TWO HALVES CROWNED THANET’S TOP PUB FOR 2018

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Danny’s 10 Desert Island Beers
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On the Loop Bus Route
Hello again, I would like to start with a thank you to all those who attended the Annual General Meeting and put me in the Chair for a second year. Another huge thank you to Debbie Aris, who has stepped down from the position of Treasurer after many unflinching years’ service. I was privileged to be able to present, on behalf of the Branch, Debbie with the Dick Parkin Memorial Trophy. Dick Parkin was one-time landlord of the Artillery and he also helped establish the Viking Brewery, he was also a prominent committee member in the past, and by all accounts a top man.

There were also some changes within the Committee, with Damien Clark handing the Vice Chair to Steve Saunders. Damien remains on the Committee, but I would like to thank Damien for his time as Vice Chair, his knowledge has been of valuable assistance to myself and others. Steve, or Beery Steve as many of you know him has been on the Committee for a long time and has also previously served as Chair. New to the committee are Mark and Mike.

With CAMRA’s AGM in April, voting on the recommendations of the Revitalisation Project, times could be changing for both the organisation and the Branch. The CAMRA website has recently been updated for members to register for the weekend or to volunteer. Members should also have received an email with details on how to vote. Alternatively, you can register your vote using the reverse of the address sheet of your March issue of What’s Brewing. I have had many conversations with members who are concerned that the changes are diluting CAMRA’s objectives, that we would become less relevant, at this time I can only advise that as a member you need to register your vote and be counted. The purpose of the CAMRA Revitalisation Project was to develop a stronger campaign which I am sure as a Branch we will support.

As many of you know, the Branch Committee are all volunteers, and one of the roles we undertake each year is the short listing of establishments for the Good Beer Guide, unfortunately we are only allowed to have eleven entries in this book. Entry in the Good Beer Guide does not guarantee inclusion in following years, and in Thanet in recent years we have see an increasing number of pubs worthy of inclusion but with fierce competition there simply isn’t room for all those we would like to include. We, as a Branch, have requested additional entries, but as yet have not been given any further allocation, we can but hope and wait.

We have also been judging for our Branch Pub of the Year, which this year goes to The Two Halves, with The Conqueror and The Old Bay coming joint runners up – certificates are on their way!

If you would like to be involved in the judging for next year, why not come along to some Branch Meeting, get to know the Committee, and keep an eye out on Social Media and through emails for these opportunities.

Enough from me for now – I’m off to do some preparation for the Beer Festival, look forward to seeing you there!

“Most people hate the taste of beer – to begin with. It is, however, a prejudice.” Winston S Churchill

JO WALBANK
Seafront pub wins branch’s annual accolade

Margate’s Two Halves has been judged top pub 2018 in Thanet CAMRA’s Pub of the Year (POTY) Competition.

The Two Halves was opened by Shaun Smethers in former retail premises overlooking the town’s stone pier in July 2015. It has a clean and bright interior which is adorned with Margate memorabilia and local artists’ pictures. Seating is around a mix of high and low tables. The real ale and cider is served on gravity dispense from a temperature controlled cellar room behind the bar.

The annual POTY award gets local Campaign for Real Ale members judging a selection of pubs on their ale quality, the atmosphere, style and decor of the place along with the service and welcome given to customers. They also look at clientele mix, the pubs sympathy with CAMRA principles as well looking to see if its products are value for money. It is run as part of CAMRA’s national Pub of the Year competition. The pub will now go into the East Kent round of the competition.

The runners-up in this year’s competition were the Conqueror in Ramsgate and the Old Bay in Birchington-on-Sea.

Local brewer tastes success

Ramsgate Brewery’s Gadds’ No.3 has been voted Beer of the Year in the Produced in Kent Taste of Kent Awards 2018. The annual awards showcase the best of Kent’s food and drink products.
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Sun 12:30 - 4ish  Closed Mondays

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Thanet CAMRA Pub of the Year 2018

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OPEN
15.15-22.30 MON-THU
12.15-22.30 FRI-SUN
Across
4. Angry King Richard has lost his heart in Ramsgate or could it be St. Peter's (3,4)
9. I’ll order swift ones for me and a friend in Margate (3,6)
11. Unpredicted beers in Margate (4,2,3,10)
12. Be the victor in Ramsgate (9)
14. Rung in the tower either in Minster or St. Nicholas (3,3)

Down
1. Inn in the Capital (6,6)
2. Royalty’s cranium in Ramsgate (6,4)
3. Light your way to St. Peter’s with these (4,7)
5. Crackles shined on this famous literary person in Broadstairs (6,7)
6. Damn the Pig in Broadstairs (4,3,3)
7. Tommy’s headgear in Margate (3)
8. Enclosure full of beer in St. Peter’s (4,2,3)
10. Jovial Agriculturalist (5,6)
13. Not a new beach down Minnis way (3,3)

Answers on Page 23
**What’s the branch up to in the coming months**

**Tuesday 10 April**

*Broadstairs sea front crawl*

starting at The Tartar Frigate CT10 1EU - 7.30pm
and heading towards Charles Dickens via as many as we can do.

**Tuesday 24 April**

*Business meeting*

The Rodney, Garlinge, Margate - 7.30 pm

**Wednesday 9 May**

*Ramsgate harbour walk*

Start at the Hovelling boat 7.30pm then Queens Head ending at the Royal Victoria Pavilion

**Saturday 19 May**

*Mild in May*

Meet at the Old Bay Ale house at Noon.

Itinerary to follow

**Socials to Come**

Saturday 17th June - Train trip to Deal and Walmer starting at The Just Reproach at Noon and ending at The Berry at Walmer

Saturday July 21st - Noon. Walk from Reading St, White Swan to 19th hole and onwards to The Yard of Ale finishing at the Four Candles.

Saturday August 21th - Bus trip to Butchers Arms, Herne and micro crawl of Herne Bay. Details to follow on the branch website.

**Pub News**

**Northdown Summerfield Road Cliftonville** - Recently posted on facebook is that the micropub part of the former larger hostelry is due to be opening soon.

**Holly Tree, Northdown Road, Cliftonville** - A planning application has been submitted to the council to erect a 3 to 4 storey apartment building comprising thirty-four 2 bed and five 1 bed flats and micro-pub together with three detached dwellings with associated parking and landscaping after the fire ravaged pub is demolished.

**Bell Inn, Minster** - This pub is closed at present though it’s rumoured that it will be refitted out in the coming months to reopen in late spring.

**Saddlers, Minster** - This pub is also closed for some reasons. A note on one of the doors states closed until further notice.

