



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

THIRSTY TIMES

FREE

Chelmsford & Mid-Essex, Maldon & Dengie
and North West Essex CAMRA Branches



A day trip to
Huntingdon
See page 16

Issue 25

Spring 2018

FROM THE EDITOR

Spring has sprung – well, almost, and a new broom sweeps at *Thirsty Times* towers. In this issue we're starting a new series of articles on outstanding pubs just outside our branch boundaries, leading off with the Falcon, Huntingdon.

Readers are invited to contact TT at the email below, to suggest future destinations in the East/Southeast for our intrepid reporters to visit and enjoy.

Elsewhere Maldon & Dengie's Chris Harvey relates a similar out-of-area tale, with a trip to pubs in Angel and Islington, and James 'Woody' Wood gets technical in his summary of experience with KeyCask, pressure, polycarbonate bottles and other stuff at last year's CSBCF.

There's also space for a nostalgic look back at the brewing history of Ridley's, that becomes a look forward to good fortune for its award-winning *de facto* successor, Bishop Nick brewery.

Revitalisation

The subject of what CAMRA's place in future society might or should be is as important to members as it is likely to make them glaze over. For your delight and delectation, there is yet another new sub-domain to tackle, revitalisationdecision.camra.org.uk. Those who have stuck with the process over what seems now like an eternity can now see an end in sight.

We are now able to vote on changes to the Articles of Association, which the National Executive has decided is the appropriate means to carry through change. As a member I have my own opinions of the way that this has all been handled, as editor I am encouraging you to take the trouble to vote after reading through the proposals online.

Ad multas cerevisias,

Tony Vernon

editor@chelmsford.camra.org.uk



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MALDON BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

Festival goes West in 2018

By Chris Harvey

The 16th Maldon Beer and Cider Festival will be held at the Plume Academy, Fambridge Road, Maldon, CM9 6AF, between Wednesday, 11th April and Saturday, 14th April.

More than 60 real ales and 16 ciders will be on offer, with a great selection of beers from the West Country comprising Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, as well as a wide range of beers from the best breweries in Essex.

Chris "Podge" Pollard and his Belgian Beer Bar will also be on site on the Friday and



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Saturday; excellent hot and cold food will be available during all sessions from JP's Kitchen, our outstanding returning caterers.

The Plume is extremely popular as there is plenty of space in the hall, an outside drinking area and ample parking.

Also, the venue is only a couple of minutes walk from bus stops in Maldon High Street.

Last year nearly 1,700 people visited the festival, downing well over 4,000 pints over the festival's four days.

Entrance is £1, (free to CAMRA members) with a £3.50 deposit for the souvenir tankard, fully refundable if returned. We hope to see you there!

SW ESSEX BRANCH TRIP TO DARK STAR BREWERY

By Beryl Ellis

Last July, the SW Essex branch went on a weekend trip to Dark Star Brewery. Located near Horsham in Sussex, the brewery considers itself so remote that on its website it advises “private helicopter” as the best way to get there!

Travelling by train from Victoria to Horsham in Sussex, then via a connecting bus to Partridge Green, it was only a short walk to the brewery's weekly 90 minute tour that takes place each Saturday.

Of course, the tour had to be followed by some real ale sampling (for quality control purposes only) and everyone remarked how engaged, polite and courteous the staff were. Maybe this is a bonus from having only one tour per week.

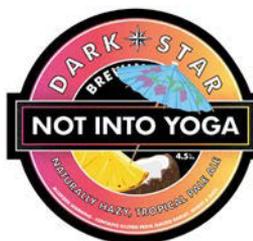
Afterwards we visited the ‘Anchored in Worthing’ micropub, about a dozen or so miles away on the south coast.

This was the Regional Pub of the Year in 2017, thus going forward to judging for the last 16 best pubs in the whole of Britain.

It had six real ales on but we had to laugh as they were mostly – Dark Star!

Brewery tours can be booked only in advance, by calling the Dark Star shop on 01403 713085 (option 3).

beryl.ellis91@gmail.com



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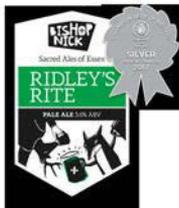
BISHOP NICK – THE BREWERY

By Tony Vernon

It would be difficult to find a real ale enthusiast in Essex and even further afield, who did not know the sad story of Ridley's Brewery's demise following the 2005 purchase by Greene King, and the ending of a century and a half brewing tradition at Hartford End.

There was a personal dimension to this heartbreak, as Old Bob in the form of a 'bob and bitter' was a favourite tippie of mine at the start of my real ale 'career', back in the early noughties.

Most would have shrugged their shoulders and moved on but for Nelion Ridley, son of Ridley's very last chairman Nicholas, the urge to brew was too strong. Some preparation was necessary, in the form of a BrewLabs course in Newcastle, and also some luck; step in Felstar's Franco Davanzo, who generously allowed Nelion to use his 4bbl brewkit in Crix Green, Felsted, to hone the new concoctions to perfection and start trading. Bishop Nick



was born, and the Ridley family's brewing tradition was born again.

Further keeping it 'in the family', Joss Ridley over at the Compasses, Little Green (just a mile or so from the old Hartford End brewery) acted as Nelion's first outlet and Libby Ridley was key in perfecting Bishop Nick's 'look and feel' to the public, running a very effective publicity machine.

Roll on seven years from the brewery's establishment in September 2011 and expansion to 20bbl at new premises in East Street, Braintree, and Bishop Nick is front and centre of the campaign with their ales now being stocked in virtually all good pubs in the county either on a guest or permanent basis.

In its short history Bishop Nick has produced many good brews but this feature celebrates one in particular – at the 2017 Great British Beer Festival 'Ridley's Rite' was awarded Silver Supreme Champion, having achieved the same in the Bitters category. Only Church End's delicious Milk Stout could keep Ridley's Rite off the top of the podium.

This achievement is testament to the effort



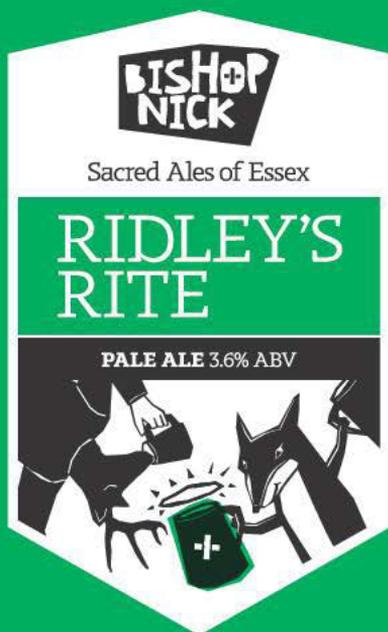
REAL ALE ENTHUSIASTS:
Nelion and new Head Brewer,
Alex Ratter

THAT ROSE AGAIN

and determination of all at the brewery; jacks-of-all-trades Keith and Trevor Thorogood, office manager Claire Wager, book-keeper Tracey Varney and former Assistant Brewers George Cullen (now at Wibblers) and Harry Howard. Very recently Bishop Nick marked the 'top of the climb', recruiting veteran Head Brewer Alex Ratter from Mighty Oak. Nelion will thus be able to focus on the brewery's SALSA accreditation, new projects, business strategy and sales but, according to Libby, will find the urge irresistible to nip into the barrel plant now and again for "a quick stir".

What next for Nelion, Alex & co? Well many good beers, success and awards at future GBBFs and others but here's a suggestion; what about buying back a favourite recipe from Greene King – 'Young Bob', anyone?

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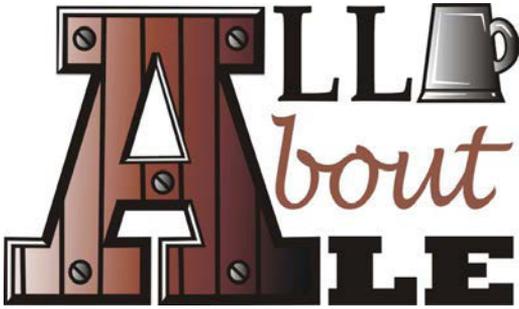


RITE n!



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KeyCask first for the Summer Fest



The bit most don't know about KeyKeg is that you can have stupidly-hopped beers or strawberry lactose sours, like we had. Jolly Good Beer supplied the kegs and 'beer wall'. The only complaint I had was that the rig had 13 taps close together so any more than four volunteers serving at the same time resulted in Beer Twister.

