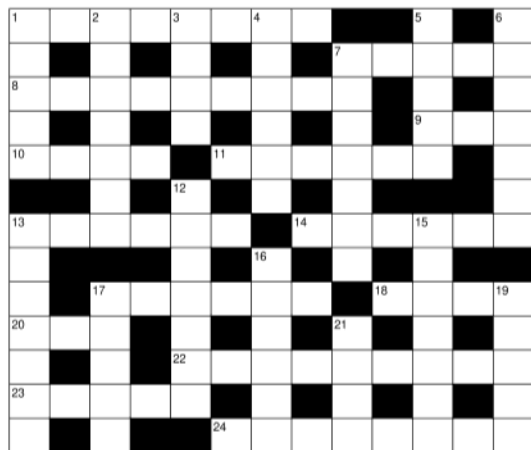
**Exclusive House Beer at The Craft Beer Co. in Clerkenwell**

**[www.kentbrewery.com](http://www.kentbrewery.com)**

# The Draught Copy Prize Crossword No. 6

compiled by MICK NORMAN

*Solution in next issue*



*Solution to Crossword No. 5  
in issue No. 165*



## Across

- 1 See 14
- 7 Pale ale country (5)
- 8 Metal vapour to decrease? On the contrary! (5,4)
- 9 By the sound of it, only an old space station (3)
- 10 Teaching union's backlash? (4)
- 11 I'm Stan, working at Rochester Cathedral on Sunday mornings (6)
- 13 Buccaneer finds food affected by rodent infestation (6)
- 14,1 Church or beer? Short opening, so no good in Rochester Cathedral most evenings (6,8)
- 17 That's odd! (6)
- 18 West goes west for dinner (4)
- 20 Contrived end of study (3)
- 22 Fatuous Navy directive initially ignores rubber-stamping (9)
- 23 Famous? Not Mr Miliband! (5)
- 24 Much-missed Maidstone brewer's symbol found in London SE1 (8)

## Down

- 1 Five points for German city (5)
- 2 Voter finds role etc confusing (7)
- 3 Hesitation about starting price for engine part (4)
- 4 Setter's conquest (6)
- 5 Suffolk brewer loses direction, leaving ale (5)
- 6 Messenger's summit in Maidstone (7)
- 7 Understanding what's visible (7)
- 12 Ted Rees directed (7)
- 13 Black dessert? (7)
- 15 Stainer composition the Greeks find intoxicating (7)
- 16 Cumbrian town where the Scots knew everything, apparently (6)
- 17 Unknown item before agreement (5)
- 19 Festival Isle... (5)
- 21 ...Drug induced fall (4)

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**Angel, Addington** – Lee March has had the toilets completely re-fitted and both Ladies and Gents now have full-length mirrors, so there is no excuse for not looking your best. The bar front has had the old barrel sections removed and there is also a new back-bar. My last visit found guests, *Addington Angel*, which is the *Westerham* house beer and *Theakston Double Cross IPA* with regulars *Shepherd Neame Spitfire* and *Courage Best*.

**Bush, Aylesford** – Kim has been putting on some guests recently including *Youngs Special* and *Adnams Gunhill* which have proved popular. *Fullers London Pride* remains as the regular ale.

**Bull, Barming** – This was closed for a while but has now re-opened and here we have seen the ubiquitous *Sharps Doom Bar*, together with *Wells Bombardier* and *Courage Best*.

**Bull, Benenden** – Mark had the usual good selection of good ales on when we made a foray into our southern area. A group of musicians were playing well and not at a deafening level favoured by some venues. Of the *Dark Star Hophead*, *Larkins Traditional*, *Weltons Bull Bitter* and *Harveys Sussex Best*, the *Hophead* and *Larkins* proved to be the most popular.

**King William IV, Benenden** – New licensee Lyndora had *Shepherd Neame Master Brew* and *Spitfire* on the bar when we made a branch visit.

**Woolpack, Benover** – At this popular dining pub we found the seasonal *Sheps Late Red* together with the regular *Master Brew* and *Spitfire*.

**Cock, Boughton Monchelsea** – The beers are always in good condition here and the guests, *Potton Shannon* and *St Austell Trelawney*, proved particularly popular. The regular is *Shepherd Neame Master Brew*, and Dave normally takes the seasonal ales and those ales provided by the pilot plant at the brewery.

**Mulberry Tree, Boughton Monchelsea** – This restaurant no longer has *Goachers Fine Light* but still keeps *Harveys Sussex Best*.

**White Hart, Claygate** – We hear this *Shepherd Neame* pub is now run by Mr R Auldjo. No visits as yet since the change.

**Rising Sun, East Malling** – This village local shows sports events on the TV and always keeps *Goachers Fine Light* and *Theakstons Best Bitter*. There is usually an interesting guest ale on the middle pump.

**King & Queen, East Malling** – This popular dining venue keeps *Westerham Prince of Ales* as a house bitter and has recently had as regulars *Ringwood Best*, *Harveys Sussex Best* and *Sharps Doom Bar*.

**Red Bull, Eccles** – As a change from the usual *Sheps* beers and *Wells Bombardier* I found *Otter Ale*.

**George & Dragon, Headcorn** – A change of management again as David Ball decided not to stay after all.

**Peacock, Iden Green**— A correspondent informs us that this pub sells not only the regular *Sheps* beers, but also those from their pilot plant.

**Plough, Langley** - Paul Bates took over here on the 14th November following on from the previous long-standing licensees. A new cellar has been installed and now up to 6 real ales will be available, including a 'house' ale, *Plough Bitter*, being brewed by Tonbridge brewery. One hand pull will be dedicated to *Shepherd Neame*, another to a guest mild and 3 further guest ales. I have received a good report on the food as well.