**Why Not, Westgate-on-Sea** - A planning application to turn this long closed micropub into a restaurant has been submitted to the council.

That’s it for now. If you have any pub news email the editor steve@thanet-camra.org.uk with pub news in the subject box.
Saison Beers

A little known beer style from the depths of the Wallonian (French speaking) part of Belgium. Originally designed to be a summer drink only, the beer is now available all year round. Originally, Saison brewers found fermentation a tricky business during the heat of the summer, so to combat this, they brewed beers between 5 and 7% in the spring, then chocked them full of hops to survive the storage in the heat; also during this process, most of the sugar in the beer had turned to alcohol producing the strength of the beer.

The result is that you have a very hoppy beer that has so many different subtle tones and flavours, it is a beer to savour. Today, many of the old style saisons have been so changed to compete with mainstream beers that they are not really saison, but fear not, there are still excellent examples of these beers to delight you.

According to Tim Webb (author of the GBG to Belgium and Holland), the best saisons are “mature, delicately aged and complex darkish pale ales with a slightly dry sourness”, and I have to agree, however, there are now some lighter saisons on stream, that are also excellent.

One of the best Saison breweries, is Brasserie A’Vapeur (the steam brewery), based in a little village of Pipaix near Leuze en Hainaut. The brewery itself is rather old, dating from 1785, and the buildings now in use date back to the 1890’s. It also happens that I have visited the brewery and met the brewer, one Jean Louis Dits, who is extremely proud of the traditional beers he produces, and rightly so.

His labels on some of his beers are also rather funny, as he has four different pigs on the Vapeur Cochinne bottles. The pigs were inspired by a Belgian artist and mimic the motions of a Walloon students drinking song, apparently! The labels might be different, but the beer is the same, excellent! The brewery also produces Vapeur en Folie or in 25cl bottles, Vapeur Blonde, and is a bright gold colour, citric and sour, reminiscent of a good lambic, but in a class all its own. And last, but by no means least, one of my favourites, Saison De Pipaix. This has a gorgeous amber, toward orange colour, and so many different tastes and complexities. People have said this beer is like a toned down Lambic Geuze, again, this beer is so good there are similarities, but enjoy this beer for its own taste. At 6.5%, it won’t blow you away, well, the alcohol won’t, but the taste might!

Other breweries that do Saisons are:
- Brasserie de Baugies (Dour, Hainaut): Saison D’Epeautre.
- Brasserie Fantome (Soy, Luxembourg): Saison D’erezee.
- Brasserie Lefebvre (Quonset, Brabant): Saison 1900 - A light Saison, good Saison intro.
- Brasserie de Silly (Silly, Hainaut): Saison de Silly - Bit fruity, good Saison intro.

The other favourite Saison brewer of mine is Brasserie Dupont (Tourpes, Hainult). It produces two saisons, Saison Dupont Biologique. Not bad, but has a peculiar tang to it. Also, Saison Dupont Vieille Provision, which is an excellent Saison, good for seasoned saisonsists and newcomers alike! Has a nice citric bite to it with a malty finish.

The saison beers, although difficult to get are well worth trying. As they say, the beers of Wallonia, Belgian’s best kept secret! Happy Drinking!

Lambic Monster - Ron Buchet.
Becoming active...website co-ordinator

When did I decide to get “active”.....?? It was in the aftermath of attending the Revitalisation Project meeting held in the wonderful Crampton Tower where the views of the membership was being sought to help decide the future of the campaign. This decision to become more involved was reinforced when we attended the post briefing beers across the road in the Mind the Gap and was made most welcome by the then chairman Martin who took time to discuss the situation with me and my friend Paul as well as making us very welcome at the very next branch meeting where we observed the procedures, processes and truthfully the personalities of the people who make up the committee..................and to my great surprise I was not put off....................only joking my friends.......!!

It was then that I decided to attend the Annual General Meeting with a view to getting immersed and offer what support I could to the hard working volunteers who have been the lifeblood of the branch. The first role that became available was to be the branch chair which I obviously knew would be the wrong position for a novice such as myself, though it did not put everybody off standing regardless of experience. Jo was rightly voted in and this then left two more jobs which needed filling, social secretary and website co-ordinator and with no hesitation I heard myself declare my interest in volunteering as the latter one.

The social secretary role was also filled as well which meant we now had all roles with somebody in place. After the AGM in the bar of the London Tavern, Steve who had held the role previously enquired to my previous experience of websites which I had to admit was quite limited but I always back myself to be able to learn new things quickly or be dogged enough to chase down the person who can help me.

Over the next week or so the link to the administration screen of our website arrived as well as the user name and password. I nervously logged in to find a content management system which I have now mastered (well the bits I need!!) but have found quite “clunky” and non-intuitive in the way things have to be input, loaded etc. I have only managed to take down the system once completely and the person who steers me in the right direction was able to sort it out very quickly but most importantly explain the cause of the error which was simply cutting and pasting content which the platform obviously does not like. The lesson was learnt. With great gusto I set about the task of shortening each page as I am not a fan of
having to scroll up and down a page, adding a new style calendar for our social events, links to Twitter etc and all of this on the normal budget i.e. no cost or no cost....!!
I hope you like what I have done and appreciate it is evolution not revolution that I was intending BUT I would love to hear from any of you if you have any great ideas for ways to improve the website my contact details are nicholasgurr@icloud.com or 07545 285658.

Being a glutton for punishment I also asked whether it was possible for me to take control of the Facebook page and Twitter account in the name of the branch. My reason for doing this was to ensure whichever message we needed to communicate it could be done at the same time and in the same style. I am at heart a nosey person so knowing what activities and beers our pubs and breweries close to us are doing is very pleasing to me and I endeavour to comment on every post and message that is relevant and at all times stay neutral from any controversial subjects such as Revitalisation....!! We have something like 400 followers on Facebook and fast approaching the same number on Twitter. One of the committee once asked me what Twitter is all about so I will try to enlighten you all here.........!!

Twitter is a way of receiving information about things you are interested in. You can FOLLOW as many people, organisations, teams, etc as you wish. There is a limit of 280 characters (used to be 140) and this includes any spaces, punctuation etc so the aim is to be short and to the point. Multiple or single pictures can be added to bring the TWEET to life. When you see something of interest you can carry out a number of actions – you can select the heart which is LIKE (basically means the person knows you approve of what they have tweeted about). You can also RETWEET which basically sends the original tweet onto anybody following you . You also can add a COMMENT if you wish to the original tweet or your retweet. HASH TAGS or # are ways of starting or looking for popular tweets from people you may not necessarily follow under normal circumstances for instance #isitok is used on Channel 4’s The Last Leg every week inviting people to essentially write in and ask a question which the hosts then comment on live on national TV.

