

Issue No. 2
WINTER 1992

FREE

INN VIEW



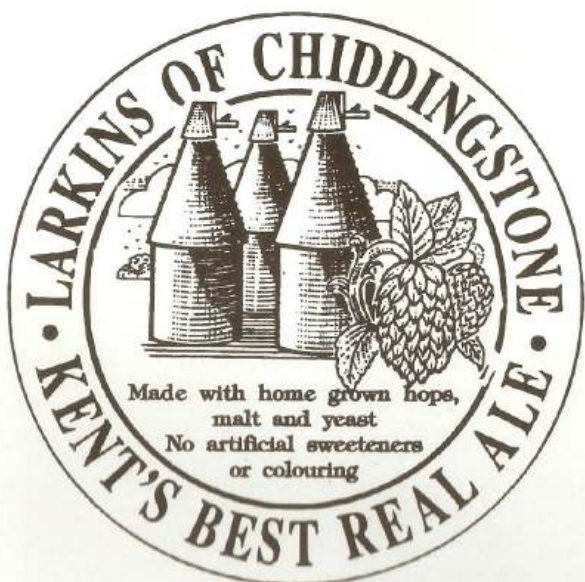
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The Quarterly Magazine of the Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale

ISSN
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 Rotherfield - Bicycle Arms, George Inn, Kings Arms
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An Introduction

Hello and welcome to the second edition of "Inn View".

I would like to take this opportunity to explain a little about CAMRA in general, and our branch in particular.

We are a nation-wide organisation, started twenty one years ago, to try to do something to save real beer and traditional pubs. We do appear to have been successful, and have been called "Europe's most successful consumer movement."

However there is still a need today for someone to stand up to the big breweries, who seem as determined as ever to turn every pub they can into a noisy amusement arcade, serving up "lager-top" to teenage customers.

In this area we are still fairly fortunate, in that we have a good many decent pubs, and of course the best way of keeping them is to support them.

Our branch, which covers Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks area, has social evenings once a fortnight, to which anyone is welcome. They are purely social occasions where we get people of all ages, and from all walks of life, meeting to enjoy a good pint in a proper pub. Why not come along? You will find a list of our forthcoming socials in this issue.

If you have any comment to make on this magazine or CAMRA in general, please contact me at the address or phone number below.

Cheers,

Jim Wood

Telephone: 0732 361507

"INN VIEW" C/o The Padwell, Stone Street
 Nr Sevenoaks, TN15 0LQ.

THE WHO'S WHO OF CAMRA

JEREMY P. SMYTH

Married to Penelope-Jane.
Has 2-4 children.
Is Chairman of a Merchant Bank in the City.
Owns an 8 bedroom house in the Chilterns.
Studied at Eton and Cambridge.
Holidays at private villa on St. Lucia.
Has a small aviary and an Afghan named Rupert.
Is current President of local Antiques Guild.
Drinks Real Ale.
Jeremy is in CAMRA.



ERIC BRUDGER

Lives with Doris. Has 8 kids...maybe more.
Works as part time sweeper at local Grayhound Track.
Rents a flat behind gasworks.
Was educated behind the bike sheds.
Takes holiday at the Hotel El Bingo in Benidorm.
Has a dog called Spot and a goldfish named Ossie.
Plays darts for the Gut & Fangle'B team.
Drinks proper beer.
Eric is in CAMRA



CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

"INN VIEW" VISITS KING & BARNES

I was rather surprised when "Inn View" was invited to the King & Barnes press preview day. We aren't quite Fleet Street after all so, despite thinking that some sort of mistake must have been made, Bob and I set off for Horsham. The offer of beer sampling and a free lunch had nothing to do with our decision to go!

Once there we found ourselves in the company of Roger Protz from "What's Brewing", CAMRA's illustrious leader Iain Dobson MBE, and representatives from most of the local papers in that part of the world. The King & Barnes Chairman Peter King and his directors welcomed us with a pint and explained what the day was all about. The Brewer's Society had nominated September as Brewery Month and were hoping to increase the number of visitors to the breweries and thereby public interest.

We were shown a new video that visitors to the brewery will see, and Peter King went on to point out several little known facts about beer and breweries. In this country beer drinkers alone will contribute an estimated £4,000,000,000 to the Government in tax for 1991-92, which works out at over £16,000 for every minute the pubs are open! He also pointed out what a green and natural process brewing is. All



the main ingredients are grown in this country and all the by-products are recycled: the spent grain goes to local farmers as cattle feed, the spent hops are returned to the land as fertiliser, whilst the extra yeast generated during the fermentation is sold to Marmite as a food in its own right.

All this information needed washing down with another beer, which Head Brewer Andrew Hepworth happily provided! Then we were off on a tour of the brewery, during which we saw the ingredients and the entire brewing process.

Next came the hard bit! More beer and the wonderful lunch

we were so generously provided with. Poor old Bob, he was driving so he had to say no to all this beer on offer, but I'm sure he enjoyed watching me sample King & Barnes products! He did however put his foot down and drag me out to the car when we were invited down the road to try a King & Barnes pub, "There's no way I'm going on a pub crawl if I can't drink!" I reluctantly got in the car and let Bob drive me home.

Thanks again to Peter King and all at King & Barnes, and sorry we couldn't get this in our last issue where it could have informed our readers of brewery month. Technical problems you know!

THE PRICE OF YOUR PINT

Have you ever noticed when you go to some pubs that the price always seems to be higher than it was last time?

Despite the currently low annual rate of inflation, the big brewers do tend to have a habit of piling price increase on price increase. Back in 1975 when the author spent an evening in the pub for the first time, he came away quite tipsy for just 50p. Admittedly it had taken very little to have that effect due to his unfamiliarity with beer. However, the fact remains that beer was then only 20p a pint whereas in the same pub (which is by no means expensive for the area) it now retails at £1.55. If, over the same period, it had only increased in line with inflation, it would now cost just 85p. In other words, beer is now 82% more expensive in real terms than it was 17 years ago!

The prices cited above are

those in Sevenoaks where, incidentally, you can quite easily spend more than £1.55 a pint. The picture nationally has been one of similar large increases. CAMRA's 1992 prices survey shows that the average price of a standard bitter (described as 3.6% to 4% ABV) increased by some 6.7% from 1991 to 1992; i.e. well above the annual rate of inflation. In addition, it seems that the large national brewers are charging over 3% more per pint than are the independents and almost a further 2% again for a guest ale.

So what are the reasons for these big increases? The Chancellor must take some of the blame as excise duty was again increased in the 1992 budget. However, this only accounts for 1p a pint for all but the very strongest beers. On the strength of this duty increase, a number of breweries immediately raised the

prices by between 2p and 4p. This is in strong contrast to certain other breweries who have done no more than pass on the budget increases. For example, Sam Smiths of Tadcaster has not raised its prices (except to cover duty increases) since August 1990.

The Brewer's Society has tried, in a recent report, to shift the blame for high prices by pointing out that brewers only directly set prices in their 13,500 pubs. But the fact remains that they also have a massive influence on the prices charged by other outlets since they often control their rents.

And within the last few weeks the national brewers have said that, "because of falling sales", they are putting their prices up again. Well that should really bring the customers out in droves!

Editor's note:- Sounds like they are getting their excuses from British Rail! What next, the wrong sort of snow or leaves in the beer?

"GOOD BEER GUIDE" SELECTION

A problem CAMRA members can incur, when they admit to their membership, is having to defend the selection of pubs in the Good Beer Guide. Both landlords and locals will challenge why their pub has been excluded again, and offer to tell you the truth about the pub that has been selected. This is probably not surprising, if one considers the limited number of entries permitted for each region or area. However, those pubs representing an area can differ quite widely in their individual presentation, and this therefore, inevitably provokes the question:- why them and not us?