**Marden Village Club, Marden** – It's not often we get to visit a club but we were afforded a warm welcome and found they had good facilities here. The beers available were *Harveys Sussex Best* and from *Sheps*, *Christmas Ale*, *Master Brew* and *Spitfire*.

**Dragoon, Maidstone** – Colin Beck has left this *Shepherd Neame* pub and the current licensee is Mr R Barker.

**Fox, Maidstone** – Mandy & Duncan are now longer in the pub which was found to be closed on 14 November.

**Hare & Hounds, Maidstone** – Re-opened on 22 October following a re-fit and is being run by Kaz Kaur, who seems to have re-juvenated it. Now there are two regular beers *Courage Best* and *Master Brew* with up to two guest ales. *St Austell HSD*, *Fullers Red Fox* and *Adnams Ghost Ship* were among the first guests to appear.

**Paper Makers Arms, Maidstone** – This pub in Upper Stone Street with the distinctive blue tiles on the exterior has been closed since March and has been reported to have been sold and to become a real ale pub again.

**Swan, Maidstone** – You can get a very good pint of *Sheps* beer here with *Master Brew* and *Kent's Best* usually available. *Spitfire* is often on the bar and the current seasonal with a guest from the pilot plant whenever possible.



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**Wheatsheaf, Maidstone** – There is always the regular *Courage Best* here and we found guests *Caledonian 80/-*, *Brains Festive Cheer* and *Jennings Redbreast*.

**Kings Arms, Offham** – I heard that a new licensee, Jo and her two sons are now running this village pub. A notice states that it does not open till 4pm and since I arrived before 1pm, I was unable to find out more.

**White Horse, Otham** – Our first branch visit for the 2012 found *Courage Best* and *Sharps Doom Bar* in good order on the pumps.

**New Swan, Sandhurst** – Re-opened on 23 October. No reports as yet.

**Bull, Sissinghurst** – We found this closed on 6 October. No further news.

**Wateringbury, Wateringbury** – There has been a re-fit here making the interior a little lighter and some glass screens have appeared which help cut down the noise from adjacent areas. *Greene King IPA*, *Sharps Doom Bar*, *Wells Bombardier* and a guest ale were available on my last visit.

**Bull, West Malling** – Now has a sixth pump and so should always have 5 ales available, unless they have been consumed too quickly for Trevor to keep up with replacements. *Youngs Bitter* is the regular ale and guests tend to come from Kent micros, *Kent Brewery* and *Goachers* being the closest and most frequently seen.

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I'm writing these notes during the limbo period between Christmas and the New Year, hopefully looking forward to a prosperous 2012 and cheerfully looking back at 2011, during which two of our foremost real ale pubs, the **Bull** at Horton Kirby and the **Crown & Thistle** in Gravesend, both closed unexpectedly and both re-opened after a short while and are regaining their former status without any significant alteration in style. Suzanne at **The Bull** has re-instated the popular Bingo Quiz on the first Wednesday of the month and both pubs have impressive rotating beer menus.

In the previous issue we mentioned the closure of the **Fruiterers Arms** in Crockenhill, which fortunately turned out to be temporary, as the pub is now up and running again, initially offering *Courage Best* and *Fuller's London Pride*, and we look forward to sampling real ale again at the "**Mud Hole**" in the near future. The other pub in Crockenhill, the **Chequers**, underwent refurbishment recently and, on passing, I couldn't spot any handpumps, only tall fonts dispensing *Sharps Doom Bar* and *Wells Bombardier*, similar in design to the large font at the **Lullingstone Castle** in Swanley serving *Greene King IPA*.

The branch held a social in Eynsford in November and we were disappointed to find that the **Five Bells** was closed, devoid of furniture inside, and showed no indication outside of future developments. Fortunately this was another temporary closure and the pub was very busy over Christmas. For the record we visited the other pubs in Eynsford, the **Malt Shovel** sold a good pint of *Young's Bitter* and *Sharps Doom Bar*, the **Plough** was offering *Spitfire* and *Doom Bar* and the **Castle** had *Shepherd Neame Master Brew* and *Late Red*, all standard beers from regional breweries.

Nevertheless Eynsford has much more real beer to offer than Swanscombe, which has seven pubs. This time last year we had high hopes for the **Alma**, but this pub has closed and re-opened a couple of

times in 2011 and is now called **J.J.Sports Bar** with no real ale. The **Sun** and the **Anchor** still do not sell any real beer. Only the **Rising Sun (Top House)**, at the top of Craylands Lane, regularly sells traditional beer and we understand that real ale is occasionally on offer at the **Wheatsheaf**. However there is light at the end of the tunnel. The **George & Dragon** at the Galley Hill end of Swanscombe, another pub constantly closing and re-opening, now has a new landlord, who we are informed is very keen to operate a traditional pub with an assortment of real ales. *Oakham Brewery Bishops Farewell* and beers from *Brodies Brewery* in East London were available around Christmas, and many bottled beers are stocked, including Belgian favourites and several craft beers from the USA, so we have high hopes for this corner pub in 2012. Oh, I nearly forgot, the seventh pub in Swanscombe, the **Morning Star**, is still closed and boarded, but planning permission for conversion into residential accommodation has been rejected.

Our Branch Pubs Officer objects in writing to all planning applications which would result in the permanent loss of a pub. However there is one current application which the branch is supporting. As reported at length this time last year, The **Vigo** at Fairseat, on the main A227 road between Meopham and Wrotham, re-opened in December 2010. Andy and Val have worked very hard to keep the pub going during 2011, with regular live music, local beers from *Goachers* and *Old Dairy Brewery* and are now serving food. The application concerns planning permission for a rear extension and car park. One small back room and the large garden are already accessible to the public and a rear car park would certainly improve matters, as there is only space for about five or six cars at the front. Please continue to support the **Vigo**, which is still an authentic pub, retaining the old Kentish daddlums table in the public bar for public use.