NICOLAS GURR

GLOSSARY

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>TWITTER - EMAIL EQUIVALENT</td>
<td>FOLLOW - ADD TO CONTACTS AND UNJUNK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWEET - WRITE EMAIL</td>
<td>LIKE REPLY TO EMAIL &quot;THANKS&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>RETWEET - REPLY TO EMAIL &amp; FORWARD TO YOUR CONTACTS</td>
<td>COMMENT - REPLY TO EMAIL ANSWERING RELEVANT POINTS OR ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT</td>
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<td>HASH TAG or #</td>
<td>- CHANGING FONT TO BOLD &amp; UNDERLINE TO HIGHLIGHT THE WORD(S)</td>
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I hope this makes it clearer BUT I am not convinced. Grab me over a pint at one of our socials and I will try to explain.
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Welcome to my third blog as the Thanet CAMRA Social Secretary. I hope to inform you about the pubs and events the branch has been involved with in the last few months, and inform you as to where we will be visiting next. All socials/meetings for the next few months can be found in What’s Brewing, Twitter, the Thanet CAMRA website and in this current edition of Ale of Thanet.

Any member can e-mail me with suggestions of pubs to visit. In particular they should point out for example, when pubs in Thanet have beer festivals or maybe meet the brewer sessions or any event that members would find of interest. All members are welcome to come along to these events though you need to be a member with a current CAMRA membership card to vote at any business meeting or the AGM. I hope to include more visits to areas we don’t visit as often as we should, as well as some of the many fine pubs and micros we have in Thanet.

I am writing this blog from Goa in Western India. For 25 years I have been coming here and the only beer available was Kingfisher. However this year I have found out that India has discovered craft beers. There at least 10 microbreweries that have sprung up since my last visit to the world’s largest democracy; the potential for microbreweries in India is massive. Two breweries have arrived in Goa. One is the White Owl brewery. At Inferno’s restaurant and bar I tried a 5% beer called Diablo. It was an Irish red ale and tasted a little young. At £1 for a third of a litre it was a bargain. Another brewery is the Simba brewery. I sampled a Jungle Stout from them. This was a rich creamy stout with caramel flavours. Another bargain at £1. Hopefully next time I return there will be many more beers to sample.

Anyway, back to socials where there were more than just me present! We started December with a tour of some of Margate’s finest pubs. The CAMRA group started at the Harbour Arms. Here we found three ales, Brew buddies being pretty popular. However there was a quiz which started at 8pm so we had to move on earlier than expected. The next stop was the Wig and Pen. Here we found two Gadds’ ales - No 5 proved very popular. The next stop was the Lifeboat. However we found a band playing here and added an extra stop at the Fez. Here there were 5 beers on, the Shrimpers Rum Stout at 4% being very popular. We finished at the London Tavern.

The last social before Christmas was the CAMRA Christmas Social at Nauticales. Lots of CAMRA members attended. Micky and co put on a great spread. On offer were five ales, Maiden Voyage seemed to be the most popular, being brewed by the boys at the Four Candles brewery.

The New Year brought us on a tour of Birchington and the local area. We started in the Bake and Alehouse where we crowded out this fine micropub. 5 beers were on offer. My favourite was Wantsum’s Black Pig at 4.8%.

Next we headed for The Wheel Alehouse which had 5 more fine ales awaiting us. I enjoyed Titanic’s Cappuccino Stout which seemed stronger than 4.5%.

We took a bus to the Old Bay alehouse. Kirsty greeted us warmly. Four beers awaited us. Nick’s favourite beer was the cask lager brewed at Whitstable; I particularly enjoyed
Gadds’ Oatmeal Stout at 4.6%. Our next stop was The Swan at Westgate. Here we found three ales on offer. The Gadds’ No 3 was well received by all. A short bus journey away we added an extra visit as Ales of the Unexpected didn’t open on a Saturday until 5pm. So to the Two Halves where Shaun had four beers waiting for us, a selection of ales to suit all tastes. The Fireside Porter was enjoyed by all. Our final pub was Ales of the Unexpected. A nice pint of Mighty Oaks 5.2% Xmas Ale was downed here. I departed to try a few pubs on the way back to Ramsgate. Oh the joys of a Loop bus ticket!

The next social unfortunately had to be cancelled as I got food poisoning. Well choc ice poisoning actually; don’t eat ice cream that has partially melted and refrozen!

The Dover Winter Ales Festival took place at the start of February. Several Thanet members attended along with members from all over Kent. Some started with a full English, other like myself headed for The Lanes, Dover and district’s POTY. Here I enjoyed a pint of Mosaic from the Downlands brewery. In the Dover town hall there were enough beers over 5% to satisfy even the most thirsty of drinkers. I particularly enjoyed the Goacher’s 1066. That packed a punch. Old Dairy’s Dark side of the Moo at 7% was excellent as it always is.

Our AGM took place at the Red Lion where 35 of us enjoyed a fabulous spread put on by Mel. The beer was quality. I enjoyed my Dark Star American Pale Ale and Gadds EIPA. Altogether 5 ales appeared as we aimed to drink the pub dry. There were a few there who had been at the Dover festival the day before. I’m sure there were a few sore heads among them.

Our final social in February took us to snowy Margate. A few of us brave souls risked the icy winds to meet in the Two Halves. Of the 3 beers available we all enjoyed the Bexley Porter. At the Lifeboat 4 cask ales were available and there was a most welcome roaring fire. The Kent Prohibition was in excellent form and at 4.8% hit the spot. We next headed to the Fez. Here we were greeted with hot water bottles to try and warm us up. The Kent session Pale at 3.7% was superb. Our final pub was the Mechanical Elephant. Here we enjoyed a selection of the locally brewed Wantsum ales.

Danny O’Sullivan,
Social Secretary.
Beer Styles

MILD
A hundred years ago, during the height of the Industrial Revolution, when manual work was plentiful and arduous in factory, field or pit, men would restore themselves with a pint or twelve of Mild. Most popular in the North West and Midlands, this sweetish, dark ale conjures up images of old men in cloth caps (with ferrets and black pudding in the Yorkshire version) talking and smoking aimlessly for hours in ancient pubs. Since the decline of the manufacturing industries, of all the styles, Mild’s rise and fall has been the most dramatic.

