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**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Issue 30
Winter
2006/07

The Newsletter of the Deal Dover Sandwich & District
branch of the Campaign for Real Ale

CHANNEL DRAUGHT



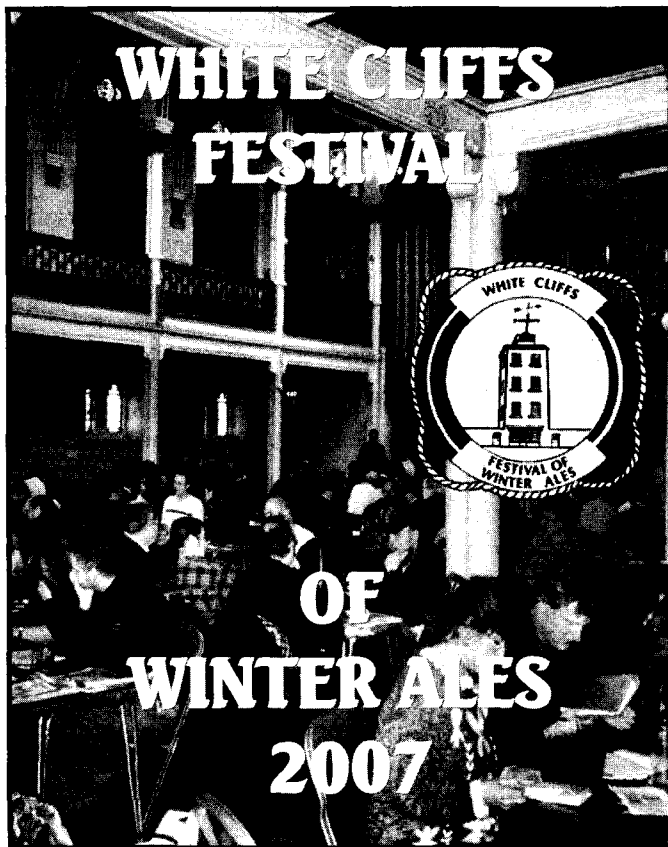
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FOR
SHEPHERD
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BEFORE**
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you really
safe to drive

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Channel Draught is the Newsletter of the Deal Dover Sandwich & District Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale.

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Branch of the
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views expressed
herein are not
necessarily those of
this branch or
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Please drink
sensibly!

CHANNEL DRAUGHT

ISSUE 30
Winter 2006/07

January 2007 and a Happy New Year to all our readers.

The brewing and pubs industry is as ever unsettled (in a ferment as a wag might put it), and in fact it is difficult to think to think of any other area of business that appears so embroiled in argument and dissension, so interfered with and worried over by Government, and so prone to the whims of fashion and taste – and the forthcoming year promises to be no exception.

The biggest anticipated shake up this year is of course the smoking ban, due to be introduced in July. Everywhere else where a ban has been applied to public houses and bars there has been a fall off in trade, a consequence that pub owners are well aware of, and which has seen mass disposals by some of the larger operators, of 'landlocked pubs' – i.e. smaller locals without a car park, garden, etc. where smoking facilities could be provided. In due course it would be surprising if not a few were to close, as many at the moment are only just viable.

Meanwhile, in what some might feel is a demonstration of not completely joined up thinking, there appears substantial support in Parliament for the Sustainable Communities Bill, which if passed will require the Government to produce a strategy for supporting local small businesses, including pubs (see National News). CAMRA, as one of over eighty organisations behind the bill, is also actively promoting local pubs; its annual National Pubs Week in late February this year being targeted at community pubs.

And February of course has particular resonance for our own branch, specifically the White Cliffs Festival of Winter Ales, set, as usual, for the first weekend of the month at Dover Town Hall, when we will have available 70 plus rarely seen beers from all over the country.

Martin Atkins (Editor)

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EVENTS DIARY

Fri 2nd & Sat 3rd February.	WHITE CLIFFS FESTIVAL OF WINTER ALES Maison Dieu (Town Hall), Dover Fri 1pm - 11pm Sat 10.30am - 6pm
Mon 19th February, Sat 24th February	Branch Meeting, Royal Oak, Nonnington , 19:30 Sandwich Pub Stroll (10 pubs). Meet 11.00-11.30am, Red Cow, Moat Sole, Sandwich.
Mon 19th March	Branch Meeting, Eagle, Dover , 19.30.
Fri 6th & Sat 7th April,	Planet Thanet Easter Beer Festival , Main Hall, Winter Gardens, Margate.
Mon 16th April,	Annual General Meeting & Branch Meeting , Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club, Dover, 19.30.
Mon 21st May,	Branch Meeting, The Charity Inn, Woodnesborough . 19.30.

For full details of Rural Rambles, please contact John Pitcher on 01304 214153.

Branch meetings normally held every third Monday of each month.

Events marked * are not organised by CAMRA.

Interested in joining CAMRA? Come along to one of our meetings!



The Local News

Contributors - Martin Atkins, Anne McIlroy, Roger Marples,
John Pitcher, Tony Wells, etc.

If you have any news about a pub in your area – new beers or different beer range, alterations to the pub, beer festivals or anything that may be of interest to our readers, please e-mail:

channeldraught.pubnews@virgin.net

We are, of course, equally pleased to hear from Landlords with news about their pub.

DOVER

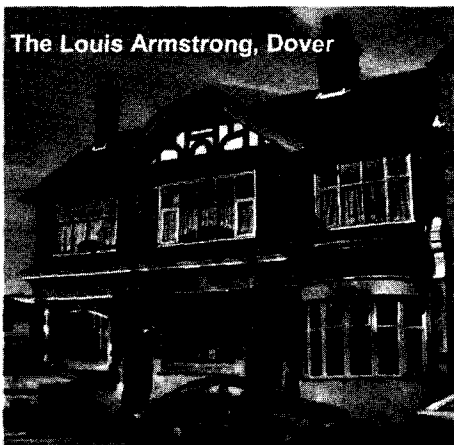
Flotilla, Bench Street: Apologies to Bish, who in our Autumn issue we announced had retired. This was a surprise both to herself and the pub, as she most certainly hasn't; although she has had considerable time off sick over the last year. We wish her well. Meanwhile former landlord, Dan Warwick, is now owner of the **Leather Bottle**, Mongeham (see below).

Eagle, London Rd: Having successfully kept two pumps going over the summer (Greene King IPA and Fuller's Discovery proving particularly popular), Steve expanded his range in the Autumn. Late September found Nelson Trafalgar on the bar, and early November the now rarely seen Marston's Pedigree alongside Nelson's Pieces of Eight; these last two, on the day we visited priced very competitively at £1.50 and £2 a pint respectively. Pieces of Eight was subsequently joined by two other Nelson brews Rochester Bitter and Loose Cannon. Our intrepid reporter dutifully tried all three, and found the first two excellent and the third superb. Steve is especially keen to provide local beers, and would like to take some Gadd's but is finding it hard to obtain. Meanwhile, Rochester appears to have become a regular, and will normally be found alongside one or two other

beers from the same brewery.

Red Lion, Charlton Green: An easy pub to miss in a cul-de-sac at the bottom of busy Frith Rd. Real ales are Bombardier and London Pride, crib and darts are played and there's an open fire in the public bar. For warmer weather, behind the pub is a walled garden and skittle alley.

Louis Armstrong, Maison Dieu Rd:



Hopdaemon Skrimshander is now well established as the pub's standard real ale, its sales considerably outstripping the replaced Bass. Guests include the usual suspects – Grand Union, Burton Bridge, Nelson and Gadd's No 5, the

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latter seeing in New Year with Skrimshander. Music remains a strong element, particularly the Sunday night jazz which has been a regular feature since the 1960s. A special treat for the Tuesday before Christmas saw a performance by Pat Halcox of the Chris Barber Band, and friends, the line-up including such Louis jazz regulars as Charlie Conner, Trefor Williams and Barry Weston; and, of course, just for the cost of your drinks – compare with a London club.

Primrose, Coombe Valley Rd: Permission now granted for demolition of pub and erection of eleven houses and seven flats. Open and shut on a regular basis for several years now, this was no doubt inevitable, bearing in mind the size of the site and the current high property prices: and although no real loss to real ale (except for a short spell a few years ago the pub hadn't sold it for ages) it's always sad to see a pub go – a telling reflection on our current society.

Lord Nelson, Flying Horse Lane: Last Autumn saw new landlords, Helen Rickard and Andy Stratford installed at this town centre pub. Helen, for whom this is a return to the town after 26 years during which time she's managed pubs in Dartford and Medway, said she hopes to provide an old-fashioned pub atmosphere with home cooked food including traditional Sunday roast. There will be darts and pool, and quiz nights will be introduced. Early November was spent refurbishing the pub, with official re-opening Friday 17th.

Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club: Following the lead of Blakes, a year earlier, the RCPYC in late 2006 dispensed with keg draught Guinness and replaced it with handpumped Goacher's Imperial Stout, Phil Goacher obligingly providing the beer in 4.5 gal. pins. At present the club's other real ales are also Kent brews – Fine Light, also from Goachers, and

Hopdaemon Incubus.

White Horse, St James St: The usual



eclectic selection over the last few months, with Timothy Taylor Landlord currently the sole regular. Excellent beers from ever reliable stalwarts such as York, Dark Star and Rebellion, the latter's Roasted Nuts in early December proving particularly popular, as did, about the same time, Frog Island Best Bitter. At the time of writing Dark Star Best Bitter is on the handpumps, superbly well rounded and dark – more the colour of a mild, and a new beer to this reporter. Christmas saw the appearance of many a strangely named, and sometimes strangely flavoured, seasonal brews, Dark Star producing a gingerish five percenter.

Blakes, Castle Street: Kent brewers remain well represented in this cellar bar. Goacher's stout is a regular and its other beers appear from time to time. Hopdaemon and Gadds feature prominently, Incubus always selling particularly well. More recently Peter has started taking beers from the Westerham Brewery, to I think almost everyone's approval, as its beers, in this writer's opinion, are of consistently excellent quality. From further afield beers from the Northumberland Brewery, and Dark Star and 1648 from Sussex, are often available. As an alternative to ale there are normally one or two ciders and a perry. The pub was also

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the venue for the branch's Christmas Social (i.e.: nosh up) and very good it was too – one of the best we've had, and many thanks to Peter, Katheryn and the staff for their efforts. We were also able to enjoy Goacher's fearsome 1066 old ale, which 'came on' during the evening, a deceptively strong brew of 6.7% which should be treated with considerable discretion.

At **Snoops** (or Images or the ABC or Granada), thirty or forty yards down the road Wetherspoon, as reported in our last issue, is pushing ahead with the re-development of this former cinema-cum-nightclub, which they acquired several years ago. However, rather than renovate the existing building, now in a state of considerable neglect, it plans to demolish and start again, with the new premises up and running by late 2007/early 2008.

Eight Bells, Cannon Street: Dover's existing Wetherspoon establishment and the subject of mixed opinions over the years. However it does offer one of the widest ale selections of any of its local pubs, extended even further during their autumn beer festival. In particular of late it has been selling Marstons Old Empire, a truly excellent brew, kept here in superb condition. In late November/early December the pub hosted a wine festival. There were 14 wines on offer - including two from the Chapel Down winery in Kent.

