



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

THIRSTY TIMES

Chelmsford & mid-Essex Branch of CAMRA



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Thirsty Times

CHELMSFORD'S BUSIEST BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL YET!

At the biggest beer garden in Essex there was a great party in the park including celebrations for 40 Years of Chelmsford and mid-Essex CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale).

Attendance was up from 21,000 last year to 22,600 people over the 5 days. It was the busiest Saturday ever with an amazing increase for the family fun day from 6,500 in 2014 to 8,500 this year.

8,000 glasses were sold with lots of collectors keen to keep the souvenir glass. For only £2 you can buy a poster depicting the glasses from all 54 festivals the branch has held. Contact Claire Irons, Publicity Officer for the branch via publicity@chelmsford.camra.org.uk or phone 07773 093399.



40th Anniversary



Autumn 2015

COVER STORY: A LONDON CRAWL

Highgate to Clerkenwell via Gospel Oak, Camden and Euston

This crawl starts in Highgate Village and ends in Clerkenwell, mainly using the Northern Line and the handy 214 bus.



Duke's Head, Highgate

www.beerguidelondon.co.uk/pubs.166

Take the Northern Line to Archway. Highgate Hill is quite steep, so although it's a walkable distance to the pub you may prefer to get a bus (143, 210, 271). This is a deceptively simple, one-roomed pub which oozes character. They are developing a justified reputation for well-kept cask ales here, with up to 10 on offer, plus a well-chosen range of 10 quality keg beers. There is also a small but well-chosen range of bottles and cans. Food is provided by a different 'street food' vendor every month and reports are usually very positive. A 5 - 10 minute walk through the village takes you to our next stop:

The Bull, Highgate

www.beerguidelondon.co.uk/pubs.88

This smart and comfortable pub is also now a brewpub - one of two run by London Brewing Co. Here you'll find cask beers brewed on-site and keg beers from sister brewpub the Bohemia in Finchley. The quality of both is rapidly becoming excellent. You'll enjoy the food here too, with the menu being of the highest quality. From here, go back up North Hill towards the village to find the 214 bus, which drops you off just past our next stop:

Southampton Arms, Gospel Oak

www.beerguidelondon.co.uk/pubs.19

'Ale, Cider, Meat' proclaims the sign on the outside wall of this wonderful, atmospheric pub which clearly knows its priorities. Inside you will find all three, with 18 handpumps dispensing beer and cider from smaller independents including their own Howling Hops brewery in Hackney Wick. You'll often find beers from the likes of Magic Rock, Marble, Thornbridge and Dark Star, so the overall quality is exceptionally high. Get back on the 214 bus to Camden, getting off just after Camden Town station on Bayham Street, almost directly opposite our next stop:



BrewDog, Camden

www.beerguidelondon.co.uk/pubs.84

The first BrewDog bar outside Scotland, the Camden bar is compact but offers a stunning range of up to 20 draft beers. The beers are all keg only, of course, in line with company policy, but the guest range includes beers from some of the world's top breweries, providing a drinking experience that many of us would have given our right arms for 10 years ago. A great range of bottles completes the offer. The feel is modern, trendy and unmistakably BrewDog, but a recent refurb. has introduced more comfy seating and the staff, as in all BrewDog establishments, provide service of the very highest quality. From here you can get a bus from Bayham Street or return to Camden Town station and take the Northern Line southbound to Euston for the next bar:

Euston Tap

www.beerguidelondon.co.uk/pubs.9

Located in one of the old gatehouses right outside Euston Station, this beer house serves 8 cask and 19 keg beers in an often outstanding selection. It's

tiny, with just a handful of seats in the bar area downstairs, though there are more seats upstairs. Given the location the pub can get busy very quickly and there is a constant flow of customers coming and going, but we love the atmosphere here and the service is always quick and helpful, with tasters offered to the undecided. From here take the short walk to Euston Square station and get the Circle, Metropolitan or Hammersmith and City line to Farringdon. From here it's a 5 minute walk to our final stop:

Craft Beer Co, Leather Lane

www.beerguidelondon.co.uk/pubs.3

The original Craft Beer Co pub, and in our view still the best. Offering 37 draft beers, with up to 16 cask ales available at once, the selection is hard to beat and you are almost guaranteed to find something of interest. While the bottled selection is extensive and highly impressive, it's best to check you are comfortable with the price before you buy. Food extends to posh pork pies only. There is an additional seating area upstairs.

This crawl can easily be extended by visiting some of our recommended pubs near those featured above, for example Black Heart - less than a minute from BrewDog Camden - or Old Red Cow on Long Lane near Smithfield Market, which can be visited with only a slight detour en route from Farringdon station to Craft.

Footnote: Kernel Brewery tap - featured in some of our previous articles - is now closed. The brewery continues to open as a bottle shop for takeaway sales only on Saturday mornings, but you can no longer drink on site. The brewery are considering alternative options for providing a better brewery tap-type facility elsewhere in the future.

Written by Jezza, SW London. Jezza's guide to pubs and breweries in London can be found online at: www.beerguidelondon.com

The site contains full details of all the bars featured in this article – including opening times, which you should check carefully while planning any visits. You can also follow Jezza on Twitter @beerguidelondon or @bons-voeux1 for frequent updates.

Autumn 2015



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THE COMPLEX LANGUAGE OF BEER ARE WE CONFUSED?

We all know that we are in the wondrous grip of a beer revolution. During my twenty-one years in the British beer industry I can't remember a time when we had it so good in terms of consumer interest in our national drink.

But what are the drivers behind that revolution, what might come next and how should we as an industry work to build on the positives for beer we are enjoying right now?

I'm sure CAMRA would claim that real ale has been the key driver behind the renewed success of beer. New-wave craft brewers may well claim it is the American influence and that craft keg is the leading factor. SIBA might claim that it is the promotion of and access to local beers that have fuelled the growth in members' market share.

They are probably all right, to a greater or lesser extent.

There's little doubt that real ale has enjoyed a sustained period of positive performance, whether by declining less than the rest of the beer market, or growing in volume and/or draught terms. The Cask Report, now in its seventh year, has provided the market with credible insight into the fortunes of cask ale and, only a few weeks ago particularly premium cask, and it is in growth. The success of CAMRA over the last ten years or so is a major factor in this; membership has doubled in little more than a decade and 177,000 people can't be that wrong!

Likewise the new-wave craft movement has pumped some arguably much-needed excitement and innovation into British beer.

It's created new avenues and opportunities that everyone is now trying to get a taste of. The influence of heavily-hopped US-style beers has created a whole new level for beer and that is a very welcome development in every way – and in every format – cask, keg, cans and bottles.

Consumers love local. Every survey will tell you that; it is the single most important trend in food and drink according to the 2014 Top Ten Trends Report. In recent years it has been seen as ethical and meaningful to consumers besieged by recession and austerity leading in part to a rejection of global brands and the embracing of things closer to the comfort of home. It's created a huge opportunity for the 1,500 or so brewers now filling their mash tuns. It's created a whole new industry where small is good and provenance is demanded by engaged and affluent consumers. It's made British brewing about people, the crafted beers they brew and the stories behind them, and not about large-scale global corporations.

As an industry, we have finally started working and communicating effectively together, albeit incompletely. Look for example at the excellent joined-up campaign involving SIBA, CAMRA and the British Beer and Pub Association to secure no less than three cuts in beer duty (many said it would never happen and many were wrong). Look at the global brewer-led There's a Beer for That campaign funded to the tune of more than £10million and supported by many brewers, retailers and other groups including SIBA.

The need to speak with one clear voice about beer is a driving force behind SIBA's vision to deliver the future of British Beer and become the voice of British craft brewing. In

so doing, we are not looking to exclude, but rather to include, as many brewers as possible in SIBA by providing practical business and commercial benefits and coherent campaigning and promotional activity that no one else can match and to collaborate with other groups as much as possible. We represent and work for all independent British craft brewers, whether they are 'traditional' or 'new-wave' in their approach to business.

I'm sure that many factors determine the behaviour and decisions of beer drinkers; we are a complicated bunch. Despite this I have yet to see a coherent body of evidence setting out what the real consumer drivers are behind British beer. On a crowded bar or shelf what makes people choose their beer? Is it about localness, real ale, craft, Britishness, provenance, style, wide choice, ingredients, the brewer, independent credentials, flavour, format or a dozen other terms making up the complex

language of beer? The likelihood is that it is a mix of most or all of them.

It is for that reason that SIBA is leading a new project to find the truth behind British beer so that we can help members continue to build market share through a greater understanding of what drives drinkers' decisions. We hope to reveal the findings early in 2016 and run a conference to discuss them at BeerX, our major event, in Sheffield next March.

The beer industry has never been more exciting and SIBA will provide the insight for our members to take it even further in an increasingly uncertain and competitive market.

Cheers,
Mike Benner,
Managing Director,
Society of Independent Brewers Association (SIBA).



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2013, 2014 & 2015

PUB NEWS

The **Green Man at Howe Street** has been bought by two Michelin-starred chefs, brothers Chris & Jeff Galvin. It will become their first gastropub. When it opens in spring 2016, after a £1m refurbishment, we are promised local brews alongside local produce.

The Castle, Great Leighs (formerly St Anne's castle) is scheduled to reopen on 19th September. It will be a Pie & Pint Inn, joining the Hare at Roxwell.

Greene King's acquisition of the Spirit Group pubs gives them 6 more pubs in our area to add to the 27 they already owned – that's 20% of our pubs. You're never far from a pint of Greene King IPA!

Earlier this year I mentioned an approaching milestone at the **Chequers, Felsted**. In May landlady Wendy Barker duly celebrated 60 years of her family holding the licence. Her parents took the pub in 1955 and (many years later, of course) Wendy was born there. Wendy is a very popular landlady and we hope that she'll continue for many more years. A group of us visited the pub in June and presented Wendy and Graham with a certificate to mark the occasion, together with an engraved flower vase. Congratulations, and we hope to do something similar in 10 years' time!

The **Walnut Tree, Broads Green** has started selling real cider. Westons Rosie's Pig and Thatchers Heritage are always available, possibly with a third joining them.