But what of the origins of Mild Ale? During the mid-eighteenth century, Porter was the beer style for the masses, its strong, dark and murky depths well hidden from the drinker in pewter tankards. Malting technology (the art & science of turning barley seed into the brewers malt by part germination and subsequent kilning) dictated that malted barley was brown in colour, due to the use of wood in the kiln, and thus, all beer was brown at the time. Porter was also aged (which gave it a slightly lactic, sour flavour); the lack of refrigeration encouraged the majority of beer to be brewed during the winter, favouring long maturation times. With the rapid growth of the industrial towns and cities, supply often fell short of demand and brewers were forced to brew ‘stop-gap’ beer late in the summer to see them through. This beer was characterised by a cleaner, fresher flavour (it had to drunk young since its keeping qualities had suffered due to it being brewed in warmer conditions) and the masses began to get a taste for it, dubbing it Mild.

During the nineteenth century, the malting industry became more commercialised and adopted the use of coke instead of wood. Coke burnt cleaner and allowed maltsters to produce pale malts in great quantity, economically and at a high quality - brewers would now use ‘patent’ dark malts (black, roasted) to colour their beers.

Glass manufacturing technology had also made great headways, enlightening the Porter drinker to the previously hidden ‘soup’ concoction and highlighting the visual benefits of the new ‘pale’ ales.

So the rich switched to Pale Ale and the poor to Mild. But this ale was twice the strength of Mild today – in the late nineteenth century, the average strength was around 7% abv, dropping a % or two by the early twentieth century and undergoing, as all beer did at the time, a significant drop in strength during the first world war. By the end of the second world war, the average strength had declined to around 3%!

Towards the end of WWII, the admiralty commissioned three brewing ships to serve ‘our boys’ in far-flung corners of the world and although only one ever sailed and brewed, it chose Mild as the style. Mild was still the mainstay of the British brewing industry and remained so until the effects of the swinging, modern sixties were felt.

This fabulously drinkable, lightly hopped, dark rich ale retains many followers in the old industrial heartlands of England and Wales and, through CAMRA’s efforts in recent years, is enjoying a mini-renaissance amongst the more enlightened ale drinkers of a new generation.

So look out for special promotions on Mild in your favourite ale house during May and drink a toast to the hard working men and women who got through the Industrial Revolution supping a goodly amount of the stuff – the binge drinkers of their time!

EDDIE GADD
There are, of course, pros and cons to craft beer, but am I the only person who is beginning to wonder whether the cons, real or perceived, are in grave danger of becoming lost or ignored in the euphoria of the craft beer boom? Before considering this issue we must ask ourselves just what craft beer is, or is not. Everybody seems to think they know, but it isn’t an easy question to answer. The brewing industry hasn’t been able to do it, although in 2013 BrewDog suggested that it should be defined as “beer brewed by a craft brewer in a craft brewery” on the basis that “craft brewer” and “craft brewery” might be easier to define! The Oxford Dictionary states “craft beer, NOUN, a beer made in a traditional or non-mechanized way by a small brewery”. Put simply then, craft beer would appear to be beer that is “crafted” by a small, traditional brewery rather than “manufactured” by a large, possibly multinational, brewer. The self-titled craft beer brewers tell us that their products are brewed with care, in small batches, from the finest of ingredients and that all of this is very expensive. No doubt this is true to a greater or lesser extent but we in CAMRA must be aware of what craft beer is not – it is NOT all real ale, and this becomes a problem when a respected figure within the Campaign, whilst visiting Swale, stated to the Press that CAMRA must embrace craft beer!

CAMRA’s definition of real ale states that “Real ale is a beer brewed from traditional ingredients (malted barley, hops, water and yeast), matured by secondary fermentation in the container from which it is dispensed, and served without the use of extraneous carbon dioxide”. From this we can see that for craft beer to also be real ale it must firstly be made from CAMRA-acceptable ingredients, secondly it must not be brewery conditioned, and lastly it must be dispensed in a CAMRA-acceptable manner. The dedication, or otherwise, of the brewer and the size and nature of the brewery have no relevance.

So let's deal with the traditional ingredients first. Water, or liquor as it is known in the brewing industry, is the main ingredient of any beer; the mineral content varies from place to place but it can be easily treated (Burtonised) to make it suitable for the type of beer being produced. Hops (Humulus Lupulus) give beer the distinctive bitter flavour and act as a preservative; their many varieties help to give brewers a palette of floral and citrus tastes and aromas to balance the sweetness of the malted barley. Malt provides the sugars (mainly maltose) which the yeast feeds upon to produce alcohol (ethanol) and carbon dioxide (CO₂). Malt is dried in a kiln to halt the germination process and, depending upon the degree to which it is kilned, its colour will darken and the flavour will vary from biscuit (think Horlicks) through to roasty, with coffee and bitter chocolate overtones. Finally yeast, a top-fermenting variety for ale (Saccharomyces Cerevisiae), is a living unicellular organism, essentially a fungus, which feeds on the sugars released from the malt at the mashing stage; it can have a major effect upon the beer’s flavour. We have seen that the two main by-products of fermentation are ethanol and CO₂, but many other complex flavour compounds are released. Fusel alcohols produce winey flavours, whilst esters tend to produce fruity flavours; isoamyl acetate tastes like bananas, ethyl acetate like nail polish remover, whilst ethyl caprylate gives us apples and pears. Wild yeasts (typically Brettanomyces) can infect beer and produce “horse blanket” and “wet dog” flavours although this is encouraged in some Belgian beers (Geuze and Lambic) and is now being used by some craft brewers (Brett beers). The skill of the brewer therefore, what used to be called “the art and mystery of brewing”, is to manage all of these variables to produce the range of tasty ales which we know and love.

Craft brewers have a growing reputation for experimentation and pushing the taste envelope; at a beer
festival last year I tasted a craft beer brewed to reproduce the taste of a Vietnamese pork roll! We have all seen, and possibly tasted, their “four malts and seven hop varieties” creations, and more power to their mash paddles for doing so. But, much as their experimentation with traditional ingredients is to be lauded, what of the other ingredients which are finding their way into modern beers? I would contend that brewing a beer with a “mango” taste derived from hop varieties, provided that all of the other criteria are met, can be a real ale. But I would also contend that a beer brewed with real mangos added can never be a real ale, according to the CAMRA definition, because mangos are patently NOT a traditional ingredient! Likewise, the “Coffee & Doughnut Stout” brewed recently with real coffee and real doughnuts added, as interesting and as tasty as it might be, will never be real ale. I have heard these beers, as well as flavoured ciders and gin, the current fad drink, described as “grown up drinks for the alcopop generation” and I have some sympathy with this view.