In River the **Dublin Man O' War**, traditionally a Greene King outlet with IPA and Speckled Hen landlord has discontinued the latter since the drop in strength and has been looking elsewhere for his second real ale. Goacher's Goldstar has been on, and he's interested in taking other Kentish brews. Along the road Shepherd Neame's **Royal Oak** was



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selling Late Red and Master Brew during the Autumn and **Crabble Mill**, Robinson's Lighthouse.

At the **Orange Tree**, Folkestone Rd. an application for demolition of pub and erection of six flats is currently undecided and the place remains boarded up. And seemingly no work yet on the increasingly derelict looking **Westbury**, nearby, where permission exists for conversion to residential use. Further along Folkestone the **Engineer** remains closed and up for sale. In Ladywell rumours suggest that the **Falstaff** is about to re-open but no sign as yet.

DEAL

Bohemian, Beach Street: The upstairs restaurant provided an ideal venue for our October Branch Meeting, John having kindly opened up especially for us that night – the pub normally being closed Monday evening. After our September meeting at the Coastguard, this was the second meeting in succession where our deliberations were accompanied by the sound of waves crashing onto the foreshore outside – how romantic! Beers were Woodforde's Wherry, Caledonian XPA, Cottage Temple Meade and Adnams Broadside, plus Weston Organic Cider.

Leather Bottle, Mongham: As predicted in our Autumn issue Dan Warwick, formerly of the **Flotilla** in Dover has taken over a pub in the Mongeham area, and as suspected it turned out to be the Leather Bottle. Refreshingly, with so many freehouses being acquired by the big pub chains, he has bought it freehold. Already Dan has reinstalled real ale, currently Bass and Flowers IPA, but expects to be expanding the range in the near future.

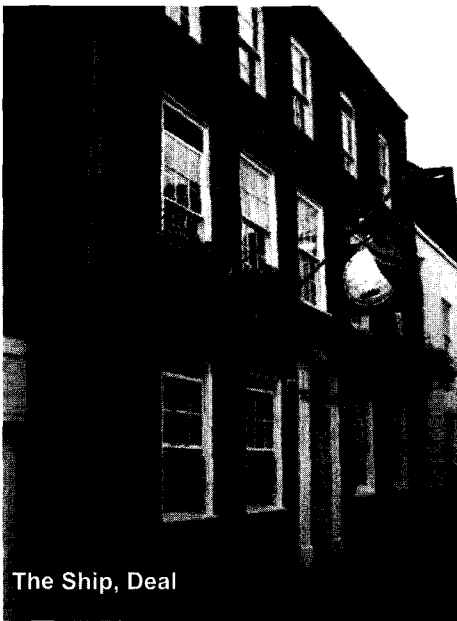
Alma, West St: Recently refurbished and redecorated, a visit in mid October found the pub 'much more welcoming than its previous gloomy aspect', however our correspondent would have appreciated a wider beer range than the regularly seen

London Pride and Greene King IPA.

Brickmakers Arms, Mill Rd: Currently no real ale, the landlord saying he had tried it but there was no real demand.

Granville Arms, Cambridge Rd: Yet another pub appears to have given up the struggle, with planning permission applied for to convert the ground floor into two flats. Nearby, the **Lifeboat** still stands shut up and empty, with permission we understand also for conversion to residential. Better news, however from the **Berry**, Canada Rd. where Chris will be running a 'Happy Hour' (or at least half hour) between 5.30 and 6.00pm starting on the 1st February.

Of course a pub that's been running a 5.30-6.00 pm happy hour for some years is the **Ship**, Middle Street; and to all ap-



The Ship, Deal

pearances very successfully, the bar, whenever this reporter calls there, being well full. A visit in late October found Deuchars IPA, Gadd's 7 & 3, Wyre Pid-



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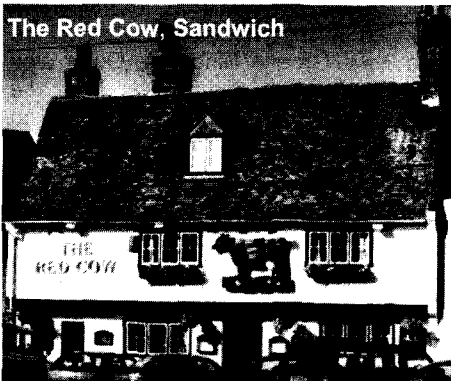
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die 'Piddle thru the leaves' and Summer Lightning. Master Brew was interestingly notable by its absence.

SANDWICH AND RURAL

Red Cow, Sandwich: A late night visit



one Saturday evening in October found a few diners finishing off. The bar was deserted, which may reflect the prices –

Gadd's 5 £2-90, Abbot £3, although both good. Other real ales were London Pride and Greene King IPA. From memory in July the pub was selling Gadd's 5 at £2.50 a pint.

Fleur de Lis, Sandwich: Regular real ale line up is Wadworth 6X, Greene King IPA plus guest – the latter recently including Arundel Castle Bitter, Cairngorm Sheepshagger's Gold and Acorn Nutcracker. Beer quality normally excellent, with even the oft criticised IPA scoring well, although someone remarked that the



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Sheepshagger's was a bit cold, and, with its citrus flavours more suited to summer than November. Clientèle remains very varied – football watching youngsters to 'genteel Pfizer types having cocktails', whoever they may be.

Elsewhere around Sandwich the sparsely furnished **Crispin** is still selling Adnams beers, Bitter and Broadside, and a recent visit to the **George and Dragon** found Bombardier, Master Brew and Ruddles County on handpump, but even less space in which to drink any of them, as more tables are devoted to food. A Saturday night visit to the **New Inn** found enjoyable ambiance and 'crikey! perfectly drinkable Courage Best' – bares out comments from elsewhere that it's a much improved beer.

Blue Pigeons, Worth: Another freehouse



The Blue Pigeons, Worth

disappears, this time into Punch's sprawling empire. However not only has the pub lost its independence but its real ale range has been reduced; the four pumps in the middle of the bar have now become two at the side, on our visit offering Greene King IPA and Wadworth 6X, while their place has been taken by an enormous font for that traditional British beer, Stella Artois.

Bell, Shepherdswell: Still closed after last summer's disastrous fire permission has now been granted for a single storey extension at the rear, no doubt to be included when the pub is rebuilt. Any

information about projected reopening gratefully received.

Yew Tree, Barfrestone: After three months closed the pub reopened on January 1st with new landlord Chris. Reports from 'Our Man in Eythorne', suggest that on the beer front not much has changed except for the addition of the ubiquitous Greene King IPA. Other ales included Incubus and a beer from the 1648 brewery, with Skrimshander due on shortly. Plans include the reintroduction of live music.

Five Bells, Ringwoud: Situated on the main Deal-Dover road in the middle of the village, the pub will be familiar to everyone, but how many have ever been inside? – probably not many, standing, as it does, on a busy junction with parking not easy (our own fault, some would say, for not taking the bus). However the pub is well worth a visit. Popular and very much a local – there's always someone in there as the saying goes – its real ales are Bass and London Pride, a recent pint of the latter being one of the best this correspondent has enjoyed.

Five Bells, Eastry: At the other Five Bells, the Mild has changed from M&B to Tetleys, Punch having removed the former from their list. Other regulars remain Greene King IPA and Bass. Over the festive period the pub rapidly disposed of two firkins of Dogbolter. Also available in recent weeks has been the now rarely seen Burton Bitter, and on a visit in mid January your correspondent enjoyed an excellent pint of Adnams Broadside.

Fitzwalter Arms, Goodnestone: A visit in October found new landlord/landlady in residence and the restaurant under renovation. Beers were Master Brew and Spitfire – also to be found, on the same day, at the nearby Griffin's Head, Chillenden, along with Shepherd Neame Best and Late Red: these last two both proving excellent.

Hare & Hounds, Northbourne: Landlord Bruce reduced the number of beers during the quieter Autumn period – mid-November finding just Theakston's Best, Flower's IPA and Harvey's Sussex, with no Master Brew and no stronger bitters. However the Christmas period saw numbers boosted again..

Plough, Folkestone Rd. Hougham: A major refurbishment should be currently underway costing £700,000 and lasting ten weeks, as part of Beefeater's £45m overhaul of its 158 restaurants across the country. A company spokeswoman said they wanted to move away from being a steak and chips restaurant. The transformed establishment will be 'posher and smarter', 'trendier and more upmarket' and 'stylish and modern', but also comfortable and inviting with new leather booth seats. The menu will be extended with more adventurous dishes and a char-grill in the new kitchen. As well as

steaks and burgers there will also be lamb, chicken and fish dishes, pastas and salads. Although they don't mention it we presume you'll still be allowed in for the humble pint.

Red Lion, St. Margarets-at-Cliffe: Good to see favourable reports from this pub again, having for many years seemingly been lost to lager drinking youth. Beers in mid November were Young's Bitter and Charles Wells Bombardier, and in good condition. 'Checked this place out of duty, as on rare previous visits it seemed rather grotty', commented our reporter, 'but a welcome surprise. Changed hands in July, I think, and bar and dining room attractively refurbished. Food provided for 6 without a murmur at 2.30 – good ambience.'

Chance Inn, Guston: Just along the road from Connaught Barracks the pub was a staunch supporter of opposition to their conversion to an open prison, and hosted

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celebrations for the successful campaigners after the decision to drop the plan was announced by the Home Secretary in November. It normally carries one real ale, Bass and Black Sheep featuring regularly.

Butchers Arms, Ashley: The planning inspector has now upheld the Dover District Council's decision to refuse planning permission for conversion to a dwelling and dismissed the appeal, stating that it considered Ashley and its environs as a community, and that there had been inadequate attempts to sell the property as a pub. As far as we are aware the pub remains closed.

Still closed as well the **Endeavour** at Wootton and the **Way Out Inn**, Westmarsh, which is up for sale for £475,000 freehold. Also up for sale (£330,000 leasehold, or £650,000 plus freehold) is the **Chequers** at West Hougham, closed since mid October. Further afield the **Three Horseshoes** at Lower Hardres remains closed and had been joined at last visit, before Christmas, by the **Duke William** at Ickham.

FOLKESTONE

East Cliff Tavern: Normally carries one or two real ales – a recent visit found Hopdaemon Incubus and Father Christmas Ale from Cottage. As well as these two brewers, regular suppliers include Wychwood, Archers and Gadds – a fine pint of Gadds Seaside being enjoyed in mid November.

Lifeboat: The East Cliff's near neighbour, and with new licensees, seemingly returning to the glory days of the early 1990s with up to six real ales available. A visit in the New Year found Landlord, Adnams Bitter, Greene King IPA, Old Speckled Hen and Coachouse Xmas Pudding, alongside Harveys Best which appears to be standard. Also seen in recent weeks Gales HSB and

Thwaites Liberation.

Happy Frenchman: Now well back in its stride under new manager, Sharon, following the fire and refurbishment last year. Two or three real ales normally available – recently Theakston best, Green King IPA and Bombardier. Nearby **Harveys** were selling Courage Best and Directors, and Archers Best, the latter still at £2.00. A quick half of Directors found it sharing some of the improvement recently noted in its stablemate Courage Best, but hardly reminiscent of its days at Bristol.

Princess Royal: Some changes afoot here since our last visit. The pastel internal lighting as gone, as has the TV in the front bar. There's a dart board in the back bar and Master Brew on the handpumps. Still not many customers though.