We are always on the lookout for more pubs selling good quality local, predominantly Kent brewed ales, to join the dozen or so local pubs and clubs which have CAMRA *LocAle* accreditation. Jim Clarke, landlord of the **Ivy Leaf**, in Darenth Road, Dartford, has recently installed three new handpumps bringing the total to six real ales. One line is dedicated to a local beer, which was *Millis Thieves'n'Fakirs* on a recent visit and *Old Dairy Brewery* has also been supported. The two regular beers are *Bombardier*

and *Doom Bar* and three rotating guest beers come from a wide portfolio and were *Purity Mad Goose*, *St.Peters Best Bitter* and *Thwaites Your Very Good Elf* on a visit over Christmas. Jim is a very enterprising landlord, who devises and hosts a regular Sunday evening Quiz and there are regular monthly Live Music and Open Mic nights on various Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The branch held an impromptu Christmas social on 15<sup>th</sup> December at the **Paper Moon**, an enterprising Dartford town centre *Wetherspoons* outlet where Chris and Kelly Smith actively support local breweries. That evening was a “Meet the Brewer” event with *Kent Brewery*, based in Birling near Maidstone, which had recently celebrated its first birthday, one of several new breweries to have opened in Kent in the past two years. Head brewer Toby Simmonds and Paul Herbert are passionate about their beers, which follow the excellent examples of progressive breweries such as *Dark Star*, *Brewdog*, *Thornbridge* and some of the new American craft brewers. The *Pale*, golden ale at 4%, was in superb condition, as was the *Bosses Ale*, a new stronger 5.5% golden beer, which may become a house beer at the **Paper Moon**. Excellent dark beers were also showcased, including *Cobnut*, *Porter* and *Stout*.

The current mayor of Dartford, Eddy Lampkin, is a CAMRA member, and a beer festival was held at the end of October in support of the Mayor’s Charity Appeal. The venue was **Dartford Cricket Club** Bar in Hesketh Park and 25 cask ales and several ciders were available for a private event on the Friday and a public festival on the Saturday, and we would especially like to thank the club steward, Dave Hill, for his assistance setting up the event. A small CAMRA contingent sampled the ales and members were impressed with the quality and range of beers from smaller breweries such as *Crouch Vale*, *Hopdaemon*, *Hopstar*, *Raw*, and *Ulverston*, regional breweries *Sharps*, *Shepherd Neame* and *Thwaites* and our very local *Millis Brewing*, with *Kentish Gold* being particularly good. Jim from the **Ivy Leaf** helped sponsor this festival and we were introduced to another sponsor, Peter, the new landlord at the **Horse & Groom** in Leyton Cross, Wilmington, who has improved the quality and choice of beers available in this pub, with the solitary *Courage Best* having been replaced by the regular *Sharps Doom Bar* and one or two guests; *Hop Back*

*GFB* on my visit. The **Horse & Groom** joined the Dartford Independent Quiz League at short notice for this season and Peter is keen to promote other pub-related activities.

Hopefully, during 2012, the majority of pubs will be able to prosper and continue to expand their beer ranges, particularly supporting local and micro breweries, but this depends on the public reciprocating by frequenting the pubs and drinking the ales, so please let us know of success stories, particularly about pubs which do not appear often in these pages. The “Use It or Lose It” slogan still rings in our ears.

I’m wondering whether some of the “lost pubs” of yesteryear were as good as people made out, as I believe that standards in general and quality and choice of real ale in particular, have improved greatly since I started frequenting pubs in the 1970’s, and I’ve frequented most of them in the area. One that I never knew about was the **(Old) Cedar Tree** in Daltons Road, Crockenhill, which closed as a pub sometime around 1990, became a club (Dalton’s), then an old people’s home, before being demolished (before 1998) in favour of new housing. Some of our members have visited it but cannot remember which beers were sold – any ideas? Going back further we are informed of a pub called the **Hope & Anchor**, beside the village green opposite the **Chequers** in Crockenhill, which was still open in 1962, but subsequently demolished for housing (same old story).

Thinking back to Swanscombe, I’ve always been intrigued by the name “**Top House**” and have learnt that there was also a “**Middle House**” and “**Bottom House**” in Craylands Lane, which must have been the **North Kent Tavern** and the **Coopers Arms**, which were in existence within drinking memory. Do any of our older readers remember these pubs, exactly where they were located and whose beers they sold?

Returning smartly to 2012, February and March are quiet months for beer festivals in the area but April, Easter and St. George’s Day will bring the barrels out of the woodwork, so to speak. Regular festivals are due to take place in April at the **Crown** in Otford (*see ad on page 25*), the **Dartford Working Men’s Club** (which sold over 500 different real ales from more



than 150 breweries during 2011) and of course the nearby *Bexley Branch* beer festival at the **Sidcup Sports Ground**, which is planned for the week after Easter from Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April. Full details of these events should appear on our branch website [www.gdvcamra.org.uk](http://www.gdvcamra.org.uk) closer to the dates.

Finally, we've just received notification that a brand new pub has opened in Dartford during December. This is the newly built **Beacon**, Halcrow Avenue, Dartford DA1 5PR. It is a *Beefeater Grill*, part of the new *Premier Inn* complex on the Bridge Business Park, situated very close to junction 1a of the M25, Dartford Tunnel and the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge. *Fullers London Pride* and *Shepherd Neame Spitfire* were sampled at the reasonable price of £2.95 a pint.