Let’s look at dispense methods now. Traditionally real ale has been dispensed at the point of sale by gravity, straight from the cask, or by hand-pump. Over the years a number of other methods have come and gone; notably CO₂ top pressure and air pressure, both rejected by the Campaign as they negatively affected the beer. CAMRA came about because brewers were putting pasteurised and filtered beers into kegs and using CO₂ pressure to deliver it to the glass. The method was foolproof, required no skill, and increased the brewer’s profit margins despite the necessity to increase advertising budgets to persuade the punters to drink it. But what it did not do is deliver good beer! Fortunately, drinkers with a taste and love for cask-conditioned ale rebelled, CAMRA was formed, and the rest is history – so cask (real) ale good, keg beer bad.

Now we have the miracle of KeyKeg, but is that real ale? Or is it keg beer in the old sense? Its proponents tell us that using KeyKeg enables pubs to offer a greater range of beers, and that they will keep almost indefinitely if sales are slow. How is this possible? The KeyKeg system was developed in the Netherlands, a country not noted for cask-conditioned ales. It is marketed as a one-way, lightweight and cheap alternative to conventional stainless steel, aluminium, or polyethylene containers; think of it as a kiddie’s helium balloon inside a PET fizzy drink bottle inside a cardboard box. The beer, or wine, cider, milk – whatever, is filled into a flexible plastic bladder which has an aluminium foil coating to prevent migration of gasses through the permeable plastic. By applying air pressure into the outer PET vessel the beer is pushed from the bladder up to the point of dispense. Unlike a cask breather and floating widgets the system uses no extraneous CO₂ and the air pressure is separated from the liquid. Simple, foolproof, requires no skill, and cheap – sound familiar? KeyKeg marketing material is all about cost-cutting and recycling not about product quality, and where beer is mentioned it is brewery conditioned. This “bag-in-a-box” technology has been used for many years for wine, but only for cheap wine; you won’t find Chateau Lafitte in what the Australians call a “goon bag”! I wonder why?

If a beer is pasteurised and/or filtered to remove the yeast, then filled into KeyKeg it is NOT, despite the use of no extraneous CO₂, a real ale according to CAMRA’s definition. The yeast has been killed and/or removed so the beer cannot be “matured by secondary fermentation in the container from which it is dispensed”, so it isn’t real ale. A real ale in cask will have finings added which will drop down through the beer as it undergoes the secondary fermentation process, taking the debris down into the bulge of the cask (known as dropping bright). Any excess CO₂ is vented to atmosphere by skilful use of porous and non-porous pegs (soft and hard spiles) in order to maintain the correct amount of condition (sparkle) in the beer. So how is this process handled with real ale in a KeyKeg? Well basically, it isn’t; the condition of the beer remains stable within the bladder so either the brewer has to condition his beer to a greater or lesser extent before filling and have it served with a yeast haze or risk the customer getting a glass of yeast soup! If the brewery conditioning results in a bright beer from the KeyKeg then it is debatable at which point the beer ceases to be considered real ale. I guess that many of us have had “bright beer” for parties and events but it isn’t strictly real ale, not being matured in the container
from which it is served. So, does CAMRA have a policy on KeyKeg dispense? The Campaign’s website tells us that "CAMRA's technical experts agreed several years ago that beers served from key keg/cask under certain circumstances (my italics) qualified as real ale". But how is the drinker to know whether those circumstances (sufficient yeast cells in the KeyKeg to allow secondary fermentation and no extraneous CO²) have been met?

Real ale in bottle (RAIB) has long been accepted, indeed promoted, by CAMRA. Craft brewers seem to prefer to put their products into cans, stating that they do so to protect their beer from spoilage by light. Beer may indeed deteriorate due to exposure to light (become lightstruck), that is the reason why beer is sold in brown bottles. A cynic might suspect that their reasoning may have something to do with cans being cheaper and having more room for branding than bottles. A craft brewer, who puts 65% of production into cans, 30% into keg and only 5% into cask, in a recent interview in the trade Press, stated that "We reach a wider audience through our canned products…. we get better feedback on social media through them. We are constantly looking at how we can push the medium of beer forward, either through new ingredients and techniques or looking at how we present the packaging…” That sounds less like craft to me, and more like a business model!

Social media is important to craft brewers; one Kentish brewer claims to have been the brewer of the “best beer in Kent” for the last two or three years, as listed on the Ratebeer app, despite producing NO cask conditioned beer at all!

The big brewers are ever on the lookout for a new angle and their marketing departments weren’t slow to latch on to the beer drinking public’s interest in the craft beer movement, with the result that successful craft brewers are being snapped up by large multinationals who seem to be somewhat reticent about informing their customers of the fact! So we now have concerns which, on the face of it are microbrewers, or craft brewers, whose beers are brewery conditioned and sent out in true kegs for CO² dispense. This has posed a problem for the Small Independent Brewers Association (SIBA), who have found that some of their members are no longer small, and no longer independent! Craft brewers have their own organisation – United Craft Brewers. Also we are now seeing firms originally established as cask microbrewers who have grown so large and successful that they can no longer be bothered to send out their beers in cask conditioned form. In order to survive in the business all brewers, of course, have to be part brewer and part businessman; it would seem that if the latter is more prevalent then the drive to grow the business and to improve profit margins result in the cask microbrewery becoming a craft brewery.

The craft brewer quoted above stated in his interview that “The price point of cask beer is too low…. the ingredients we use, the heavy hopping rates, and the raw material costs... (make it) quite difficult for us to achieve the price we need to sustain our business in the cask beer market”. This could be interpreted to mean that they make what they want but the punters won’t pay for it!

Even relatively small brewers are now moving away from cask ale; recently one stated that they will only fill two casks with a new beer, then it will be all keg. Craft beer has now become a marketing term, created by the microbrewer with heart, and usurped by brewing businesses, large and small, who have spotted a new angle to drive sales. The average beer drinker, who neither knows nor cares about the niceties, probably already think that craft beer is real ale and vice versa. One microbrewer recently changed his branding to include the word “crafted” – craft sells!

So today the real ale drinker has to be ever-vigilant when they visit the pub; best to stick to the local micropub because they only serve real ale, don’t they….? A craft beer enthusiast said to me recently that “Anything that gets young people drinking real ale must be a good thing, surely?” On the face of it, this would seem to be true, but only if those young people can recognise whether they are drinking real ale or not. Perhaps what CAMRA needs to be doing is to seek to educate those young drinkers in the niceties so that they can make an informed decision as to whether they drink real ale. Unfortunately there may well be a good few within the Campaign who need to be educated first.

Given the choice between a KeyKeg “Mango & Chocolate Crème Brulée Triple Hop Black IPA” and a boring, reasonably priced, copper-coloured best bitter with a fine balance of biscuity malt and refreshing bitterness, I know which one this old beer buff would choose!