Around the Bayle, the **Pullman**, despite its extensive array of handpumps only ever seems to sell one real ale – in early January Hobgoblin. Meantime at the **British Lion** there was Greene King IPA, Old Speckled Hen and a Christmas Ale from Nottingham's Milestone Brewery, and at the **Guildhall** Greene King IPA and Abbot, and Charles Wells Bombardier, with due on St Peter's Suffolk Gold, Snecklifter and Skinners Cornish Knockers.

Elsewhere the **Two Bells** and **Martello** are still closed with steel shutters everywhere. The former gives every impression of being lined up for redevelopment, while the disappearance of all signage offering it for sale, lease or whatever, from the latter suggests that it might be joining it. In Cheriton as far as we know the **White Lion** also remains closed and boarded up.



TONY'S TAPPINGS

The perambulations and musings
of our Pubs Officer, Tony Wells

A Memorable Visit

I don't often get to the Deal Hoy but I had reason to visit this particular pub at the end of 2006. I have to admit that this was one of my most memorable pub visits for a long time.

First a scrummy pint of Shepherd Neame Porter. I am sure that Shep's have changed their recipe for Porter in recent years as it is no longer what I would call a "knife and fork" beer. Nevertheless, it was very good. This was followed by an extraordinarily good pint of Shepherd Neame's Bishop Finger. Bishop's Finger is something you very rarely see on draught so I just had to try it. In fact it was so nice I just had to have another pint.

While complimenting Jeff, the landlord, about the quality of his beer he told me his secret: was to keep the beer turning over so quickly that it doesn't have a chance to even think about going off. The beers I had that day were testament to that philosophy. Cheers Jeff!

The Joys of being Pubs Officer

A number of people, when they find out I am Pubs Officer, look at me with an incredulous stare and ask me "How can I apply for the position?", "Does that mean you have to visit every pub?" and "Do you get a subsidy?". One day I'll write up "A month in the life of a Pubs Officer." Anyway, one of my goals is to keep track of the pubs in our area, even the ones that don't serve real ale. There are three reasons for this: firstly, to ensure that all our pubs are visited regularly; secondly, to keep in touch with any changes in our pubs; and finally, in case a non-real-ale pub sees the light and starts serving real ale, like the Leather Bottle in Mongeham did recently. Before I go on, I should mention that there are other stalwart members of the branch who help me in this task - so a big thank you to them. Here are two events which show why the role of a Pubs Officer is important to CAMRA and what makes my post enjoyable.

The first was on a visit to the Three Tuns, Staple (see The Pubs Officer goes Green below). This pub is at the edge of our area so I don't often get to visit it. On this particular occasion, I was pleasantly surprised to find real cider being served: Biddenden's Bushells. The pump wasn't just any old pump: Steve had converted an old cider jug. Bushells is not for the faint hearted, and Steve only serves it in half pints.

My second event, which may well have been referred to elsewhere in this month's Channel Draught, was on a CAMRA walk to St Margaret's at Cliffe. I recall on previous visits to the Red Lion that it was a town-like pub with little going for it in either real ales or ambience, unless you liked Sky Sport.

However, when I entered the pub I almost walked back out to check that this was the right one. The whole pub had been renovated from top to bottom. The bar area was tastefully done out with wooden floors and comfy sofas and there was a carpeted res-

taurant next door. Blissfully, there was no Sky sport. I got speaking to Nick, the landlord. He and his wife, Sarah, had moved in at the end of July and had spent some time doing the place up. They opened up, at the beginning of August. The pub is open all day and they are thinking about having live music once a month. The real ales on offer were Young's Bitter, which is their regular beer, with Charles Wells Bombardier as a guest. At the time, Bombardier was selling well so they were considering keeping it on. So, remember, if you've heard any news about a pub in your area, or you are a landlord with some news, then let me know at channeldraught.pubnews@virgin.net.

The Pubs Officer goes Green

Frankly I have never been one to travel by bus: it's not always easy to get to the bus stop, the buses weren't frequent enough and you couldn't always guarantee the times they would arrive. Everything changed when Stagecoach introduced The Diamond Route. Now the options and possibilities of travelling around our area are endless. Buy a Day Explorer ticket, which is slightly under £5.00, from the bus driver and East Kent, as they say, is your oyster, or perhaps that should be Whitstable Oyster Stout!

To give you an example of what I mean, here's a log of one of our shorter days out:

Note: Although we hadn't planned it, we noticed that every pub we visited served

Depart: 11.44. Route 14. Betteshanger, Circular Road. Paid £4.70 for a Day Explorer.

Arrive: 12.02. Sandwich, Guildhall. Sandwich is a great pub terminus - 4 pubs within a minute's walk: Fleur de Lis, The Greyhound, The Market Inn and The New Inn. Popped into the Fleur, where there was Wadworth 6X, Greene King IPA, Cairngorm Sheepshagger Gold.

Depart: 12.32. Route 13. Sandwich, Guildhall.

Arrive: 12.47. Ash, Chequers. The Chequers was serving Greene King IPA and Shepherd Neame Spitfire. Alternatively, we could have got off at The Volunteer, at the other end of Ash.

Depart: 13.14. Route 14. Ash, Chequers.

Arrive: 13.20. Staple, Three Tuns. The Three Tuns had Ruddles County, Greene King IPA and Rev. James, from Brains, which was replaced by Greene King Fireside. They were also serving Biddenden's Bushells cider. We had lunch here so we were not in a hurry.

Depart 15.12. Route 14. Staple, Three Tuns

Arrive: 15.58. Great Mongeham, Church. The Three Horseshoes, where their regular beers Greene King IPA and Gadds #5 were available.

Depart: 16.41. Route 14. Great Mongeham, Church

Arrive: 16.49. Betteshanger, Circular Road. Popped into our local, The Crown, Finglesham, for a quick one on the way home.

Greene King IPA.

Some final thoughts and comments about this new bus service. The bus normally arrives within a couple of minutes of the scheduled time. This is something that makes the day out so much more fun because you spend less time worrying about whether the bus will arrive or not. You can often find yourselves clock-watching to ensure you don't miss the bus. Someone suggested that we should take an egg timer with us next time to remind us when the next bus is, but this may be just slightly overkill. There are very few pubs in our area that you cannot get to by bus. On our particular trip the most walking we did was to and from our house, and once we were on our journey all the pubs on the route were within yards of the bus stop.

As a last comment, I'd like to congratulate Stagecoach on providing a prompt and efficient service. The buses have nearly always been on time and if they are late, it is only by a few minutes. Also, £4.70 for a day out roaming the Kent countryside is great value for money. More information can be found at Stagecoach's web site at <http://www.stagecoachbus.com/eastkent>

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The National News

By Martin Atkins

SHEP'S SOARS

Shepherd Neame has reported its 31st consecutive year of growth, with pre-tax profits rising 13.9% to £11.2m for the year to 1st July, and beer sales up 6.1%. Chief Executive Jonathan Neame said pub costs were generally rising but believed that their policy of investing in the highest quality outlets and focusing on the needs of the local market would continue to drive profitability in the future. The brewery is continuing its policy of buying additional outlets, particularly well established Kent pubs and pubs within the M25, where it now owns 55. Recently two more have been bought in central London, one off Leicester Square and one at Fenchurch Street, however it is not planned to take the estate any further north than Watford. Disposals realised £1.6m while £13.5m was spent on buying nine 'outstanding freehold pubs'.

The Government's ban on smoking, to be introduced next year, will be a major challenge, and over the next few years the brewery will be investing £3m into its pub gardens and patio areas to try and alleviate matters. Commenting on the implications of the ban, Chief Executive Jonathan Neame, warned that there were too many pubs, and too many of those were poor with inadequate service and investment: the smoking ban would force them to improve or drive them out of business. 'There need to be fewer pubs and the ones that there are need to be of higher quality,' he said. 'There are parts of Kent where there are too many pubs and plenty are closing. There are so many communities where you've got four or five pubs competing for the same market. That market would do well if

there were one or two good pubs.'

On a happier note Shepherd Neame was one of only seven UK companies in 2006 to achieve a Queen's Enterprise award for sustainable development; recognising the brewery's efforts to reduce the environmental impact of its Faversham operations and pub estate, and its work with the local community. Qualifying activities included providing bicycles for staff to travel to work, installing broadband and Post Office services in some rural pubs, cutting noise and pollution in Faversham by opening an out-of-town distribution centre, initiatives to cut electricity and water consumption, and using local barley for beer and local food in its pubs. 'As Britain's oldest brewer, we need to ensure the brewery's activities have a positive impact on the environment and recognise the need for investment in modern technology and best practice in all we do,' said Jonathan Neame.

HARDYS & HANSONS AXED

To nobody's real surprise Greene King, having taken over Hardys and Hansons in September 2006, closed the brewery with the loss of 80 jobs at the end of the year. Some brands have been transferred to Bury St Edmunds while cellar services and distribution have been retained at Kimberley. At the time the decision was announced in October, Greene King Chief Executive Rooney Anand said 'We concluded with regret that it doesn't make economic sense to continue brewing at Kimberley. The best way to ensure that Hardys & Hansons brands continue to flourish is to transfer brewing to Bury St Edmunds. We look

forward to offering Dark Mild, Cool and Olde Trip to a much wider audience.' The future for Hardys & Hanson's 3.9% bitter is less clear. It was not included in the announcement of those brands to be transferred to Bury, although a brewery spokeswoman subsequently said that it would still be available in ex-Hardys & Hanson's pubs.

BURNING ISSUE AT LEWES

More controversy for Greene King in East Sussex. Following the tradition of burning the town's enemies in effigy, which has included many Popes and Osama Bin Laden, Bonfire Night in Lewes saw a 'green king' put to the torch, symbolising the town's bitter dispute with the brewery over its decision to drop Harvey's Sussex Best from the Lewes Arms. Greene King acquired the pub when it bought the former Beard's chain in 1996, and was the last ex-Beard house to still sell Harveys – a GK spokeswoman describing the move as a long overdue bit of tidying up. The dispute has generated much media attention, including Radio 4's *Today* programme, while the campaign to retain Sussex Best has gained the support of local MP Norman Baker and a 500 signatory petition. However the brewer, whose Chief Executive, Rooney Anand, was at one time threatened with seeing his own effigy burnt, are refusing to back down unless a reciprocal arrangement can be agreed with Harveys. However, at the time of writing, the latter has had no approach from Greene King.

LOCAL LOYALTY PAYS OFF

A recent survey of 200 pubs by SIBA, the micro brewers' organisation, has found that for the majority their total business had increased since they started taking ales through SIBA's Direct Delivery Scheme – increased choice and growing interest in local brews being given as the main reasons. These results are a well timed riposte to the regional's recently formed

think tank, Why Handpull, one of whose first recommendations was a reduction in the number of handpumps to avoid customer confusion and deter landlords from selling more ales than they could manage. DDS Managing Director, Nick Stafford of Yorkshire's Hambleton Brewery said: 'This is an overdue rejection of attacks on local brewers. Far from cannibalising existing beer sales, an increased choice of quality local ales is helping grow business.'

EUROPE BACKS DOWN

The European Commission has decided against demanding across the board increases in excise duty and stringent new labelling to combat alcohol related harm. Instead a new body, the Alcohol and Health Forum, is to be created in which Government bodies, drinks industries and other interested parties can discuss best practice and promote awareness and education in alcohol related health and disorder problems. The Brewers of Europe, which represents brewers organisations in the EU, welcomed the new approach, saying that alcohol strategy should target problem drinkers and not the vast moderate consuming majority.