Nomination of pubs for the Good Beer Guide is open to any member of CAMRA. The processing of such nominations, which includes a survey of the pub's facilities and beer, is undertaken through the local branch of CAMRA. The local branch then makes the necessary selection of pubs for the Good Beer Guide in accordance with the number of entries allocated to its area. As the number of entries may be from twelve to twenty four for a local branch, disappointment must befall many pubs in that branch area.

This should mean that the local branch members make a collective decision as to the pubs they wish to represent

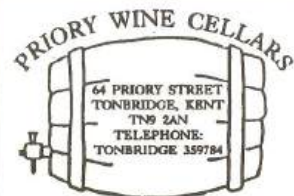
their area in the Good Beer Guide. If so, then one may assume that the selection of a wide range of differing presentation of pubs is to offer examples of the wide range that exist in the area, in accordance with the varying taste of the customer. Therefore, one will find examples of the idyllic country pub, a good eating house, a locals local, a pub for the refined customer, and a pub with basic amenities. Their common tie, the offer of a selection of real ales.

One could argue that this is exactly what the local branch selection consists of. Others may argue that maybe the selection process should include further criteria to ensure a more uniformed selection of pubs in accord with CAMRA ideals. Do we really want to propose a good eating house pub, if the emphasis is first on food and real ale second? A locals local may be fine for the member who frequently uses it, but unappealing to the visitor. Do we accept that a pub has to have machines and continuous music, or prefer the rustic charms of a 16th century house? The argument is as long as it is varied.

What is missing from the local branch selection is the debate. Too often the majority of the members leave the work to the unfortunate committee, and/or loudest activists of the

branch. This allows individual preference to dominate in the selection process without proper consideration of other measured views or information. It also allows the opportunity for the selection to be dominated by the ideal example of a pub, which will not necessarily reflect the provision available in the area. Although this branch's selection definitely does not reflect the latter, many entries can be challenged with equally good examples in the area. We therefore return to the original question:- How do we select pubs for the Good Beer Guide? Before the process for the 1994 selection begins, maybe we should take this opportunity to debate now what pubs or type of pubs we wish to represent this area now, rather than allow the timetable of events to snowball us into decisions.

R. Collier



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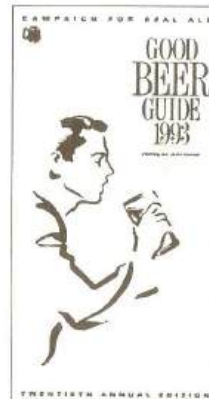


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FOX MY PINT

Branch trip to The Fox and Firkin, Lewisham, 27th

First a bit of history about the Firkin chain of pubs, covering most of London and stretching as far north as Derby and Manchester. When founded in 1979 by David Bruce (now of Hedgehog & Hogshead fame) all of the pubs brewed their own beer. Now after being sold for the third time, to Allied Breweries, passing through the hands of Midsummer Leisure (later European Leisure) and Stakis Leisure, only a few of them brew their own beer and the others are mostly supplied in bulk where the beer is then stored in cellar tanks and kept under a blanket of CO2. The Fox and Firkin is, thankfully, still one of those brew pubs.

Having left the Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells area by about 7pm, the eight of us were "driven at great speed" and deposited outside the Fox

and Firkin, just in time to order the first round before 8pm when all the bar stools were removed. It transpired that this was to make more room for the hoards of people that filled the pub to capacity.

There was an excellent range of 5 different beers including the ubiquitous Dogbolter (OG 1059) and Fox Bitter (OG 1044), unique to the Fox and at only 99p a pint, good value too.

One of the reasons that the Firkin pubs are so popular is the fact that most of them have live music in one form or another on at least two nights a week, the Fox being no exception. It turned out that our entertainer is actually a member of CAMRA and from this branch area. His interpretation of some well known and some not so well known songs, all played on the Honky-Tonk piano, was

interesting to say the least, this was mainly due to the fact that the amplification needed so that we could hear above the general chatter in the pub distorted these "masterpieces".

Part way through the evening we were all handed photocopied sheets of paper. Upon closer inspection we found they contained the words to about 35 well known songs which we were all supposed to join in and sing along with our piano player. This proved to be hilarious because very few of us could sing let alone sing in tune. Luckily our "dancing" was considerably better than our "singing".

Another attraction to the Firkin pubs is that they all sell assorted T-shirts, sweatshirts and the like, but all unique to each pub. Unfortunately they had run out of the best one, otherwise I would have been the proud owner of a T-shirt saying "Fox my pint and I'll Firkin thump you."

The thought of the quiet and coolness of the minibus after our energetic evening of dancing, singing and drinking on one of the hottest evenings of the year was quite appealing especially as we stopped off in Bromley for some much needed nourishment, at least for those of us who hadn't already succumbed to the land of nod.

I think that I can speak for all of us by saying that it was a most enjoyable evening and well worth a return visit.

Richard Oldershaw.



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which Grandma enjoyed!

Then Liz and I moved on to meet the crowd at THE CASTLE INN at Chiddingstone, where we gave their range of ales a testing. We spent a sunny time in their garden, and moved indoors as it darkened, some for a super meal in the restaurant, the rest settling for a snack in the bar. Everyone had a great time, we're meeting there again next week so join us. Give me a ring at after six and we and Sarah to

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THE GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL

OLYMPIA 1992

I had worked at the hall for three sessions prior to the opening of the festival, meeting many CAMRA acquaintances and rubbing shoulders with the hierarchy - ie. the National Executive, the Secretary (now an MBE), editors of publications etc. In fact it was quite a social event. My job was located on the balcony from where I could see (and hear) the gradual creation of the bars, the deliveries of beers and the placing of kilderkins on the scaffolding structure. The day to day progress was truly astonishing.

This effort earned me a couple of free pints per lunchtime plus a free entry ticket to one session so, having worked on the Tuesday till 3pm, it was convenient to use it the same evening - the opening session.

Having met my friends (mostly former workmates) I was then able to view the scene in the hall from ground level. The great sensation was one of space. By comparison with every other previous venue Olympia provided a most generous amount of circulation area so that, once having reached the crowded bars and made a purchase, it was a simple matter to move out to a jostle-free area in order to savour one's pint.

The bars were confusingly

named after dead breweries in various parts of the country and the beers found thereon were from that general area. This was actually a cunning ploy to encourage the customers to buy a programme but, having done so, one then had a convenient means of noting the beers sampled. These were mostly served in good condition at a decently cooled temperature but I did find exceptions.

The foreign beers section was surely the largest ever from the point of view of area and of choice and it was provided with many tables. I did no more than walk round this section to marvel at the prices being asked (and paid) there.

There were various ploys to tempt the visitor to part with his money on collectors' items, tombola, traditional pub games, and other special festival games. I thought the choice of food on offer showed some improvement this year but the queuing for it called for stamina. Musical entertainment in my view is totally unnecessary at events of this kind but, thanks to the strange acoustics of the rail terminus-like roof, the sound was soon muffled and diffused so that at a distance of about a hundred yards from the source it was ineffectual.

Having a direct Underground train service to the venue must have been the greatest contributory factor to the resounding success of the event. This is reflected in the following calculations I have made from the figures in "What's Brewing".

There were 11.8% more customers than in 1991 who drank 18.4% more pints (4.73 pints per head average) and a gratifying 31% more new members came forward.

My one criticism is that there was no publicity (while I was there) for the winning beers. I learned that Woodforde's Norfolk Nog was the outright winner only by hearsay and had no inkling of the others until the arrival of September's "What's Brewing". Of course it would be unreasonable to expect to sample these beers at the festival itself because only a normal supply of each would have been purchased. However, it would have been interesting to know.