© PETER MOYNIHAN

Quakers Hill, NSW
A Merseyside pub saved from closure has been named the best in the country

The Cricketers Arms in St Helens, Merseyside, has won the prestigious Pub of the Year title from the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) just five years after it was boarded up for closure.

When owners Andy and Denise Evans took over the running of the pub in 2013, it was boarded up and hadn't served cask ale since the 1980s. The Cricketers Arms is now a well-established local community pub with an excellent selection of 13 locally sourced cask ales and up to 20 ciders in the summer. Alongside an impressive ale and cider range, plans are in the making for a microbrewery to open in the next few months and customers will be tasked with naming the pub's beers. Visitors can also take part in a number of social nights including regular beer festivals, dominoes, jam nights, pub quizzes, karaoke and pool teams, as well as enjoy a new whiskey and gin bar.

The Cricketers Arms regularly wins local CAMRA awards, but this is the first time it has won a national title. Paul Ainsworth, CAMRA's National Pub of the Year coordinator said: "After winning the regional award in both 2015 and 2016, it's a well deserved third time lucky for the Cricketers to be named CAMRA's national Pub of the Year."

"In less than five years, Andy and Denise have converted a boarded up pub on the brink of closure into a true destination pub for beer lovers across the country. What impressed me the most is that the Cricketers is a genuine community pub where people from all walks of life come together to socialise. It is a shining example of how a pub, which seems destined for closure, can have its fortunes turned around when in the right hands."

Owner Andy Evans said: "We are over the moon to be named the top pub in the country after just a few short years of renovations. We've done everything we can to make this a welcoming community pub and still have exciting developments ahead of us. As well as expanding the beers available, we created a beer garden and put greens in the ground, and have big plans to install a microbrewery this year. We are very proud to be part of the cask ale scene and look forward to celebrating with our locals!"

Runners-up in the competition include the Wigan Central in Wigan, the Stanford Arms in Lowestoft and the Weavers Real Ale House in Kidderminster. Pubs in the competition are selected by CAMRA volunteers and judged on their atmosphere, decor, welcome, service, community focus and most importantly – quality of beer.

CAMRA Discounts For Card Carrying Members

The following outlets in Thanet offer a discount to CAMRA members on the presentation of an up to date membership card. For information on the discount available please visit the branch website www.thanet-camra.org.uk or ask when ordering.

- NautiAles (Ramsgate), Harbour Arms (Margate), Wheel Alehouse (Birchington-on-Sea), The Tap Room (Cliftonville), Bake and Alehouse (Westgate), London Tavern (Margate), The Fez (Margate), Yard of Ale (St. Peters-in-Thanet), Lifeboat (Margate), Chapel (Broadstairs), The Bottle Shop Off Licence (Birchington-on-Sea), Corkscrew Off Licence (Westgate-on-Sea)

Outlet list correct at time of going to press (Mar 2018) - they may withdrawn or alter at anytime please ask when ordering.
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Big Job from St Austell Brewery is crowned the best bottled beer in Britain

Big Job from St Austell Brewery has been crowned the Champion Bottled Beer of Britain in CAMRA's prestigious annual award which recognises the best bottle-conditioned real ale in the country. Big Job is a big beer. At 7.2% ABV it is powerfully hoppy with both citra and centennial hops, and is jammed full of Cornish barley. With a smooth, citrus fruit taste and a hoppy, lemon smell, it is anything but subtle.

Runners up include Fullers' Vintage Ale which took home silver, and Oakham's Green Devil IPA which won Bronze.

Roger Ryman, Head Brewer at St Austell said: "In a market where there are so many fantastic beers available including two of my own personal favourites - Fullers' Vintage Ale and Oakham's Green Devil IPA - it is a huge honour to take home the crown. This award is a huge testament to the hard work of our brewing and bottling teams which are very dedicated to producing fantastic beers."

The judging and announcement took place at the BBC Good Food Show at the Birmingham NEC, following a series of local member voting rounds and regional judging competitions throughout the year. Visitors to the BBC Good Food Show will now have the opportunity to sample the winning beer along with other finalists at a number of tutored beer tasting events run by famous beer writers as part of the Great British Beer Experience.

CAMRA's National Director responsible for the competition Nick Boley says: "Congratulations to St Austell for winning the Champion Bottled Beer of Britain award, one of the highest accolades in the beer world."

Christine Cryne, master beer trainer and judge adds: "The standard of competition was fantastically high. Big Job is a moreish, golden beer with honey caramelised citrus notes, refreshingly smooth with a warming finish with increasing spicy dry bitter notes and a soft fruity nose. We were particularly impressed with how well balanced it was - we were looking for a beer which showed the brewers art of complexity, and that just gave it the edge."

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**Thanet pubs selling locally brewed beers**

Listed below are pubs and bars that are known to regularly sell real ales from breweries within 20 miles of Thanet.

**Birchington:** Wheel Alehouse, Old Bay Alehouse
**Broadstairs:** Bradstow Mill, Chapel, Charles Dickens, Dolphin, George Inn, Little Albion, Mind the Gap, Pavilion, Tartar Frigate, Thirty-Nine Steps
**Cliftonville:** Banks, Tap Room
**Margate:** Ales of the Unexpected, Fez, Harbour Arms, Lifeboat, Mechanical Elephant, Two Halves, Wig and Pen
**Minster:** Hair of the Dog, New Inn
**Pegwell:** Sir Stanley Gray
**Ramsgate:** Artillery Arms, Churchill Tavern, Comfort Inn, Conqueror Alehouse, Earl St Vincent, Elephant & Castle, Hotel De Ville, Hovelling Boat, Montefiore Arms, NauticAles, Oak Hotel, Queen Charlotte, Queens Head, Red Lion, Royal Victoria Pavilion
**St. Peters:** Four Candles, Yard of Ale
**Westgate:** Bake & Alehouse

Reading Street (St. Peters): White Swan

Thanet CAMRA cannot guarantee the availability of a local ale or the quality of the ale served in any establishments listed and cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions to this list.

We hope to stock Ale of Thanet regularly in these pubs

**Birchington:** Wheel Alehouse, Old Bay Alehouse
**Broadstairs:** Thirty-Nine Steps, Mind the Gap
**Margate:** Ales of the Unexpected, Fez, Harbour Arms, London Tavern, Mechanical Elephant, Two Halves, Wig & Pen
**Minster:** Hair of the Dog
**Pegwell:** Sir Stanley Gray
**Ramsgate:** Artillery Arms, Churchill Tavern, Conqueror Alehouse, Hovelling Boat, Montefiore Arm, NauticAles
**St. Peters:** Four Candles, Yard of Ale
**Westgate:** Bake & Alehouse

Other pubs in Thanet, East Kent and beyond also stock Ale of Thanet irregularly.