While superficially a welcome victory for moderation and common sense, such a radical reversion of policy (the Commission being well on the way to implementing swinging restrictions) is somewhat disquieting. The forces pressing for restrictions haven't gone away, and no doubt will be re-grouping and biding their time. Obviously they enjoy substantial support amongst Commission members, and we would be wise to see this 'climb down' as a tactical withdrawal: in due course we can expect these or similar proposals to be resurrected.



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FULLERS FULLER

Following its acquisition of Gales at the end of 2005 Fuller's has seen a 31% rise in profits, with the Hampshire based pubs of the ex-brewery being the major contributor to a rise to £10.9m in pre-tax profits for the six months to September 30th. The combined estate now totals some 360 pubs and Chief Executive, Michael Turner, said that the brewery was on the lookout for further pub deals: 'There's great pressure on companies to consolidate at the moment and I suspect it will continue'.

Fullers has also announced that it intends to continue brewing Gales Prize Old Ale – the unique bottle-conditioned 9% ABV which has a large number of admirers. Whether we'll be able to find any is a different matter.

BREAK AT BRAKSPEAR

The Brakspear family is finally to sever all ties with the pub group that bears its name, following an agreed sale of its shareholdings to fellow family owned pub group J T Davies, who currently run 51 tenanted pubs in London, as well as a wine and spirits wholesaling business. J.T.Davies, who already owned 29.9% of Brakspear, will run the combined estate of 150 pubs under the Brakspear name. Brakspear stopped brewing in 2002 and its beers are now brewed by Refresh at Witney, Oxfordshire, using much of Brakspear's original equipment. We can now expect to see Brakspears beers across London in Brakspears own pubs.

WOLVES TO BECOME MARSTONS

More renaming at Wolverhampton & Dudley, who is to adopt the name Marstons, having owned the Burton brewer since 1999. Over the next few years it will re-brand the majority of its 2000 plus pubs to Marston, although the Jennings name will be retained in Cumbria and adjoining areas. The

company believes that the Marston's name will emphasise its 'tradition, heritage and values' and 'has much more resonance geographically.'

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES BILL

The Sustainable Communities Bill, the result of three years of work by over 80 pressure groups, including CAMRA, Friends of the Earth, the Society of independent Brewers, Women's Institutes, and many other small business, farming, consumer and ecological organisations, appears now to have every chance of becoming law. With cross party support it has won the backing of MP Nick Hurd, Conservative member for Ruislip Northwood, who came top of the Private Members Bills ballot and will be sponsoring it in Parliament. The Bill's objective is to require the Government to produce a strategy for supporting and promoting local independent businesses, such as shops, post offices and pubs; and is applicable to inner cities and suburbs, as well as villages and rural communities. Once the bill has become law organisation like CAMRA will be able to make their own specific policy proposals to the Government.

NEW HOME FOR COURAGE

As we go to print Scottish & Newcastle have announced the sale of their Courage business to Wells & Young's for an undisclosed sum, but believed to be about £10 million. Presumably, now to be brewed at Bedford, Courage is used to being moved around having formerly had homes in London, Alton, Bristol and currently Tadcaster. As things stand the latter's real ales will now just number John Smith's and Theakston's Best (brewed for Theakston's of Masham).

Kent Small Brewery News



P & D Goacher 01622 682112 – Maidstone
Contact Phillip Goacher.

Goacher's now have their own website that has been designed by brewer Simon's lady friend. The winter brew of 1066 Maidstone Old Ale has been produced, and was selling very well at Blake's in Dover. Crown Imperial Stout is now a regular feature in the member's only (Guests may be signed in) Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club. A new outlet for Goacher's Gold Star is The Dublin Man of War at River. This is unfortunately not available all the time, but owing to its popularity is often ordered by the landlord.

Hopdæmon Brewery 01795 892078 – Newnham
Contact Tonie Prins

The brewery closed over the Christmas/New Year period and Tonie is frantically trying to catch up with production. His wife has just given birth to twins (one of each). There is a rumour that a celebratory brew by the name of Gemini, is to be produced.

The Ramsgate Brewery 01843 580037 – Broadstairs
Contact Eddie Gadd.

An experimental bottled stout was brewed, late last year, at 9%. This to my mind was an exceptionally good brew. Eddie initially thought the brew was too sweet, but after maturation the residual sugars disappeared. Another brew will be produced at Easter and will be matured, ready for sale next winter. An IPA has been brewed at 7%. It was intended to have this ready for our Festival. Unfortunately, this will no longer be possible as it will not be quite ready. This brew used the first of the new seasons hops which Eddie says, "are outstanding". He has used plenty of them and this promises to be an interesting beer. Dogbolter is now available in a bottle conditioned form from the brewery shop. The shop is now open weekdays and Saturday Mornings. Orval and the De Ranke XX Bitter, both from Belgium will also be available from the shop. In my humble opinion the XX Bitter is one of the best Belgium Beers that I have tasted, and certainly the hoppiest.

Eddie's assistant, Iain, has moved to John Smith's Brewery at Tadcaster (*must be mad*).

Whitstable Brewery 01622 851007 – Grafty Green
Contact Rafik Abidi

Naval Reserve, a 5% brew of a deep amber colour will be available at our festival and is likely to remain a seasonal beer,

Roger Marples

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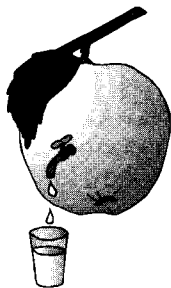
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Basket Competition***

Beer Garden Piano Darts



CIDER MATTERS

As I write this, we're well into the pre-Christmas beer festival season, with the National Winter Festival due in January, and our own festival shortly afterwards. Although I've only ever been to it once, Pig's Ear has always captured my imagination, partly because of the wide range of beers, but also because they like to stock a good range of ciders and perries, and 2007 should be no exception. It's always worth keeping an eye on the festivals list in *What's Brewing*, as CAMRA encourages all festivals to stock cider and/or perry these days. Some are more enthusiastic than others, of course, but it would be a boring old world if we all liked the same things, wouldn't it?

The CAMRA minibus trip in November produced a few great pubs, but only one serving real cider, the Coach and Horses at Hacklinge, and very good it was too: in fact the evening overall was excellent. I heartily recommend branch minibus trips, so why not watch out for the next one and come along? Also, I managed a mini-crawl in Dover with the branch membership secretary which took in two cider outlets, Blakes and the Eight Bells, one even selling perry! The perry was, for me, the best pint of the evening, and I'm happy to report no hangover the next morning, either. Probably something to do with no additives, I expect.

UK Cider has been as busy as ever with cider lists for beer festivals, technical queries and advice, tasting notes, etc. The technical stuff while being a mix of the usual, machinery, barrels, etc., also includes a tale of someone applying for Customs exemption for a small cider producer. He sent the form to the address provided and was advised to contact his local office. When he phoned them, he found they had visited while he was out, "peered through his windows", and already granted his exemption. How quaint!

There was also news of a district council in the East Midlands which has started to provide free of charge an apple tree to all householders who request one. It was thought to be a carbon offset scheme, but what a great idea! Several of the apple varieties are cider apples, so what a great way to start a cider-making co-operative. It might not catch on elsewhere, of course, and not every council can afford it, I expect, but it is a fine example of taking a fresh approach to a problem. Everyone wins!

Another eyebrow-raiser was the news that someone was selling cider on eBay. This is against eBay rules, and possibly illegal if the seller does not have the correct licence. Watch out for that one.

Well, last summer was a hot one, which is probably good news for winemakers, and hopefully for cider makers as well. Will all that lovely sunshine lead to more apples, more juice and more cider? I can't wait to find out.

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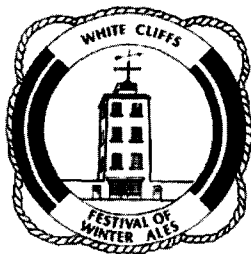
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WHITE CLIFFS FESTIVAL OF WINTER ALES 2007

A new year, and in Dover that means a beer festival will not be far behind – specifically the White Cliffs Festival of Winter Ales. This year will be the Branch's 14th and personally my 10th as Festival Treasurer, although it usually feels as if we've been doing it for ever, which considering that for most of the year we're either clearing up after the last or preparing for the next, is perhaps not surprising. As always (except once when we clashed with the Hunt Ball) this year's is set for the first weekend in February, Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd, and will of course take place at Dover's Town Hall, the Maison Dieu.

However, also as always, there will be some changes from previous festivals. Probably the biggest single change this year is that, for the first time, we are selling tickets in advance – a limited number for the Friday session. As most of you will be well aware, space constraints at the Maison Dieu have meant that for a number of years now we have had to restrict entry for several hours on Friday evening, limiting access to just one in, one out. The queue would stretch back as far as the War Memorial and not a few would give up, and go away disappointed. Last year we tried opening earlier at 3pm hoping to spread attendance and perhaps alleviate the problem, but all that achieved was to bring the problem forward, from 8pm to 6.30pm. This year, purchasers of advance tickets are guaranteed entry without queuing until 8pm. We are also pushing the Friday start time even earlier to 1pm, last year's 3pm start being generally judged a success even though it did not manage to remove the queuing problem.

Otherwise the festival will be much as normal – 70 to 80 firkins of winter ales, all 5% and above in strength, and all still at the very reasonable price of £2.00 a pint. As always Kent breweries will be well represented, but as well there will be beers from all over the country, and if previous years are anything to go by, most we will have never seen before, unless possibly at previous festivals. Entrance will be £5.00 on Friday and £2.00 Saturday (both free to CAMRA members), although as usual anyone joining CAMRA at the festival will be refunded their entrance charge. If you are a CAMRA member and would like to help we would welcome your assistance – please contact Staffing Officer, Roger Marples at 12 Elms Vale Rd. (01304 208333).

As I've said above the Friday session will start earlier this year at 1pm, but will then

run through to normal finish at 11pm, while Saturday will run from 10.30am until 6pm, if there is any beer left. Music will be returning for Friday night in the form of acoustic folk from local singers and musicians, while Friday lunchtime will once again see the classical recital that we've grown accustomed to over the last few years. The Town Hall managers, Thanet Leisure, will be providing a range of food on both days and request that no additional food is brought into the hall – a rule it will be strictly enforcing.

We hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend, and that if you do, you find it as enjoyable an event as we always have done. Don't forget that if you are coming on Friday and have not purchased an advanced ticket, you may find yourself having to queue, and our advice is always to get there as early as possible. You'll also be more likely to find the whole range of beer still available, as of late our enthusiastic festival goers have been seeing off at least ten or a dozen barrels by the end of the evening.



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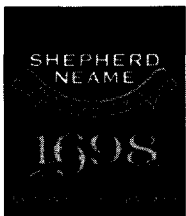
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SHEPHERD'S DELIGHT OR SHEPHERD'S WARNING?

What Now For Shepherd Neame?

Shepherd Neame is the oldest, and by a long margin the largest, of our local brewers; in fact with its estate reaching into London and beyond it is perhaps more accurately a regional brewer. As we report in National News, the last 30 years have seen steady financial success, profits and beer sales rising, and the brewery continuing to buy additional outlets, while disposing of those that do not fit its current business strategy. And success has extended into other areas, its environmental efforts last year, making it one of only seven UK companies to win a Queen's Enterprise award for sustainable development.