When it comes to volunteering at beer festivals (or ours) you work where you want to a certain extent, but need to be prepared to help where required for a while.

The KeyKeg area got a group of younger members interested and working at the bar. I think our bar exuded fun.

There is a belief that all KeyKeg/craft beer is lager and is pumped full of gas. With KeyKeg gas doesn't touch the beer at all.

What happens is gas goes in a plastic cylinder and squeezes a bag inside that holds the beer. As a lot was unfiltered, putting them in the cold store overnight did not impact on the beer which was supposed to be cloudy.

By James Wood,
KeyKeg Bar Manager

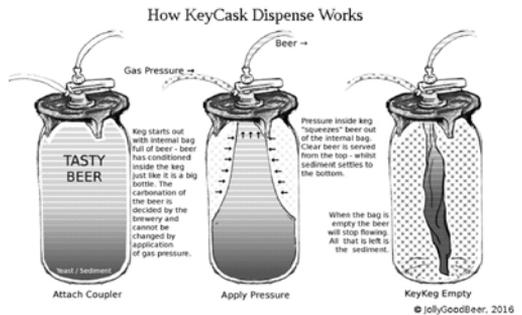
It was my pleasure and challenge to manage the first Chelmsford & Mid-Essex CAMRA KeyKeg bar at the 2017 Summer Beer & Cider Festival.

KeyKeg was controversial so I did get some abuse but on the whole most were respectful to me even if they didn't like it. When first asked to manage I had a limited knowledge of this style; can't lie, I was a tad scared and worried about how it would be received. However, I found that many publicans and members of the public were interested in the hows and whats of this novel dispense method.

When the other KeyKeg bar manager Dan and I first discussed what beer we should select we had the same ideas; some Dark, some Gold, some mental (which I loved).



Jolly Good Beer's closely-spaced KeyCask fonts made for volunteer 'beer twister' at the Summer Fest

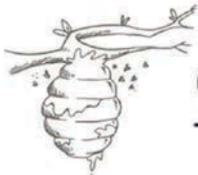


An advantage of this system is that the beer can last several weeks as air cannot get to it unlike cask, where it is good for only a matter of days. One thing that is an issue is the fact the containers are not recyclable which is one factor for higher pricing of these kegged beers.

I hope we do KeyKeg again this coming summer because I really loved it, but it was hard work and a steep learning curve.

jimmytwolids@gmail.com

Thirsty Times



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MALDON & DENGIE PUB NEWS

FRESH STARTS AT TWO VILLAGE LOCALS

By Chris Harvey,
Chairman MAD CAMRA

Two Gray's pubs in the area have recently acquired new licensees, and they've both made promising starts to their tenures. I visited them both recently to find out what's happening.



Cara Newlands is the new landlady at the **Queen Victoria in Woodham Walter**. This welcoming and comfortable village local has two bars, with a sizeable area set aside for eating. There's a dartboard in the public bar, and the pub boasts two darts teams. Cara has worked in the pub trade for a while; she was previously employed at the **Olde Green Dragon in Shenfield** but the Queen Victoria is the first pub she has run, having been an ambition of hers for some time.

On my visit there were three beers available on handpump: Adnams Southwold Bitter, Wibblers Dengie IPA and Maldon Brewing's Pucks Folly. The Southwold Bitter and Dengie IPA will be available all the time with the third beer changing regularly, usually a golden ale. No real ciders were on offer, although she said she is considering soon stocking at least one.

The beers I sampled were in excellent condition. Cara said although she is not a beer drinker, she is very interested in the whole process of looking after beer and has undertaken a Cask Marque cellar management training programme. Good home-cooked food is available, and she intends to introduce themed food nights, which might include curry or Mexican evenings. There are good

value roasts available on Sundays. Cara is also interested in matching the beers she sells with the dishes on the menu.

Woodham Walter is unusually well-provided for pubs, as it also has the **Bell** and the **Cats**. The Queen Victoria wants to be seen as the village 'local', with community events including quiz nights to be held in the future.



The new tenants of the **Round Bush in Purleigh** are Dave and Anne Heelis. This friendly roadside pub has a single bar serving two distinct drinking areas and a large beer garden. Darts and bar skittles can be played. Dave and Anne were popular licensees of the **Blue Lion in Great Baddow** for quite a while, although they have spent the last couple of years travelling the length and breadth of the country in their campervan.

On my recent visit, they had two beers available straight from the cask: Mighty Oak's Jake the Snake is their permanent beer and the other beer will change on a regular basis. I tried the Jake the Snake, and it was in very good condition. Two hand pumps will be installed very soon and Dave's ambition is to transform the Round Bush by serving up to six real ales.

Come this April they will be offering home-cooked food in the pub from Thursday through to Sunday lunchtime every week; the adjoining café will continue very much as it does now, serving breakfasts and lunches from Tuesday to Sunday. Currently an extensive refurbishment of the pub's interior is underway; Dave is a bit of a dab hand at this kind of work, as he is also contracted by Gray's to decorate quite a few of their pubs!

charvey23@gmail.com

Thirsty Times

CHELMSFORD & MID-ESSEX PUB NEWS

By Rob West

The Eagle, Galleywood, now has a new landlady – Tina Smyth. It is open seven days a week serving well-kept beer (between two and four to choose from) with excellent food six days a week (not Mondays).

Older members are recommended to try their Thursday lunch special while those with children can get one child's Sunday roast free with each adult roast. If you enjoy quizzes their Thursday night quiz is always well attended. Tina will be putting some Oscar Wilde mild on as one of the choices for our branch meeting on 14th March. Westons Old Rosie cider is the regular real cider. For the summer they are planning to have live music and a bouncy castle in the garden.

The Swan at Witham has reopened under new owners. Opening times are Monday to Friday, 2-11pm and Saturday to Sunday noon-11pm. The regular beers are Greene King IPA and Abbot Ale.

The Cherry Tree, Witham has been sold by Punch to Star Pubs. They will take control of the pub in March 2018.

The present landlords are merely holding landlords until the changeover takes place – they may or may not be here in two months. For some reason, the previous landlords took the real ale out before Christmas, and the present landlords do not intend to do anything about it until Star Pubs take over. Watch this space!

The Rose and Crown at Great Waltham is holding a festival from 10th-12th August 2018 with three plus guest beers in addition to normal beers and live bands/DJs from noon on 10th till close on 12th. Barbecue and bouncy castle/face painting add to the fun.

May and Ross are new tenants in the **Two Brewers, Chelmsford** which has been completely refurbished – including the fascia. The refurbishment is tasteful but retains all the character of the old pub with its rafters and beams. It is still a three roomed pub with a small area to the left as you enter from the car park – the bar is in the central area and the restaurant area to the right – both the bar and restaurant are fully accessible to wheelchairs. Four real ales – Spring 2018



Theakston's Best Bitter and Caledonian Deuchars IPA being regular beers with the other two being guests. Freshly prepared food is available seven days a week from menus that are Mediterranean inspired rather than your normal pub grub – there is also a pizza menu. Ross has previously run his own Italian restaurant in the Lake District. We wish them well in their new venture.

As usual the **Woolpack, Chelmsford** will hold their Easter Beer Festival but for something a little different **The Compasses, Littley Green** will be hosting a Steam Up, fundraising for Farleigh Hospice starting Good Friday afternoon 30th March until 3pm, Sunday 1st April with live music – good food and lots of real ale and cider.



The annual Ridley Round is Saturday 16th June: Run, walk or crawl round five old Ridley pubs (13.1 miles).

The **Galvin Green Man, Howe Street** will be holding a **Meet the Brewer** night in the pub the last Thursday of the month.

February – Bishop Nick
March – Silks Brewery
April – Brentwood Brewery
May – Nethergate Brewery
June – Leigh-on-Sea Brewery

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What's on at the Maypole Thaxted

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A DAY TRIP TO...

The Falcon, Huntingdon

By Tony Vernon

This piece inaugurates a series of articles on exceptional pubs located in CAMRA branches neighbouring MAD+NWE+CME.

Inspired by a recent and very positive appraisal by day-trippers from the CME branch, I decided some time ago to visit the Falcon in Huntingdon. Due to life etc intervening, it was not until last November that the opportunity finally arose to 'complete the mission'.