I must in conclusion acknowledge the tremendous organisation and effort which went into the event which, in spite of early appearances, all seemed to come right on the night. Well done to all concerned.

IMBIBER

THE GATE

Until a few years ago, if I was asked to recommend a pub with really good food, I would without hesitation say the "Gate" at Hildenborough, run by Guy Sankey, a Whitbread tenant. Although it wasn't cheap, I do believe you get what you pay for, and the Gate's seafood was fantastic. Judging by the amount of fellow customers I was not alone in my views. Needless to say I was not too happy to hear it had closed down, to re-open some months later as a "Brewer's Fare".

What's this got to do with CAMRA? It is a perfect example of Whitbread's attitude to

their pubs and their tenants.

I heard later that Guy had started up in Tunbridge Wells, and was delighted to find the new "Gate" just as good as the old. On a recent visit Guy told me the whole story.

He has been in the pub trade for most of his life, his parents used to run the George and Dragon at Speldhurst, so when he took over the tenancy of the Gate in September 1980 he was an experienced publican, and mainly through food the trade increased enormously, becoming renowned for seafood. Whitbread were not slow in noticing and more

than doubled his £3,500 rent within three years. They also changed their minds about selling the freehold which had been offered to him in 1981 for £100,000. By 1987 they were charging him £24,000 p.a. rent. The final straw came when Guy was told he had to pay not only for new kitchens but also for the complete renovation of the sewage and drainage systems. He left them to it and started up his new "Sankeys at the Gate" in Tunbridge Wells. Whitbread meanwhile spent in the region of £400,000 to turn the Gate into yet another characterless steakhouse doing a fraction of the trade it did.

It's nice to see the little Guy come out on top for once.

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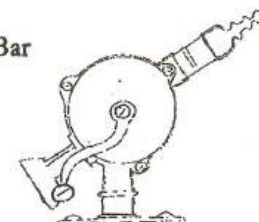
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LOCAL PUB & BRANCH NEWS

September marked the arrival of Morlands beer in the area, with the brewery's take over of eight pubs in the Maidstone area and two here; The Bell at Golden Green, and the Greyhound, Tonbridge. At The Bell, Morlands Original, Old Masters and Speckled Hen are available, and if your partner is a discerning wine drinker, a delectable dry white wine.

Following on from the sixty pubs Shepherd Neame purchased or leased from Whitbread - a subject of debate, as rumours suggest that they will revert to Whitbread on expiry of the leases - they have taken over The Bat and Ball, Leigh and the Bush, Blackbird and Thrush, East Peckham. Although Shepherd Neame are introducing blanket pressure in many of these pubs, the landlord of the Bush, Blackbird and Thrush was intending to maintain the dispensation of beer direct from the barrels. Let's hope so.

Greene King has also taken on further pubs, including Fleur de Lys, at Leigh and The George and Dragon, Tudeley, an old CAMRA favourite local. In some villages the national brewers are definitely no more. However, one that is ensuring its appearance is Bass Charrington. They have sold a chain of their pubs to Mars, a beer retail company (ie. a pub chain company) who will continue to buy their supplies from

Bass Charrington. However, the pubs can buy from the Bass Charrington supply list, which means that the range of real ales on offer may include Harveys, as well as Charrington IPA and Bass.

Three free houses previously omitted from our last issue are:- The Stag, Tonbridge, Rose and Crown, East Peckham and The Lamb, at Sundridge. At time of going to press we still await a decision regarding the Papermakers Arms at Plaxtol, which Whitbread was intending to sell in a chain. Finally, for members who reckon they could run a pub better than the landlord, two opportunities exist for you to put your words into action. For sale:- The Queen Tavern, East Peckham and the Prince Albert, Tonbridge. Feel assured that the local CAMRA members will rally round to support your venture, taste the ale, and comment on how better we could run it.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This is to be held at the Little Brown Jug, Chiddingstone Causeway on Wednesday 27th January 1993. Although the agenda is not yet ready, all members are encouraged to attend and participate. It will include the election of branch officers and committee members. The present committee members are eligible to be reselected, but new blood is always welcomed. Nominations should be forwarded to

Tim Wood, branch secretary, and include a proposer and seconder, plus an acceptance from the nominee that they are willing to stand for election.

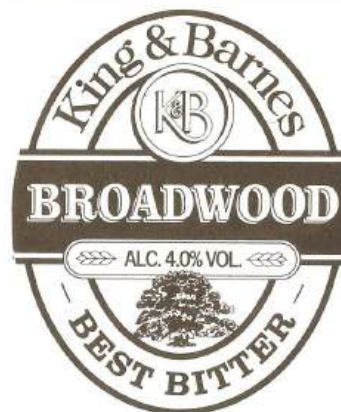
BRANCH SOCIALS

This year we have tried to hold them in all corners of the area, but support on occasion has been poor. Although the committee is aware of the problems of travelling to some of the rural pubs, it is felt that the branch should be seen throughout the area. Do you agree, or do you have any suggestions as to which pubs to visit? If so please let us know, either through the magazine, through our social secretary Trevor, or at the AGM.

By the way, it was nice to be thanked by Paul, the landlord of The Grapevine, for holding a social there. For once it was probably a good thing that not too many did turn up, otherwise it might have been Cyril Scutt and his improvising quartet.

REAL ALE FOR THE YOUNG

Is it becoming popular among the under 30s? Well, its definitely available in the latest theme pub in the area. Word has it that Owd Roger and others are available in the Jailhouse, formerly The Clarence, Tunbridge Wells. Only non-white/grey hair members admitted, so hurry up with the Grecian 2000!



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CAMRA 21 YEARS

A Personal Look Back

This year sees CAMRA celebrating its 21st Birthday and, with this anniversary in mind, former branch chairman and long standing CAMRA member Paul Bailey takes a personal look back at the early years of the campaign.

"I can't claim to have been in at the start of CAMRA, that took place in Ireland in 1971, but I have been a fully paid up member of the campaign since December 1973, and have seen the movement grow from a small association of beer lovers into a hugely successful and influential consumer organisation.

"At the time of joining I was back in Kent for the Christmas vacation, following my first term as a student in Manchester (or Salford to be precise!) Manchester itself had been quite a revelation and had already introduced me to the delights of Boddingtons, Robinsons, Tetleys and Greenall Whitley to name but a few of the local brews. Now sitting in the public bar of the Three Horseshoes at Lower Hardres, near Canterbury, I was listening to the landlord describe the work of CAMRA, whilst enjoying a few pints of his delectable Youngs PA and Special drawn straight from wooden casks.

"I had already heard of the campaign through an excellent

book, purchased during my first term at University. It was titled "**The Death of the English Pub**", and was written by Christopher Hutt - one of CAMRA's first national chairmen. The book detailed the threats facing the English pub, the most serious of which was the disappearance of traditional draught beer and its replacement with characterless, national keg brands. This went hand in hand with the takeover and closure of many local breweries by six large national brewing combines who, as well as phasing out popular and respected local beers produced to suit local tastes, were also wrecking their pubs in the process. Unless something was done, the traditional English pub, together with traditional beer, would soon be a thing of the past.

"The book struck a chord with me, and I knew I had to be a part of the fight against the big brewers, and to try and save our brewing heritage. I consequently paid my 50p subscription, and became a member of the campaign. I attended my first CAMRA meeting during Easter vacation, at the City Arms in Canterbury - where I also purchased a copy of CAMRA's first Good Beer Guide - price 75p! Locally, Shepherd Neame provided the majority of real ale in Kent, as most Whitbread, Courage and Ind Coope pubs sold nothing but

pressurised or keg beers. The breweries section at the rear of the guide was something of an eye-opener, as it listed every brewery still operating in England and Wales. Names I had never heard of, such as Harveys, Ruddles, Wadworth, Hardys & Hansons, Yates & Jackson etc, had an almost magical ring to them, and set me on a quest to track down and sample as many of them as possible.