However, while local drinkers will applaud Shepherd Neame's environmental award they might well speculate on the absence of awards for its real ale. To many of us, its most widely distributed beers, Master Brew and Spitfire, although often well looked after, never seem to excel, and landlords as well as customers comment on their variability – Master Brew, in particular, seeming sometimes strangely thin. The seasonal brews appear to receive more acclaim, but still leave the feeling that they could be so much better, and give the impression that there's more than one eye on the balance sheet; the current representative for example, the 4.5% winter porter being a pale shadow of the 5.2% porter brewed in the mid 1990s. Meanwhile, probably the two best from the current batch, Kent Best and Bishop's Finger, are all too rarely seen. Kent drinkers will also note how their choice is being reduced by the brewery's policy of moving its estate away from many of its traditional outlets – often that one time core element of the business, the back street local (which very possibly ends up being closed, or if it stays a pub, losing its real ale) – towards more up-market food orientated pubs, often by acquiring former free houses.

It is therefore perhaps no surprise that Shepherd Neame is not regarded with the affection that well established local brewers can often expect. No doubt the company will point to the ever growing profits and beer sales and ask what it's doing wrong; after all its beer gets drunk and if the same amount of trade can be channeled through fewer pubs surely that's good business? However, for many, in a Shepherd Neame pub, it's either Master Brew, Spitfire, etc., or keg; while to view its estate just in terms of its balance sheet value, is an injustice to the public house's long established role as a cornerstone of the community, and to all those who for many years provided the brewery with its livelihood by drinking its beer.

Shepherd Neame places a lot of emphasis on its position as the country's oldest brewer from the 'Heart of the Hop Country'. It would be pleasing to feel that this is not just marketing hype, that as Kent's only survivor of the scores of family breweries that once sup-

plied the county's beer, it had a real interest in perpetuating the tradition. However it all starts to look a bit threadbare as food and wine and smart roadhouses take over from beer and darts and the street corner local, and when those seeking to enjoy Kent's brewing heritage turn first to the county's micros. Compare East Sussex neighbour Harveys of Lewes, whose Sussex Best Bitter is increasingly more commonly seen on Shepherd Neame's home ground. Which of the latter's customers would have kicked up a fuss at the prospect of a change to Greene King, as did those at the Sussex Arms (see National News)? – probably not too many.

No doubt Shepherd Neame would claim that it is a very different operation from Harveys (it is considerably larger) and have to survive in a very tough environment. A talk by one of its executives at a Kent Regional Meeting a few years ago spelled it out very succinctly: Shepherd Neame has to keep on expanding or go under, he said, that is the world we live in – or maybe it's the world it chooses to live in. Whichever, it would seem that much of the brewery's output is irrevocably wedded into competing with international and national giants, and all that entails in lowest common denominators and industrial processes. However, this need not apply to all its beers. It would be good to see Shepherd Neame promoting Kent Invicta Best Bitter as a real challenger to Sussex Best, which currently many of us feel it isn't; and while this might sound like heresy, what is there to stop Shepherd Neame offering guest ales from other brewers? Greene King does it and it would probably attract a great many who might otherwise give its pubs a miss.

Martin Atkins

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CHANNEL VIEW

This year CAMRA's annual February pub week campaign is focusing on community pubs. Let's all hope its not too late, for the future of the traditional local is under threat like never before. Many pubs have always led a precarious existence, and we've all come across landlords who, no sooner had you crossed the threshold, than were informing you that it was a dreadful business, no money in it, and pubs were rapidly going down the pan. However, the current spate of closures (some temporary, some not), rapid changes of landlord, and general fall off in trade, suggests that we are facing something more than just old fashioned bar room hyperbole.

At a conservative estimate about 26 pubs a month are closing across the country. These will not be the noisy town centre pubs, aimed at the youth market, with like as not no real ale; nor are they the large family orientated roadhouses, the trendy city centre gastro-pub or the Michelin starred country hotel. The pubs that are disappearing at a rate of knots are the traditional British locals where the ordinary citizen could enjoy a couple of pints and a game of crib or darts, followed by putting the world to rights round the bar afterwards. Idealised perhaps, but very dear to our hearts. Much of literature, film and TV, would be struggling without the pub, and soaps unimaginable; while the stand-up comic would have to radically rethink his material denied the standard opening line, 'man walked into a pub'. Along with the church,

school and post office, the local was a cornerstone of the community; but also like them it finds itself at the mercy of modern times. It is no idle speculation to wonder if it can survive in anything like the form that we know it, or at all.

Many, in fact, would say that the pub has already changed out of all recognition, and certainly there are few which are not appreciably different from how they were forty or fifty years ago. Most now sell food, a comparative rarity then, pork pies and pickled eggs excepted; and while this has been a real lifeline for country pubs, it has seen many become not much more than restaurants. Meanwhile in the town centres it is often difficult to find an ordinary pub, of which there always seemed dozens in and around any main street. Redevelopment and retail use have accounted for many, while the rest have largely been gutted, and turned over to shoppers and tourists in the daytime, and the noise and excess of youth in the evening. In recent years they have been joined by that new phenomenon, J D Wetherspoon, and its acolytes, converting redundant banks, cinemas, etc. into the pub equivalent of the supermarket.

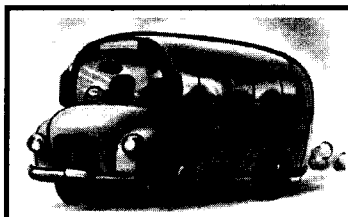
Of course the traditional community pub has not ceased to exist, and is still probably representative of the majority; but these seem increasingly confined to the older residential areas of our towns and cities where the booming house market, offering easy and profitable conversion, makes their future far

from secure. For while we all profess to love the local, we don't seem inclined to use it, at least not enough. This seems particularly ironic. Ted Tuppin, boss of pub chain Enterprise, describes the British pub as a truly 'great brand'; while having shed its one time not quite respectable image, it is now generally applauded as an essential part of our cultural heritage. There are of course obvious reasons for such neglect – far more alternatives to going around to the local in the evening, and cheap supermarket prices being the most apparent. However, also, society has changed. A more mobile population does not see its life tied up with a local community, and for many, particularly the young, going out for a drink means the town centre, or maybe a meal as well, and a drive to some rural pub/restaurant. And brewers and pub chains are not now prepared to carry a large stock of outlets just as a means over selling a brewer's beer, as was the case when most pubs were established. A pub today is a valuable asset needing to prove its worth; if it doesn't, it will go.

The slogan 'use it or loose it' is nowhere more apt. It'll be no use moaning when that application for conversion goes before the local council, it'll probably be too late. Use your local regularly; it might be more expensive than a few cans bought from a shop, and not as easy as slumping with them in front of the TV, but it will help to keep it in existence. Don't, and it'll go the same way as the butcher, baker, corner shop and all the rest we've lost.

The early morning Radio Four farming on Boxing Day produced a report on the environmental impact of brewing.

Having considered the approach of Adnams of Southwold, barley locally sourced (good and good – local supply of an environmentally friendly crop), some hops also now locally grown (good), and further points gained by its draymen's delivery procedures, the programme moved on to Scottish and Newcastle's industrial scale Edinburgh brewery where also, we were assured, environmental concerns were taken very seriously. The programme then tuned to the public house's use of energy, and in particular the power requirements necessary to provide chilled beer, the traditional 'warm' ale apparently no longer appealing to the country's pallet. At this point one might have hoped that a useful comparison would have been made between the energy and additional carbon dioxide required to produce a pint of super cooled lager and illuminate the enormous and unnecessary tap fonts, and the purely mechanical operation of a real ale handpump. No such information was forthcoming, neither was there any reference to the reduced fuel required to transport beer from a local brewery rather than half way across the country. Instead the programme fell back on the current fashionable concern of binge drinking. 'What should be the approach of the environmentally concerned drinker?', the reporter was asked. Moderation of course, all over indulgence proving detrimental to the environment. True no doubt, but compared with the vast majority who don't binge drink, of no particular consequence, one should imagine. A piece of unnecessary PC, or has the BBC been co-opted as an agent of the nanny state?



A RURAL BUS TRIP

On the evening of Tuesday 14th November, the minibus arrived in plenty of time outside Blake's in Castle Street, Dover for the start of a trip around some of the more distant branch pubs. Inside, the intended participants were gainfully employed enjoying that day's selection of beers and ciders – Goacher's Crown Imperial Stout and Fine Light Ale, 1648 Armistice Ale, Hopdaemon Skrimshander, Thatcher's Traditional Cider, Weston's Organic Cider and Herefordshire Country Perry. Having extracted ourselves from the bar, and seated in the vehicle, it was found that we were two short. However, a phone call to our membership secretary informed us one of our number was just passing the town hall and would be arriving shortly. Despite the Hon. Sec. suggesting loudly and with asperity, that we should depart forthwith, the remaining members were more philanthropic and we were subsequently joined by the tardy Andrew Bushby, albeit five or six minutes later than planned. Unfortunately there was still no sign of Ron Meares, so off we went.

After collecting various members along the way we arrived at The Marquis of Granby, at Alkham, only a few minutes late. As it was early in the evening the bar was not yet busy, but mine host, hostess and barmaid were ready to provide us with liquid refreshment. Mine host then promptly disappeared; I do not blame him, our reputation must have preceded us. Beers were Nelson's Blood and Dogwatch Stout from Nelson Brewery which were the choice of our group. Also on sale were Courage Director's Bitter and Greene King IPA. Although The Marquis is predominantly a venue for eating, it was good to note that some imagination had been shown in the choice of beer rather than sticking to the customary standards. The chance of trying a Nelson draught stout was particularly welcomed. However, as I explained to Alison, our hostess, time was limited as we had a timetable to adhere to, and we were soon on our way.

Our next stop was the Jackdaw, Denton, where two more members of our group joined us. This is another house in which food predominates. However it normally carries beers that cannot easily be found elsewhere locally. Guest ale was Loddon Bamboozle, alongside regulars Ringwood Best Bitter (a welcome sight) and Shepherd Neame Spitfire. It was a shame, though, that the prices were so high. The Loddon was £3 a pint, which is the most that I have paid, to date; service, however, was very professional.

The Royal Oak at Nonington was next on our itinerary, and although it does have a restaurant, the trade that evening was 100% drinking, a lot of which was in progress when we arrived. There was also a bar billiards match being played against the Market Inn, Sandwich. As this was our half way point comestibles had been

ordered, and were duly provided at a very reasonable price. Beers were Wychwood Hobgoblin, Timothy Taylor Landlord, Hancock's HB and Deuchar's IPA. We had slightly longer than the usual sojourn, to allow for the consumption of solids, and a number of us sought 'a pint for the road', but just as a large order was given to the landlord, the Deuchar's IPA, the chosen beer of most of us, sold out. With much glancing at timepieces by the beer's prospective recipients the landlord changed the cask with about ten minutes to spare, a change, in the writer's humble opinion, well worth waiting for, as it produced one of the best pints of the night – Whitstable EIPA.

At our next stop, Woodnesborough, our man from Faversham was planning to join a scheduled bus service to Canterbury, and we duly arrived outside the Charity with seven minutes to spare. In the pub a quiz night was in full flow, but there was plenty of room and the atmosphere most convivial. Beers available were Black Sheep Bitter, Greene King IPA and Ansell's Mild. Various people periodically ventured outside to check on the progress, or more accurately lack of it, being made by Jeffrey Waller, our intending bus passenger. Eventually, the bus appearing non-existent, he hired a taxi from Canterbury to take him to the railway station – allowing him time, however, to partake in an excellent pint of Ansell's Mild. We were lucky to be able to visit one of the very few outlets of real draught mild, which was once the predominant drink of the area.