Arriving overnight from work in Germany, I took care of some housekeeping tasks in Chelmsford and saw my son for a Toby Carvery breakfast in Springfield. It was then westward ho to pick up the M11 and A14 to Huntingdon, arriving around 3 in the afternoon at Bray House my overnight billet on the edge of the town. Proprietor Auberon Hedgecoe showed me to a snug bedroom-cum-outhouse, ideally situated away from the main house so as not to disturb other residents with -ahem- milkbottles being sent flying by a tipsy author returning from town later that evening.



Bray House, my accommodation in Huntingdon

There was no obvious bus service, so I walked into town as dark was falling just in time to catch the market packing up on Market Hill, the main town square. A quick shuftie around showed three or four pubs within 10 minutes' walk, always a good sign, but my destination beckoned.

The Falcon nestles between two much larger neighbouring buildings, squeezed in almost as an afterthought. In fact this is a style of pub almost gone now, as coaching inns like the Falcon with accompanying mews were by and large converted



Falcon between neighbouring buildings

to accommodation last century, while larger-fronted public houses with ample room for dining (whether or not food is actually served nowadays) have become the norm in Britain. The Falcon itself nearly succumbed, and was only saved by a dedicated group of locals after a recent closure of a few years.



Olde English inscription over the mews archway

Diving inside after one last snap of the exterior and puzzling over the Olde English inscription over the archway, I feasted on the sight of no less than 13 hand pumps. Not for no reason was the pub worthy of its 'CAMRA Pub of the Year' boast on notices outside! Signs distributed around the bar proclaimed that there were 'no card payments' so the place was obviously aiming for high drinking seriousness.

Generally, prices were not such that a cheque book would be required to buy a round and in fact a group of three hand pulls to one end of the bar were even cheaper than the other brews on sale. My snapping away with a digicam had already attracted the attention of one of the locals, who explained that these were the 'in house' brews, as



Spoilt for choice!

in, the Falcon was one of three local pubs owned by the new landlord, and these acted effectively as brewery taps for his micro operation.

So far he markets 'Potbelly', 'J.Church' and 'Old England Ales' from Kettering. Tony Clancy, the local who had taken an interest in my doing a story on the pub, explained that a core group of locals were allowed to determine which of the three 'tap' brews would be on sale for £2 per pint that day – a custom that I had never heard of before, but a very good idea as only the first through the door that day would make the decision, ensuring that the



***The Falcon's 'brewery tap' brands
– Potbelly, J. Church and Olde England Ales***

locals got there early rather than late!

It was around this point that the 'Oliver Cromwell and Tunnels' thing started. Tony's opening gambit was that Oliver Cromwell was an ex-schoolboy of Huntingdon, and that there were various tunnels under the town some of which emerged at the Falcon itself. There were apparently tunnels to the museum across the road, to the river some one and a half miles distant, and to Hinchingsbrooke House about three quarters of a mile away (a later trip to Wikipedia confirmed that Cromwell was both son and MP of Huntingdon).

As interesting as this all was, I had been off sick the afternoon they taught the History of England
Spring 2018

at my alma mater, St Andrew's Academy in Saltcoats. The hard work of beer scoring mercifully intervened. Potbelly Best (Potbelly, £2.25) returned a 3, Charles I (Olde English Ales, £2) a very creditable 4 and Gold Testament (£2.25, J. Church) a somewhat-indifferent 2.5.



Local Tony Clancy demonstrates the Falcon's 'floating dispense' method

Another local joined Tony and started remonstrating about tunnels and Cromwells. Skilfully diverting the conversation to what was happening in the cellar below, it quickly became apparent that the landlord wasn't going to allow me down there to have a shuftie and take a few snaps. Luckily Tony was an ex Falcon bar-person and nipped downstairs to retrieve the apparatus for the Falcon's 'floating dispense' method.

I had not heard of this before, but subsequently discovered that the Orange Tree in Chelmsford uses the same system. Here, the cask is stood on end and a light siphon is inserted through the bung at the top, which floats on the surface of the beer. The advantage is that only the top few centimetres of the ale have to drop before it is ready to serve, then as beer is drawn off the liquid level chases the clearing beer down the cask. Wastage, according to Tony, is very low and can be as little as less than a pint left at the bottom of the cask. If the same beer is to be served, the floating siphon can be inserted into the next cask without cleaning; only if a new beer is to be dispensed, or a third of the same type is to come on, does the siphon need to be cleaned and sterilised.

After all this beer science, it was time for more scoring. Chain Breaker (Sandiway Ales, £2.75) was an excellent 4, Hobgoblin Gold (Wychwood, £3) a creditable 3 and Executioner (£2.40, Old English Ales) also came in at 3. There was to be no escape, however, as our conversation had spread to the locals' table where Cromwell was being hotly, if mostly inaccurately, debated. Another local, Tommy Kennedy, wandered over to find out

Continued on next page

A DAY TRIP TO... Continued

what I was doing, and I explained about Thirsty Times and the series of articles on exceptional out-of-area pubs. According to Tommy, Cromwell had been something to do with St Ives, and had studied law in London.

The hand pumps called again, and this time Boon Doggle (Ringwood, £3) and Lancaster Bomber (Marstons, £2.80) slipped down. The former was a rather indifferent 2, but the latter a complete revelation and I could find no excuse not to award the first and so far only 5 out of 5 I have ever enjoyed. This is also the favourite tippie of my great buddy Leo, so I couldn't resist texting him to crow over my find.

By now we were into the home straight, and Sunbeam (Banks Park, £3.10) at 3.5, Old Thumper (Ringwood, £3) at 4, King Henry VIII (Olde English Ales, £2.90) at 3.5 and Courage (Directors, £3.20) a surprising 3.5 to 4, rounded out the scoring. As I was topping and tailing my pictorial record for the night with a snap of the Falcon's real cider and perry offering another local, "Woody" Elms started speaking to me. He was also an ex Falcon bar-person, and had an interest in local cider making, so much so that he put me on to a Google maps overlay of all the fruit trees in Cambridgeshire, from which windfall cider and perry could be made.

I left the Falcon that evening knowing a lot more about beer and Oliver Cromwell than when I had entered. Slowly

Lancaster Bomber at the Falcon, my first and only 5



Local Tommy Kennedy offered some Cromwell insight



The Falcon also boasted an impressive real cider and perry offering

coming-to the following morning (one limb at a time, at my age) I was relieved to look around the hotel room and observe that no scenery had been knocked down during my return from town and preparations for bed. I had even remembered to take my shoes off, which is a touch-and-go thing after such a heavy beer scoring session. Self-congratulation and wonderment at the internal 'beer gyroscope' that seems to take over after about 200 milligrams was cut short, however, when I eventually wandered to the bathroom. There, waiting for me in all its glory, was a full pint of bitter perched on the wash bowl ledge. It had evidently made sense at closing time to juggle my last pint the mile and a half home from the pub of which, of course, I had no recollection!

All in all, this was a trip thoroughly to be recommended. Bray House was £60 pppn via booking.com. For those lucky enough to have a designated driver available Market Hill, Huntingdon (pedestrianised) can be reached in about two hours via the M11 and A14. Alternatively a day return from Chelmsford to Huntingdon via Liverpool Street and King's Cross will set you back about £35 and is slightly less than a three hour trip each way. For the intrepid, Huntingdon can be reached by bus via Cambridge although you might need a calendar rather than a watch to time the journey.

- If you would like to propose your own exceptional out-of-area hostelry, please send an article plus accompanying photos to editor@chelmsford.camra.org.uk

All contributions gratefully received.

Front Cover Photo: Gypsy Pearce (centre) and the Falcon barmaids



NORTH WEST ESSEX BRANCH

North West Branch Contact: contact@northwestessex.camra.org.uk

Monday, 5th March – Branch Meeting, Three Horseshoes, Duton Hill CM6 2DX, 8pm

Monday, 9th April – Branch Meeting, Wethersfield Village Club, Wethersfield CM7 4EB, 8pm

Tuesday, 8th May – Branch Meeting & AGM, Prince of Wales, Broxted CM6 2BJ, 8pm

Monday, 4th June – Branch Meeting, Half Moon, Belchamp St Paul CO10 7DP, 8pm

Monday, 2nd July – Branch Meeting, Horse & Groom Cornish Hall End CM7 4HF 8pm

See the branch diary page of www.northwestessex.camra.org.uk for the current list of meetings.

Colchester and North East CAMRA

Colchester and North East CAMRA have a varied events diary and welcome members of other branches to join them.