"This pursuit was aided by the purchase of another book - "**The Beer Drinker's Companion**", written and researched by Frank Baille (no relation!) The book gave detailed information on every brewery in the country, and as well as listing the draught and bottled beers produced by each company, described 'where their respective pubs could be found. According to the information on the booksleeve, Frank Baille had drunk every draught beer available in the UK, as well as many of the bottled ones - now surely that was something worth emulating!

"Back in Manchester, and armed with my GBG, I set out to put this quest into action, and managed to sample Hydes, Holts, Lees, Marstons, Burtonwood and Oldham Ales for the first time - Manchester being a part of the country where the beer drinker is spoiled for choice. My first brewery visit, to Marstons at

Burton-on-Trent, also took place about this time, although I must confess that I don't remember much about it!

"That summer I embarked on a pub crawl of London in the company of a school friend and fellow fledgling CAMRA member. We had as our guide a copy of "**Real Ale in London**", the first of many such local guides to be published by CAMRA. On the tour I sampled for the first time Charrington IPA (then still a London brewed beer and a far superior brew compared with today's lacklustre version), Ruddles County plus Fullers London Pride and ESB. Ruddles was sampled in the legendary Becky's Dive Bar, near London Bridge station, whilst Fuller's superb beers were enjoyed at the excellent Star Tavern, hidden away just off Belgrave Square. Our crawl finished up at the Anglesea Arms in South Kensington, which was one of the first freehouses in the capital to offer real ales from around the country.

"The following year I was fortunate enough to visit the Covent Garden Beer Festival - one of the first such events organised by CAMRA. To be able to wander round a hall and sample beers from all over Britain, in tip-top condition, was like being in paradise and helped establish the popularity of beer festivals in the minds of the public. The festival was a resounding success, so much so that my friends and I were unable to gain entry when we returned

for the evening session - such were the crowds queuing for admission.

"By this time CAMRA's message was starting to get through and, as sales of beers produced by the independent brewers began to rocket, even the big brewers started to take the campaign seriously. One



of the first to respond was Courage who launched a promotion for their Directors Bitter, a beer which had been on the verge of extinction. Allied Breweries followed suit with a new premium strength beer called Ind Coope Draught Burton Ale, selling at the then scandalous price of 34p a pint! Not to be outdone, Bass increased the gravity of Draught Bass, and greatly increased its availability.

"Apart from developing a liking for the latter, most of these events had little effect on me as I was still living in Manchester where real beer at sensible prices was widely available. Apart from drinking the real thing though, my time as a student left me little time to play an active role within CAMRA, and it was not until 1979, when I returned to live in Kent, that I was able to take part in the activities of my local branch.

"Obtaining the latest edition of "**Real Ale Pubs in Kent**" showed just how much things had improved during the years of my absence; the main improvement coming from Whitbread who, responding to the demand for real ale, had brought back the name of Fremains to both their beer and their pubs in the county. I took the plunge and started attending meetings of the Maidstone branch, where I happened to be living at the time. Within a few months I had been asked to join the committee. Since that time I have been actively involved in branch affairs, firstly within Maidstone & Mid-Kent branch, and more recently with Tonbridge & Tunbridge Wells.

"Now, like other members of CAMRA, I am looking forward to the next 21 years of the campaigning. There remains much work to do, but along the way there will be new beers to enjoy, different breweries to visit and unspoilt pubs to discover. Cheers!"

PAUL BAILEY



THE ABERGAVENNY ARMS

THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED PUB

This issue we will target a pub slightly out of town. This may be the sort of establishment that you do not consider visiting because of its position. If that is the case, read this and think again.

From the outside, The Abergavenny Arms is rather imposing, but I suggest you step inside. Instead of one large pub, what greets you is a rather pleasing contrast of drinking areas.

Entering by the front door you come into the main bar. To your left is a rather impressive bar with a multitude of both keg and hand pumps which we will discuss later. To your right is the games area of the pub, with a bar billiards table, and darts board and also the scene of frequent large spoof games. Opposite the bar is the restaurant and food serving counter with seating, it also incorporates a non-smoking area.

Continuing through takes you to the pub's side entrance, leading to the car park, and to your left what is for me the most pleasing of the bars. This area comprises of two sections, the first of which is dominated by a huge walk-in inglenook fire place. The whole area is a network of REAL oak beams, the walls tastefully decorated with a selection of pictures, prints and



horse brasses with nothing tacky or overpowering in presence. This provides a pleasant, subtle effect to the bar making it a most relaxing place to enjoy a drink (even the seating is comfortable!). A friend of mine, Caryn, says I should also mention the beautiful carpet, so there, I have.

The Abergavenny Arms enjoys a prominent position on the edge of Frant, on the A267 Tunbridge Wells to Eastbourne road and commands a superb view across the Weald of Kent and what was once the Abergavenny Family estate. The pub itself has a very interesting history, the original part of the building being built back in 1450. It was then called the "Apsis" until the late sixteenth century when it became the "Bull", acquiring its present name in 1823. During your visit be sure to ask for a leaflet which gives the history in more detail and includes

the curious story of the coachman, who while staying overnight in 1770, died in his sleep. The law of that time decreed that should someone die on licensed premises, those premises should stay closed until an inquest had been carried out. The innkeeper of that time had no wish to close his pub and lose money and so threw the unfortunate man's body out of the window reporting his death as a suicide. Legend has it that to this day the ghost of the coachman returns every year on the anniversary of his death to haunt the resident landlord.

On many visits to the Abergavenny I have always found it to be a place full of life and activity. The main bar area is always a scene of lively conversation, although if you prefer a quieter drink I recommend the peace of the last bar I mentioned round the side. The pub benefits from a very

large following of regulars and is host to a football team, cricket team, quiz team and no less than four darts teams! There is also a good passing trade, helped by the pub's position, with families and all newcomers being made very welcome.

Now to the most important question: what choice of liquid refreshment can you expect? This, I feel, is the Abergavenny's strongest point, but then should it not be every pub's? For those so minded there is a wide range of bottled or draught lagers, including the famed Hacker. The bar, also boasts seven hand pumps, six of which offer real ales, the seventh serving Bulmer's Traditional Cider. Four of the pumps hold permanent beers, Harveys Best Bitter, King & Barnes Broadwood, King & Barnes Mild and Hopback Summer Lightning always being available. The other two pumps offer a wide and constantly changing range of guest beers. Observe the bar's impressive

display of pump clips, giving you some idea of the huge range of guest beers which have been served in the past and regularly return for another tasting. Favourite guests that make frequent returns include Greene King Abbot, Exmoor Gold, Gales HSB, Hook Norton Old Hooky, Ringwood 49er and Bunces Pigswill.

For a pub of this class the pricing is extremely reasonable. King & Barnes Broadwood is £1.40 per pint and Hopback Summer Lightning will cost you £1.70 a pint, very reasonable for a beer of this strength which comes all the way from Wiltshire. On the subject of value for money, oversized glasses are also available. This ensures that the customer receives a FULL pint of beer with the frothy head extra, as required by law, something that CAMRA has been campaigning for very strongly for some time now.

Although it is out of town, accessibility to the Abergavenny

Arms is extremely good. Driving to it will take you only five minutes from the centre of Tunbridge Wells and not much more by bus, a main route passing by with a stop right outside the pub. Travelling by train, the nearest station is at Bells Yew Green, about two miles away, although it may be easier to use Central Station in Tunbridge Wells and catch a taxi for the last leg.