Sad news from the nearby **Rose & Crown at Great Waltham**. Popular landlord, Richard Bailey, died recently. Richard will be fondly remembered, particularly for his love of horse racing and all country pursuits.

The new owner is Ben Johnson, born and brought up in Great Waltham. NHS workers, don't forget you receive a 10% discount on food here.

Jo Green has taken over at the helm of the **Railway Tavern, Chelmsford** (another case of keeping the licence in the family; in our second edition we noted how few families have run this pub). One of her first projects was to commission a brand new mural championing Chelmsford in their newly-refurbished beer garden. Both are well worth seeing. You may have read about the mural in The Essex Chronicle

but you need to visit while it's still warm enough to sit outside.

Their Meet the Brewer events continue to be popular. Billericay Brewing Company were there in September and next up is Round Tower on November 4th (they're usually the first Wednesday of alternate months).

The **Endeavour in Springfield Road** has added another regular beer – Wibblers IPA – which is proving popular, alongside their existing regulars and two guests. If there's a particular beer you'd like to see speak to landlord Mike and he'll do his best to get it in.

Jacqui reports that their two darts teams and crib team have done well in the summer leagues, and poker is proving popular. There's never a dull moment at this pub with another great Quiz Night in August and a Macmillan Coffee morning coming up on Saturday 26th September from 10 am. Try to drop in and support this – you don't have to drink coffee! Cake donations would be very welcome. Their 'Pop-up Restaurant nights' continue to be popular. At "Back in Time" you could have had prawn cocktail, chicken Kiev, and profiteroles, accompanied by Blue Nun and Black Tower wine. How sophisticated we were then! You'll have to be quick for the next one - "American Diner" on Saturday 19th September

Finally, Jacqui was the first person to wish me a Merry Christmas, with the news that they've taken their first Christmas booking.

Down Springfield Road, the pub that was Yates has metamorphosed into the **Slug and Lettuce** after a refurbishment.

We have a number of events taking place within a day or two of publication this time, and here is one.

The **Golden Fleece in Chelmsford** asks for your help! They are taking part in an attempt to break the world record for the most people drinking beer at one time. It's on Friday 18th September at 7pm and they hope to have as many in as possible to drink a pint of Hobgoblin. They need 714 (across all their 32 pubs) to beat the record.

Don't forget the 20% discount on all ales for CAMRA

PUB NEWS

members, and their £2 real ale offer every Monday & Tuesday evening with free cheese boards every Tuesday too.

Details of their next beer festival below.

Following their Late Summer Beer Festival at the beginning of September, Will and Donna at the **Woolpack, Chelmsford** announce three more festivals – details below. On 3rd & 4th October they have Blues in the City, with music on both afternoons, and featuring a Round Tower Limited Edition ale - City Gold. They are also now trialling two additional real ciders - Aspell Cyderkyn 3.8% and Thatchers Heritage 4.9% to go alongside the Westons Old Rosie they already stock.

More live music on Saturday 17th October at the **Railway, Witham** from 'The Beaten Track' (sounds appropriate!). They play a mixture of music from Cold Play to the Beatles. A week later on 24th October they have a charity Karaoke night on the 24th of October where you have to pay a pound to sing and all money raised goes to cancer research. The last time it was held this event raised £520!!! Don't forget their regular quiz night every Wednesday.

Other news from our Witham correspondent is that The **Red Lion, Witham** has been granted permission to change the flat above the pub into 4 letting rooms for bed and breakfast accommodation.

If you visit **Last Orders at the George** you will now find only one real ale – Last Orders' Ale – Landlord's Choice. Unfortunately there was not sufficient demand for the three ales they began with.

Neil and Samantha are leaving the **Swan (Witham)** after 5 years at the pub. We wish them well for the future. The pub will be closed for 3 weeks for refurbishment before a new landlord takes over.

As we go to press the **Spread Eagle** is closed yet again but is expected to reopen soon as a traditional pub.

Still in Witham, the **White Hart** has installed a new big screen and will be showing all the games throughout the Rugby World Cup which kicks off on Friday 18th September with England v Fiji. This happens to

coincide with their 8th annual End of Summer Beer Festival starting on Thursday 17th of September – details below. More of their guest ales are now being sourced from local breweries which is proving popular with customers. They have also recently introduced another 3 guest draught ciders bringing the total to 7.

Finally, we have a new outlet selling real ale - the recently-opened **Toby Carvery**, beside the A120 in Great Notley.

Upcoming **Pub Beer Festivals** that we know about.

Thursday 17th – Sunday 20th September. White Hart, Witham. 8th annual End of Summer Beer Festival. Themed around the Rugby World Cup (landlord Dave is a Kiwi), there will be 30+ beers and ciders. It also coincides with Witham's International Puppet Festival on Saturday 19th September, when their renowned hog roast returns and 3 bands will be playing later throughout the evening. "Who could ask for more!!" (end of quote).

Friday 18th – Sunday 20th September. Queen's Head, Boreham – their first beer festival. 15 beers and 3 ciders; Entertainment and food; families welcome (children up to 9pm).

Thursday 24th – Sunday 27th September. Golden Fleece, Chelmsford. It's part of their Proud of Our Ale campaign which runs from 18th September to 31st October and which aims to feature over 60 different ales. During the festival those buying 6 pints get a 7th free, 12 pints gets you a t shirt, and 24 pints an entry to a prize draw.

Wednesday 28th – Saturday 31st October. Woolpack, Chelmsford. Halloween Beer Festival with Halloween-themed real ales, ciders & perrys.

Wednesday 2nd – Saturday 5th December. Woolpack, Chelmsford. Christmas Beer Festival with, you've guessed it, Christmas ales, ciders & perrys.

Sunday 27th – Thursday 31st December. Woolpack, Chelmsford. Winter Beer Festival with not only winter ales & ciders but also the Best Selling Ales of 2015.

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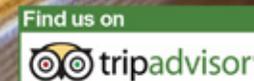
Also come and visit our brewery shop at:
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BREWERY NEWS

BILLERICAY BREWERY *Trevor Jeffery tells us:*



Brewery has been busy throughout the summer supplying beer festivals and pubs including new outlets: the Old Windmill, South Hanningfield, the Anchor, Canewdon, the Foxhound, Orsett & the Broker, Leigh. Regular outlets now include the Hoop, the Mayflower in Leigh, the Miley, the Golden Lion, Rochford, the Three Elms, the Olde Trout, the Viper, the Gun plus many pubs in the Grays group. The summer ales Norsey Gold and Sun Corner Gold have proved very popular and in the other extreme Chapel Street Porter is building quite a following. A Mild with No Name received the brewery's first award for beer of the festival (2014) from Epping & Ongar Railway. New 5.8% ESB Clever Trevor continues the Ian Dury theme and is available from the start of

September. Further autumn ales are planned for September - watch Twitter & Facebook for details. The micropub is becoming increasingly popular on Thursday, Friday & Saturday evenings (although no longer open on Sunday afternoons except special occasions). Most weekends there are at least 5 beers on tap, including at least one dark beer plus an Essex cider - guest ales are also regularly appearing. With all this extra work the Billericay Brewing team is increasing in numbers. Alex & Rose help running the micropub, Paul also helps in the micropub plus telesales and deliveries, Steve is the pub and other outlets salesman and for extra help in the brewery Will has started to work 2 days each week and a full time apprentice should be recruited by the time you read this.

BISHOP NICK *Marie reports:*



Our Limited Edition offering for autumn is **Embers** (3.8%) - back by popular demand. A scrumptious amber ale with Bramling

Cross hops. As earthy as a golden harvest and as smooth as runny honey, it's a bonfire of a beer. One reason not to mourn the passing of summer!

Revelry (4.5%) sold out extremely quickly in cask but this full-bodied boisterous festival of a beer is still available in 500ml bottles as is **Martyr IPA** (5.0%), our highly-praised American style IPA. Our bottle-conditioned ales can be purchased online from our website or from our brewery shop onsite and selected outlets across the county.

Summer was typically action-packed. We hosted another fun-filled and successful **Revelry Day** celebrating Father's Day. Then propped up a bar at the 40th Anniversary Chelmsford and mid-

Essex CAMRA Beer Festival at Admirals Park. We also made a debut appearance at the Essex Food & Drink Festival at Cressing Temple barns where we show-cased our bottled range.

Our brewery **Open Days** have been very popular with a number of people visiting for brewery tours and tastings.

New to the SIBA listing, we have already taken a number of orders. The Walnut Tree took some **Ridley's Rite** and raised a toast welcoming the Ridley name back to its pumps after so many years. Other SIBA pubs with Bishop Nick on pump include the Angel, Wheatsheaf, Rose & Crown, Black Lion, Hutton, Golden Fleece, Earl of Beaconsfield, Bird in Hand, Geldart, the Star and the Swan.

Reach us on 01376 349 605 and follow us on Facebook - BishopNickAle and Twitter - @BishopNick or sign up for our newsletter at info@bishopnick.com

BREWERY NEWS

BRENTWOOD BREWING COMPANY *by Wendy Pike*

Brentwood Beers to watch out for include Poppy 3.7% - a donation from sales goes to The Royal British Legion. Also Spooky Moon 3.8% for Halloween and Chestnut Stout 3.999% made with local chestnuts.

One of the first Brentwood Beers, Volcano 4.6% ABV, will be about this autumn. It's a black IPA which took its name after exploding all over the brewery when we first brewed it!

From Elephant School Brewing we have Milky Way (4.5% ABV tbc) as well as Cookies and Cream 4.5% ABV which is a luscious chocolate milk stout made with cocoa powder.

Another one to look out for from us is Mike's Hike (3.7% ABV tbc), named in honour of a Three Peaks Challenge that blind physiotherapist Mike Conyer from Brentwood is aiming to conquer within 24 hours to raise money for local charity SNAP.