It is published quarterly in March, June, September & December. It can be viewed online at issuu.com/aleofthanet or downloaded from the branch website.
Danny’s 10 desert island beers - part 1

I have read in some CAMRA magazines articles that were written by members about their desert island beers; beers that they have enjoyed over the years and would take with them, if they were stranded on a desert island. I thought I would do something similar but choose ten beers that have meant something to me over the years. Some bring back memories from history; others remind me of happy or sad times and others a story with a moral. Some are no longer brewed or have a totally different taste to how they were originally brewed. They are not necessarily my favourite beers, though some are, just beers that remind me of events from the past. Some of the tales are from a few years ago, meaning some of the details are a little hazy for obvious reasons. The beers are in no particular order but were drunk between 1975 and today.

**Beer No. 1**

Mitchells & Butlers Brew XI (using Roman numerals and pronounced Brew Eleven) - Cape Hill near Birmingham 3.6% - It had a buttery toffee taste; it is now brewed by Brains in Cardiff and is a different beer altogether apart from the name.

The first beer I ever drank in a bar was Brew XI, advertised as 'For the men of the Midlands.' It wasn't the first beer I had drunk or tried to drink. When I was 11 and on holiday in Connemara in the West of Ireland where my mother is from, I had helped to bring in the hay, riding the tractors and filling up the barn. All workers were given a bottle of Guinness stout at lunchtime, including me. When my Granny saw me drinking I got a clip around the ear, as did my Uncle Paddy who had given me the booze, and that stout ended up being flushed down the sink.

The first pint of Brew XI I had was in 1975, in Fishers Club in Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, which was the working men’s club attached to British Leyland car plant. My late father took me in there and introduced me to beer. He had changed job recently, and had started to work in the Factory in 1975. He seemed to get on very well with the shop stewards who drank in the club. He enjoyed his job so well he persuaded his brother, my uncle Michael to work there as well. I used to enjoy going to the club for a game of snooker and a pint of Brew XI or Ansells Bitter.

My dad used to work nights and I used to tape episodes of Minder and Coronation Street for him on our Betamax recorder. However, I never seemed to understand how the next day he used to say he had seen the shows at work, especially as he was supposed to be working. It was only several years later I found out my dad was one of the guys who had paid £1000 for his 'job', though my sister said he only paid £500. Too many people were employed to do the work in the factory, so he only seemed to do one nights work a week, and watched TV and slept most nights. I always thought it strange how he would take his sleeping bag to work with him. They were some of the original 'jobs for the boys'. You can read more about this and a similar story at the Longbridge car plant in Wikipedia.

**Beer No. 2**

Gadds No.10 Imperial Stout - Ramsgate Brewery 10% - this is a delicious and complex, old style stout with hints of chocolate and coffee.

The first time I attended The Margate beer festival was in 2015. I had travelled down by train with a number of MMK CAMRA members. It was a very eventful festival as there were lots of TV camera crews present as the general election was nigh, and Nigel Farage who was standing in Thanet South was present and looking for votes. He came to talk to a small group of us and I asked him what he was drinking. He told me it was Gadds no 7. I told him I was drinking Gadds no 10. He then told me that apparently Gadds beers were numbered by the number of beers you could drink. You should be able to drink 7 Gadds no 7 as its 3.8% but only 3 of no 5 as its 5%. However this wasn't really the case. You should not attempt to drink 10 of Gadds no 10 as its 10%. It should have been called no 1. After several no 10s, I felt the need at about 5pm to sit down in the stalls overlooking the festival.

At around 9pm I felt my phone vibrate in my pocket. It was a message from friend Charles telling me my fellow CAMRA members were on the train back to Maidstone. I looked around and noticed there was nobody in the hall. I had been asleep for nearly 4 hours. I had missed my last train from Ashford to Maidstone and had to part with £60 for a taxi home. Perhaps you are only supposed to drink 1 Gadds no 10. Doh!

**Beer No. 3**

Ruddles County. Rutland 1050 OG. - County was a 1050, round and hoppy beer thanks to the Goldings, Fuggles, Challenger and Bramling Cross whole hops used in making it which resulted in a fruity and dry flavour; just wonderful!
Many people today identify Ruddles as a Greene King beer often sold in Wetherspoons. However, today's beer is nothing like the original that used to be one of my favourite beers in the 80s and 90s. I used to drink the 1050 strength beer Ruddles County in the Flower Pot in Maidstone.

Back in the day Ruddles was a small independent brewery based in rural Rutland. Ruddles County, splendid strong ale, was an iconic beer of the real ale revival. However, in 1986 Ruddles sold out to one of the then big brewers, Grand Met, who in turn flogged the brewery to the Danish outfit Grolsch. The next owners were Morlands of Oxfordshire who closed the Ruddles brewery and transferred production to their own plant in Abingdon. They continued brewing Ruddles County (and Bitter) but these were truly miserable counterfeits. In 1999 Morlands sold up to Greene King who thus inherited the Ruddles brands.

Now, reputations die hard and although Morlands had ruined County, it was still a famous and recognised name. So they decided not to scrap such a well-known brand. What GK actually did was to create a brand new beer, at a lower strength (4.3%), and give it the Ruddles County name. This for me was sacrilege. So many people today visit Greene King and Weatherspoon’s pubs and drink a Ruddles that is a pale imitation of a once great beer. I weep at the thought.

**Beer No. 4**

Goacher’s Imperial Stout, Maidstone. 4.5% - an excellent stout brewed with roasted barley and high levels of Kent Fuggles.

About 10 years ago I was on my way to the Mote Park CAMRA beer festival in Maidstone where we had a beer tent to raise money for the Cheshire home. I had had a blood test the week before and was calling in for my results on a Saturday morning before the festival. A locum female doctor called me in as my regular doctor wasn't available. The young doctor asked me how much I alcohol drank, and I gave my usual answer, 3 or 4 pints a night 3 or 4 nights a week. She then told me my liver function test result was very high at around 7.5 when normal is about 4. She told me I could never drink again or my liver would pack up. I was naturally gutted, went to the festival and knocked back 5 pints of Goachers Stout and vowed not to drink again.