With Christmas almost upon us the Abergavenny Arms may be your ideal venue. Functions and buffets are easily catered for and the excellent menu and welcome to families could make this pub a worthwhile place for a day out. On the other hand, why not just stop by for a couple of pints. Either way, you can be assured of a warm welcome by your host, Richard Bradley, and his most efficient and friendly staff.

Hope to see you there for a pint!

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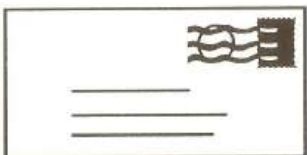
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LETTERS to the EDITOR

Dear Editor

I was very pleased to see the re-launch of "Inn View", with its many varied articles. It reminded me of the previous magazine, which often provoked questions and letters from its readers.

Therefore, I was disappointed that you did not include my letter of September 1989. This referred to the article "Canned Draught Guinness". I would be very interested to learn of your reply to my observations as to the head of a canned Guinness in comparison with a draught Guinness. I had hoped it would be a thought-provoking letter.

Yours sincerely

Reg

EDITOR'S REPLY:- "Sorry we lost it!"

Dear Editor

I have just seen Whitbread's latest attack on independent brewers, namely their advertisement showing "ale bores" discussing the merits of pints such as Old Grumbleweed and then "normal" people enjoying a "fine traditional" pint of Flowers.

'Don't be fooled by the fancy names,' says Whitbread. Given the choice between Wiltshire's Old Grumble and a pint of mass produced Flowers, I know which I'd rather have.

Companies like Whitbread cream profits from the new generation of real ale drinkers by attracting them to mediocre pints with mass advertising campaigns. What galls me is that it is CAMRA who has fought hard for these people to drink real ale, while Whitbread and their chums tried to kill off real ale altogether.

But now the likes of Whitbread gain and, from their adverts, you'd think they'd been ale's No. 1 friend for life.

We know the truth, but will new ale drinkers listen to the advertisement? They will, or people wouldn't advertise.

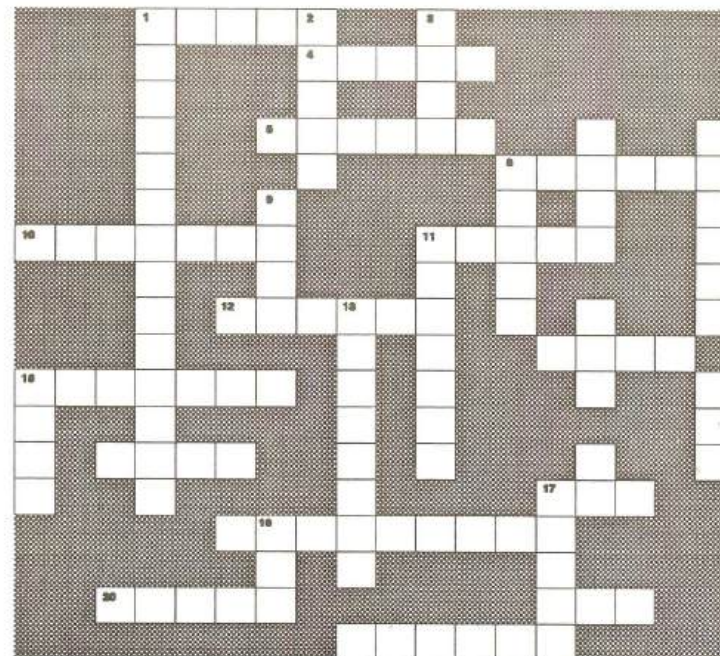
Adverts like this will increase, I fear, and, like lager, ale drinkers will start drinking advertising and more independents will close.

I hope CAMRA and the independents can provide some sort of counter attack - we must make everyone realise the truth behind these national brewers. Perhaps independents could pool some profits and make advertisements in support of independent ale, highlighting the mediocre mass production techniques of the likes of Whitbread in their slaughter-houses at Cheltenham and Sheffield, and make public the nationals' record of allegiance to real ale.

If people realised that, their adverts wouldn't be quite so effective. Whatever the case, I boycott the likes of Whitbread, and hope that others will do the same

MATTHEW FORD

BOOZERS CROSSWORD No1



ACROSS

1. Jovial (5)
4. Helped (5)
5. Another pint (6)
8. Torpor (6)
10. True beer (4,3)
11. Nearby watering-hole (5)
12. Place where wry beer is chumed (7)
14. Arab chief (5)
15. Beer drunk by 'Roger Rabbit' Bob (7)
16. Jumps to improve the flavour of bitter (4)
17. Ale put out to pasture (3)
18. Brewery which used to be found near Stonehenge (9)
20. Glad (5)
21. Mischievous dwarf (3)
22. Presumably this beer isn't old? (6)

DOWN

1. "Thriller" beer man (7,7)
2. Beer made from yeast (5)
3. Hades (4)
6. Dwelling for the masses (7,5)
7. Brewery for an inexperienced monarch? (6,4)
8. Too many beers might make you this (4)
9. King following insect to make a drink (4)
11. The Darling Buds of May brewery (7)
13. Does this brewery have the value of a pile of notes? (8)
15. --- brewing? (4)
17. Home of Harveys (5)
19. Climbing plant (3)

Answers: Page 21

ALE OF A JOURNEY

SOME REMINISCENCES OF AN AGEING TRAIN-TRAVELLING DRINKER

To my mind there is a certain pleasure in achieving an "illicit" beer when the train timetable is not meant to allow for it. I consider a beer from a station buffet scores a much lower mark than one drunk in a nearby pub.

Let me give a few examples of past successes which come to mind.

On a special steam-hauled train in Hertfordshire a stop was made at the closed station of Cole Green for the benefit of photographers. Those not interested in exposures quickly spotted that there was a small pub at the foot of the embankment and it was open. In no time there was a stampee down the approach road and the bar became a heaving mass of thirsty people waving half crowns (12 and a half pence) at the landlord. He nobly rose to the occasion, calling his wife away from the TV in the back room and two outnumbered locals moved behind the bar and served. However, the landlord's luck was short-lived and a lot of potential customers were disappointed as the engine whistle sounded for departure. The beer was Whitbread's own City-brewed bitter which had a distinctly pleasant nutty flavour.

On another occasion a special arrived at the little terminus of Newport Pagnell in Buckinghamshire. It was necessary for

the engine to run around its train for the return journey. This gave time for a few 'believers' to leap down onto the ballast, run across the goods sidings, climb over the goods yard gate and reach a Phipps' house. Their beer was not of great merit (something like the present Webster's) and the brewery later succumbed to Watney's. However, any beer was better than no beer.

In the 1990's special trains for rail-enthusiasts often carry bright (i.e. filtered) real ale so the incentive to rush off on a quest does not arise.

Now for a failure. In Wales, when travelling on a normal service train which was running late, the arrival at Swansea was at 2.25 pm just giving time for a drink before closing. The nearest pub proved to belong to Evans Evans, Bevans whose trading slogan was 'Vale of Neath Ales'. The beer proved to be sharp and warm and I must admit we didn't/couldn't finish it. There was no point in trying to have it changed as it would only

have been in the same condition. We could then see why the locals knew the beers as 'Vale of Death Ales'.

Mention of the following stations produces happy memories of beers snatched between service trains, often from brewers long since gone and sometimes of branch lines long closed - Withernsea (Hull Brewery), Carlisle (the State Brewery), Silloth (Workington Brewery), Grimsby (Hewitts), Lincoln (Warwick & Richardsons), Spalding (Barnsley Brewery), Banbury (Hunt Edmunds), Evesham (Atkinsons), Maldon (Grays), Cowes (Mew Langtons) etc. etc.