Brewery Open Days are held from 10.30am to 3.30pm on the first Saturday of the month on 3rd October, 7th November and 5th December. We always have at least two draught beers for you to taste for free, special offers in the Brewery Shop, tours for £10 per person

THE MALDON BREWING Co. Ltd (T/A Farmer's Ales) *Mike says:*

Maldon Brewing has opened its very own bottle shop and micropub called Farmers Yard on Maldon High Street (no. 140). It's very small - the smallest pub in Maldon - with space for about 20 people at a time! We stock two or three of our beers as well as changing guests alongside real cider, red and white wine and a few adult soft drinks, aiming to keep it traditional. And that is about it! (with pork scratchings and locally-sourced crisps...). We are going to keep a well-stocked bottle store as well for people to take away or drink in. We were really looking forward to getting it open as everyone has been

including a pint and excellent street food.

On 3rd & 4th October we're at the Food & Drink Festival, West Street Vineyard, Coggeshall with a bar and a bottle stall. If you go along on Sunday at 2pm you can hear our very own brewery 'celebrity' Roland giving a talk on beer and food matching.

3rd October Essex Wildlife Trust, Grand opening of Ingrebourne Valley Visitor Centre, Hornchurch Country Park.

10th October Brentwood Brewing Company Open Conker Championships

25th October is the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt. The brewery will be there and raising funds for a local charity. Check out the brewery blog on our website for more details www.brentwoodbrewing.co.uk

Brentwood Gold has been awarded a Gold Star for excellence from The Guild of Fine Foods at the Great Taste Awards. Also the brewery is a finalist in the Brentwood Gazette Business Excellence Awards in the Communities category. We'll find out who the winner is at a black tie dinner at Hylands House, Chelmsford on 25th September.

really supportive and we want to have a beer with them all!

In other news the Barge themed beers are still incredibly popular and we are fitting in extra brews whenever we can including Molliette, a 3.8% deep ruby ale in which Cluster hops give a spicy blackcurrant flavour. Also Thalatta, a 4.4% rich and fruity amber beer and Unity, a 4.2% traditional amber. September also sees the return of the always popular Maldon Oyster Stout a 5.0% robust coffee with chocolate hints and a smooth finish.

BREWERY NEWS

CROUCH VALE BREWERY

The esteemed Lord Colin Bocking proclaims:

The news from Crouch Vale is that we have re-brewed Citra (abv 3.9%) and also to make a welcome return will be Mosaic (abv 4.1%) which will also shortly be available in bottle-conditioned form. Both beers should be available in September/October.

ESSEX BREWERY COMPANY

Ian Chisholm reports:

Since its formation and opening in late September 2014, Essex Brewery has developed its product range from traditional IPAs (Essex IPA), traditional Bitter (Grumpy Old Men), Essex Black Gold Stout, amber ales and wheat beers made with fruit puree to impart zesty flavours, including our Lemon Wheat Beer which is full of citrus flavour. The Essex Brewery Company offers beer in bottles at farmer's markets and events around the county and in the East Anglia region. The brewery's expanding choice of bottle-conditioned beers will shortly be joined by a range of four cask ales which should soon be available to landlords in a pub near you.

Contact Ian at the Brewery on 07732189364.

MIGHTY OAK BREWERY

Gill reports:



Mighty Oak's new Tap Room will be opening its doors sometime in October. Situated at the top end of Maldon High Street, this little pub will be the place in town to sample all of our ales, some fab. hand-picked wines and, of course, our rather lovely Wilde Spirit. Based on the very popular new wave of micropubs, our little venue will have restricted opening times – usually closed by 9 or 10pm, and we aim to promote conversation, traditional pub games and enjoy the occasional 'unplugged' evening music event. Check out our website for details of the grand opening.

ROUND TOWER BREWERY

Simon Tippler tells us:



We hope everyone had a good summer; we certainly did here at Round Tower Brewery. It was great to meet so many people at the beer festival and see everyone enjoying some great beer from us and other

breweries around the county and further afield. It was really good to get some direct feedback regarding our dry-hopping experiments, especially for the casks of Ella & Rakau that we opened at the beer festival, all differently dry-hopped. This was so well-received that we are continuing to do it with various casks that leave the brewery. The biggest surprise for us at the beer festival was how much everyone enjoyed the special edition Oak-Aged Slipstream, so we are taking some inspiration from this and will be oak-aging a few more of our beers over the next year or so. We were really pleased with how well our #100 8.9% Imperial Stout was received when we opened the first cask at the beer festival. If you weren't one of the lucky few who got to try it then don't worry as we have delivered a cask to the Orange Tree and another to the Ale House. If you miss those then you might still be able to try it when we release a limited number of bottles around Christmas. Keep an eye out on Facebook and Twitter and we will announce where and when it can be found.

We have recently launched a new range of pump clips so look out for them appearing on a bar near you!

Although we hate to mention it... we are planning for Christmas and will be reopening our 'Pop-Up Bottle Shop' at the brewery on Saturday afternoons in December for sales of bottles, gift packs and pre-ordered polypins.

BREWERY NEWS

WIBBLERS *Abby reports*



Wibblers once again hosted the Craft Brewing Association UK members for the annual Flocculation, and Crafty and Wobbly Otter have been made.

Crafty Otter is a 4.3% golden ale with home-roasted malt and Epic and Minstrel hops. It will be at the Maris Otter festival in Norwich in September. Wobbly Otter won't be available for a while, but Wobbly Mouse from last year's event is now available in cask and bottle.

Once again we are planning to brew Hop Harvest, with green hops from our own hop yard plus donations from various pubs locally. Dengie Red 4.0% will be making a welcome return in September/October along with Dengie Devil in for Halloween.

Our open day in September, Saturday 26th, is going ahead with our range of keg products available, ciders, Crafty Alec and Odyssey lager. Open day in October is 31st, prize for best fancy dress of a mini cask. Our Christmas open day is 12th December with mince pies and free samples so please come down and order your Christmas supplies.

As many people will know Wibblers may be moving premises early next year to a location in Southminster. A planning application has been submitted for works on the Grade 2 listed building so please cross your fingers this goes without a hitch. The new premises will allow us to have a tap room and continue to grow our retail offering.

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STOP PRESS!

The White Horse, Sweffling has been voted East Anglia Pub of the Year

SAISON

There are a tremendous number of new and a few old breweries now brewing beers and calling them Saisons. So what are Saisons? I think this is best explained by Tim Webb & Joe Stange in CAMRA's current Good Beer Guide Belgium.

How does one explain saison? Perhaps by leaving Belgium for a moment.

Historically, wine is the drink of southern Europe because grapes grew there, while beer was the drink of its northern belt because barley was plentiful. But brewers always had issues in summer. Farm brewers needed their workers on the land rather than in the brewery, and bugs plagued anywhere with open fermenting vessels. Hence brewing became a seasonal affair in many parts, including southern Belgium.

The problem for stylists is that while saison beers have a common theme of being derived from the need to make beers in cooler months for quaffing in summer, this does not extend to being similar in taste or format.

Three broad traditions are found within this fold.

Likely the commonest in days gone by were beers low in alcohol, made largely for rehydration of thirsty agricultural workers—including hired hands called *saisonniers*—and those working in heavy industry.

Higher than average hopping would help with preservation, and storage in sealed oak casks would be likely to cause mild acidity, though there is also a second tradition of light beers made sweet to give instant calories.

Meanwhile, over the French border in Picardy and neighbouring *départements* brewers made *bières de garde*, or 'stored beers', allowed to condition at the brewery for some months, a principle that a German brewer might call 'lagering'.

These heavier beers, likely of 6% alcohol and up, with

a somewhat aged edge, are unlikely to have been given to thirsty workers, as they would be too intoxicating and less refreshing. However, they may well have been held back for the celebrations at the end of harvest.

So from a confused history, we end up with Wallonian brewers recreating or perhaps inventing local 'traditions' of beers in widely different styles, all termed 'saison'. This is not a position that should sit comfortably with those intent on presenting or winning brewing awards, or patenting suitable yeast strains.

The term 'farmhouse ales' falls somewhere between a modern marketing ploy and a simple way to explain saison to Anglo-Saxons. Expect more confident hopping than comes from Flanders, an excuse for experiments in mixed fermentation, and—in the better ones—bottle-conditioning that goes the distance.

What is surprising is that so few seem to follow the lead of Saison Dupont, the beer that launched not only the re-emergence of saison beers but also the self-respect of francophone Belgian brewers, and played a significant role in the revival of hop-forward craft beers around the world.

Light hoppy saisons to try: Biologère; Belgoo Saisonneke; Ultra Frâiche.

Sweet light saisons to try: Saison 1900; Saison de Silly; Saison Voisin.

Bigger hoppy saisons to try: IV Saison; Saison Dupont; Saison de Dottignies; St. Feuillien Saison.

Unusual saisons to try: La Moneuse; Saison Cazeau; Saison de l'Epeautre; Saison d'Erpe Mere; Saison de Pipaix.

CAMRA Good Beer Guide Belgium, written by Tim Webb and Joe Stange, can be bought for £14.99 from CAMRA HQ.



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Andy Shaw, Administrator for Cambridge Beer Festival and a National Director of CAMRA, during judging of the East Anglia Bottled Cider Competition at Cambridge Beer Festival May 2015.

EAST ANGLIA BOTTLED CIDER JUDGING

I was honoured to be asked to be a judge again for the East Anglia Bottled Cider Competition, which took place in May at the Cambridge Beer Festival. There were 32 ciders and 15 bottled perries.

The cider competition consisted of 4 panels, each of 8 ciders and one of 7, with a final of 6 perries. There were 4 judges for each of the preliminary panels, and 7 judges for each of the 2 finals.

The format is to have 6 samples of cider / perry and a glass for water with something bland to clear the palate between samples to judge, such as plain bread or crackers. Each panel had 4 judges with a team leader to ensure that everyone got enough to taste with extra to come back to if need be and to lead discussion as required regarding the merits and characteristics of each sample. These are blind tastings with each bottle numbered so that only the organiser, Chris Rouse, who is the East Anglia Regional Cider Coordinator, knew them. Samples were judged on a scale 0-10 on Aroma; Initial Taste/Flavour; Finish/After Taste and Personal Enjoyment so the total score was

out of 40. As much as possible people were allocated to judge what they would enjoy in categories such as Dry Cider, Sweet Cider, Cask Matured, and Perry. Perry is made from pears and although often assumed to be sweet this may not be the case.