See www.colchestercamra.org.uk



THE SHIP

The Ship is an established and popular Chelmsford pub that has been in the same family for three generations.

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Easter Steam Up Weekend!

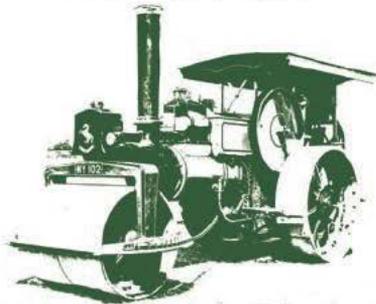
Starts Good Friday Afternoon 30th March 2018

Until 3pm Sunday 1st April 2018

Steam Up, Live Music – Good Food & lots of Real Ale and Cider!

VENUE:

The Compasses at Littley Green



THEHUFFERPUB

SOCIAL CALENDAR

CHELMSFORD & MID-ESSEX BRANCH

Fares include drop off near home. Book with
Martin Joy: 07878 624443 /
socialsecretary@chelmsford.camra.org.uk

Members are encouraged to attend and support
all listed festivals

MARCH

Saturday 3rd March 2018 – Branch Cider PotY Judging Trip, depart 11am opp. Chelmsford Station CM1 1LW Free minibus for members judging all the pubs on the score sheet, pick up in Witham if required. Back to Chelmsford early evening. Evening trip to **Chappel Winter Beer Festival** (If no beer then visit pubs in **Colchester**). Nominal Charge of £5, members only.

Friday 2nd to Saturday 3rd March – Chappel Winter Beer Festival, East Anglian Railway Museum, Chappel and Wakes Colne CO6 2DS 11am to 11pm both days. After 5.30pm on Friday admission is by ticket only, make your own way or book your place on the minibus planned for Saturday evening.

Tuesday 6th March - Branch Committee Meeting 8.30pm, The Orange Tree, Lower Anchor Street, Chelmsford CM2 0AS. Open meeting to all members to observe and perhaps become involved in branch activities.

Wednesday 14th March – Branch Meeting, Eagle, Stock Road, Galleywood CM2 8PS 8pm for 8.30pm start, visit our Most Improved Pub of the Year and join in our Branch Meeting. Free pint for any first time attendees. No Minibus to this venue as ample bus services available from Chelmsford. Numbers- 51, 42, 100, 13A. (41 replacement if there is one)

Saturday 17th March – All day trip to some of the more rural pubs in CME branch area Minibus departs 11am opposite Chelmsford Station, CM1 1LW, £10 for members only. Plan to visit many of the pubs which are not easily accessible by public transport in Roxwell, Blackmore, Mill Green, Fryerning, Margaretting Tye, West Hanningfield, Rettendon to name a few. Usual drop home afterwards.

Wednesday 28th March - Woolpack Easter Beer Festival preview invite, CM2 0DN from 8pm For card carrying branch members a special reduced price of £2.50 per pint.

Friday 30th March - Good Friday Pub Crawl, public bus no.45 from Chelmsford to Writtle for midday meet at the Chequers, CM1 3NG then onto Wheatsheaf, Rose and Crown then a walk or bus into Chelmsford where we continue along Lower Anchor Street, visiting the Queens Head, Orange Tree, United Brethren before ending the day at the Woolpack Easter beer festival.

APRIL

Saturday 7th April - Essex Cider PotY judging trip, depart 11am opp. Chelmsford Station CM1 1LW Free minibus judging Cider PotYs from each Essex branch to determine the Essex Cider Pub of the Year. Members from other branches are invited along if spaces are available. Book early to avoid disappointment.

Tuesday 10th April – Evening trip to Harwich, depart 7pm opp. Chelmsford Station CM1 1LW Minibus with potential pick up in Witham. £10 Members only with drop home afterwards. Visiting the Alma, Hannover, New Bell and Stingray.

Wednesday 11th to Saturday 14th April - Maldon Beer and Cider festival, Plume School, Farnbridge Rd, Maldon, CM9 6AB Public buses 75 From Colchester; 90 from Witham; 31, 31b, 31c, 31x from Chelmsford.

Saturday 14th April - Annual Walk from Chelmsford to the Maldon Beer Festival, meet 9am Railway Tavern, CM1 1LW to stroll along the River then the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation to Maldon. Break at Papermill Lock (noon-ish?), visiting Carpenters Arms, CM9 5QF prior to Maldon Beer Festival. Cyclists, dog walkers and those wanting to do only part of the walk are most welcome.

Wednesday 18th April – Branch Committee Meeting Walnut Tree, Broads Green, CM3 1DT 8.30pm. Open meeting for all members to observe and become actively involved in the Branch.

SOCIAL CALENDAR

Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd April CAMRA Members Weekend, AGM and Conference – Warwick University, Coventry. Members are encouraged to attend. See National CAMRA website for further details.

Saturday 28th April – Essex PotY Judging Trip, depart 11am opp. Chelmsford Railway Station CM1 1LW All day minibus to visit all the pubs judged to be their best for each branch in Essex. Free trip but you must judge each pub we visit using the forms provided. Book early to avoid disappointment.

MAY

Saturday 12th May – Mild May and Cider Safari Tour, meet 12 noon at the Endeavour, Springfield Green, CM2 6AW (Public bus no.54 from City Centre) as part of CAMRA's initiative for people to try mild and cider during the month of May, all are welcome to join us for our annual hunt for those pubs serving mild and real cider in the city. Check website and social media for itinerary and planned route nearer to date.

Wednesday 16th May – Branch Committee Meeting, Queens Head, Lower Anchor Street CM2 0AS, 8.30pm Open meeting for all branch members who wish to observe the committees reports and planned actions.

Thursday 24th May – Branch Meeting and Social, White Hart, Newland Street, Witham CM8 2AF 8 for 8.30pm Minibus departs 7.30pm opposite Chelmsford Station. Booking required, £7.50 members only. Free pint for first time attendees.

Friday 25th to Sunday 27th May – Weekend Visit to Newton Abbot, Devon Limited to members only due to insurance restrictions. Estimated cost for travel and fuel will be £35 per person. Two nights accommodation at the Premier Inn is approx £140.00 for a double. Early as possible booking advised, see CME website for details.

Tuesday 29th May to Saturday 2nd June - Colchester Summer Beer Festival, Arts Centre, Church St, Colchester CO1 1NF Public buses and trains run regularly from Braintree, Chelmsford and Witham.
Spring 2018

JUNE

Tuesday 5th to Saturday 9th June - Thurrock Beer Festival, Civic Hall, Blackshots, Thurrock RM16 2JU 100 Bus from Chelmsford.

Saturday 9th June – Visit to the Dengie Peninsula (the Return), departing 11am opp. Chelmsford Rail Station Minibus cost £10 per person with drop home afterwards, members only. Includes visit to Wibblers Brewery and the Crouch Vale Tap Room 19 with the evening in Maldon where's there's a chance to visit the Mighty Oak Tap and Farmers Yard micro pubs.

Tuesday 12th June - Branch Committee Meeting, United Brethren New Writtle Street, Chelmsford CM2 0LF 8 for 8.30pm Open meeting for all branch members who wish to observe the committees reports and planned actions and perhaps become involved in the Branch.

Thursday 14th – Saturday 16th June - Braintree Real Ale Festival, Bocking Arts Theatre (formally Braintree Institute), Braintree CM7 9AE No.70 Bus from Chelmsford, 38 from Witham. *Celebrate 'Beer Day Britain' this 15th June!*

Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th June - Gibberd Garden Beer Festival, The Barn, Marsh Lane, Harlow CM17 0NA No.59 Bus from Chelmsford.

Wednesday 20th June 2018 – Branch Social, Endeavour Springfield Green CM2 6AW From 8pm, please make your own way, public bus no 54 from City Centre. Chance to meet and share a few drinks with other members.

FOR THE FUTURE

Tuesday 10th – Saturday 14th July 2018, Chelmsford Summer Beer and Cider Festival, Admirals Park, Chelmsford, CM1 2PL

Saturday July 28th – Sunday 29th – Regional PotY Judging Trip with overnight stay in Norwich

Saturday 11th August - Trip to micro-pubs in Broadstairs and Ramsgate

Friday 21st to Sunday 23rd September - Weekend Trip to Bristol

Volunteer drivers for minibus trips appreciated

SOCIAL CALENDAR

MALDON & DENGIE BRANCH

MAD Social Secretary:

Mike Cutler, 07754 206099

MARCH

Saturday, 10th March – Bury St Edmunds Pub Walk, meet 10.50am for train at Chelmsford Station CM1 1LW A leisurely walk around this historic Suffolk market town, seeing the sights and visiting six great pubs/brewery taps serving a wide selection of ales.