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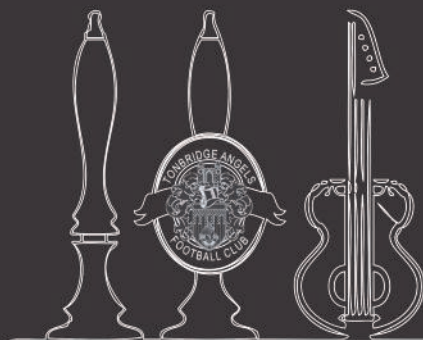
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## Rye, Icklesham and Hastings

by Andy Osborne

It was a crisp but bright and sunny morning when I set off to Maidstone, the meeting place for the day's bus trip to Hastings. The *Explorer* bus ticket had increased in price slightly to £6.80 but still represented excellent value for money for a whole day's travel.

Thirteen of us caught a no 12 to Tenterden, where we had a few minutes to wait before the 312 arrived to finish the journey to Rye. On arrival, a short walk took us to the **Queens Head Inn**. This pub is in the *Good Beer Guide* and is a 17<sup>th</sup>-century free house, which reopened in 2010, and is becoming known as a music venue as well as for its beer from local breweries. It has homemade food, real fires and a large meeting room, and the landlord gave us a warm welcome on our arrival. The bar hosted three beers with *Silver*



*Top* and *Gold Top* from the *Old Dairy Brewery* and *Hophead* from *Dark Star*. I tried the first two and enjoyed both. A bar billiards table had been spotted and a competitive game ensued.

Sooner than desired, it was time to leave and take a No 100 to Icklesham, where we had a choice of two pubs. The group chose the **Queens Head**, as it promised a larger range of beers as well as a possibility of one from a new brewery in Hastings, called, strangely enough, the *Hastings Brewery*, which the previous landlord had told us about. This pub is a regular in the *Good Beer Guide* and was the local CAMRA branch Pub of the Year winner in 2009. The interior has five areas with three log fires, is adorned with an eclectic mix of decorations and memorabilia and has an autumn mini beer festival.



This pub was certainly popular with diners, as it was fairly full on a Saturday afternoon in November.

There was an impressive list of eight ales from which to choose, namely *St Austell Trelawney*, *Greene King IPA* and *Abbot*, *Labyrinth* from the *Salopian Brewery*, *Harveys*

*Sussex Best*, two from *Dark Star* being *Saison* and a double-hopped ale *APA* with Harvest hops, and lastly *Harvey's Bonfire Boy*, but sadly no sign of any from the aforementioned new brewery, so that is a pleasure for another day, and I have to say the quality of the beers matched the quantity. As there was a shortage of seats inside we decided to enjoy the sunshine in the spacious garden which has a splendid view over the fields to the coastal area of Rye.

After a period a section of the party decided they had time to visit the alternative option, another GBG pub the **Robin Hood**, a roadside pub dating from 1607. It has a large garden to the rear and a spacious car park. In July it hosts the popular Icklesham village beer festival. On the day of our visit, I am later told (as I remained at the **Queens Head**) had *Highgate Lone Wolf*, *Hardy Hanson's Bitter*, *Young's Special*, *Gangly Ghoul* from *Greene King* and *Old Dairy's Silver Top*. There was also some bar food, which I understand included some pants-ripping pickled onions marinated in birds-eye chillies.

Reunited back on the bus, we continued our journey to Hastings where we again had to make a choice between the **Dolphin** overlooking the unique fishermen's huts in the Rock O'Nore area, or the **Filo (First In Last Out)**, which has been covered more fully in a previous issue; both are in the GBG. Finally, we decided on the **Dolphin**, and on entry to this seafront pub, surprisingly found no fewer than six beers on sale. In no particular order were *Harveys Sussex Bitter*, *Old Reg* from the *Kite Brewery*, *Courage Directors*, *Dark Star Hophead*, *Harveys Old Ale* and *Wadworth's Swordfish*. This old

town pub is decorated with fishing memorabilia and is busy at weekends and holidays. Food is available and live music and quiz nights take place during the week. After a couple of splendid ales we were duly joined by a few of our group who had taken the opportunity to eat in a nearby fish and chip restaurant.

On leaving here we had an enjoyable walk along the seafront to reach the bus stop where the 340 was to be found, which would take us to Westfield and in particular the **Old Courthouse**, a community-focused pub in the centre of the village with an open fire, traditional games, and featuring *Dark Star Meltdown*, *Weltons Autumn Gold* and *Harveys Sussex Best Bitter*. I tried the *Meltdown* first and found it very agreeable. I also tried their tasty and inexpensive food. An annual beer festival is held on the August bank holiday weekend. Another bar billiards table in this pub was sure to resurrect the previous rivalry and at the close of play some of the branch's top brass declared themselves the winners against the 'rank and file'.

We now had to start the return journey proper and so back on the 340 to Tenterden and once there we just had time for a quick one in the nearby **White Lion Hotel** with its olde worlde charm and a choice of *Jennings World's Biggest Liar*, *Wychwoods Hobgoblin*, *Ringwoods Best Bitter* and *Old Thumper*, I chose the *Jennings* offering as did most that had followed me in and it was pretty good. Time to go after this and we crossed the road to catch the 12 back to Maidstone. Once returned to the group starting point, we decided to have a last drink in the conveniently placed Wetherspoons establishment the **Muggleton Inn** where we said our farewells.

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Welcome to 2012 and another difficult year for the beer drinker, with prices bound to increase with the March budget. The ‘Schooner’, two-thirds of a pint, introduced by the Government at the beginning of October as a legal measure has failed to take off with nowhere in the branch area selling ale in this amount.

This year’s **Bexley Beer Festival** (*see ad on page 11*) will be music free as a result of the music being under-appreciated for the past few years. With events such as the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic, the Olympic Games and the European Football Championships to look forward to, there will no doubt be a large number of related guest beers brewed by the brewers, hopefully.