Producers from throughout East Anglia submitted their bottled products for judging with each being decanted into opaque plastic bottles that were numbered accordingly. The counties in the CAMRA East Anglia Region are Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Chris Rouse said, "The number of East Anglian cider makers is increasing year on year, and the quality is exceptionally high, even for first-time cider makers!"

Results for 2015

CIDER

- 1st: Harleston, Ice Cider
- 2nd: Apple Cottage, FTJ (Filthy Tramp Juice)
- 3rd: Burnard, Monty's Double

The other finalists (in alphabetical order):

Apple Cottage, Scrumpee; Buffoons, Mindbender; Burnard, Oaky Dokey; Cam Valley, Meldreth Stocks; Pickled Pig, Bourbon Cask.

PERRY

- 1st: Apple Cottage, Perry #1
- 2nd Simon's, Perry
- 3rd Pickled Pig Cider; Will's Perry Sweet

The other finalists (in alphabetical order):

Buffoons, Wonky Weasel; Pickled Pig Cider, Will's Perry Medium; Simon's, Pyder

The presentation to Harleston was made at the Great British Beer Festival on Wednesday 12 August 2015 and to Apple Cottage at the Orange Tree, Baldock on Friday 28 August.

Thirsty Times

Presentations to Burnard, Simon's and Pickled Pig are yet to be organised.

CAMRA CAMPAIGNING SUCCESS

In March, CAMRA launched a campaign to counter the European Union proposal to ban the tax exemption for small cider makers. The European Union demanded that very small cider producers making less than 70 hectolitres (12,319 imperial pints) per year, equivalent to around 33 pints a day, start paying a disproportionate tax of £2,700 each year. As they typically sell less than £10,000 of cider a year this would make production uneconomic for small-scale producers of cider and perry such as hobbyists and farm gate producers.

I personally thank all those who responded to my appeal for support for this campaign at branch meetings and via my Cider Press article in the summer edition of Thirsty Times 2015.

Thanks to 26,000 CAMRA members and cider lovers, on 10th June CAMRA members presented a petition to 10 Downing Street in London, calling on the UK Government to act on the threat to the small cider producers across the UK and to support the cider sector by rejecting an EU tax on these producers.

I am delighted to announce that as a direct result of CAMRA members meeting the European Commissioner Office on 7th July to discuss the matter that the next day it was announced that CAMRA welcomes the budget announcement supporting small cider makers. I asked Tim Page, Chief Executive of CAMRA for a quote about the maintenance of the tax concession for small volume cider producers:

"Once again, CAMRA was able to mount a persuasive campaign by mobilising its members – who responded quickly to our request that Autumn 2015

they sign a petition. Those 26,000 signatures, together with the lobbying conducted both in Westminster and in Strasbourg, were instrumental in the Government deciding to maintain the tax concession for small-volume producers. CAMRA's part in achieving that victory was widely acknowledged by other campaigners."

CHELMSFORD SUMMER FESTIVAL CUSTOMER FAVOURITES

- **Cider of the Festival:** Cox-A-Ruby-Do Medium (from cox apples and matured in a red wine barrel)
- **Perry of the Festival:** Apple Cottage Fred's Perry
- **Pyder of the Festival:** Apple Cottage KT Perry (made with Katy apples and perry pears)

I plan presentations to Ian Reynolds of Bertie's Cider Company and Gayle & Paul Edwards from Apple Cottage at our Winter Beer and Cider Festival. This will be at King Edward Grammar School, Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, CMI 3SX, 17th - 20th February 2016.



Fern Patterson who designed the logo for Cox-A-Ruby-Do which was made to celebrate 40 Years of Chelmsford & mid-Essex CAMRA and was voted Cider of the Festival by customers.

SOCIAL CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

Friday 25th September.

Visit to Witham Beer Festival.

7.45pm Community bus from Chelmsford station departing 8pm, drop-off Chelmsford circuit on way home.

Cost £5.00 members/OAPS £6.00 non-members.

Wednesday 30th September, 8pm.

Beer Cuisine Night at the White Hart, Margaretting Tye.

Taxibus/Community bus from opposite Chelmsford station departing 7.30pm. Cost £5.00 members, £6.00 non-members. £24.95 for a three-course meal with selection of beer samples. Please confirm your interest as soon as possible so that we can gauge numbers.

OCTOBER

Saturday 3rd October, all day.

Cider Safari + Pub Crawl.

Walking activity visiting all the pubs listed in the Cider map for Chelmsford including the Essex Cider Shop. Start at the Endeavour pub at 11.30am.

Wednesday 14th October, 8 for 8.30pm start.

Branch Meeting at Galleywood Social Club, The Street Galleywood.

No transport to this event, however nos.41, 42 & 51 buses from Chelmsford. Night Saver bus ticket £1.80 return after 7pm.

Saturday 17th October, 12noon to 10pm.

40 years Party at the Black Bull Margaretting. Celebrating 40 years of the Branch at this former Ridley's Pub and the first ever Chelmsford and mid Essex meeting point, which was on 15th October 1975.

Previous original branch members and present members are welcome, **by invitation**. Places are

limited so if you would like an invitation please contact Claire Irons or email - publicity@chelmsford.camra.org.uk.

An RSVP will be required, including any specific dietary requirements.

A selection of 6 real ales (one dark and 2 from Nelion Ridley's Bishop Nick Brewery) and a cider will be available, plus a full range from the pub bar will be there to purchase.

The invitation includes Tokens for 2 pints of Beer/Cider plus one free buffet meal token. There will be two buffet sessions 1-3pm and 6-8pm and guests will have a choice at which session they wish to use their token.

The party will be in the pub and guests are encouraged to wear something red or ruby for the occasion.

The pub is served by the 351 bus from Chelmsford to Brentwood. Last bus to Brentwood 8.26pm, last bus to Chelmsford 9.26pm.

Friday 30th October.

Maldon Pub Crawl (+ joint social event).

Proposed pubs to visit: Chequers, Goldhanger, Maltsters Arms, Heybridge, Carpenters Arms, Blue Boar (if open) and the new Wetherspoon at the Rose & Crown, High Street Maldon (time permitting). Community bus from opposite Chelmsford Station at 7.30pm. Cost £5.00 members, £6.00 non-members.

NOVEMBER

Saturday 7th November.

All Day Trip to Oxford including visit to the Hook Norton Brewery.

By coach from Chelmsford station departing 8.30am. Costs £25 members/OAPS, £26 non-members. Brewery visit including free tastings costs £10 for members, £12.50 for non-members. At least 5 hours in Oxford to explore the city. Stop-off and break on way home at the Woodbine, Waltham Abbey. ETA for arrival back at Chelmsford 10pm.

SOCIAL CALENDAR

Tuesday 10th November.

1975 GBG Pubs Runabout.

Visiting some of the pubs that were listed in the 1975 Good Beer Guide that were, and still are, in our area. 7.30pm minibus departs opposite Chelmsford station, then on to the Tulip, Chelmsford followed by visits to Cross Keys, Hatfield Peverel, Victoria, Witham and the Dolphin, Bradwell (possibly ending the evening at the Willows, Cressing). Cost £5.00 members only.

Wednesday 11th November. 8 for 8.30pm start.

Branch AGM at the Orange Tree, Chelmsford.

No transport to this event. All members are encouraged to attend.

Tuesday 17th to Saturday 21st November.

Rochford Beer Festival.

Members are encouraged to make their own way there by train.

Saturday 21st November.

Visit to Billericay

Including the brewery and micropub followed by Pub Crawl of Billericay and Stock. By 100 Bus from Chelmsford. Meet at Chelmsford bus station at 11am to catch bus to Billericay. (Bus runs every 15 minutes.)

Tuesday 24th November.

Brentwood Runabout.

Visiting White Horse, Coxtie Green, Rising Sun, Victoria, & Dairyman, Brentwood. Community bus departing opposite Chelmsford station at 7.30pm. Cost £5.00 members, £6.00 non-members. Drop-off Chelmsford Circuit afterwards.

DECEMBER

Saturday 5th December, all day.

Ipswich Pub Crawl (Joint Social with Ipswich CAMRA).

11am by train from Chelmsford, Witham or Braintree – Group Save tickets where possible. Full details and

proposed itinerary to follow as we will be under the guidance of the Ipswich Branch.

Wednesday 9th December, 8 for 8.30pm start.

Branch Meeting at the Walnut Tree, Broads Green.

Community bus from opposite Chelmsford bus station at 7.45pm. £5.00 members/OAPS, £6.00 non-members.

Sunday 13th December, 1pm.

Christmas Afternoon Dinner at the County Hotel, Chelmsford.

Proposed cost for 3 course Christmas Meal is £24.95. Deposits and firm bookings will be required for this event.

Tuesday 15th December.

The Mystery Runabout Trip.

Coach/minibus to be confirmed (may include brewery visit?). Departing opposite Chelmsford station at 7.30pm. Cost £9.00 members, £10 non-members.

Saturday 19th December, all day.

Colchester Social Pub Crawl (joint event with Colchester CAMRA).

By train from Chelmsford, Witham or Braintree. Group Save tickets where possible. Visiting some of the best pubs in Colchester under the guidance of our friends at Colchester CAMRA. Departing Chelmsford station at 11am.

Tuesday 29th December, all day.

Inter Branch Social – London Trip and Pub Crawl.

Train from Chelmsford to Paddington, then 205 bus route visiting various pubs on the route back to Liverpool Street. One day off-peak travel card costs £26.40 from Chelmsford and includes travel within London. (However there may be some cheaper options available.)