Tuesday, 13th March – Branch AGM Shaw Farm, Old Wickford Road, South Woodham Ferrers, CM3 5QY 8pm. First pint FREE for NEW MEMBERS attending their first meeting.

APRIL

Wednesday 11th – Saturday, 14th April – Maldon Beer and Cider Festival, Plume School Farnbridge Road, Maldon CM9 6AB 60 beers and ciders; featuring 40+ beers and 10+ ciders from the West Country.

Saturday, 14th April – Wibblers Spring Open Day Goldsands Road Southminster CM0 7JW. Opens at noon.

Tuesday, 17th April – Branch Meeting: Festival Feedback, Kings Head 1 High Street Tollesbury CM9 8RG 8pm First pint FREE for NEW MEMBERS attending their first meeting.

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MAY

Saturday, 5th May – Burnham to Southminster Walk, meet at noon at Queen's Head, Providence, Burnham-on-Crouch CM0 8JU ending with a barbecue at the Station Arms, if you would like to join MaD members attending on this day.

Tuesday, 15th May – Branch Meeting, Queen Victoria, Woodham Walter, The Street, CM9 6RF 8pm First pint FREE for NEW MEMBERS attending their first meeting.

Thursday, 17th May – Bar Billiards, Chequers Goldhanger CM9 8AS, 8pm Join us for the chance to win or lose a trophy – either way!

JUNE

Monday, 11th June – Branch Meeting, Star Steeple, The Street CM0 7LF, 8pm First pint FREE for new members attending their first meeting.

Thursday, 14th June – Minibus trip to the Swan Beer Festival, School Road, Little Totham CM9 8LB, pick up at 7pm outside All Saints Church, Maldon PLEASE BOOK to avoid disappointment, the festival runs from 8th to 17th if you miss out on the minibus.

Friday, 29th June – Sunday 1st July – Hurdlemakers Beer Festival, Post Office Road, Woodham Mortimer CM9 6ST Branch Social, 8pm

Forthcoming Events: Minibus Cider Tour! Chelmer and Blackwater Canal Walk, Twickenham/Richmond London Walk...

Please indicate your interest: MaD Trip to Bamberg, Germany Mon 17th-Thurs 20th Sept 2018

Contact MAD Social Secretary Mike Cutler to book a place for any of these events.

mjcutlers59@gmail.com

Thirsty Times



TOP BEER – HOW IT ALL BEGAN

By Keith Mitchell and Marcus Taylor

It all started about ten years ago, we used to be regular lager drinkers until a friend called Geoff Hicks introduced us to the world of real ale. Geoff also took us to our first Chappel beer festival and we've been going to Chappel every year since, cultivating and nurturing our love of ale as well as increasing our knowledge base plus of course collecting the souvenir glasses!



We found inspiration one day after watching the TV program *Oz and Hugh Raise the Bar* and thought to ourselves, why not take a road trip and document it?

We could create a YouTube channel and share our love of ale through honest, fun reviews. We don't portray ourselves as any kind of experts, just two blokes who enjoy different beers and from here Top Beer was created.

After a bit of research the first Mitchell/Taylor beer trip was organised; our wives waved us off on a four-night adventure starting in Burnham-on-Crouch and ending in Norwich.

We've come to realise that you don't need to go to fancy pubs to find an excellent ale, just regular everyday pubs where they have a good selection. Admittedly we haven't always picked a "good 'un" and there have been times where our taste buds just haven't agreed with each other's choice. But that's what we love about what we do, always being upfront with each other and our viewers.

We try to keep our reviews honest and laid back and don't take it too seriously; some reviews have needed several re-takes as the bottle overflowed, or the cat's been video bombing in the back ground, or we just make each other laugh. Ales are reviewed when and wherever possible as we can record on the spur of the moment, thanks

Spring 2018



to the high-quality video possible on modern smartphones nowadays. Anything goes when it comes to Top Beer!

In all seriousness we enjoy trying new beer and love hearing other peoples thoughts; best of all, friends now and again bring us a beer and say "I saw this and it looked interesting, will you try it and review it for your channel?" Free beer (!) has even been sent in the post for us to try for the channel.

Chappel is one of our favourites, it's just a nice combination of beer and trains that makes for a great atmosphere.

At the festival a few years ago, we suddenly heard our names being called by a couple of Frenchmen; they had seen our videos in France and travelled over to experience Chappel firsthand. I think they were more star-struck seeing us than we were amazed that someone even recognised us! We were also chuffed when our Chappel reviews were added to the official festival website.

We're spreading the beer love one review at a time – check out the website for more info and beer news, www.therealalechannel.co.uk

If you spot us out and about, please stop us and say 'hi', we love to talk beer.

keith@mitchellclan.co.uk
marcus-taylor@live.co.uk

BODY SOUL *and* SPIRIT



By **Tony Vernon**

When a bottle of distillate of Mighty Oak's signature brew 'Oscar Wilde' wafted across Thirsty Times' sampling desk in mid-2017, my interest was piqued at what was going on.

'Spirit of Oscar Wilde' is produced under contract by the English Spirit Distillery in Great Yeldham, just south of the Essex-Suffolk border.

ESD takes Oscar Wilde at 3.7% ABV, through multiple stages of distillation to produce a golden, 40% spirit that has been described by thealternativetipple.com as a "...fragrant, sweetish, amber eau-de-vie-like

spirit with just the slightest hint of hops on the aftertaste."

That this was not just a flash-in-the-pan experiment was confirmed when Wibblers of Southminster offered up their 'Apprentice' beer to be distilled by ESD into a 40% 'Journeyman' (the next stage in career progression after apprentice), the result being more to my palate than the Oscar Wilde distillate.

As regular readers of TT will know, CAMRA is looking to broaden its remit to encompass more than just the traditional real ales, and last year helped found a 'cousin' organisation called Drinkers Voice, the mission of which is to represent all pub-goers and all who enjoy a responsible pint or tipple, be this real ale or not.

So it is very interesting to see established brewers like Mighty Oak and Wibblers moving to position themselves for this coming transformation of the pubs and drinking scene, which would not be possible without artisan distillers like ESD.



Set up in 2010 by Oxford biochemist Dr John Walters thus just preceding the rush to craft whisky, vodka and gin production that is the 'second wave' following on from craft brewing, ESD uses traditional copper still techniques slowly to refine input liquors into finished spirits.



Wibblers Apprentice beer distilled by ESD into Journeyman malt spirit

As well as their own products such as Old Salt rum, Dr J's gin and award-winning Toffee Vodka, the distillery works on a contract basis, producing not just the Oscar Wilde and Apprentice distillates but also making whisky for any brewer willing to supply at least 200 hectolitres of input wort.

Obviously it's this end of ESD's production spectrum that will be of most interest to dedicated beer drinkers such as TT's readership, but there's also a fun aspect to the whole distilling lark, embodied in expressions such as their Cucumber Spirit, which in 2017 won a gold at the International Wine and Spirit Awards.

With artisan producers like ESD as part of the push-back against neo-prohibitionists the future for the pub and home drinker looks good; find them at englishvodka.com, and book a tour around their distillery to see what it's all about.

A fine English oak aged malt spirit, 5 times distilled & unfiltered for extra smoothness. Made from the same malted barley & hops used in our Apprentice beer. A Journeyman is the next stage to becoming a master Craftsman.

Distilled by the English Spirit Company
Head Brewer Philip Wilcox, Distiller John Walters

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Men	3-4 units daily
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Avoid alcohol if pregnant or trying to conceive

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editor@chelmsford.camra.org.uk

CIDER PRESS

By Claire Irons,

Cider Representative, CME CAMRA

May is Cider Month

CAMRA has designated May to be a cider month (blossom time and when the cider for that year made from the previous year's pressing will first be ready to drink).

October is also a cider month, when pressing of apples to make the juice to ferment into cider takes place.

Of course, cider is an all-year-round drink but the new season for judging ciders starts with the annual National Cider & Perry Awards at Reading Beer & Cider festival over the May Day weekend. Seek out opportunities to sup cider at various events and festivals over the month, such as on the Annual Mild Meander and Cider Safari around Chelmsford on Saturday 12th May.