We left, slightly late for our ultimate stop, the Coach and Horses at Hacklinge. When we arrived, the bar was quiet; presumably most of the customers, having

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Spitfire plus Guest Ales***

Listed in the 2005 CAMRA Good Beer Guide

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OPEN

12-12 MON-SAT

12-11 SUN



ALES GREENE KING IPA GADD'S NO 5

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Sunday Roast 12.00 - 3.00

Wednesday OAP Lunch Thursday - Steak Day
2 Courses £3.75 Steaks from £5.00
12.00-2.30 & 6.00-9.00

Booking Advisable Wednesday, Thursday & Sunday

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Bat & Trap available Thursday

Music one Friday a month & bank holidays

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www.threehorseshoesmongeham.co.uk

learned of our impending arrival, had decided to leave. Fortunately the licensees were expecting us and gave us a pleasant welcome. Beers were Gadds No.5 and Courage Director's Bitter, with also Weston's Cider on handpump. The Gadds was very popular, but the cider had its following. The Coach and Horses is easy to pass on a fast stretch of straight road, but should you wish to enjoy a good pint of locally brewed ale or a proper cider you could do worse than stop here. Unfortunately we had to finally terminate our evening's sampling, and after arousing the Hon. Sec. from his slumbers (we thought it would be unfair on the licensees to leave him), we proceed home in an orderly fashion, with many thanks to Harry Harris, our Britannia Coaches driver, for an excellent evening.

Roger Marples

Footnote: Stagecoach forgot to amend its website timetable. The Canterbury bus now stops around a corner a good five minutes' walk away. Late night visitors to the Charity beware.

WHITE HORSE DOVER

EST. 1365

Monday – Saturday
4.00pm – 11.00pm

Sunday
1.00pm – 10.30pm



4 CASK-CONDITIONED ALES FROM THE OLDEST PUB IN TOWN

Hall & Woodhouse Badger Best
Woodforde's Nelson's Revenge
Hall & Woodhouse Tanglefoot
Thatchers Draught Scrumpy
Pawley Farm Vintage Cider
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Young's Winter Warmer
RCH East Street Cream
Greene King Hobgoblin
Wychwood Abbot Ale
Hop Back Crop Circle
Ringwood Best Bitter
Woodforde's Wherry
Hampshire Ironside
Hop Back Odyssey
White Horse Bitter
Titanic White Star
Brakspear Original
Brakspear Special
Ringwood 49er
Young's Bitter
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Stewart and Debbie
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Home cooked food Sunday Carvery

Pentanque, Pool, Darts etc.

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Function Room Available

Open

Mon to Sat 11am - 4 pm, 5.30pm - 11pm

Sun 12 - 4pm, 6.30pm - 10.30pm

Enquiries 01304 611188

SPOT THE BREWERY

1.  
2. 
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4.  
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6.   
7.  
8.  
9.  
10.    

Solution on Page 61



King's Head

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Extensive wine list - Over 20 malt whiskies*

**Fine
Conditioned
Real Ales**

Opening Times

Guest ales always available.	Lunch	Saturday	12 - 3pm
		Sunday	12 - 10.30pm
Often local	Evening	Mon-Friday	5-11pm
		Saturday	6-11pm
		Sunday	12 - 10.30pm

Available any lunchtime for personal or business functions



THE MORNING AFTER

When are you *really* safe to drive?

As many readers will know, two years ago, I was caught driving over the limit and it taught me a salutary lesson. As part of my 'punishment' (on top of a driving ban and a £500 fine) I attended a driving rehabilitation course and learnt the following:

How often have you considered the morning after? We all know that to drive after drinking in the evening is running a risk, but how many of us think about the alcohol remaining in our system the following morning? At the time of writing, Kent Police is launching its annual drink/driving campaign, and will be giving special attention to the traffic from 6.00am. The following is an analysis of how much alcohol you can expect in your body after drinking the night before. Although the breathalyser legal limit is 35mg/100ml of breath the medical *and* legal consensus is that any alcohol in your system can affect you. The determined 'safe' level is therefore zero and the rest of this article assumes the zero level.

Let's take a typical evening. There are different figures for males and females so please make sure you use the correct column! The same quantities and timings have been used to enable direct comparison.

Male	Female
4 Pints 4.0% ale/cider	4 Pints 4.0% ale/cider
Finish drinking 11pm	Finish drinking 11pm
Safe to drive 8.5 hours later – 7.30am	Safe to drive 12.5 hours later – 11.30am

As you can see, for an evening's consumption, the male just makes it safe by 7.30am (make that 9.30am if he has a fifth pint), the female has to wait until 11.30am – almost lunchtime – to be completely clear of alcohol.

The calculation goes as follows:

A pint between 3.5-4% is 2 units (remember units?), a pint around 5.0-6.0% is 3 units, and, for the winter ales festival, a pint at 8% is 4 units plus! This relates to ale, cider and similar products. For wine, a small glass is 1 unit, a large glass 2 units, and the bottle 11 units. Spirits are 1 unit per 25ml serving. Add up all the units for the afternoon/evening and multiply by the time it takes for the body to lose

alcohol: for a male that's a unit in an hour, and for a female a unit in 1.5 hours. The clock starts ticking half an hour after the last glass is finished.

Why are the figures different for males and females? For a start the loss of alcohol from the human system is related to size and the calculations are based on the 'average' person, while the body's water content, a major factor, varies between the sexes; want to know more – ask me!

Food taken with alcohol creates a strange circumstance. As the body treats alcohol as a priority over anything else, no or little food is processed whilst alcohol remains in your body. Enjoy your meal but you may not receive any benefit. Food can slow the start of the absorption of alcohol by the body, but by the end of a session the recovery times will be as expected (see above) for the *average* person. Of course your personal experience may vary.

Topsy

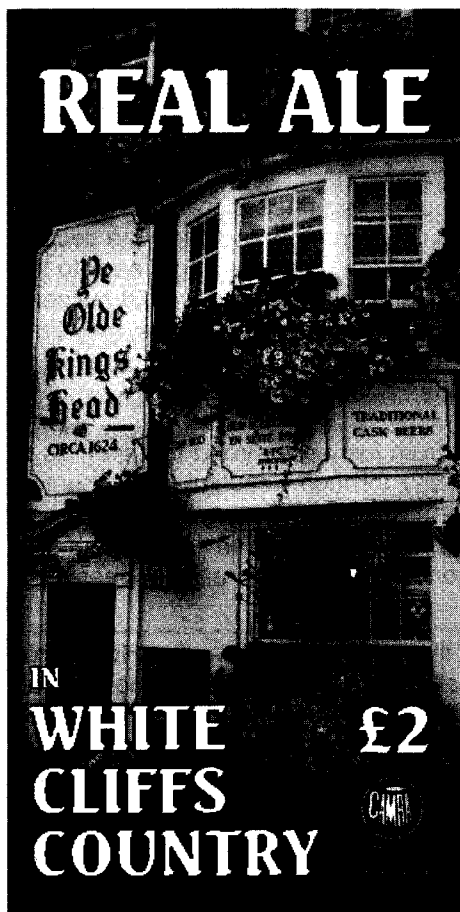
(Obviously the unit rate for wine will vary according to its strength, as with any other drink, and the stated total of 11 units per bottle would probably relate to the strongest at 14.5 - 15%. Ed.)



**Friday APRIL 6th & Saturday APRIL 7th 2007
Winter Gardens, Margate, Kent.**

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for more info**

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Real Ale in White Cliffs Country

Amendments as at January 2007

The revised licensing laws mean that some the pub opening times shown in the guide may now have changed.

- **Butchers Arms, Ashley** – Now closed, future uncertain.
- **Yew Tree, Barfreestone** - The family symbol  should be added. The cider is Biddenden 8% Dry.
- **Admiral Penn, Deal** - Closed.
- **Star & Garter, Deal** - Now closed. Converted to flats
- **Engineer, Dover** - Closed. Freehold advertised for sale
- **Millers, Dover** - Now renamed **Marine Court** and run as a 'Brewers Fayre' and Premier Travel Inn.
- **Orange Tree, Dover** – Closed and boarded up. Future uncertain
- **White Horse, Dover** - Opening Times changed to Mon-Sat 16.00-11.00pm
Sun 13.00-10.30pm.
- **Mogul, Dover** - Now Closed. Converted into offices. Stillage from The Mogul transferred to Blakes, Dover.
- **Crown, Finglesham** - telephone number should be 01304 612555.
- **Hare & Hounds, Northbourne** - fully no smoking 
- **Bell, Shepherdswell** - Destroyed by fire.
- **Lifeboat, Walmer** - Closed following retirement of landlady, future of pub uncertain.
- **Chequers, West Hougham** - Closed
- **Endeavour, Wootton** - Closed, future uncertain.

Please note that the  in the Guide means that the landlord has indicated that the pub will admit children.



BEER ACROSS THE BORDER THE 6th PHOENIX BEER FESTIVAL

Around this time last year I was writing up a pair of beer festivals across a few borders – one in the neighbouring Canterbury branch and the second in our old home patch of Hampshire. Sadly we didn't manage to get back to the wonderful Prince of Wales in Farnborough North this year, but we did succeed in our aim to return to The Phoenix in Canterbury for the Saturday day-time beer festival session – and this time by bus, which meant nobody needed to drive (yours truly being DES last year, on the Friday evening).

The Finglesham Contingent caught a bus from just up the road that took us to Canterbury on a clear and crisp winter's day through beautiful Kent countryside. Once in Canterbury several of us went our separate ways to do the odd bit of shopping before repairing to the well-earned relaxing environment of The Phoenix, where Linda and her team had once again laid on a great beer festival.

As at last year's festival (the pub's fifth), there were 25 beers plus Honeyhole Farm's Firebird Cider from near Faversham, specially brewed for the festival. The beers this year ranged from the 3.7%, Hopdaemon Golden Braid, to Butcome Brunnel IPA at 5%. The cider was again 6%, and the chosen tippable of Trish, while the remaining three quarters of the Finglesham Contingent set out on a journey to sample at least one of each of the beers on the list (we were drinking halves, so it's not as bad as it sounds!) – something time did not permit last year. We achieved our aim, and enjoyed re-sampling our favourites – topped this year by Timothy Taylor Landlord, which



along with the Honeyhole Cider, got the maximum number of points in our unique beer festival scoring system. The other close runners were Rother Valley Smild (3.8%), Marston's Ashes Ale (4.1% - more on this later), Gough's Tournament (4.1%), Cottage This Time Next Year (4.1%), Nelson Jolly Grog (4.3%), Hydes Yule Be Back (4.6%), Hopdaemon Scrimshander (4.5%), and the strongest beer on the list – Butcome Brunnel IPA (5%).

There were some especially well named beers this year. Apart from Hydes "Yule Be Back", my favourite was Harviestoun "Good King Legless". We were intrigued by Nelson "Chocolate Orange" – whether this was indeed what the beer tasted of – and on sampling it we agreed with Linda (what a saleswoman!) that it wasn't necessarily what you might expect (in our case, a piece of Terry's chocolate orange), but had more of a coffee, or even liquorice flavour. Either way, it was an interesting and complex bitter with many different overtones. Coming back to Marston's "Ashes Ale" – this could not have been more timely as the festival was held while the Ashes test match was being played out in Adelaide, South Australia. Being from Adelaide, I simply had to have it! Quite aside from the topical name, it was an excellent beer – and I think aptly described in the tasting notes thus: "Light coloured, sharp, thirst quenching session bitter with lemon aroma". At that time the Adelaide test was thoroughly gripping, but we all know what happened in the last few days – and

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at the time of writing England is still hanging on in there (or, 'out to dry' - Ed.), at the WACA in Perth. But it's not over until the fat lady sings, and we'll not know the outcome until after this piece has been submitted...