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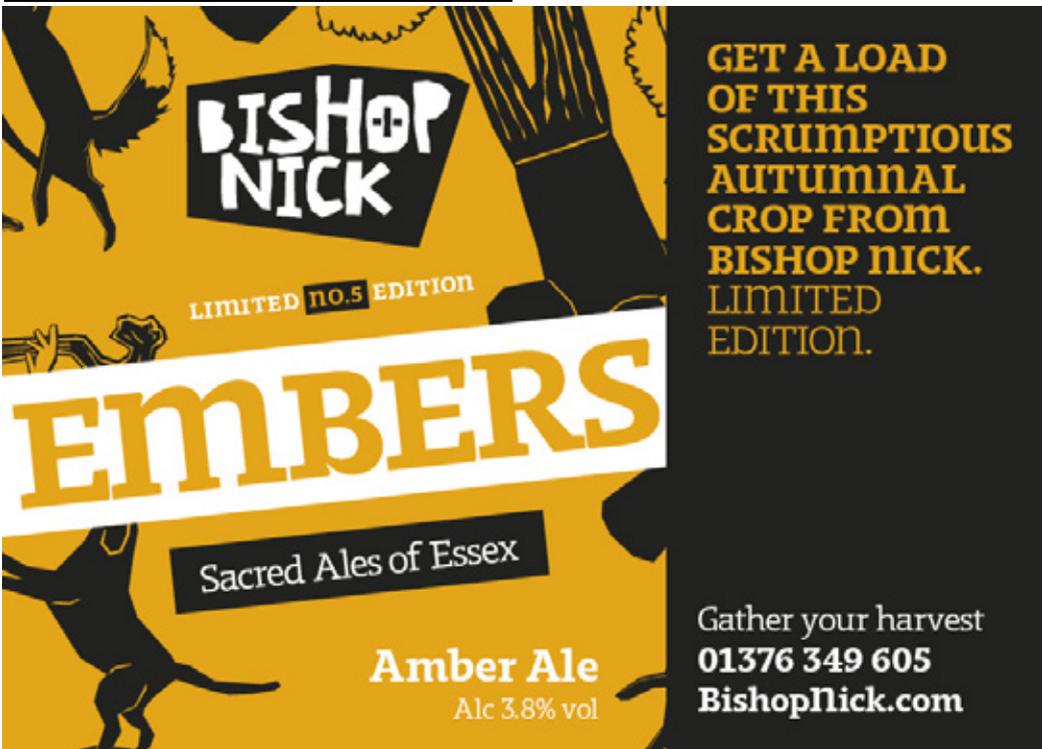
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CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE DUKE REVS UP! COMMUNITY REFUSES TO ACCEPT END TO 500 YEARS OF HOSPITALITY



Pubs closures are so frequent they barely make the news any more. So when the Duke of Marlborough in Somersham near Ipswich shut down for trade on Christmas eve 2014, it could have remained just another statistic. But it won't. Not if the local community has its way.

"The Duke is a beautiful, historic pub; a central feature of village life," says local doctor Sarah Caston. "We want it to stay that way. Quite simply, we refuse to accept that 500 years of local hospitality should come to an end."

A public meeting held at the beginning of the year established that there was an appetite for the fight. Since that meeting, people from across the community have worked tirelessly in setting up a Community Benefit Society, establishing Asset of Community Value (ACV) status, researching, making applications and fundraising. Sarah, who has been leading the Save the Duke campaign, and who has done the lion's share of the work said,

"The Duke of Marlborough is in many ways a national - as well as a local - treasure. It symbolises all pubs that have been the life-blood of communities for centuries but are now under threat of being turned into residential properties. When we raise our voices about the Duke, we're raising them for all rural pubs at risk."

The Save the Duke campaign is aiming to raise the funds to buy the pub through a crowd-funding share issue. To succeed, 7,000 shares of £50 each need to be sold. The opportunity to invest is open via www.

savetheduke.net and on Crowdfunder. There is a minimum holding of five shares per person. Pledged money will be put in a holding account and returned intact if the deal doesn't go through.

"We're convinced we can do it," says Sarah. "There's a compelling case for the business. All our research shows there will be extensive support for the newly re-opened pub. People really want a vibrant social hub serving fresh food and quality drinks from the region. By offering an enticing menu, creating a great atmosphere and putting on the right events, custom will be attracted from far and wide.

"Our business plan has been scrutinised by experts across the industry, and there's real confidence in our proposals and ability to deliver."

Most of the money is expected to come from people in Suffolk, but there's been interest from further afield too. All investors wishing to become part owners of the enterprise are welcome, wherever they're from. Anyone wanting a prospectus should email marlboroughsomersham@gmail.com.

In the meantime, Save the Duke campaigners have asked everyone who cares about pubs and communities to follow @helpsavetheduke on Twitter, and to 'like' the Save the Duke of Marlborough page on Facebook.

"A new age is emerging," says Sarah, "one in which people are grouping together to make a difference. With lots social media activity from well-wishers and financial support from those able to offer it, we can do it. Every single contribution matters.

"We'd like to thank in advance every individual who takes the time to vocalise their support or to buy a few shares. They will be helping to make sure this beautiful pub is not lost to future generations."

For info please contact: Frances Brace
frances@redflamecommunications.co.uk
07432 692309

WITHAM PUBLIC HALL TRUST REAL ALE FESTIVAL

25th - 26th September 2015

A warm welcome is guaranteed when you visit the Witham Public Hall Trust's Real Ale Festival being held on the 25th and 26th September. We are grateful for the support of CAMRA Chelmsford.

The festival is open from 12 noon until 11 pm each day. Admission is just £3 with £2 refundable on return of glass. Card-carrying CAMRA members are admitted free on both days (glass deposit required).

Special commemorative glasses have been commissioned for the event and are sure to sell well and be a great addition to anyone's collection. We are indebted to Crittall Windows Ltd for sponsoring us and providing funding for the purchase of the glasses.

With over 30 real ales, cider and perry to choose from there is definitely something for everyone, from a Dirty Blond to Cornish Knockers and Top Totty to a Tiddly Vicar.

The carefully-chosen ales feature many award-winners including, Oakham Ales Green Devil IPA, Champion Cask Ale 2015 awarded by International Brewing Awards and Green Jack Rising Sun, awarded Gold in 2013 by SIBA.

Closer to home we have an ale from the Moody Goose Brewery which is located in the grounds of the King William IV Public House in Braintree. They brewed their first beer in February of this year and are already proving to be very popular. It's good to see new micro-breweries emerging on the scene and our aim is to always feature them at our festivals.

Another small brewery making their first appearance at this year's festival is Sticklegs Brewery from Elmstead Market. Founded in 2008 with support from The Cross Inn, this small brewery now regularly produces five

different brews. We are featuring two of their ales, Boudica Gold which has a biscuity, nutty flavour with a pleasant flowery and spicy citrus experience and grapefruit undertones and Bar'King, a copper-bronze bitter with earthy floral notes and gentle honey aroma.

Saturday evening includes entertainment in the form of The David Warren Jazz Quartet. David is a very well-known musician around the UK and is probably best known for his Ukulele Band D'Ukes.

A great variety of hot and cold food will be available on both days and a relaxing day with a pint or two of your favourite ale and some good company will ensure a great day.

When you've found your favourite tippie why not take a couple of pints home with you in our two pint cartons.

This event continues to grow in popularity with the real ale enthusiast and we look forward to meeting you.

Our address is Witham Public Hall, Collingwood Road, Witham. For sat-nav users our postcode is CM8 2DY and the mainline railway station is just a 5 minute walk from our door.

Witham Public Hall is administered by the Witham Public Hall Trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee. Our charity number is 1139957. Our stated aims are to provide and maintain the hall for the use of the local and wider community. All profits from this event will be invested in the upkeep of the hall.

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Graham Green, Events Manager.



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ESSEX FOOD & DRINK FESTIVAL 2015

Volunteers from the Chelmsford and mid-Essex branch were active over the weekend of 18-19th July when CAMRA took an exhibitor's stand for the first time at the popular Essex Food and Drink festival. This event, which is sponsored by the Essex Chronicle and Adnams Brewery, offered a celebration of food and drink from Essex producers and others from across the East Anglian region. In addition to the numerous stands offering information, tastings, meals and an opportunity to purchase produce well-known celebrities and top local chefs provided inspiration about presenting food and drink. Therefore it was an ideal opportunity for CAMRA to connect with a large and receptive group of people.

The festival is held annually at the historic site of Cressing Temple, located in the countryside between Witham and Braintree, the attractive grounds and historic buildings of which provide



a perfect setting. A CAMRA stand offering books and information about membership was one of many to be found in the exceptional Grade I-listed 12th century Barley Barn, constructed after King Stephen gave the estate to the Knights Templar in 1137. Samples of cider and perry made by Bertie's Cider Company in Braintree were given away. In a separate tent tutored beer tastings were offered during Saturday and Sunday by Roger Protz and Annabelle Smith respectively, both attracting a large audience. They introduced and tasted beers from a number of local breweries including Brentwood BBC2 and Chockwork Orange; Bishop Nick Heresy; Colchester AK Pale; Mauldons Black Adder; Adnams Fat Sprat, Broadside and Ghost Ship. As writers of many popular books about beer they spoke with great authority about the taste and quality of each beer resulting in many questions and lively discussion.

CAMRA attendance at the festival was extremely worthwhile, new members were signed up and many more gained a greater appreciation of what it means to drink good beer. If you have never been to Cressing Temple and enjoy a good day out in pleasant surroundings with the opportunity to enjoy a pint then look out for this event next year.

Dave Buckley

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THE KNOWLEDGE & THE SECRET BAR

TALKING BEER WITH MEANTIME & SHARP'S

Recently I had that opportunity to drink beer and talk with two breweries who have much in common, but under very different circumstances as you will see.

Both breweries are owned by multi-national drinks firms, SAB Miller acquired Meantime earlier this year whilst Molson Coors bought Sharp's back in 2011. I was interested in getting both breweries' perspective on what some have seen as selling-out and was encouraged by what I heard from both parties. However it was Meantime to which I was invited first of all, so that's where I'll start.

I was invited to the Greenwich brewery, for the launch of The Knowledge, a series of beer appreciation courses for those wanting to delve a little deeper into this liquid that we love.

We were met at the Tasting Rooms, opened shortly before the buy-out was announced, by the current Beer Academy Sommelier of the Year, Rod Jones, who gave us a brief tour of the brewery before we made our way to the upstairs Brewhouse bar, home to some of the late beer writer Michael Jackson's astonishing bottle collection.

On our way around we were treated to a view of Meantime's small but interesting barrel-ageing area, which is home to a very small batch of the much-missed and sought-after Thomas Hardy's Ale. Originally brewed by Eldridge Pope from 1968 until 1999 when they ceased brewing, it was briefly revived by the Devon-based O'Hanlon's Brewery, but they had to stop after five years as it proved too expensive. The bottles from the cask we saw won't be seen in the UK however, as they will be off to Italy. However it was hinted that a very limited amount may be made available. I live in hope.