CAMRA DEFINITION OF REAL DRAUGHT CIDER AND PERRY

Prior to fermentation, the liquid content must be 100% non-pasteurised apple juice for cider and pear juice for perry with neither concentrates nor colourings. No added flavourings may be used except pure fruits, vegetables, honey, hops, herbs and spices; no concentrates, cordials nor essences are allowed.

There must be no artificial carbonation of draught products nor pasteurisation during the production process. Sweetener may be added fully to ferment cider/perry to make it medium or sweet. The alcohol content may be brought down by the addition of water by the producer, however



the minimum juice content should ideally not be lower than 90% of the volume. Micro-filtration removes the yeast, hence leaving a 'dead' product and rendering the cider "not real".

HOW TO TASTE CIDER/PERRY

Temperature: Like cheese, chocolate and strawberries, cider and perry are best enjoyed at a temperature that allows their characteristics to flourish.

The cider bar at Chelmsford Beer & Cider Festivals follows the beer bar practice of serving at cellar temperature between 10 and 14 °C, ideally 12 °C. So if storing in the fridge at home, remove it about 15 minutes before serving as if it is drunk too cold the aroma and flavours will be masked.

Assess the Attributes, Taste and Appearance: For CAMRA competitions the contenders are judged on Aroma; Initial Taste/Flavour; Finish/After-taste and Personal Enjoyment. My mantra for this is See, Sniff, Swirl, and Sense.

SEE: colour, clarity, bubbles;

Mouth-feel is the texture experience in your mouth which can add to the enjoyment

CIDER PRESS

CORE INFORMATION:

West Country-style ciders use cider apples which have been divided into four categories depending on the percentages of tannin and malic acid. A balanced flavour in the finished cider would need some juice from a member of each category or may be blended from the finished single-variety ciders. Sweets, sharps, bittersweets and bittersharps give the characteristic “bite” of this style.

All wines have tannins from the grape skins, seeds and barrels, with red having more than white due to the extra pressing. Tannins are antioxidants that occur naturally in chocolate, coffee, tea and wine (particularly red).

Eastern-style ciders are made with culinary (cooking) and eating apples and often have wine or cider yeast added due to their not having the extent of natural yeasts present on cider apples. These may appear vinous (wine-like) hence at Chelmsford we introduced a sticker for the cask card depicting a wineglass, as part of our Taste and Appearance stickers to help festival-goers choose something they might like.

Crab apples may be added to give tannin and more balance to the cider. Naturally sparkling cider will foam up as it hits the bottom of the glass, with the bubbles slowly swirling up to the surface being smaller than those in an artificially-carbonated cider.

Perry pears are too tannic to eat but make delicious perry, often very palatable due to sorbitol which is a non-fermentable sugar giving a sweetness to the finished product.

When trying a range of different ciders it is recommended to start with the driest first, working towards the sweeter end of the spectrum to avoid overloading your taste buds.

If judging and aiming to be particular it is advisable regularly to have water and something bland to cleanse your palate such as plain bread or crackers between each sample.



SMELL: swish in the glass to allow oxygen to release all the nuances of aroma before at least one big sniff and as many as you need smaller sniffs;

SWIRL: around your mouth, as if chewing the cider so that your taste buds pick up all the sensations of sweet, sour, bitter, salt and savoury – some people open their mouths slightly to suck air through to enhance the flavours;

SENSE: discern the balance between acidity and sweetness, whether there are tannins or other characteristics e.g. oak or spirit from the cider being matured in an oak or spirit cask.

I do this three times to accentuate the characteristics and mouth-feel, which increase on repetition.

Mouth-feel is the texture experience in your mouth which can add to the enjoyment, such as the astringency from tannins giving a drying sensation which can be hard or soft (subtle). After swallowing a high tannin wine or cider there is a lingering bitter/dry feeling in the mouth. Thin, watery cider may have acidity giving a tingle or juiciness that make your mouth water (salivate) and can be sharp and/or refreshing.

MALDON AND DENGIE CAMRA

A stroll around Angel and Islington

By Chris Harvey,

Chair Maldon & Dengie CAMRA

The name isn't the only angelic thing about this area – it is blessed with some excellent pubs and is a very attractive place for an afternoon stroll. Recently, a group of a dozen or so Maldon & Dengie CAMRA members set off on a 3½ mile one-way walk from Angel tube station, which is an easy bus ride from Liverpool Street station. We were taking in six pubs on our route, all of which are highly regarded for the choice and quality of ales they serve.

It was a very short walk to our first port of call, the **Three Johns** in White Lion Street. This is a spacious Chapel Market boozier which boasts a spectacular copper ceiling and serves three cask beers. They also have 12 craft keg taps, including some very unusual Swedish and American ales. My favourite tippie here was Siren Brewery's Broken Dream – a very smooth, chocolatey stout.

The pizzas on offer here also looked very tempting, but we had to press on – we had plenty of other pubs to explore! Next was nearby **Islington Brewhouse and Kitchen** in Torrens Street. This opened in 2014 and

MAD Group in the Old Fountain

serves seven real ales, all of which are brewed on-site. The pub also serves 10 or so craft keg beers.



It's an attractive and welcoming drinking space; the bar staff also offered us some complimentary nibbles, which went down very well.

Our lunch stop, the **Island Queen** in Noel Road, is a grand Victorian gin palace that is listed on CAMRA's Inventory of Historic Interiors and the walk took us through some of Islington's most charming squares and streets. The food was good, reasonably priced for the area and they had four real ales on offer, Timothy Taylor Landlord being very acceptable.

The **Earl of Essex Arms** in Danbury Street (surely the use of names here was not a coincidence?) had featured on one of our earlier London pub walks, so some of us knew what to expect. We were not disappointed. This former Watney's house now serves a stunning range of beers from cask (3) and keg (13), many from London breweries such as Howling Hops, Beavertown and Camden and a few from North America. I had a third of Brooklyn Brewery's Black Chocolate Stout (10.0% ABV) from the USA – superb!

There was a longer walk to the next watering hole, but no-one seemed to mind as it took us along the towpath of the Regent's Canal, which made for a very pleasant stroll. Several of the group even helped one narrowboat work its way down one of the locks. We eventually reached the **Wenlock Arms** on Wenlock Road in neighbouring Shoreditch. In the 1990s this pub became an iconic real ale haven in North London, which was threatened with permanent closure a few years ago when the owners decided to retire. A high-profile campaign by local CAMRA members and Hackney Council led to the pub eventually being



**“We don't want
Watneys!!!” – Islington
Brewhouse and Kitchen**

MAD CAMRA London Pub Walk - Angel & Islington



- ❶ **Three Johns** - 73 White Lion Street, N1 9PF - 020 7837 1892
- ❷ **Brewhouse & Kitchen Islington** - Torrens Street, EC1V 1NG - 020 7837 9421
- ❸ **Island Queen** - 87 Noel Road, N1 8BD - 020 7704 7631
- ❹ **Earl of Essex** - 25 Danbury Street, N1 8LE, 020 7424 5828
- ❺ **Wenlock Arms** - 26 Wenlock Road, N1 7TA - 020 7608 3406
- ❻ **Old Fountain** - 3 Baldwin Street, EC1V 9NU - 020 7253 2970
- ❼ **Draft House Old Street** - 211 Old Street, EC1V 9NR - 020 3141 9095

saved. It now serves 10 hand-pumped real ales, one of which is usually our very own Mighty Oak's Oscar Wilde.

The group then headed south towards Old Street, to find another North London real ale icon, the **Old Fountain** in Baldwin Street, which is adjacent to Moorfield's Eye Hospital. Eight excellently-served real ales were on offer here, plus eight keg craft beers. Hammerton Brewery's Apprentice No

A third of Black Chocolate Stout goes well with a pub crawl tour – Earl of Essex Arms, Danbury Street Spring 2018

More IPA was one of the best beers of the day for me. It was a fitting place to finish the "official" walk here.