It was largely through being a railway buff that my interest in local beers developed. In the years I am speaking of local beers WERE local, there were no beer agencies and fewer free houses so that you could not buy Adnams' in Sussex, Hall & Woodhouse in London and certainly no Boddingtons outside the Manchester area.

B.H.F.

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AN INNKEEPER'S VIEW

I was recently asked by a friend, customer and CAMRA member if I would like to contribute a piece to "Inn View" from a landlord's point of view.

As this is essentially a fun, beer-loving magazine and as landlords generally elicit as much sympathy as redundant bank managers and failed estate-agents, I feel a sobering sob-job is incongruous. Nevertheless, perhaps I can try to explain why a pint costs as much as it does, the fluctuating price of beers being a permanent talking-point.

If the retail price of "Supersludge" is £1.50, first the VAT must be deducted, that reduces the amount of money actually going to the landlord to £1.28. If the cost per pint to the landlord is 65p (an actual price for a popular local ale before its annual price rise) that leaves 63p per pint profit. That may sound very healthy.

Maybe a list of weekly expenses (obviously approximate and subject to all manner of individual variations) will explain why in reality that's not such a bountiful figure.

1. Glass and beer-line cleaner and CO2 for ciders, lagers, keg ales£20.00
 2. Wastage:-Each drip tray holds nearly 2 pints
Each beer-line clearance involves 3 pints wastage. Customer returns and regular fobbing
must average about 40 pints a week over 11 products£30.00
 3. Wage:- 1 barperson per session per week
@ £15£210.00
 4. Cesspit clearance, sewage, water£30.00
 5. Cleaning materials for pub£10.00
 6. Lighting, heating etc£80.00
 7. Insurance£50.00
 8. Rent/Mortgage of, say,
£20,000 p.a.£384.00
- Total weekly expenses£814.00

That means that 1,300 pints a week have to be sold just to break even; that's nearly £2,000 a week in takings, with all the work involved, without any profit. This leaves aside many minor expenses (e.g. glasses and local taxes) and is most certainly an underestimate.

In these straitened times there are not many rural pubs taking that kind of money in beer sales alone. Hence the introduction of machines, juke-boxes, pool tables and an amazing array of antics (from live music to Karaoke) to stay solvent. The only other realistic alternative is the increasing switch to placing emphasis on food sales with the greater income this generates and the increased sales of wine and spirits. The landlord hoping to exist purely as a traditional outlet, resistant to all gimmicks that so infuriate the purist, is therefore under serious threat. Leisure trends have altered drastically in the last two decades. Many pubs were built to cater for an off-duty society expecting nothing other than a good night out at the local.

By the end of this decade many people will be sitting in their local Indian/Chinese /Steakhouse/ converted alehouse or just moping in front of their videos bemoaning wanly the demise of the "old fashioned pub of yore", a meeting point for all manner of men and women to relax and socialise informally in warm, friendly surroundings.

Most people reading this will already appreciate the charm and appeal of a real pub, but unfortunately their numbers are dwindling and the price of a pint will increasingly reflect the fact that fewer and fewer people really care.

PORTER

It's nice to see Porter making a comeback. Larkins have a very good one, widely available throughout the area at the moment.

Even Shepherd Neame are doing Porter this year and is particularly pleasant - try it at the Nelson Arms in Tonbridge.

DO YOU TAKE CZECHS?

I would like to tell you a short story about a new Czechoslovakian beer which is about to be introduced to the UK market by a Tonbridge-based company, 1st Choice (Czechoslovakia) Ltd, part-owned by myself.

The beginning of the story goes back some 12 months or so when one of my co-directors stopped near Mereworth to pick up a hitchhiker who turned out to be a Czech graduate picking fruit in England to earn money and to perfect his English before returning to Czechoslovakia.

Two subjects of common interest soon emerged, one being the fact that both had until recently served in the armed forces, albeit potentially on opposite sides, and the other ... beer.

Some months after Ivan (sic) returned home, he contacted us to investigate the possibility of importing various commodities and most proved impractical because of the design of the actual article, its legality or the price. It has to be remembered that until two years ago, Czechoslovakia was a poor communist country in the hands of the Russians (remember the student protests in Wenceslas Square in Prague, and the televising of the first legal Anglican service since 1940 something?) and has had very little contact with the West, cer-

tainly not on a regular trading basis.

Even now a sales manager is considered to be earning a good salary at £130 per MONTH. (Now you can see the attraction of fruit picking at, say, £30 per DAY.)

Finally, our common interest in the juice of the hop led inevitably to considering the import of beer, especially as Czechoslovakian beer has always had an enviable reputation for quality.

This summer, therefore, I and another of my co-directors drove to Czechoslovakia to try and iron out the wrinkles in the deal - the Czechs are naturally finding it difficult to change from their communist economy to a free market in such a short time - and to make a personal visit to the brewery, in Ostravar, to improve business relations and of course to try the odd litre of beer.

The beer is made in the traditional manner, as it has been since 1897, using only the finest Bohemian hops and conforms to the German Reinheitsgebot standard (which the Brussels administrators are trying hard to destroy, much to the disgust of the Germans) and is a premium beer of 5% ABV.

A number of people, apart from ourselves, have tried it and have been favourably im-

pressed, so we are pressing ahead despite the problems of dealing with a non-EEC country attracting extra duty and the Customs and Excise regulations (whose staff incidentally have been most helpful) and are now beginning to offer Ostravar beer to the free trade, off licences and pubs.

Plans for the future? At the moment the bottles are of 1/2 litre capacity and, as a lot of people have expressed interest in a smaller size, we are hoping to introduce in addition, a 1/3 litre bottle. We also hope to bring in a dark, ruby beer, similar to the German Dunkles beer, also of 5% ABV and this could satisfy what is a considerable gap in the UK beer market.

CLIVE COOKE

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS	DOWN
1. Merry	1. Michael Jackson
4. Aided	2. Yates
5. Refill	3. Hell
8. Stupor	6. Public House
10. Real ale	7. Greene King
11. Local	8. Sick
12. Brewery	9. Beer
14. Sheik	11. Larkins
15. Hoskins	13. Wadworth
16. Hops	15. Home
17. Lea	17. Lewes
18. Wiltshire	19. Ivy
20. Happy	
21. Elf	
22. Youngs	

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RAMBLING RON

Be warned, for this time it is a proper ramble. We will cross fields, pass wild animals - white woolly things - and be beyond the sight of civilisation and houses. To recall, in the last issue we left Hadlow heading in the direction of Tonbridge towards the Rose Revived, and already we have a choice. To follow the A26 to the next turning on the left, Ashes Lane, or to cut across country through Hadlow College and along a footpath to Ashes Lane. If you're wearing wellies, maybe we should go across country to get into the spirit of a ramble. However, you could encounter some very ferocious animals, playing rugby.

Whichever route you choose, the college student union bar does deserve a mention. It does now serve a real ale, Theakstons XB. Although the purists amongst us will argue that it is now a Scottish and Newcastle brew and not from the home town of Theakston, Masham, it is an improvement. Unfortunately, although my dress sense has not improved since the days of Status Quo, and my capacity for work is zero, only student union card holders are permitted to use the bar.

Having selected the A26 route and braving oncoming traffic which believes the national speed limit is the minimum speed to travel at, one hope-

fully reaches Ashes Lane. As you turn into Ashes Lane, you cannot miss the Rose Revived. An ideal candidate for the idyllic country pub with its whitewashed fifteenth century facade. It's not unsurprising that for many years it was the front cover of the Better Pubs Map of Kent. Inside, the pub is equally not disappointing with its beams and inglenook fireplace, and for the purist no electronic machines or jukebox. A list of beers available are proclaimed in the porchway entrance, including as regulars King & Barnes Sussex Bitter and Harveys. The guest beer has been Fullers, Youngs and Wadworth 6X, and in the winter often a winter warmer is available.