We also got to see the first contribution SAB Miller has made to Meantime as Rod proudly introduced us to four shiny new fermenting vessels that inhabit the brewery yard. Finally, when we were all seated with a glass of beer in front of us, Rod proceeded to tell us about the reasoning behind them taking this initiative.

"We have wanted to do this for some time, and



indeed have been doing so on a limited basis" he began "and it's something we are hoping to roll-out to the on-trade shortly, as well as those who sell our beer in places like Waitrose"

"The thinking behind this, particularly for trade customers, is to educate them. It's about reclaiming working in the licensed trade as a career path, educating and helping them promote better beer. It's about realising that beer is not going to go back to the 'old men in pubs' thing."

"The industry is renewing itself constantly anyway. Bottles of light ale, the traditional pale ale and Mackeson have all but disappeared from pubs. We think that there is plenty of interest in beer now and we want them to come in and experience a working brewery and learn something about beer. This is a genuine education programme within the industry."

He then went on to explain the two levels of courses on offer.

The first is split into four mini-courses: Beer Appreciation/How to taste beer, how beer is made, London beer history, and Beer and cheese, the latter being an informal talk and tasting of Meantime and other world-class beers with various cheeses with the aim of bringing out the best in both.

The second of these is the Masterclass, a one-day five hour course that includes lunch and a full beer tasting, and covers all aspects of beer, including its evaluation, identifying faults, serving temperatures and beer and food.

A limited level of knowledge is assumed when people come on these courses we are told, and should you be interested in finding out more then you can do so on the Meantime website.

We talked about beer for quite some time with Rod impressing us all with his detailed level of knowledge. He talked to us on a wide range of beer-related subjects from the simple and complex sugars in barley and malt, to the ancient Mesopotamian poem, the Epic of Gilgamesh, in which beer plays a part in creating the first man, to hop oils, and the history of brewing in London.

There is one subject on which he won't be drawn, and that is on the SAB Miller acquisition itself. I ask him if it was they who approached Meantime or if there was any courtship on their behalf, and he side-steps this issue by stating that he wasn't party to the deal. He is keen to stress, however, the benefits that the larger brewery will bring, from increased distribution and investment to a wealth of industry knowledge. Most importantly though, for the time being at least, Meantime is being left largely to its own devices and continuing to do what it does best, brewing good beer.



It had been a satisfying and informative evening with plenty of Meantime beer being drunk, and being presented with a certificate to say that I had completed the course was a rather nice touch.

A few weeks later, I'm making my way to Finsbury Circus, a short walk from Moorgate tube station, to attend the annual London Beach Rugby event as a guest of Sharp's Brewery.

You may think that the city of London is an odd place for a beach rugby tournament, however as I approach the venue it becomes clear from the noise level that quite a lot of people think this is very much the place to be.

The London Beach Rugby tournament, essentially a series of five-a-side games on sand, was first held in Covent Garden in 2013, and has been sponsored by Sharp's from the beginning. It moved to London's Docklands last year, but this year the Finsbury Circus venue became available and I gather that it will be held there next year too. The Sharp's team was coached by former England Tighthead Prop Phil Vickery, and it was my pleasure to meet and chat with him a little later in the day.

Spread over two afternoons it's a thoroughly enjoyable way to watch competitive sport up close whilst working your way through Sharp's core range, so if it sounds like your thing then keep an eye out for it next year.

I had been promised a very special tasting experience and I'm met by Lara from Red Consultancy who has set this meeting up, and it is she introduces me to James Nicholls, Sharp's Senior Brand Manager.

I immediately warm to James and his easy-going manner; he is friendly, knowledgeable and most of all passionate about the brewery he has been with for over twenty years. Having started washing casks and helping out in his spare time he has worked his way up to a senior position in the company but this hasn't jaded him in any way. The Sharp's fire still burns fiercely inside him.

We talk about beer in general, as well as Cornwall in particular, as I used to regularly visit the area where Sharp's are based in the early nineties.

Inevitably the conversation turns to brewing in Rock, and when I ask him directly about the

recent revelation that some Doom Bar isn't actually brewed in Cornwall he gives me an honest and straightforward answer.

"I know this has caused a lot of fuss" he says "but it's only the bottled version that's brewed by Molson Coors in Burton upon Trent, and this only accounts for 15 per cent of production. It's all a question of resources, and the remaining 85 per cent, which accounts for all of the cask production, is still brewed in Cornwall."

This actually makes a lot of sense, and having discussed this with a few people whose opinions I respect since then I have come to the conclusion that if you're going to have beer brewed elsewhere, then Burton upon Trent with its rich and historic brewing tradition is certainly the best place to do so.

It seems that Sharp's have been largely left alone by Molson Coors, with the multi-national bringing them investment, distribution and industry knowledge; in fact it's practically exactly the same answer that I got from Rod at Meantime, but the real difference is time. Remember that it's been nearly five years since they were sold, and in that time it cannot be denied that, whatever you think of Doom Bar, its profile has been significantly raised and there are an army of drinkers who actively seek it out. I have friends who talked of it in almost hallowed tones, and it's the one beer that they look for if they want a pint of 'real ale'. Publicans know this, and that it sells well, and it has become a regular fixture on bars the length and breadth of the nation.

I have been promised a visit to the 'Secret Bar' and I'm soon led over to a mobile home-type vehicle towards the back of Finsbury Circus. James says he'll be seeing us in a minute and promptly disappears, whilst Lara and I are ushered into the back onto some fairly standard seats but there is a partition door in front of us. The main door is closed, and with it the sights and sounds of the rugby tournament beyond. The partition door is rolled back slowly to reveal ... the 'Secret Bar'.

Unfortunately, I have been asked by Sharp's not to reveal exact details about the bar, suffice to say that it is designed in such a way that your whole focus is on the beer itself.

James is there of course, assuming the guise of barman, and I am served beer, as you might expect,

and more besides. He is very keen to hear my opinions and those of Lara, as well as offering his own and we evaluate the beer as we go and talk about the flavours we find and the way they are brewed. It is a fascinating and enlightening experience and we are in there for some considerable time, nearly two hours to be exact, and though this is a fairly new experience for them as well as me, I'm told that they are normally in and out in around twenty minutes.

We emerge into the sunshine with the tournament into its closing stages. Tokens are pushed into my hand for beer, but I'm not left to my own devices, and even though the tasting is over, James and other members of the brewery team are attentive and on hand to chat and talk about beer, answering any other questions I have.

Several pints later it's time for me to leave, and although the rugby has finished the party will be going on long into the night.

On the train home I reflect on the day and the experiences I had with both breweries. Meantime obviously had a product to sell, and even though they were genuinely friendly it was a little more clinical than the easy-going charm of the staff at Sharp's. The events themselves obviously went some way towards this, and whilst Sharp's were obviously very comfortable with the role their parent company spent in the day to day running of things, I didn't get quite that same feeling at Meantime.

Time will tell of course. Let's hope we continue to be drinking good beer from both of these breweries for many years to come.

Soon after I had finished writing the piece above, an article appeared on the Beer Insider website which caused more than a few eyebrows to be raised. It would appear that the Dutch lager Grolsch, another of SAB Miller's concerns, is being blended into Meantime's London Lager on a 1:10 ratio, meaning that it is at least ten percent less 'London' than it used to be. Whilst this is obviously a worrying development, as it shows that the larger brewery is already influencing production, it might not be a huge cause for concern yet. It does make me think of those four shiny new fermenting vessels that had recently been delivered and what beer they might contain in a few years' time.



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80 BRUSSELS BOOZERS (AND WHAT TO DRINK)

My title doesn't have quite the same ring to it as that chosen for the book that this post is about. The 80 beer series has returned to where it began with the release of the second edition of *Around Brussels in 80 Beers*. I caught up with author Joe Stange to find out what he's been getting up to:

BIK: How did you get involved with 80 beers?

JS: I was living in Brussels and writing a book on the best places to drink the best beer in Brussels. Then I heard that Tim Webb wanted to publish one akin to Podge and Siobhan's *Around Bruges in 80 Beers*. And I thought, "Oh, shit. I'd rather not compete with that." So I called Tim. I explained that I was a journalist who was already working on such a book, and might he need someone to write it? So he put me together with Yvan De Baets, and we co-researched and wrote the first edition. My background was news reporting, plus two years of living in Brussels and filling a notebook with beer and pub notes.

BIK: How did you find the time to check out so many pubs & bars? I assume there must have been plenty that didn't make the cut too!

JS: At this point many years of research have gone into it. I have a working list of nearly 200 cafés, but there are many hundreds more in Brussels. I can't get to them all. I lived in Brussels for four years until 2010, and I've managed to get back two or three times per year since then. Most of that time I spend just walking and tramming around the city, following leads and occasionally finding something new. I follow local Brussels media too, because they occasionally write about new cafés or restaurants. Still, I'm sure there are a few good ones out there that I haven't found. If so, let me know!

BIK: Are you impressed with how much the bar scene in Brussels has moved on in the last 6 years?

JS: Yes and no. There are more bars, cafés and shops run by people who are selective about Belgian beer and know what they're doing. So that's great. It was harder to narrow my list down than it was in 2009 for the first edition.

On the other hand there are also an absurd number of ridiculous trendy "concept" bars that either don't care about beer or are content to rely mainly on the products of one large beer company. Meanwhile, Brussels hotel bars are stuck in the 1980s.

Also, Belgian bars are starting to play with international craft beer, which is fine, but unfortunately they come at international craft prices. As in other well-established beer countries, the Belgians generally refuse to pay much for beer. I'm cheap and old-fashioned so I like it that way.

BIK: What are your thoughts on how Belgian beer as a whole is moving to more modern interpretations of styles whilst some breweries are still preserving traditional styles

JS: Our cultural borders were always liminal, never hard and fast. What we once learned were "Belgian" beers were also heavily influenced by British ale, German lager and French wine -- and influence has many vectors. But Belgian beer does have a certain identity and common characteristics -- light body, sturdy foam, lively carbonation, expressive yeast, bottle-conditioned -- and I get annoyed when lazy brewers chuck all that away in a doomed attempt to imitate a California IPA, for example.