Our October Branch meeting began with an early evening visit to the **New Cross Turnpike**, then the meeting proper at the **Wrong ‘Un**, finishing off the evening at the **Furze Wren**, thus allowing everyone to enjoy the JD Wetherspoon beer festival. It was noted that the **Furze Wren** has increased its number of hand pumps to ten and that along with Sidcup’s **Tailors Chalk** has been awarded five star certificates in the ‘Loo of the Year’ awards 2011.

November saw us meet in the **Royal Oak (Polly Clean Stairs)**, Mount Road. It was our first official visit since the pub re-opened. Luckily it still retains its rural charm and was selling *Fullers London Pride*, *Wells & Youngs Bitter* and *Harveys Best* at £3.20 a pint. The landlady commented that she had never sold so much real ale in one session before. Food is now available from noon until 7pm Monday – Saturday and a Sunday roast from noon till 5pm.

Our December meeting was held in the **Jolly Millers** in Bexleyheath. Sadly only *Sheps Late Red* was available although at £2.80 a pint we were not complaining as it was in very good nick.

Sad to report that the iconic **Black Horse** in Sidcup High Street has been totally demolished and will be replaced by a Waitrose supermarket and an 84-bedroom Travelodge. The front will however be replicated minus the bay windows. This former coaching inn dated back to 1705 and at



one point was one of only five buildings in the town. In 2004, Bexley Council gave it the status of a locally listed building. In 2002 the pub was rebranded the Blue Rose before finally closing in 2007.

The **Jolly Fenman**, Blackfen Road re-opened on 7<sup>th</sup> November as a John Barras pub, still sporting two handpumps, while at the edge of our branch boundary in Upper Wickham Lane the **Foresters Arms** has reverted to a pub with two handpumps (from zero) selling *Fullers London Pride & Wells & Youngs Best*.

In Erith town centre **Potion** has removed its handpumps but in Bexleyheath, the **Kings Arms** was found to be selling *Wells & Youngs Bombardier* and *Deuchars IPA* while the **Woodman** had *Batemans Rosey Nosey*.

In Bexley village, the **Railway Tavern** continues to offer a wide range of beers at a fair price for the area. A pie and a pint for can be had for £5.50. Pensioners are able to buy a pint of *Wells & Youngs Courage Best* at £2.00 (11-4 all week). From Monday to Thursday there is a commuters' discount where the same beer is just £2.75.

In the 'Bexley in Bloom' competition the **Yacht**, Long Lane won first prize in the new for 2011 'Best Public House & Restaurant' category. Congratulations to joint managers Sue Barnes & Jason Togwell.

Our socials this quarter saw us remain close to home with the nights drawing in. In October we toured Bexleyheath, starting at the **Prince Albert**, where the *Late Red* (only beer on) ran out just as the last two members of our party arrived, so we moved on fairly swiftly to the **Jolly Millers** to again find only one beer available (*Brakspears Bitter*) at £2.00 in excellent condition and plentiful supply. We stayed for quite a while before moving on to our final destination for the evening the **Rose** where we found *Sharps Doombar*, *St Austell Trelawny* (changed on our arrival by a very accommodating landlord), *Adnams Lighthouse*, *Harveys Best* and *Wells & Youngs Bombardier*.

In November we hosted a joint social with Gravesend & Darent Valley Branch in Crayford, and not only did we have a fair turnout of their members but also two new members of our own branch (Welcome Mary & Pat). We started at the **Charlotte** where there were *Wells & Youngs Bitter* (changed on arrival by the genial Pete), *Thwaites Wainwright* and *Sheps Spitfire*). From here we moved on to the **One Bell** where we found *Greene King IPA*, *Harveys Best* and *St Austell Tribute* (which was sadly off).

Finally we made our way back down the hill to the **Crayford Arms** (a former Pub of the Year) where we found *Sheps Spitfire, Late Red* and *Kents Best*.

In December we held our annual Twixtmas crawl (so named as it falls twixt Christmas and New Year. We met as usual at the **Robin Hood & Little John** (Pub of the Year) for a beer and something to eat. Most of us then moved on to the **Wrong 'Un** followed by the **Rose, Furze Wren, Jolly Millers, One Bell and Crayford Arms**. By the time we reached the Arms, there were just six of us from an original start number of 10. Of the six, three of us stayed to do the Christmas quiz in which sadly we finished 4<sup>th</sup> of 5 but the quiz managed to raise £75 for charity.

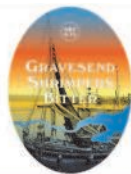
Finally still closed and future uncertain are the following pubs: **Royal Alfred** (Erith), **Cross Keys** (Erith), **Red Lion** (Foots Cray), **Infernos** (Welling) and **Bar 2** (Bexleyheath).



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# A Polar Expedition

by Jeff Tucker

Back in 1908, American Frederick Albert Cook was the first person to claim to have reached the North Pole, using dog-sleds and sledge-hauling. Apparently it took him ages. He must have been trying to find a completely different pub, because I got there in under an hour from East Malling!

This walk is about six miles long and starts from West Malling, accessible by train from the Borough Green and Maidstone directions, by bus 72 from Maidstone or 151 from the Medway Towns. Starting from the main square bus stops, turn right and head down Swan Street towards the station. If coming from the station, walk down Station Approach and turn right under the bridge.

The next bridge carries the A228 by-pass. Just after this, turn right and use the small gate next to the large metal one. A short walk up the slope leads to a path on the left. Take this path and, on reaching a lane, continue almost opposite. This will bring you out onto Mill Street. Turn right, and the **Rising Sun** is a few yards away round the corner.