In the world of economic reality it is not surprising that this pub attracts the lunchtime visitations of businessmen. However, the provision of food is secondary and only at lunchtime from Monday to Saturday. The landlord takes pride in offering a "wet" house, and in consideration of the market meals generate for a pub of this character it is a bold position to take. Nevertheless, the image of providing for businessmen is one some villagers paint of the pub, as if some of it is to the detriment of the locals unless you own a Porche, BMW or a Lada, you are not welcome at the pub. This I can refute, for not only have I arrived on foot, but I can also recall the

owner of a 2CV being welcomed and served. He did eventually go up market and buy a Lada.

What of dogs, I hear you cry. In short, the landlord would expect to be asked first, and to be assured of its behaviour. For this walk my little mutt could accompany me, but I underestimated her ability. After she read the last lines of my previous report her comments were: "Blow this for a game of soldiers," and promptly went home.

After you leave the Rose Revived continue up Ashes Lane for nearly half a mile to the hamlet of Pittswood. There in the centre of a group of houses lies the Three Squirrels, a former Whitbread pub bought by the family and run by the parents. This is a country locals' pub which is not surprising as many folk do not know of its existence, or if they did, have still to enter it. It's an end of terrace house offering two bars, a small saloon, and the main public bar. For many, it epitomises a locals' local, no frills or fancies, just a plain, simple pub in which only the prices reflect the passing of the decades.

As it is a former Whitbread pub it's stock is still purchased through the brewer. Consequently, the two real ales available are both Whitbread beers: Fremfins and

Flowers. The prices, however, are a bit cheaper than elsewhere. Finally, for the intrepid explorer who does find the pub, I would recommend the public bar if you are in search for company.

For our ramble we will be heading off along the road opposite the Three Squirrels. Before we go, however, a few points of information. To the far end of Ashes Lane is Poult Wood Golf Club. The bar is open to the public during the old fashioned pub hours but, more important, it does serve real ale. On my last visit Wadworth 6X and Boddingtons. The best time to go is in the summer when you can sit on the verandah watching the golfers approach the 18th green. It is always interesting to note the golfer hitting the ball for the eighth time to reach the green calling out to his colleague that he reached it in three, whilst we have already pictured our two strokes (number 3 wood followed by a 6 iron) to the green. A marvellous game for story tellers, whether players or onlookers. My only criticism is that they do not take full advantage of all day opening hours for the bar. I could not appreciate playing the game if the 19th hole was going to be closed when I finished.

Anyway, as we set off up High House Lane you may be interested to learn what the red building on the corner is. Yes, it is an ancient monument or telephone box, but I regret to say that the "A" and

"B" buttons no longer exist. Follow this road to a crossroads, but take care crossing. For although it is a country lane, it does link two villages, therefore qualifying it as a motorway. Anyway, cross the road and follow up School Lane, pass the entrance to Oxenhoath to the first turning on your left, Pill Box Lane, so named because of the letter box encased in the cottage wall.

This lane brings you out to another idyllic country pub, the Artichoke. It does have a romantic look about it, and it is therefore not surprising that many of its clientele are couples. For many people it is difficult to find, and when they do arrive they are hungry. Therefore, the provision of meals is prominent, with it offering both a restaurant and bar meals. However, as an ancient country pub - Kentish guide description - it is small with many low beams and an inglenook fire place. For many people this means they have a preference for sitting rather than standing, but there are not many tables, so it can be rather cramped - the unluckiest position is the table in front of the fire. To avoid burning you are advised to swop seats every twenty minutes. During the summer you can spread out onto benches in the pub's forecourt, which is also under cover for the occasional summer shower.

The real ales on offer include Youngs and Fullers as regulars, with the third pump for guest ales. Similar to the Rose

Revived it also offers a range of wines for its discerning customers. However, if you are not eating it may be advisable to visit mid-week in order to be able to sit at ease, otherwise your elbows could be nibbled by the man next door.

Now we are to go rambling. For opposite the Artichoke is a footpath leading to the Roughway. This is where you may pass those white woolly animals, so if you have children or dogs in tow, please keep them on the lead. After the initial corners the footpath is relatively straight and will lead you to Roughway Lane. Upon reaching the lane turn left and follow the road to Dunks Green. At the end of the road you will find the Kentish Rifleman.

This is another pub bought from Whitbread, but still buys its beers from them. Consequently, the main real ales on offer are Flowers, Marston Pedigree and Boddingtons. However, it does offer Larkins as a guest beer, which is even more attractive for being the cheapest. The wine, as with the other 16th century pubs on this tour, is quite acceptable.

The pub did undergo an internal refit upon being purchased but its old character still remains. For certain locals the demise of the public bar was missed, but the improvements to the loos has been most welcome, especially in mid-winter. As you may have noted, it is now a single bar pub, another common feature with the previous two ancient

pubs, and has been decorated to welcome visitors. To this end it encourages meals, both for lunchtime and evening, and at weekends it has been particularly busy. Although it is an understandable practice, it can make the passing drinker uncomfortable when seated at a table and all around him are customers eat-

ing. However, if you time your visit right it is well worth supporting a new landlord.

So another tour ends. A rather prominent tour for historic buildings, and all of them now free houses. Although less pubs for this tour, one had the

chance to sample at least ten different beers. Maybe it should be undertaken at a weekend so you can have meals to soak it all up. However, the next question is where shall I stroll to next, to Plaxtol, or to Shipbourne and Underriver to work off this excessive weight. At present, maybe I'll just doze by the

BRANCH DIARY

The following meetings which start at 8.30pm are open to non-members, and friends are particularly welcome.

- 19th November - Social at the Beehive, Riverhead, nr Sevenoaks.
- 4th December - Christmas Social at the Little Brown Jug.
- Chiddingstone Causeway (opp Penshurst Station).
- 18th December - Social pub crawl of Hadlow, starting at The Fiddling Monkey.
- 29th December - Social at the Brecknock Arms, Bells Yew Green.
- 14th January - Social at the George & Dragon Speldhurst, moving on to The Northfield.
- 27th January - AGM at The Little Brown Jug.
- 9th February - Social at The Elephants Head, Hook Green.
- 24th February - social at The Harp, East Peckham.
- 11th March - Social at The Little Brown Jug. (opp Penshurst Station).

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
OUR SOCIAL SECRETARY -
TREVOR STEVENS 0892 863667



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Just fill in the form below and send, with a cheque for £10 (payable to CAMRA Ltd) to Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3BW.

APPLICATION FORM

NAME

ADDRESS

.....

POST CODE

I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association. I enclose a cheque for £10 (£14 if overseas).

Signed Date

CAMRA - A MATTER OF CHOICE

Within the pages of the CAMRA handbook there is a list of aims for which CAMRA stands. At the top of this list reads the following: "...to protect the interests of all those who wish to drink real beer." This statement of intent can be interpreted in many different ways by the many different people who joined CAMRA for many different reasons. I have met members (not necessarily of this branch) who have decided that CAMRA exists to purge all Britain's pubs of all keg and make every bar serve real ale. Now, every CAMRA member would love to see real ale in every bar, but I do not think this should be at the expense of keg. This may sound like heresy, coming

from a CAMRA member (especially one on the branch committee) but if this were CAMRA policy then it would be an infringement of the customer's basic right of freedom of choice. I do not believe this is what CAMRA should be, or is, about. Some of my best friends drink keg beer and lager; that is their choice. If we have a mixture of real ale and keg in all pubs then we can all go out for a drink together without being forced into drinking something we would rather not.

CAMRA's commitment to choice is highlighted in its fights to keep independent brewers free from the clutches of the big companies who

have been known to shut the small breweries, relocate the brewing and sell a generally inferior tasting beer under the original name.