BIK: A topic I think will come up in conference: brewers without breweries (commissioners, gypsy or otherwise). What are your views on these type of breweries and are they overall a good, bad or indifferent thing for Belgium?

JS: The chief problem is not hiring a brewery --

it can be a sensible arrangement -- but lack of honesty. People want to know where their food and drink is made. The label should tell them the place of manufacture. Also I have little patience for misuse of the words "brewer" and "brewery." I want to protect the language there. A brewer is someone who physically brews beer. A brewery is a building that houses functioning brewing equipment. If you are not those things, do not use those words. There is no shame in being an excellent marketeer or successful entrepreneur who is sensible enough to hire skilled technicians to make a product. Own it, instead of pretending to be something you're not. It's disrespectful to the people who do the production work.

BIK: If you had time for just a single place in Brussels, which would it be?

JS: The Brocante, on Place du Jeu de Balle. Great list of lambics, lots of odd local snacks, interesting bric-a-brac, and a cat or two.

BIK: If there was one bar you'd suggest people visit to get an authentic taste of Brussels history and beer, which would it be?

JS: Lots of choices here but I'd single out the Bon Vieux Temps. Dark, ancient and unchanging, a wonderful place to sip a Trappist and talk quietly or admire furnishings.

BIK: If pressed for your favourite Belgian beer, what would you name?

JS: Saison Dupont.

Obviously a man of good taste, recommending one of my favourite Belgian beers! Joe kindly ar-

ranged to get the book posted to me in time for our trip to Brussels to give it a proper road test. It's certainly had that and now appears a few years old, replete with beer stains and foxed cover! We've been to around ten of the eighty outlets so far and found something great to drink at all of them. Joe's writing style is both conversational and observational with plenty of details on the history of the place, some great photos and each page is rounded out with a beer suggestion and some pithy tasting notes.

I started out trying to drink the suggested beer in each venue, but as with all transient things a number of the venues no longer stock the suggested beer. No worries though as there are plenty of other Belgian beers to choose from!

I'll probably do a full round up of all the places that we get to over the weekend, but in the meantime I'd recommend Neutnigen-uf for great beer cuisine, Moeder Lambic Fontinas for beer choice and le Fleur en Papier doree for atmosphere. Don't forget Cantillon and de la Senne of course!

The book is very reasonably priced at £10.99 and can be brought on line from booksaboutbeer.com

Happy bar hunting!

Steve Lamond (beersiveknown.blogspot.com)

Cheers to Joe for taking the time to answer my questions. If anyone wants to catch up with him, share suggestions, jokes or pictures drop him a line at BXL80beers@gmail.com or on Facebook/ [AroundBrusselsin80Beers](https://www.facebook.com/AroundBrusselsin80Beers).



40 YEAR REAL ALE & CIDER TRAILS: A "REAL-ALEY" GREAT SUCCESS

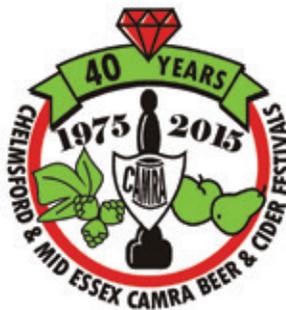


Branch Chairman, Doug Irons congratulating Dave White who completed the trail a week after it started.



Chris Maker cycled to all The Trail Pubs to win 36 pints of beer and 2 shirts

Over 100 people joined in the Real Ale and Cider Trails as part of the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of Chelmsford and mid-Essex CAMRA. The Trails ran from 17th January until 13th June, featuring pubs in the branch area from the Recommended Pub Guide 2014-2015. Some visited a few pubs and 70 completed the trail drinking at least half a pint of real ale or cider at each pub to be rewarded with a limited edition black trail polo shirt featuring the branch 40 year logo with the red hand pump. Although The Flich of Bacon in Little Dunmow is due to reopen soon, unfortunately it was closed during the Trail period so some people sent in photos of themselves at the pub as evidence of attendance. All the people who sent in their completed entry form with 39 of the 40 pubs received the very special shirt to wear with pride and are entitled to the trail pen too.



THE PRIZE DRAW WINNERS are listed below and collected their prizes from the Cheers for 40 Years Stand at the Chelmsford Summer Beer and Cider Festival 2015 in Admirals Park.

6 Pubs from the 1975 Good Beer Guide: Mike from Chelmsford won a Souvenir Glass and CME CAMRA pen.

14 City Centre Pubs: Fern from Basingstoke won GBG2015, Souvenir Glass, 4 x ½ pint tokens and Trail Pen.

14 Out & About: Dan from Little Baddow won GBG2015, Glass, 6x ½ pint tokens, Pen, 2 x evening entry to festival.

10 Rural: Kate from Chelmsford won GBG2015, T-shirt from Smart T's, 8 x ½ pint tokens, Pen, 3 bottles of Locale.

20/40: Peter from Chelmsford won T-shirt from Smart T's, 8 x ½ pint tokens, 2 x free evening entry to the festival.

30/40: Dave from Chelmsford won GBG2015 and 1 year's single membership of CAMRA.

40/40: Chris from Billericay won a polypin of Locale of his choice and an extra 40 Year CME CAMRA Trail shirt.

Visiting any 10 pubs (including the other draws) wins a special Chelmsford CAMRA Real Ale and Cider Trails pen featuring a bottle opener. However not all winners collected their pen. If you would like one please contact Claire Irons on 01245 290710, at a branch meeting or email publicity@chelmsford.camra.org.uk. Many people donated to our charities of the festival, Peaceful Place and CHES for homeless people in Chelmsford, to get a pen.

The overall winner, Chris Maker, won a polypin of Mighty Oak Beer of his choice, and 2 trail shirts, one for completing the whole trail and one for winning the 40/40 draw, and the special trail pen.

Three guys did 40 Pubs in 40 hours adding in The Ship in Chelmsford to fulfil 40 pubs visited and Chelmsford Beer Festival as the 40th pub to complete the trail. They had their own shirts made to celebrate with all the pubs listed on the back but were very pleased to win the official black ones featuring the 40 Year logo with the red hand pump.

Lots of positive feedback has been received from the publicans and participants. Indeed the trails have succeeded in prompting 2 more pubs to stock real cider throughout the year. The Plough in Chelmsford and the Walnut Tree in Broads Green are now selling real cider/perry.

Look out for our new Recommended Pub Guide 2015 featuring 50 pubs to visit at your leisure rather than as another Ale and Cider Trail.

Thank you to all those who took part and succeeded in CAMRA Campaigns 3 and 4 to try a range of real ale and cider and to increase pub-going. Many trailers who were not previously members joined CAMRA



Richard Storey and Ryan Pitt in their 40 Beers For 40 Years 40 Pubs in 40 Hours shirts with Claire Irons, Publicity Officer for Chelmsford & mid-Essex CAMRA wearing the official 40 Year Real Ale and Cider Trail shirt.

at the festival so we look forward to meeting many of you at events on our Social and Campaigning Calendar. Don't forget to claim your free pint for attending your first branch meeting and 2 free tickets for a Real Ale Runabout.

Claire Irons, on behalf of the 40 Year Committee of the Chelmsford and mid-Essex Branch of CAMRA

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BEER IN ESSEX: FOUR COGGESHALL PUBS

On a warm Saturday morning a few weeks ago we were stuck for an idea of what to do or where to go. It was one of those late spring - early summer mornings where you really feel that you'd have wasted the day if you didn't get out of the house and do something positive. Searching for inspiration, my wife turned to the internet and consulted one of those 'days out in...' guides that can easily be found. A National Trust property in Coggeshall, Paycockes House and Garden, caught her eye, and as I neither of us could recall ever having been there, or indeed having ever been to Coggeshall itself we duly set off pleased to have found a suitable destination.

My only recollection of Coggeshall prior to this was that the late eighties, early nineties TV show *Lovejoy* was filmed in the area, and that the previous owners of our current house had moved there when we bought it from them.

Consulting the Good Beer Guide for a suitable lunch recommendation upon our arrival, we headed to The Chapel Inn, of which more later, for some very good food and a couple of very well kept pints from the local Red Fox Brewery. Paycockes House was just around the corner, and well worth a visit. Beautifully kept and respectfully restored it is a fine example of a Fifteenth Century wool merchant's house, and the children were particularly delighted to be able to play croquet in the garden, but it was the walk around the unspoilt town that provided me with the desire to find out more about it and this was subsequently the inspiration for this piece of writing.

The origins of Coggeshall itself, as well as its name, are lost in the mists of time and it has been referred to with many different spellings through the years. Growing up at the intersection of the River Blackwater and the Roman Road of Stane Street that linked Colchester to Ermine Street, the main Roman Road north, it is referred to in the Domesday Book as Cogheshal, a settlement of some sixty men, with ploughs, horses, oxen, sheep, and even a

mill. It prospered from the mid-Fifteenth Century as the local monks were able to breed sheep with particularly high quality wool, from which the famous Coggeshall White cloth was made. It also had a regular Saturday market. With the decline of the wool trade, the economy was centred on silk and velvet, but by the late Nineteenth Century it had also become renowned for the quality of its brewing.

In Ian P. Peaty's excellent Brewery History Society Publication, *Essex Brewers: The Malting & Hop Industries of the County*, a constant source of reference for me, eight pages are devoted to the breweries and mentions of brewing in the town. Only Chelmsford and Colchester have more, such was its importance in the county.

As wool was such an important factor in the growth of the town it is natural that I should start with one of the pubs that takes its name from the trade itself.



The Woolpack Inn

The Woolpack (91 Church Street) dates from the 15th century, and is the oldest secular building in the town. Originally built as a home for a prosperous wool merchant, by the early 16th century it had become a hostelry catering to those in the same business, with wool auctions being held there regularly. Within the space of some fifty years how-

ever it had returned to its original use as a private dwelling.

In 1665 it was purchased by Thomas Lowery, previously vicar of the church next door, St Peter ad Vincula (which my Latin translator tells me is St Peter in chains), who had been ejected from the Church of England over his Puritanical views following the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660. He continued to preach despite this, and independent congregations would gather under his roof to hear his words, and this is commemorated by a blue plaque on the wall of the pub itself.