Through all of this dedicated hard CAMRA work we were sustained by excellent quality food from the friendly caterers serving from their 'snack shack' in the pub's car park. We enjoyed first rate home-made hot beef curry, as well as bratwurst and burgers – as no doubt did the party of a 'runner' who had been sent on a lunch-time mission from a house around the corner. He explained they had been at the festival the previous night and were now recovering, so needed the sustenance (or words to that effect).

Entertainment came in our usual array of crosswords and Saturday papers, but this year we also introduced Trish and Tony to our 'temperatures game' – where everyone has to guess the temperatures in a handful of world capitals but nobody can choose the same figure as another player. There are no prizes other than smugness – and newcomer to the game Tony developed



this in spade loads with two bull's-eyes out of four cities, plus one other 'closest' score. This is particularly smarting, because Julian and I invented the game many years ago and only he managed to get one temperature that was anywhere near the mark!

Once again, it was pleasing to see The Phoenix is truly a pub of real ale drinkers, evidenced by the fact that I only heard the bell rung a few times with the corresponding shout of "lager drinker!" through the handful of hours we were there. We then returned on our last bus back to Burgess Green, and avoided any temptation to go into either of the two pubs that we pass en route home from the bus stop. One can have too much of a good thing.

Anne McIlroy

PS: see elsewhere in this newsletter for details of the next beer festival in the local area – the 14th White Cliffs Festival of Winter Ales 2007.



BEER GOGGLES

Beer goggles is the drinking phenomenon that can transform supposedly "ugly" people into beauties - until the morning after, that is. Now scientists believe they have worked out the formula to calculate just how much effect "beer goggles" have had on a drinker's vision.

Researchers at Manchester University say that, while beauty is in the eyes of the beer-holder, the amount of alcohol consumed is not the only factor. Additional factors include the level of light, the drinker's own eyesight, the room's smokiness and the distance between the two people. According to the formula, these all have an effect on how "attractive" someone appears to be. So, for example, someone with normal vision who has consumed five pints of beer and views a person 1.5 metres away in a fairly smoky and poorly lit room, would suffer from a moderate beer goggle effect.

The formula is:

$$\beta = \frac{(An)^2 \times d(S+1)}{L \times (Vo)^2}$$

- where: *An*: number of units of alcohol consumed
S: smokiness of the room (graded from 0-10, where 0 is clear air; 10 extremely smoky)
L: luminance of 'person of interest' (candelas per square metre; typically 1 pitch black; 150 as seen in normal room lighting)
Vo: Snellen visual acuity (6/6 normal; 6/12 just meets driving standard)
D: distance from 'person of interest' (metres; 0.5 to 3 metres).

The formula produces a final score, ranging from less than one to more than 100. A formula rating of less than one means no effect - there is no beer goggle effect. Between one and 50 the person you would normally find unattractive appears less "visually offensive". Non-appealing people become suddenly attractive between 51 and 100. At more than 100, someone not considered attractive looks like a super model.

The research was commissioned by eyecare firm Bausch & Lomb PureVision after a poll showed that over two thirds of people regretted giving their phone number to someone to whom they later realised they were not attracted.



BEERY BOATERS SURVIVE THE GREAT FLOOD OF YORK

Reading about the 1982 Beery Boaters Canal Trip in the last edition makes me realise how eventful those early years were, and how much fun we had. Of course, we were a quarter of a century younger then! But although we might be a bit more staid, we still enjoy our canals and canal-side pubs just as much. To reassure readers who might have relatives in York, the York referred to here is a narrowboat, not the city. Our other boat was *Westmorland*, and both were 57 foot long, being the minimum length of the locks on the top end of the Calder and Hebble Navigation, and hired from Shire Cruisers, Sowerby Bridge. Above Sowerby the Rochdale Canal's locks are perversely 70 foot, and Sowerby Bridge Basin was once used for transhipment of goods from one size of boat to another. Later on the locks increased to mechanised locks of up to 200 feet long, before decreasing once more to 78 feet towards Selby. A very diverse route indeed!



John gets to grips
with vintage machinery

So off we set on the afternoon of Monday 2nd October intending to reach the Red Rooster at Brookfoot, just outside Brighouse, of Brighouse & Rastrick (Boghous & Gasworks) Brass Band fame (Floral Dance, etc, watch out Terry Wogan, here we come!). However, we hit problems after a couple of miles at the first of the three Salter-



The Barge & Barrel, Elland

hebble Locks, where we found that with both boats in the lock they were a mite too long to allow the bottom gates to open, after the lock had been emptied. So we had to re-fill the lock and send the boats down singly, which we did from there on down and back on the Calder & Hebble. We also got our first experience of the trip with the Calder and Hebble hand-spike, a club-like piece of wood that you insert in a slotted drum to open the paddles of the locks. It is unique to this canal. Anyway, all this put us behind schedule, so we moored at

Elland outside the Barge & Barrel for the night, and enjoyed the beers in that excellent pub. A foray up the hill towards the town centre found us in the Malt Shovel, a Sam Smith's pub with the bitter at £1.25 per pint, the usual price for the pub and the cheapest beer of the trip. Opposite is a superb Indian take-away, the Natural Spice, where all the food is cooked and prepared in full view of the customers. No mysterious goings-on in the back room there!



We were away at seven on the Tuesday morning, just as it began to get light, as we wanted to get to the Brewer's Pride at Ossett for lunchtime ale. York arrived at about 1:00pm, with *Westmorland*, York's crew believed, not far behind. However, a telephone call confirmed they had been delayed by clipping the rudder out of the skeg on a lock sill (in other words they stayed too far back in the lock and clipped the rudder out of the bottom pivot on the step at the bottom of the top gates). Fortunately, no damage was done and the rudder re-

fitted, but they were about an hour behind, and too late for food. The evening was spent in Wakefield with a lengthy walk to find a pub that suited us. Eventually we located



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***Lunchtimes & Evenings
Tuesday to Friday***

Lunchtimes - Saturday

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(at least 5 selections)***

***Main Course - Sweet - Tea
& Coffee***

***Traditional Sunday Roast
Set Lunch***

£7.95 Two course

TRADITIONAL OLD ENGLISH PUB

OPEN

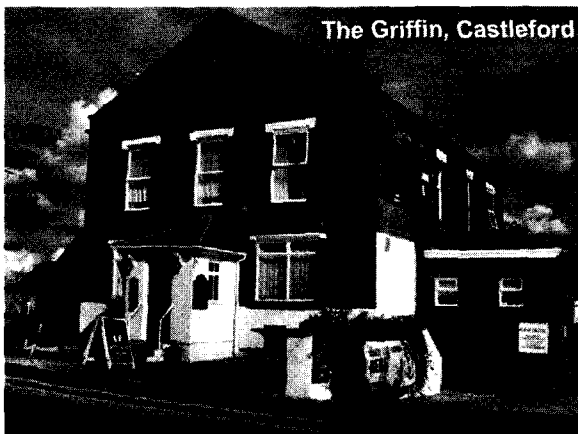
Monday to Saturday 12 - 3pm 6pm-Late

Sunday 11-3pm 7pm-11pm

Harry's Bar, a superb pub, only to find that we had passed within a few yards of the Fernandes Brewery Tap as we came into the city. The landlord at Harry's kindly provided instructions for the shortest route back, so we finished off the evening in the upstairs bar there, having stopped on the way at an Irish named pub where a quiz was in progress.

Wednesday morning, and down Fall Ing Lock onto the Aire and Calder Navigation. There was no need to start early as we only

had eight miles and four locks to go to Castleford, where we were due to pick up Dick Bates at 3:30pm. The locks were now 140 feet long, 17 feet six inches wide and mechanised, but usually boater-operated nowadays. We were at Castleford Basin well before midday, and took the opportunity to take on water before the pubs opened. Here there is substantial commercial traffic, coming down the Leeds branch, behind us, and turning left towards Goole (or vice-versa). The two nearby pubs are the Old Mill and the Griffin. The former was closed for extensive renovation, but at the Griffin, a current *Good Beer Guide* entry, we found John Smith's, its regular beer, plus Theakston Best, and not for the last time noted how much better the John Smith's seems to taste than back home. After rounds of good value sandwiches most of the crews walked up to the town, but found not much there.



Dick having joined us, we set off through Bulholme Lock and towards the huge Ferrybridge Power Station (sadly no longer receiving coal by water in compartment boats), Knottingley and the manually operated Bank Dole Lock, where the 'new' Main Line swings off right. On our way, however, *Westmorland* ran aground on the same bend

that we had stuck on in 1998. Fortunately, unlike that occasion, when Hon. Commodore had to demonstrate how to re-float a boat using the plank, with a second boat *Westmoreland* was easily pulled off. Bank Dole Lock led us back down to the River Aire, at its most twisty – the old route to Goole.



The only settlement between Bank Dole and the Selby Canal is the village of Beal, two miles further on. Here we spent Wednesday night. There are two pubs, the Hungry Fox, for-



merly the King's Arms, and the Jenny Wren, which had changed its name from the King's Head since our last visit. We ate at the first, which sold Ruddles, John Smith's and a guest, and then walked the short distance to the Jenny Wren, which only sold John Smith's. "I'm not going in unless it's John Smith Magnet!" someone complained. However, it was, and very good as well. So good, in fact, that we helped to drink the pub out of it. We also

enjoyed ourselves by entering a quiz. One question was, "What is the Star of India?" "A restaurant in Townwall Street!" the Dover contingent retorted! Actually, it's a sapphire.

We got back to the boats at about midnight. Imagine my horror when, after making my way aft on *York* to my bunk, I found it surrounded by about four inches of water! We rang the boatyard (mobile phones *do* have sensible uses) and following Nigel's instructions we drained the main cabin into the after bilge, from whence the water was pumped over the side. By about two o'clock the water was out of the cabin, carpets dumped on the landing stage and the floorboards covered with newspaper. We then found that the central heating had turned itself off and refused to be re-ignited. Naturally, it was the coldest night of the trip!

In the morning, Dick Bates, who has his own narrow boat, and a bit more idea of the fresh water system than the rest of us, gave it a check-over. He found that the drain cock from the heater reservoir tank had somehow been switched on, and with the water pump left on when we went to the pub the contents of the main water tank had gurgled away onto the floor. This rectified, we refilled the tank from Beal's water point and bled the system. *Westmoreland* departed to Selby while the *Yorkists* indulged in breakfast, and waited for the fitter Nigel had promised the night before. Just before he arrived, a final effort got the hot water system going, so he had nothing to do but check that all was well and take back the soggy carpets to be dried. Water tank full, *York* finally de-

parted – the only water problem now was the rain.