It doesn't seem that long ago that East Malling had five pubs. Now there are only two, but they are both excellent, if contrasting pubs. The **Rising Sun** offers three real ales, with *Theakston Best Bitter* and *Goacher's Fine Light* being the regulars and, like the next two pubs, is open all day. The third beer is often something unusual for the area, and prices are extremely keen. Simple but good-value food is available at lunchtimes in the week, and on Thursday evenings. On Sundays there is a popular lunchtime meat raffle, and several TV screens show sporting events throughout the week.

Leaving the **Rising Sun**, turn right and walk along Mill Street for about five minutes until you reach the **King & Queen** on the left. This pub usually has four or five ales, including a house beer *Prince of Ales*, from *Westerham Brewery*. Food is a big attraction here, and there are several separate areas in which to eat and drink. Altogether an enterprising and well-kept pub, the **King & Queen** has a programme of events throughout the year.

Once fed and watered, cross the road opposite the bar entrance, and head for the nearby churchyard. Follow the path between the graves, keeping

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the church to your left. At the end of the churchyard, take a path on the right, which is the start of the long but gentle ascent to the North Pole. Soon you will come to the railway line, which should be crossed with care, then you will reach a lane.

Turn right here for a few yards, then left into what looks like someone's driveway. The footpath will soon become clear, and is dead straight for a long way. After a couple of kinks, you reach Sweets Lane, where you need to turn right, passing the former Woodman pub before reaching a crossroads. Turn sharp left here into a chestnut coppice. The path skirts a paddock, then straightens out through general woodland.

Ignore all tracks to the left and right, until you reach a lane, North Pole Road, where you turn right. A ten-minute walk brings you to a busier road. Turn left here, using the grass verge on the left, and the **North Pole** pub is just around the corner. Your reward for the climb from East Malling is one of the four beers on, which normally include *Greene King IPA*, the excellent *Timothy Taylor Landlord*, and a beer from *Tonbridge Brewery*.

This pub has recently had a complete refit, and is popular with diners, having a separate restaurant at the rear. When it is time to leave, take the lane across the road from the pub. You may think this is a wide lane for a no-through-road, but there is a reason for this. If you look at a map of the area dating from before 1940, this road was once a major thoroughfare, connecting with the A228 above Mereworth. The building of West Malling Airfield at Kings Hill caused the road to be cut off.

Eventually you will be confronted with a gate blocking the road to vehicles. You can walk round this, then a few yards further on, turn right between rows of boulders. The path beyond here may be diverted soon, as the tentacles of Kings Hill housing estate continue to spread into the countryside. Keep fairly straight on for about 20 minutes, gently descending.


Turn left onto a lane, then you soon reach a junction. Ignore the lane on the right and the footpath on the left, and continue straight on along the wonderfully non-PC Pikey Lane. Ten minutes later, a T-junction appears; turn right here, then left onto a footpath opposite Broadwater Farm. The path leads through an orchard to another lane (Lavenders Road), where you can either take the path branching to the right, or go straight ahead onto the lane.

Both routes cross the by-pass, then converge again at the edge of West Malling Country Park. Turn left here into Water Lane, and a short walk brings you back to West Malling High Street. If you are in need of more refreshment, there are six real ale pubs here - the **Farmhouse**, **Five Pointed Star** and the **Joiners Arms** in the centre, the **Lobster Pot** in Swan Street, the **Scared Crow** on Offham Road, accessible via the churchyard, and, with the best beer selection, the **Bull** at 1 High Street, next to the railway line.

Happy wandering, and you will be able to tell people that you have walked to the North Pole!

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## Pubs in Prague and Beyond

by Jeff Tucker

I recently took another trip to the Czech Republic to see my late father's family. I flew to Prague, where I bought a 5-day ticket for all public transport in Prague for 500Kc, giving no saving on a 100Kc one-day ticket, but it would save buying a ticket every day. The exchange rate is now down to about 27Kc (Koruna) to the pound. Time was when it was twice that.

I was based in the Globus Hotel, which proved to be very good value for Prague, about £25 a night. It is only a few minutes' walk from Rožtyly metro station, but it is up a steep hill by an unlit path through a wood. I arrived two hours too early to check in, so left my luggage and caught the metro back to the main station, Hlavní Nadraží, to buy my train tickets for the next two days. In this article, beer prices shown are for a half litre unless otherwise stated.

My trusty companion was the excellent *CAMRA Good Beer Guide to Prague and the Czech Republic*, published in 2007. Unfortunately, smoking is still permitted in bars in the Czech Republic, which can be unpleasant in some places.

After sorting out my tickets, I caught a no.5 tram to Lipanská, from where it was a short walk to **Kralovství** on Kubelíkova, a small bar selling three *Cerna Hora* beers from near Brno. *Granat*, a dark beer, and *Lezak*, a golden ale, were both very nice, 4.8% and 28.50Kc. An English menu persuaded me to try a Moravian pork chop, which was like a schnitzel with a fried egg.

Back on the no.5, I got off at U Prohanu, and found the **Pivní Galerie** (*pictured opposite*) just across the road. This is an amazing place; there is an off-licence with lots of rare bottled beers, and a small pub at the side with two ever-changing draught beers. *Nova Paka Special Tmavý* was a 6.3% dark beer from the Hradec Králové region, costing 35Kc and very nice indeed.

Next was *Pernštejn Světly Lezak* from Pardubice, a 5.2% beer which was less enjoyable. I then chose a bottled beer from the fridge, *Chodovar President*, 5%, from near Plzeň, which was not very interesting. This pub closes at 8pm in the week, and is closed at weekends. I returned to my hotel to check in, and found it spotlessly clean. It seems to be popular with German coach parties.