Speaking of the church I have found an anecdote in several books that concerns a group of men (the number varies from four upwards) who, having spent the evening in the inn next door, became convinced that they could move the church by pushing against it hard enough. Having tried in vain, and after removing their jackets, they came to the conclusion that the reason that they were unsuccessful was that they were pushing against the wind. After going round to the other side and pushing with all their might for a short while, they went back to see if they had made any impression at all. Finding their jackets gone they reasoned that they must have pushed the church right on top of them!

By 1708 the Woolpack was back as an inn, although it was known as the Punchbowl for a time, and its half-timbered frame was covered in plaster in the early 19th century. Following a refurbishment in the 1930s this was removed, the building restored to the state we see it in today, with a magnificent brick fireplace discovered behind a boarded-up wall during the same work. It has suffered from some subsidence during the years, indeed its floor sloped by eight inches from the centre to the walls at one point, so a false floor was laid in the 1950s and this remains.

Today it still retains plenty of character, a memory of a bygone era; it really is like stepping back in time. A row of four cottages once stood in what is now its car park, so there is no excuse not to spend a little time there should you happen to be passing by.

If you continue towards the town, almost facing you near the very end of Church Street you will

find **The Chapel Inn** (4 Market Hill). As its name implies it is built on the site of an old chapel (although evidence of Roman drainage aqueducts can be found in the beer cellar), however I have found some conflicting evidence regarding its origins.



The Chapel Inn

The pub's website states that the original chapel was erected in 1256, and there is reference to the home of one John Sewell, Sheriff of Essex in the reign of Richard II, owning property there, which was either the chapel itself or certainly very close by. During the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, his home was looted by the rebels, although the current pub's assertion that he was decapitated on the premises at the time seem a little improbable as there are possible references to him as late as 1389.

The will of Thomas Hall, a local resident, dated January 15th, 1499, has the following passage: "I bequeath towards the edifying and making of a chapell within the said Towne of Cokesale (Coggeshall) XXS to be paid when the said chapell is werkyng."

Whether this is a new chapel, or a modernisation of the earlier one is unclear, however construction certainly took place, and there are references to it as "an olde chaple" in 1549.

In 1588 the property was conveyed to the fullers and weavers of the town before being demolished in either 1787 or 1795 depending on which account you read.

The current property, which had been known as Ayworth's, Edgworth and Seals (Sewells) after pre-

vious owners is mentioned as being sold in 1828 following the bankruptcy of the brewer of The Coggleshall Brewery at The White Hart, I. Brightwen (that we shall visit shortly), with two floor maltings being a feature of the yard at the rear.

At some point the building was a hotel as well as an inn, and featured a brewhouse being run by a Mr Walter Green, and in more recent times was owned by the Ind Coope brewery, which had its origins much nearer London though still in Essex, having been founded in Romford.

Today it is a friendly community pub and the town's only entry in the Good Beer Guide, and one in which you will find beer from the nearby Red Fox Brewery regularly on the bar. I can also recommend the food having eaten there on a recent visit so make sure it's on your itinerary, particularly if you're after some Essex-brewed beer.



White Hart Hotel

Turn right out of The Chapel Inn and down Market Hill for a few short paces and directly in front of you you cannot mistake the pale frontage of **The White Hart Hotel** (Market End).

Parts of the building date from the late 15th century, although it may have been built on the site of a much earlier building as it is situated alongside the old Roman road. A former coaching inn, and one in which you may still stay the night, it was once the only staging post on the Colchester to Braintree route.

It is also known that the Coggleshall Brewery was situated at the rear of the building as in 1837 it was

up for sale, being described thus:

“Coggleshall Brewery, including an excellent brewhouse: 3 floor malting house ... malt, barley and seed chambers ... the whole forming a frontage of 95 feet in Stoneham Street; at the back is an enclosed yard and an excellent garden. The property is supplied from an inexhaustible spring rising in a small garden a short distance from the brewery. The population of the town and neighbourhood (is such) that an intelligent merchant with moderate capital must succeed.

A company of gypsies stayed at the inn for a while in September 1842, although it appears that they were confined to the out-buildings as one of their number, Cassello Chilcott aged 28, is recorded as having died in the stables after suffering a long illness. She is buried in the churchyard of St Peter ad-Vincula, her gravestone being one of the first you see if you climb the path to the church itself.

Today the White Hart Hotel is run by Olde English Inns, the hotel arm of Greene King, and is said to be haunted by the unnamed ghost of a young woman, although this may not be that of Cassello Chilcott as there have been reported sightings even before she died there. Looking on the website it gets good reviews for the friendliness of the staff although the rooms themselves appear to be a little small and in need of some renovation. It would be a good base from which to explore the town and the surrounding area, so might be worthy of consideration should you wish to visit.

The fourth and final pub on my tour of Coggleshall is, I'm afraid, no longer an inn but a private house, but one that I feel is still worthy of attention.

The Fleece (27 West Street) is attached to Paycocke House, being purpose-built some five years afterwards in 1503, for wool merchant Thomas Paycocke's son as an inn and stables.

Whilst not as grand as the White Hart Hotel it still gained a good trade from its location on the old Roman road, albeit a little out of the main town, with its rear being home to the Gravel Brewery founded in 1870, before this moved opposite the Cricketers pub, like The Fleece no longer trading, somewhere between 1875 and 1897. The brewery

itself was started as a sideline by the renowned seed-growing company Kings Seeds, a business that is still in existence today.



The Fleece

The Fleece itself is described as having one bar with an enormous fire place in which log fires were kept constantly burning during the winter and must have provided some much welcome warmth for a weary traveller on a bitter evening.

In later years it was bought by Greene King, who

in turn closed and sold it in 2013 although the sign still remains, as does much of the brewery branding on the exterior wall. It is a fine building and it is not difficult to imagine the sound of conversation and laughter coming from it in days gone by.

Visiting Coggleshall is like going back in time, to the days of Pepys or Dickens, when the coaches thundered along the main street of this once thriving town. It is places like this, that contrast almost completely with the hustle and bustle of my corner of Essex, that fill my heart with joy and truly make me believe that I live in the best county in the country.

Sources:

- Essex Brewers & the Malting & Hop Industries of the County - Ian P Peaty
- The Romance of Essex Inns - Glyn Morgan
- Alka-Seltzer guide to the Pubs of Essex
- Titbits and Tales of Essex Inns - Mavis Sipple
- A Pub Crawl around Essex - Graham Dover
- The Essex Chronicle
- The Chelmsford Chronicle
- Borrow's Gypsies Blog website
- Olde English Inns website
- The Chapel Inn website

BEER ACADEMY LAUNCHES BEER STEWARD

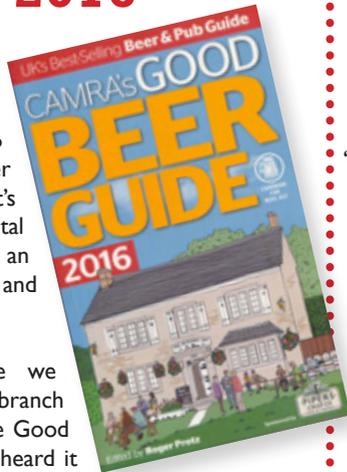
An on-line course providing the essential introduction to Beer - which will provide all those working in the Beer Sector, but particularly those working directly with consumers, the essential knowledge to allow them to qualify as a 'Beer Steward'.

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More info at: www.beeracademy.co.uk/courses/beer-steward

THE GOOD BEER GUIDE 2016



The 43rd edition of the Good Beer Guide has just been published, all 1016 pages of it. The cover price is £15.99. It's also available in digital formats, including an e-book, mobile app and sat-nav download.

In our last issue we explained how our branch selects pubs for the Good Beer Guide. I have heard it said "Oh, I bought it last year, (two years ago), and I still use it; not much changes." Not so. Of our allocation of 17 pubs, 6 are different this year, with 2 appearing for the very first time. This pattern is likely to be repeated across the country and of course the Breweries section gets larger and larger, so I urge you to buy the Guide this year, or put it on your Christmas list.

So to keep you guessing, which are the Chelmsford and mid-Essex pubs? Of the two first-timers, one is in Chelmsford and one in a village, one very modern in a listed building, the other with a more traditional interior.

The pub with the most entries in our area, 39, is back in after missing out last year, while a Chelmsford pub, which was in the first edition in 1974, returns after an absence of 29 years. There is just one other pub from the 1974 edition appearing in this one. Hatfield Peverel has its first entry for 15 years, the same pub incidentally, and two of our four Wetherspoons pubs are in. While free houses are in the majority, four Grays pubs appear and you might be surprised to find two pubs owned by Greene King. Several old favourites are still there of course but do they include your best pub, or even the one you're drinking in now?

If you're hoping to see "Answers on back page" you're out of luck I'm afraid. You're going to have to buy the book! Every real ale fan should have one.

THE LAMENT OF THE OLE' RIDLEYS RIDER

A POEM BY DES BASS

I'm an ole' "Ridleys Rider", that's what I am
I likes me bitter beer, in a glass, not a can
I put on mew clips, and away I go
'Cause with me baggy trousers, the wind it doth blow.

I pedal along, at a steady ole' rate
There's no hurry now, for me and me mate
We're just two old timers, out for a pint
Chatting about yesterday, putting the world right.

The wind catches the caps, of me and me mate
As we lean our ole' bikes, upon the pub gate
Bent half double, we totter to the pub
Thinking of beers, and cheap pensioners grub.

A pint for me, and a pint for him
We're just two ole' boys, happy at our inn
We talk of ole' times, and years gone by
No lycra then, but we had a glint in our eye

Of time trials never won, and addaxes long done
We're wrinkled outside, but once again we feel young
We eye up the girls, but our time is past
They're watching the lycra boys now, that go so fast

Cheerio landlord, it's time to leave
Where's me clips, where's me cap
Oh, it's caught up inside me sleeve

We'll just pop in the loo, before we go
It's a long ride home, it's the bladder you know.



Thirsty Times

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Autumn 2015

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A Campaign of Two Halves

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