Most people decided to call it a day after this pub, but a few hardy (foolish?) souls crossed the road to pay a visit to the **Draft House**, Old Street. This modern pub serves four cask ales and several craft keg beers. After one more beer, it was time for the stragglers to catch the tube from Old Street station to Liverpool Street. All agreed it had been a very good day out!



charvey23@gmail.com

PUB TOUR OF NORTH WEST ESSEX

By Victor Savant

Gathering outside the Railway Tavern in Chelmsford at 11 o'clock our small CAMRA group welcomed the arrival of the minibus, and those already on board, with hearty greetings and handshakes. Every space was occupied, we were 16 souls about to embark on a day-long tour of mostly country pubs selected by Neil Hill, the former chairman of North West Essex CAMRA – (we were 17 actually but, unlike the rest of us, our driver Doug spent the day drinking coffee, tea, or passion fruit squash and talking rationally.)

This tour was not about judging or rating pubs or beers and ciders, but simply about enjoying them while visiting villages dotted throughout the really beautiful Essex countryside. And if traditionally the pub is truly the centre of village life then for me, the single American in the group, this tour was also about feeling a little bit maybe what traditional English country village life was like in the past; a chance to imagine and flesh out the images and stories, myths and fairy tales from my New World childhood, these images, stories, nursery rhymes known by virtually all English-speaking children throughout the world. And, on this tour, I feel I'm often close to the source.

Barely under way, loving the view of the rolling green Essex hills from the elevated windows of the minibus, we made our first stop in Dunmow, just a bit north. We parked and climbed out smack in the middle of the bustling Saturday-morning High Street to enter our first pub, the **Boars Head**. The first half of Adnams went down easily, as crisp as this autumn morning's air. The pub is small and cosy but I would confess, the rather loud pop radio in the background – commercials and all – hardly conforms to my image of the traditional village pub where conversation is king.

Our next stop was really interesting: Stebbing Airfield for small planes, a grass strip airfield (visitors welcome) apparently much used by the Americans during the war, and its "pub" called **Millibar** (a pun relating to barometric pressure

pertinent to pilots): a few tables, computer screens showing weather information, a tiny busy kitchen and bar. It's mostly about sport flying. But for some old aeroplane photos the simple building is as unadorned, undecorated, austere and functional as the cabin of a small aircraft. The big windows give an unobstructed view of tens of parked planes as well as the runway itself. Little planes taking off. One beer on. And each time the door is opened directly on to the runway just right in front of you, the sound of well-oiled, air-cooled engines idling and revving, powering up to lift-off: the miracle of flight, a beer and a sandwich on granary bread.



And now, the **Bull at Langley Lower Green**. This is the real thing, I tell myself upon entering: quiet, a hotch-potch collection of furnishings, the absence of radio, a rough plank floor, clinks of porcelain from the diners, the random burble of voices, an occasional laugh, this could be any era, any century past, my traditional country pub. It's blowing quite hard outside now – you can see the foliage shuddering and waving, but not a whisper of wind noise disturbs the sense of everlasting solidity in this Victorian brick house. Across the green are timeless thatched-roof cottages – and a black BMW.

We motor on to **Wendons Ambo** and the **Bell**. The building dates from 1576; it's been a pub since 1806. Even the Halloween decorations can't disguise the genuine antiquity of this pub. Just standing up straight I can touch my head on the rough ceiling beams; there's hardly a straight line to be seen. Nothing but wood, wattle and
Thirsty Times



plaster. Why do I find this oldness, this historicity so valuable? I ponder this while drinking the best perry I've ever tasted, Novo Pyrus. I'm told Wendons Ambo is the train station for Saffron Walden. And while someone is explaining to me the origin of the name "Wendons Ambo" I'm thinking of having maybe another half pint of this perry.

The day is wearing on, the last day of British Summer Time. Tonight we set the clocks back an hour. We visit the **Lion in Finchingfield**, recently renovated and given a new lease on life. It's the sought-after, pleasant and warm, civilized setting. A homely hearth.

On the way to the **Bell Inn in Great Bardfield** the light is rapidly fading and we're treated to an unusually spectacular sunset. Inside the van, all of us mellowed by the day's drink doing what it's supposed to do, the conversations are animated, laughter more frequent. I'm loving this. In the pub itself there's a real piano – in good shape and tune – and in the next few minutes it's going to be played and people are going to begin singing, a wonderful experience we used to have much more often back in the days when music came from people instead of loudspeakers.

And with the last song from the Bell Inn still



Spring 2018

humming in my ear we're entering the **Three Horseshoes at Duton Hill**. Beer in hand, I'm told I "must go downstairs to see the ladies (!) toilet" and "read the inside of the door", a collage of good jokes (for the ladies) about bad blokes. It's fun. But still more interesting and inspiring is the careful and extensive decoration of this compact underground space, all about Butlin's holiday resorts from decades past. There are posters and brochures and a multitude of nostalgia-stimulating black-and-white photos. It may not be the pre-industrial idealized England of my childhood fairy tales, but it does speak of a time long since gone, unrecoverable, irreplaceable. I'm experiencing a nostalgia for something I never even knew. Powerful, this culture, this country, this history, this language.

It's dark now. And in the darkness as the van hums and bounces its way to our few remaining stops my thoughts begin to home in on the meaning of all of this: why do these pubs feel so important to me? Why are the most ancient, the most authentically-aged pubs, the ones least changed since time long gone by now the very establishments offering (for some of us at least) the most enjoyable and rewarding experience?

I have an idea: they've been here for a long time, these pubs. And among all the joys they've witnessed they've also seen the biggest wars, failed crops, epidemics, local strife, political chaos, all the turmoil and vicissitudes to which we mere mortals are subject, and though they've had to come through a lot in their time, when it was all over they're still here. Well, our own times are pretty unsettled these days; it looks as though we might have to come through quite a lot ourselves. But the very constancy of the village pub is comforting in itself. Lending confidence to the thought that maybe we'll come through a lot in our time and, like the pub, when it's all over still be here.

- Thank you to Doug for allowing us to enjoy our passion for pubs and the fruits of his labour driving the minibuss fuelled by passion fruit squash.

Doug, not the minibuss.

BREWERY NEWS



Some news from Trevor: As usual Christmas was a very busy time for Billericay Brewing and by the time Christmas Eve arrived the shelves of the shop were almost cleared of all bottles. Thankfully there was still plenty of cask beer to drink with the black IPA Black Christmas proving very popular again.

December also saw the launch of our new membership and loyalty scheme. Under this scheme, members receive discounts on all purchases in the micro-pub and shop plus the loyalty card gives them a free pint after every 10 bought. It's proved very popular with over 300 members signed up and extra benefits coming up throughout 2018, including our first members' day in the brewery on Sunday 25th February.

Our main event in March will be our Spring beer festival on 22nd to 25th March with a bar in the micro-pub and the brewery. It will feature 20+ beers and ciders, including at least a dozen of our own beers plus guest beers from new local breweries Keppels and Leigh-on-Sea.



New or seasonal special beers brewed that should feature at the festival include Woody's Bark (our first stout) Mayflower Pale (dry hopped golden ale) Billericay Bees (featuring local honey) and Raisons to be Cheerful Part 3.

The micro-pub continues to be popular, with the quiz evening taking place on the first Thursday of each month continuing to be very well attended. We are now introducing other Thursday night specials in February – 2nd Thursday Board Games night, 3rd Thursday Meet The Brewer, with the chance to have first taste of a new brew each month, and 4th Thursday card games night. The Key Kegs continue to be very popular in addition to 4 or 5 cask ales we have on tap (always including a dark ale) and a real cider.

Libby writes: We had a bumper Christmas and New Year and are super-excited to kick off 2018 with a new Head Brewer.



Alex Ratter joins us from Mighty Oak, where he has been Head Brewer for the best part of 18 years; Alex brings considerable expertise to the team, having brewed countless award-winning brews for Mighty Oak including their Champion Beer of Britain 2011 Oscar Wilde Mild.

Bishop Nick will continue to offer their core range of popular real ales complemented by Limited Editions throughout the year in cask and bottle. Black Cloak is a brand new Stout at 4.8%, elegantly laced with liquorice and brimming with allsorts!

Velvet layers of dark chocolate and caramel malts evoke treacle and coffee – it's practically pudding! Pours black and smooth.

Next up will be the return of East Street in March which was a big hit last year. A Blond Ale at 4.2% with thirst-quenching citrus flavours and floral, fruity aromas teasing the nose. Speciality extra pale malt gives this brew a sunny radiance. Perkier than a new-born Spring lamb!

Proud to be regularly supplying the Fox Inn, Finchingfield, the Green Dragon at Youngs End and the Cock Horse Inn at Lavenham to name but a few.