From the other side of the metro station, I caught bus 118 or 136 for a short ride to Sporilov, the terminus of tram route 11. Right next to the turning loop is **První Pivní Tramway**. This looks fairly hideous from outside, but much better inside. Four unusual draught beers included *Primator Hefeweizen* from Hradec Kralove, which was 34Kc and a very nice wheat beer. *Lobkowicz Princ Max*, from just south of Prague, was 20Kc for a 0.4 litre glass.

Two trams took me to **Pivovarský Dum**, a home-brew pub at Stepanska, but it was full, with a queue out of the door, so I went back to the Globus Hotel, where the lobby bar sold *Kozel Tmave* at 40Kc, which was a nice dark beer. I noticed that soft drinks were 2-3 times the price of beer for the same quantity!

On the Saturday, I travelled to Teplice to visit family, and was plied with bottled beers. Back in Prague, I caught a tram to Brevnovský Klášter and found **U Kláštera** across the road, where *Klášter Svelte* was 31Kc and *Tmave* was 26Kc. Both were very good, and at a good price for a tourist area near the castle. Back at my hotel, I discovered the 'beer hall', which was not that spectacular, but *Kozel* was 30Kc, 10Kc cheaper than the lobby bar a few yards away. *Kozel* means 'goat', by the way.

On Sunday, I visited more relatives. More bottled beers ensued. Part of the single track rail line through the village (Kytlice) had been washed away by recent floods, so there was a replacement bus service. I had a few minutes between bus and train on the return journey, so popped into the bar opposite Ceska Kamenice station, where *Breznak Svetle* was only 18Kc.

Monday started with a bus journey of nearly two hours to Chomutov, to the north-west of Prague. I was unable to find a bar in the old town which I had visited on a previous trip, so I settled for **Restaurace U Lipy** (lime trees?) opposite the bus station, where *Louny Svetly Lezak* was 23Kc. This 5.1% beer was nice, but the pub was a bit dingy, and the toilets uninviting! *Zlatopramen* was on the price list, but not available. There were no bottled beers either.

The railway runs through the centre of Chomutov, but the two stations are at either end of the town, so I had a 10-minute walk to get to the station. The 25km line to Zatec would not have survived Dr Beeching! Most stations are request stops, two have disappeared since my map was published, and two more are shown in the timetable but seem to have no scheduled stopping trains at all, even on request!

Zatec is hop-growing country, producing the Saaz variety, and has a brewery in the historic town centre. Brewing began in Zatec in 1261. Unfortunately, the brewery shop only had too-small t-shirts. Most bars in the town don't sell the local brew, but I found one, **Restaurace U Medveda** ('Bear'), which had bored staff!

*Zatecke Premium*, 21Kc, was an excellent 4.9% golden beer, and *Master*, brewed by *Pilsner Urquell* was a *polotmavy* (half dark) beer. I returned to Prague by train, changing at Luzna u Rakovnika. All trains seem to connect beautifully in the Czech Republic, and the fares are based solely on the distance, with no special deals, but the prices are dirt cheap, anyway.

Back in the capital, I found the *Novometsky Pivovar* brew pub next to Vodickova tram stop. This rather smoky cellar bar had two beers, both at 38Kc. The dark was pretty good, but the light, a cloudy wheat beer, was less enjoyable.

I caught another tram to Florenc, and the nearby **Pivovarsky Klub** on Krizikova. This stylish bar has six ever-changing beers on tap, and

dozens in bottle from all over the country. I was like a kid in a sweet shop!

*Stepan Svetly Lezak* was an excellent unfiltered beer brewed at the associated *Pivovarsky Dum* (38Kc). *Broumov Opat Bitter* was a hoppy 4% beer from near the Polish border (35Kc). The bottled beer list included loads of imports, including *Strongbow* - passed on that one. Belgian beers were mainly 155Kc (about six quid!). You could sit here and drink beers from the whole country, and the rest of the world.

In bottle, *Vyskov General* at 6% (35Kc) was an excellent non-gassy beer all the way from the other side of Brno. The cellar bar seemed busy and noisy, but it was much more civilised upstairs. An amazing place.

Tuesday was to be my last day, but my flight wasn't until the evening. I found the **U Medvidku** brew pub near Narodni Trida metro/tram stop. Downstairs, this pub only sells *Budvar*, which is a good beer, though hardly unusual, but if you walk right through the pub and up the back stairs, you get to the **Minipivovar**, where you can sit next to the brewery.

The beers were really good, but expensive, at 50Kc. *Oldgott Barrique* half-dark was 5.2%, and *1466* light lager was a yeast beer. They also produce *X-beer*, a 12.8% bottled brew, but I didn't sample that one. There was a lovely aroma coming from the brewery, and the building includes a hotel. See [www.umedvicku.cz](http://www.umedvicku.cz).

My last port of call was somewhere I had heard about from an English couple I had met in **Prvni Pivni Tramway** on Friday, called **Zly Casy**, which is a few yards east from Namesti Bratri Synku tram stop, served by routes 11 and 18.

This cellar bar has no fewer than 24 beers on draught, including some from Bamberg in Germany. I sampled *Weizen* from *Kocour*, a new brewery in Varnsdorf, just inside the Czech Republic, where my father used to work. This was a very nice 4.5% wheat beer, and cost 45Kc. *Tambor 12 Svetly Lezak* was also very good, and was a 4.8% beer from Kralove nad Labem (32Kc).

As a postscript, I was in the **Euston Tap** a few days later, a tiny bar in a former gatehouse outside Euston Station in London, which has about eight real ales on gravity and 20 foreign beers on draught from all over the world. What should I espy but a *Kocour* beer, which I had been drinking in **Zly Casy** a few days earlier!

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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. All meetings start at 8:30pm unless otherwise stated.