After the slight ... dare I say it? ... "militancy" of some of the articles in issue 1 of Inn View, this has been a deliberately "middle-of-the-road" article which will hopefully appeal to the average person who likes a nice pint of ale once in a while. But, whatever our belief as to what CAMRA stands for, our ultimate goal must be the same: let's see much more real ale in pubs.

To join CAMRA just fill in the application form from within the pages of Inn View.

ALEX

BERNIE'S BOOZE-UP

Just outside Tonbridge at Lower Haysden is the Royal Oak. Many of you reading this will already know this popular pub, particularly noted for its continually changing range of real ales. Back in July, from the 17th to the 19th, they surpassed their reputation by staging a beer festival with a staggering choice of 40 different real ales.

On your next visit to the Royal Oak, ask Bernie (the genial landlord), what is in-

volved in staging such an event. Major jobs involved the erection of a large marquee opposite the pub and building stillaging large enough to cope with the huge array of casks, not to mention preparing all of those casks, so that the beer was ready for the flood of thirsty customers. Problems that occurred, such as not enough taps for the casks, were thankfully overcome and by Friday 11am everything was ready to roll.

For those so inclined there

were several activities available such as "Bar-Fly", Bungy-Running, and the biggest Karaoke system that I have ever seen. My greatest enjoyment, apart from the drinking naturally, was getting past the bungy-running to make it to the toilets in the pub. More challenging than the bungy-running itself, I reckon. Unlimited parking was available in the adjacent field and many people also camped there for the weekend, showing true devotion to the sam-

pling of real ale. What a great choice they had too. Everything in strength from 1035 o.g. to brain-damaging 1080 o.g., including three milds, and a mixture of old favourites and several unusual rare beers. Included were Archers Headbanger, Fullers ESB, Hopback Summer Lightning, Mauldons Blackadder, Marstons Owd Roger and Youngs Special, not to mention Thatchers Scrumpy Cider from Bristol. The beer voted

best of the festival was Beer Engine Rail Ale, a beer that is extremely rare coming all the way from a home-brew pub just outside Exeter.

My own memories of the festival are extremely pleasant. I find outdoor festivals are far more enjoyable in the summer, as they give a more relaxed feeling to the event. Many valuable minutes of my drinking time were spent trying to decide what to drink

next, but I still managed to sample quite a few beers, all of which were in excellent condition.

Many thanks to Bernie for a very enjoyable time from everyone at CAMRA, we are all looking forward to next year. Talking of which, make a note in your diary for the 9th to 11th July and get along there. I know I will, probably with a tent.

FEARS GROW FOR BUDGET DUTY HIKE

Fears are mounting that drinkers will be stung in the next year's Budget following remarks by the Health Minister to an alcohol and public health conference.

Dr Brian Mawhinney, Minister of State for health, said

the Chancellor will take Health into consideration when deciding the appropriate levels of alcohol duties.

But many in the drinks industry fear that under the cloak of health concerns duty levels will be cranked up to help lift

the Government's current borrowing crisis.

British drinkers already pay the second highest tax for their drinks in the EC. Any duty rise will run counter to attempts to introduce a single market.

BATEMANS AXES ITS KEGGING PLANT

Award-winning brewer Bateman's of Lincolnshire has scrapped its kegging plant.

The keg line was put in 22 years ago, a year before CAMRA was founded.

But now, partly thanks to CAMRA's success, the equipment is being removed so that production of cask ale can be expanded to meet a growing demand.

A company spokesman said the decision to develop keg production was due to the heavy promotion the national brewers were giving their keg beers 22 years ago.

He added that at the time the company felt unable to predict whether there would still be a demand for cask beer. Many people predicted that keg beer would swamp the market.

Bateman's has now concluded that real beer has a secure future and does not want to be associated with the production of keg ale.

LAGER SALES FALL

Sales of lager have declined, according to the Brewers Society.

Draught lager fell from 32.6 to 31.4 per cent of the total beer market.

Taking draught and packaged beer together, lager fell from 51.4 to 51.0 per cent of the market.

These figures compare 1991 and 1990, the most up to date figures available.

Commenting on the decline in lager sales, CAMRA Campaigns Manager Stephen Cox said "The great lager bubble has burst. Draught lager just isn't fashionable anymore - despite the enormous sums on advertising.

"Only the fad for dull lagers in pretty bottles is keeping lager ahead. That fad will certainly pass.

"Real ale, on the other hand, continues to show significant growth.

"Real ale has grown from 19.7 per cent of draught sales to 21.5 per cent in a year (Brewers Society). We expect this growth to continue, as more and more customers seek a traditional, quality, tasty product.

"After all, real ale is a world class product - unlike the bogus beers called British lager."

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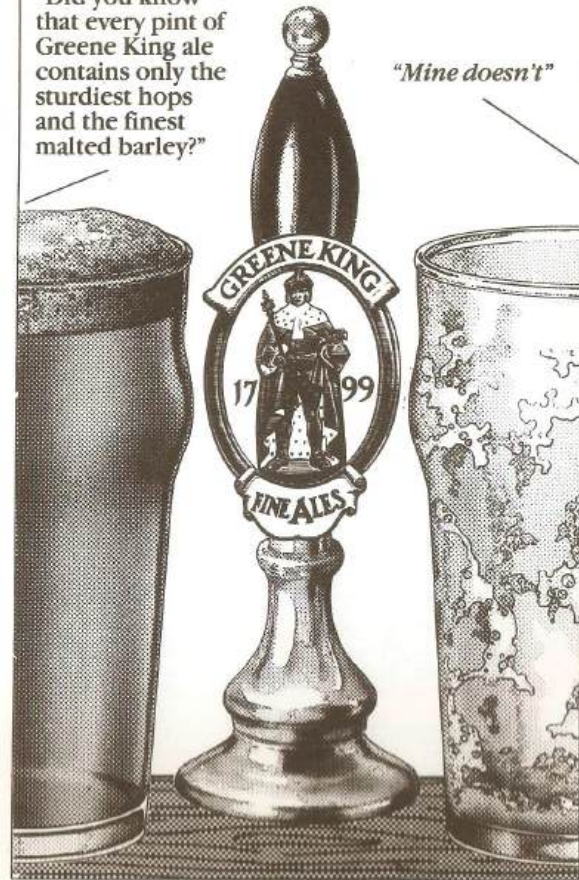
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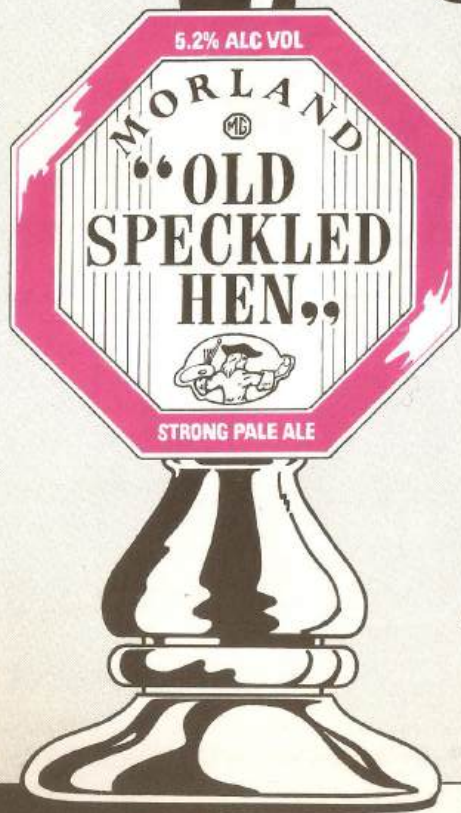
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