Nelson Ridley is taking part in a Galvin Green Man initiative to promote local breweries and will be behind the bar for a Meet the Brewer event on Thursday 22nd February.

Our beers will also be on the bars at Colchester, Chelmsford and Chappel Winter Beer Festivals.

The Brewery Shop at East Street is open Monday – Friday 9am-4.30pm and for a full product list see www.bishopnick.com

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



Events planning has been the brewery team's focus for early 2018. As well as the usual Open Days, which take place on the first Saturday of the month, the first big brewery

do this year will be our SPA Day on Saturday 24th March. Don't worry we're not branching out into the beauty business. It's to celebrate the launch of the latest Brentwood Beer which is SPA 4.1% or Session Pale Ale.

Entrance is free and there'll be beer straight from the fermenter tank. We hope you'll join us at Brentwood Brewery anytime from 11am to 3pm. Hot food and snacks will be available from the brewery's snack van Beer Grylls. We're hoping to have live music too. Come along and be among the first to try SPA, a perfectly relaxing, refreshing pint with notes of sun-blushed tropical fruits.



All Beer in the Brentwood range is now Gluten Free (BBC1 is not yet but will be soon)

We have some fabulous news for anyone who suffers from gluten intolerance or Coeliac disease - all beers in the Brentwood range are now gluten-free. There's currently one exception, BBC1, which will be gluten-free very shortly. Added to that, all bottles of Brentwood Beer are vegan-friendly too.

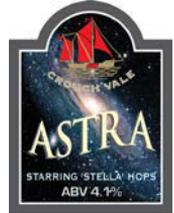
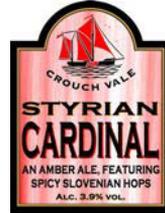
Planning ahead to Easter weekend, if you have any get-togethers organised do remember to order your polypins in good time (01277 200 483). We sell 18 and 36 pint pins and cases of 12 bottles. See www.brentwoodbrewing.co.uk for tasting notes and to browse the full range of Brentwood and Elephant School Brewing beers.

You needn't wait for Open Days or special occasions to visit our Tap Room and Brewery Shop. Brentwood Brewery is now open Monday to Friday 9.30am - 4.30pm and Saturday 10.30am - 3.30pm. A choice of draught beers is always on, and no beer-miles either - our bar is footsteps from where the beer was expertly brewed.



FINE ESSEX ALES

Colin writes to say: our current seasonal beers are Wild Hop – abv 4.1%, very pale and brewed with hedgerow hops gathered wild from around North Essex and Styrian Cardinal – abv 3.9%, an amber ale brewed with Styrian Cardinal hops from Slovenia. A great session pint! Also available in bottle-conditioned 500ml from the brewery shop and Tap Room 19.



From mid-February we will have Astra (abv 3.9%), brewed with Citra and Mosaic hops. Pale and very hoppy.

The Maldon Brewing Co has teamed up with artist Michael McCarthy for this year's series of special beers. The beers celebrate the fantastic beard styles adorning members of the Great British Beard Club!



First up was a collaboration brew with Toppesfield Community brewery called Imperial, 9% ABV. Available in bottle only, this beer has really been incredibly popular! We also have Freestyle, a dry-hopped golden ale showcasing the Hallertau Blanc hop and coming soon are Musketeer, a classic bitter with Munich malt and Saaz hops and Garibaldi, a red ale bursting with Simcoe, Cascade, Summit and Celeia.



The Maldon Brewing Co takes great pleasure in welcoming Jess Farmer into the family team.

BREWERY NEWS

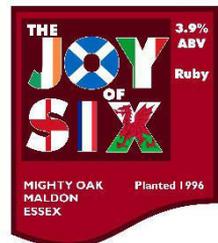
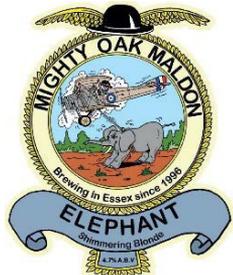


The times they are a changing at Mighty Oak!

We have a new head brewer, Charles Board, at the helm. Charles, who has brewed internationally, has an M.Sc in Brewing and Distilling.



As well as continuing to brew our marvellous real ales, Charles will now lead the way for our new craft ale range which has been named with his predecessor, Dr Alexander Ratter, in mind. Dr Ratter's Craft Ales are appearing now on bars throughout Essex and beyond! Ask your favourite landlord to get in touch with us as our craft range is available nationally!



Flying out the door are our 2018 Royal Air Force-themed beers, celebrating the RAF's Centenary. We'd love to see these flying far and wide so if you get your hands on one and are heading out to foreign lands then tweet us a photo of you with your pump clip which includes evidence of where you are (e.g. a

street sign or famous landmark). We'll put them on our FaceBook page and see which one gets the furthest away!

Coming up in February and March we have some cracking limited edition, one-off specials celebrating the Rugby Six Nations, Cheltenham Week, Valentine's Day and of course our monthly RAF100 beers. Look out for: Faithful Annie 4% ruby, Heart of Gold 4.3% palest blonde, Joy of Six 3.9% ruby, Tin Triangle 4.4% copper, Burlington Bertie 3.9% nut brown, Tempus Fugit 4.5% gold and Elephant 4.7% blonde.



Simon from Round Tower writes:

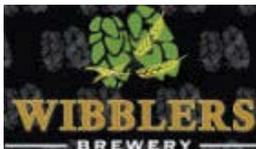
As we move into 2018, it is of note that Round Tower celebrated its 5th birthday in February.

Thanks to everyone over the past years for the support and encouragement, we couldn't have kept doing what we've done without it.

So what does this year hold? Probably just making lots more good beer. We plan to carry on experimenting and honing our processes, and plan to add a few more hops to some of our beers and to others we'd like to up the malt profile.

We'd like to think that we'll be sending kegs out on a regular basis in the near future; that should help our beer to be drunk in a few more places, both further afield and also in pubs, bars and restaurants where the low turnover of beer means that cask is not viable.

If there is anything that you'd like to see us doing, drop us a line and we'll see what we can do. Hope everyone enjoyed the beer festival as much as we did!



Abby from Wibblers reports:

Plans for the Taproom extension are underway, hopefully work will start in May. Brewery Open Day

dates are 14th April, 4th August & 8th Dec.

BREWERY NEWS

We have expended our Craft Keg range to include Gold and our lager Maverick both at 4%, more are planned and in fermenters currently.



Brewing at capacity, with specials planned for coming months likely to include Goldsands – 3.9% ABV Golden ale, always popular; New Dawn – 3.8% ABV, traditional but with new and interesting

hops; Genesis – 4.2% ABV Red ale, made to commemorate our move to Southminster but so popular we keep making it, plus several new brews with some hops that we haven't used before.

We are delighted to announce that we are supporting the Burnham-on-Crouch Little Ship Vanguard with its ongoing restoration, via sales of our Vanguard ale.

Having thought there were no more Vanguard hops available, Phil has managed to track some down, so please help us support the boat's restoration over the coming months. Vanguard was one of three 'little ships' to sail from Burnham to Dunkirk.

We have also launched a new Brewery Experience Day, alongside our 'Be The Brewer' days.

The Experience day is a hands-on day with our Brew Team working on our big kit. Please email abby@wibblers.co.uk for more information.

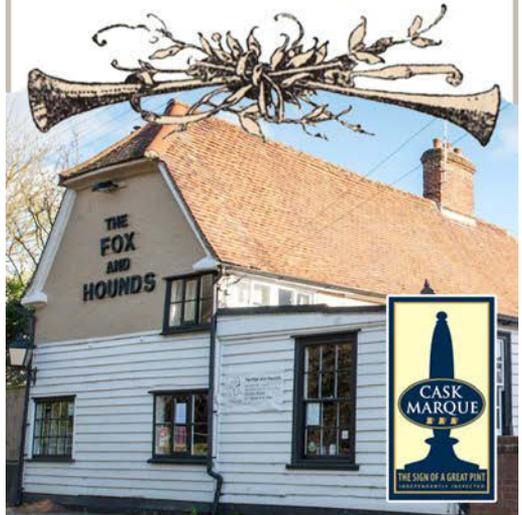
P.S. We have had no changes in staff at the time of printing.



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- Focus on Wibblers brewery
- Beer in Australia
- A Day Trip to – The Stanford Arms, Lowestoft
- KeyCask – real or not?

Spring 2018

THIRSTY TIMES

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