**BEX** = Bexley, **GDV** = Gravesend and Darent Valley, and  
**MMK** = Maidstone & Mid-Kent (*OBM* = Open Business Meeting)

## FEBRUARY

- 2 **MMK** **King's Arms**, Offham then **Angel**, Addington
- 2 **GDV** **Foresters**, then **Malt Shovel**, **Ivy Leaf**, Dartford
- 4 **MMK** *RATAS Trip to Dover Beer Festival*
- 8 **BEX** **Prince Of Wales**, **Upper Belvedere** (*OBM*)
- 9 **MMK** **Railway Tavern**, Staplehurst, then **King's Head and Bell**
- 15 **GDV** **Earl Grey**, then **Campbell Arms**, Northfleet
- 16 **MMK** **Walnut Tree**, East Farleigh, then **Bull**
- 18 **MMK** *Bus or Train Trip to Laddingford, Winter Warmers Week*
- 22 **BEX** **Crayford Arms**, Crayford (*GBG Selection Mtg*)
- 23 **MMK** Sutton Valence walkabout, start **Swan**
- 23 **GDV** **Dartford Working Men's Club** (*OBM & GBG selection*)
- 29 **BEX** **Portrait** (8pm), then **Tailors Chalk** and **Alma**, Sidcup

## MARCH

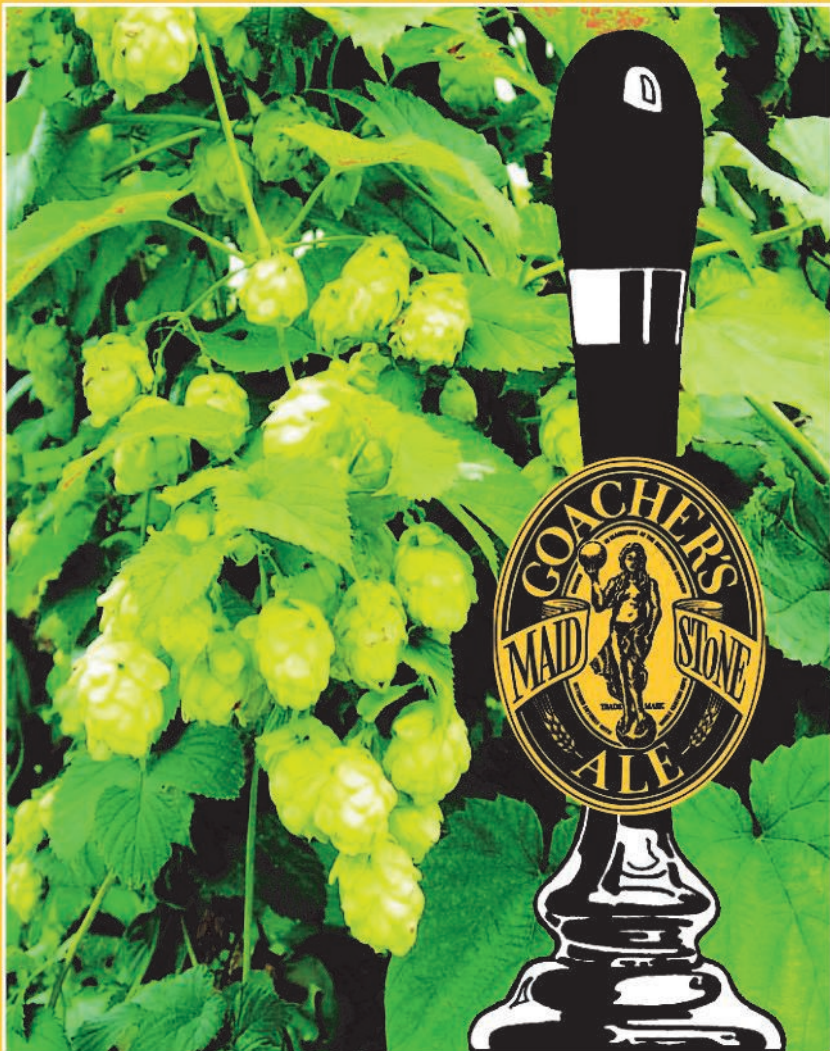
- 1 **MMK** **Brickmakers**, Maidstone, then **Flower Pot**
- 8 **MMK** **New Swan**, Sandhurst, then **Oak & Ivy**
- 10 **BEX** *KRM – Crayford Arms, Crayford* 11.30am
- 14 **BEX** **New Cross Turnpike**, Welling
- 14 **GDV** **Rising Sun**, then **George & Dragon**, Swanscombe
- 15 **MMK** **Cock**, Boughton Monchelsea, then **Stile Bridge**
- 21 **BEX** **Golden Lion** (8pm), **Volunteer & Kings Arms**, Bexleyheath
- 22 **MMK** **Red Lion**, Lenham (*OBM*)
- 29 **GDV** **Railway**, Longfield; then **Black Lion**, Hartley.
- 29 **MMK** **Drakes**, Maidstone, then **Druids**

## APRIL

- 5 **MMK** **Cock Horse**, Detling, then **King's Arms**, Boxley
- 6 **MMK** *Good Friday Ramble: W Malling stn to Nevill Bull*, Birling
- 12 **MMK** **George & Dragon**, Headcorn, then **Bell & Jorrocks**, Frittenden
- 12 **BEX** **Bexley Beer Festival** – Sidcup Rugby Club
- 18 **BEX** **Flying Boat**, **Court House & Working Mens Club**, Dartford 8pm
- 18 **GDV** **Jolly Drayman**, Gravesend (*OBM*) (venue to be confirmed)
- 19 **MMK** **Vine**, Goudhurst, then **Globe & Rainbow**, Kilndown
- 21 **MMK** *Coach trip to East Herts*
- 26 **MMK** **Rising Sun**, East Malling, then **King & Queen**

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