'Westmoreland' underway

From Beal it's four miles downstream to the Selby Canal and Chapel Hadde-sley lock, and then another five to Selby itself. At Selby we found *Westmoreland* in the basin, and its

crew in the town pubs a quarter of a mile away. Most of *York's* crew went off after them, for a somewhat curtailed lunchtime, to enjoy amongst other things Sam Smith's at £1.30 a pint and the end of an episode of *Porridge* in a pub called the Something or Other Vaults. I stayed in the nearby Nelson Inn drinking John Smith's. At mid-afternoon *York* set off back, leaving *Westmoreland* to follow behind, our intention being to see if we could moor on the bank of the Aire behind the Jug Inn at Chapel Haddesley. The rain had now just about stopped.

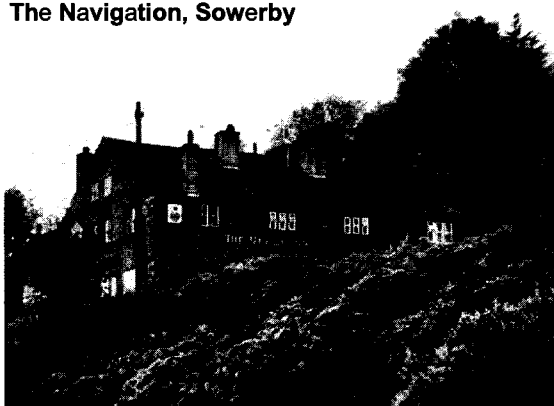


The Jug is just off the A19, about half a mile downriver from Chapel Haddesley Lock. Just past the road bridge is a weir, as far as you can get, which was once a lock when the River Aire was the old route to Goole. The boat was swung above the weir, but the riverbank was so overgrown and muddy from the recent rain, that we abandoned our efforts and decided instead to return to Beal. A pity, I thought, because the Jug is one of my favourite waterside pubs. The crew of *Westmoreland*, however, decided to moor above Chapel Haddesley lock and walk to the Jug, only to find it closed and up for auction, and spent the evening instead at the George and Dragon at West Haddesley, on the other side of the canal. Meanwhile, the *Yorkists* enjoyed another evening in the Jenny Wren. Fortunately there were no disasters when we got back from the pub, otherwise my suspicions would have fallen on the spirit of the 'old dragon' who used to live in the adjacent lock cottage.

High wind on Friday morning. The *Yorkists* rose late and had a static breakfast while waiting for *Westmoreland* to arrive, then it was back through Bank Dole Junction, and onto the Aire & Calder Main Line. There appeared to be more commercial traffic than on our way out, and perhaps because of this or the recent heavy rain, Ferrybridge Flood Lock was being used as a normal lock and was keeper operated as,

The Navigation, Sowerby

we later found, was Bulholme Lock. We thought that we'd stop at the Boat Inn, Allerton Bywater on the Leeds branch, but found this to be another closed pub. Just over a year ago it was thriving, and the home of the Boat Brewery. *Westmoreland* was inclined to continue to Leeds, but were persuaded otherwise and both boats headed back towards Wakefield. On the way we stopped at Stanley Ferry, where we walked passed the huge, and to my mind horrid, Mill House Tavern, to



the much smaller and much more welcoming Ship behind. Back at Wakefield we had no problems this time finding the Fernandes Brewery Tap and Harry's Bar; and some of the crew got as far as Henry Boon's, Clarke's Brewery Tap.

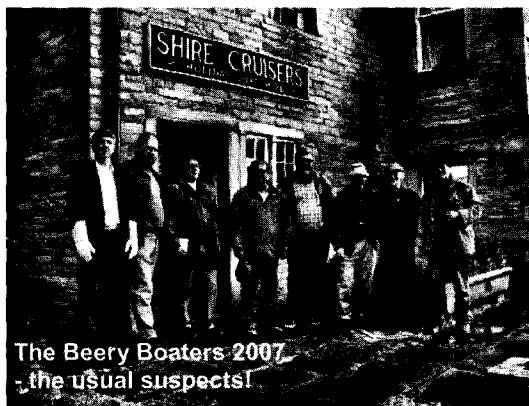
York set off first on Saturday, and by lunchtime were back at the Brewers Pride, where they were later joined by *Westmoreland*. A decent session was enjoyed, and late in the afternoon the two boats set off to cover the few miles to Dewsbury. The basin, at the end of Dewsbury Town Arm, was full of unfinished boats painted in grey primer. The basin's proprietor (he appears to run it on behalf of British Waterways) had sub-contracted to fit the boats out, but was currently in dispute with the builder. He said they were un-registered, technically not owned by anyone and he wouldn't miss one or two if they were towed away! Anyway, he kindly found berths for our boats and we spent the evening in another upstairs bar, the Leggers Inn, at the end of the basin, with plenty of real ale from micro-breweries and good company from members of the Dewsbury boating fraternity. Some of the crew went into town, and later reported that it made Dover, on even the quietest night, look like a thriving metropolis!

Sunday – the last full day of the trip and with boats due back at 9:00am the following day, our evening destination was Sowerby Bridge: At 15 miles and 19 notoriously slow locks we had a fair bit to do. *York* winded and set off at 7.00am leaving *Westmoreland* still tied up. It was a fine day and by 1.30pm we were tying up outside the Barge and Barrel where we spent lunchtime. Among the plentiful wildlife spotted on the way were two mink, one watching us from a landing stage and the other bounding along the tow-path just like the cartoon skunk Pepé le Phew. Say what you like about mink (and most people do), they are amusing creatures to watch. *Westmoreland*, meanwhile, some distance behind, stopped at the Red Rooster.

At Sowerby we moored opposite the Navigation Inn, and after starting the evening's proceedings there moved on to various other hostleries, including the Ram's Head, which is the Ryburn brewery tap. My last pub was the Moorings by the basin where

Black Sheep at £2.40 a pint led to an enquiry over the bar as to whether they were trying to acclimatise us to our return to southern parts! The crew of *Westmoreland* braved what was purported to be a Mongolian restaurant next door, which, they later reported, had mostly normal meals at abnormal prices, and not a yak in sight!

Monday morning: consume any food left, tidy the boats and cruise the couple of hundred yards to the boatyard. Another trip over, roll on April 21st 2007!



The Beery Boaters 2007
- the usual suspects!

Jim Green



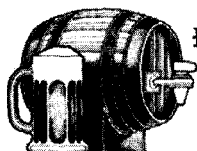
The Chambers



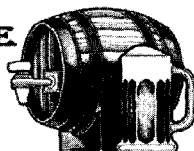
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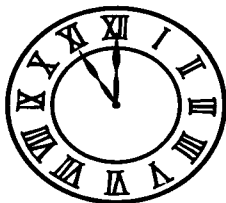
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LAST KNOCKINGS

A recent visit to the north country found John Smith's Bitter (a beer I had avoided for many years because it consistently disappointed) in surprisingly good form; a pleasing session ale which on one occasion we drank all evening. Opinions vary as to why this should be, one being that at distance from the Tadcaster Brewery it suffers from travelling or is brewed under license by someone else. However as I rarely drink the beer outside its home territory this doesn't seem to be the answer. Interestingly the day before we had enjoyed very drinkable Theakston's Bitter, also brewed by Scottish Courage at Tadcaster, while locally another of the brewery's line-up, Courage Best, seems in better condition than at any time since it moved from the old George's Brewery in Bristol. Could it be that Scottish Courage, at least, have taken note of the widespread unhappiness with the output of the larger producers, and upped their game?

A year or so on from the relaxation of licensing hours in November 2005, and life in Britain is carrying on much the same as ever, for despite the doom laden forebodings, the changes have, for the most part, passed as unnoticed as the introduction of all day opening in 1988. Few pubs applied for 24 hour opening, and of those that did hardly any have taken full advantage of it. For most, changes are restricted to an extra hour or so at the end of the evening, and then often only at weekends, while on balance the police have seen no discernible increase in bad behaviour. Only those who enjoyed the frisson of curtains drawn, lights dimmed 'lates' might feel their culture somewhat diminished. What of course we have not witnessed, as if we would, is the adoption of a 'Southern European' lifestyle, so beloved of certain of our leaders. This Utopia of apparently more relaxed family orientated drinking, has long been touted as a panacea for Britain's alcohol related problems, conveniently ignoring of course that France (regarded a fine example of this enlightenment) has long had one of the worst levels of alcohol related disease in Europe. Meanwhile for those seeking family orientated establishments, they are already among us; they are called Beefeater, Brewers Fayre, Harvester, etc., and quite dreadful they are too.

Banks's original, Gadd's Dark, Elgood's Black Dog, Moorhouses Black Cat: what do they all have in common? Yes, they're all milds, but also milds in which

the name itself has been all but dropped from the beer's name – and they're not alone. Ironically, the real ale market, supposedly the home of those of us who support the traditional and eschew modern marketing, appears as susceptible to image as does that of the big keg brands. In a world abounding with macho and fanciful hyperbole – Headbanger, Skullsplitter, Dragonslayer, Nelson's Blood, etc. – anything as down beat and limp-wristed as mild stands little chance. Truly the beer that dare not speak its name.

Over the last month the regular pub user, dropping into his local for a couple of pints, is likely to have found the place full of strange faces, with long queues at the bar and that favourite corner seat already occupied. Could this have been a new wave of immigration from distant parts of Eastern Europe, or had British television all of a sudden gone on the blink? Neither, of course: it's just the annual celebration of Christmas and New Year, when all and sundry decide that a good time can be had at the pub. The pity is that a great many of them don't feel the same way the rest of the year. As we point out in Channel View, the pub has rarely been under such pressure. Use it regularly and with luck it'll still be there next year, and for years to come – a pub's not just for Christmas.

Another aspect of the now seemingly distant festive season, is of course that allegedly new phenomenon of binge drinking. To most of us it probably conjures up images of the younger element getting legless in rowdy town centre pubs and falling dead drunk in the gutter outside. Not so the official mind. According to governmental bodies binge drinking starts at consumption of about eight units of alcohol in a session – roughly four pints of ordinary bitter, or three pints of strong ale or premium lager, a level that might somewhat startle the average pub goer. Who on earth makes these pejorative calculations? Are we really placing the ordinary drinker, out for a darts match or a quiz evening at their local, in the same category as the anti-social elements staggering about our town and city centres? As usual when dealing with pubs and alcohol the Government's understanding of the situation is less than perfect. While four or five pints a night might be well above the Government's 'safe level' consumption, it does not turn people into uncivilised yobs. The vast majority will drink this, and more, and remain perfectly well behaved. It does society no favours to throw around such ill-judged and casually arrived at figures.

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And Finally.....

Thief Steals Pub Urinal

Police were called to investigate after a thief stole a urinal from the Royal Oak pub in Southampton. The man spent 40 minutes removing the white toilet bowl after ordering half a pint. He then stuffed the urinal in a rucksack and left the pub making sure he wiped his fingerprints off the door as he went. But his exploits were caught on CCTV and after reviewing the tape pub landlord Alan Dreja handed it over to police. "It's unbelievable," said Mr Dreja, 46, who has been landlord at the Royal Oak in Houndwell Place for two years. His wife Suzie Dreja added: "We were stunned as he did it at about 5pm. "He had wandered in and ordered half a pint of Fosters, took a few sips and went into the toilet a few times. "He did a very professional job. He turned off the stop cock and capped off the pipe.

However the shamefaced thief handed himself in to police in Salisbury. The 42-year-old man, who has not been named, told police he had taken it from the pub as a "souvenir". Police have now returned the stolen urinal to the pub. The space left behind when it was expertly unplumbed has already been filled, so now the landlord has a dilemma. "I don't know whether to put it on display in the bar, or put it on eBay", he said. The thief has been given a caution.

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