40 days later I had another blood test and went to see my regular doctor, Dr Collins at the surgery. I asked him about my latest test results and he said everything was fine. My liver function test had come in at 3.7 completely normal. When I told him what the other doctor had said he told me that he had a patient who drank a bottle and a half of whisky a day and had a result of 85. That was extremely high and that patient would not live for many more months. Apparently the doctor who I saw had only just qualified and it was one of her first jobs. He would have a word with her about alarming her patients. At least it taught me a lesson and I now take at least a month of the booze every year to detox the system.

**Beer No. 5**

Berliner Pils, East Berlin, East Germany. 5% - a light beer with a crisp, spicy bitterness.

In the summer of 1989 I went on holiday to Naxos in the Greek Islands. There I met a couple of German girls from Berlin who espoused the virtues of Berlin and invited me to go and see what they believed, was the world’s greatest city. Later in the year Berlin became the centre of the world with the collapse of the Berlin Wall. I visited in February of 1990 and found a hostel in West Berlin. Here I found that some of the stereo types about Germans were true. The showers in the hostel were all communal and mixed sex, something I wasn’t used to! I used to walk along the Berlin Wall and through Check Point Charlie every day, into East Berlin. Here I found a bar called Metzer Eck, which served some fine beers. The Metzer Eck was on the corner of Metzerstrasse and Strassbourger-strasse and it is still there today, having survived for over a 100 years and through two world wars. Here you will find the real Berlin.

The Berliner Pils I drank here was more memorable for the price of the beer than anything else. On the first Monday after I arrived, £1 would have bought me 10 pints of beer. By Friday the price of a pint was about 3p, such was the fall in the value of the East German East Mark. I found it difficult to spend all the East Marks I had so for the first time I bought all the people in the bar on my Friday a drink - and I still had Marks left. They would be useless shortly after and there were a few locals who seemed pleased with my gesture. There were queues everywhere for everything in East Berlin. Prices of goods fell in real terms for so many items. An ice cream that cost me 6p at the beginning of the week was just over 2p by the end. There were only so many ice creams with 6 scoops that you can eat. I have been back to Berlin a couple of times since then and I can guarantee you that those days have long gone and 4 euros a beer and beyond is now the norm in many Berlin bars.

DANNY O’SULLIVAN

*We continue Danny’s beers in the next issue of Ale of Thanet*
Join up, join in, join the campaign

Protect the traditions of great British pubs and everything that goes with them by joining today at www.camra.org.uk/joinup

Or enter your details and complete the Direct Debit form below and you will receive 15 months membership for the price of 12 and save £2 on your membership subscription.

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Signed .................................................................
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Application will be processed within 30 days.

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Price of single membership when paying by Direct Debit. "Calls from landlines charged at local rates, cost may vary from mobile phones. New Direct Debit members will receive a 12 month supply of vouchers in their first 12 months of membership."
Head bashing with a beer

For those that remember a good old head bash ...

Unexpectedly, I was handed an offer that did lots of things at once. It meant a trip to Norfolk to visit my brother and wife, deliver the *chrissie pressies* AND go to see the band that was my first ever vinyl LP bought. A trip to see Deep Purple (Deep Purple in Rock being the aforementioned LP – 30 shillings for those with a long memory). So the wife and I set off to Heacham in Norfolk with our first stop being the Ship at Brandon Creek, Littleport, a Seventh Century pub situated on a promontory at the meeting of the Little Ouse and Great Ouse rivers. Originally, a blacksmiths it offered fare that would have suited a smithy as their motto is pies, pints and puddings. So a pint of Nobby’s Goldings 4.0% golden with a pork, mushroom and cheese pie was the order of the day, suitably refreshed we pushed on to Heacham, Norfolk. On arrival and dumping of the car we refreshed with a further couple of beers at the local hostelry and brewery, The Fox and Hounds there to quaff a couple of the Fox Brewery ales – Grizzly Beer 4.8% American pale (my favourite of the day) and a Branthill Norfolk Nectar 4.3% English pale ale. So tomorrow the trip to Brum with my old boy (Stamfordian for your younger bro) for the concert; a lift to Peterborough to get the train to arrive at New Street, Birmingham. First port of call - you know it - was a great little boozer called the Post Office Vaults an unusual pub that starts off down steps in one road and then reappears up a set of steps in New Street in between, however, were 8 real ale pumps. The choice was great to see, settled on a Whirlpool No 4 from the Market Harborough brewery, a red ale made with 4 hops followed by a Portland Black 4.5% porter from the Welbeck Abbey brewery (Worksop). Oh well, time moves on and time to find our hotel (no ales, not even in bottles). We had been chatting with the barman at the PO Vaults and a recommendation to visit the Wellington (Newhall Street) a multiple CAMRA pub of the year which we had passed on the way – a television board of 14 ales greeted us (what a great idea) which changed as you sat there as one ale went off and a new one replaced it. A quick couple here - Saltaire (West Yorkshire) Decennium cracking pale ale highly recommended at 4.6% followed by Green Duck (Stourbridge) Renaissance mild bit pokey at 9.6% so only a half. Well off to Arena Birmingham, oops a pub with its own brewery on the same road, we have to try it Edmunds Brewhouse (Birmingham) 4.5% 1895 Ale (APA made with American cascade hop) was drinkable known better, there were others to choose from but no time. At and around the arena and still an hour to kill, so we find a canal side boozer, the Flapper only a hundred or so yards away an obvious choice and what a choice Church End Brewery
ALE of Thanet

(Champion beer of Britain 2017) Goats Milk on tap 3.8% gold ale. The Flapper was in a great location and offered a good selection of ales, shame to hear it was up for demolition – there is a website set up to try to save it, so if you feel the urge look it up and sign their petition. Well, another pub on the line, no time to ponder, away to see Deep Purple. A great show with two back up bands – Cats in Space (15 min slot) and Europe of Final Countdown fame. Purple offered a great selection of new and old.

The following day, time to leave for home, train back to Peterborough where we made a decision to break up the journey, by you’ve guessed it stopping off for a couple of beers, before resuming by bus to King’s Lynn and a further bus to Heacham. Our first stop was meant to be the Oakham Ales taproom but was shut so carried on to the Bumble Inn, one of the micropubs in Peterborough, he had local ales and was quite chatty about all things CAMRA in Peterborough (he now has several copies of our AOT – who said we had to stay local), the Poetry in Motion, a 4.0% raspberry pale was intriguing but not an overpowering flavour of raspberry and we were joined by a joyous couple of ladies celebrating the demise of Mugabe with gusto. We had a chance now to visit another pub before leaving for Norfolk, so we chose the Ostrich for a bite to eat, get their Yorkshire pudding wraps (everything you could wish for from a Sunday roast in this wrap) and a wassail of Grainstore (Oakham) ten fifty 5% ESB. Time to get to the bus station and two buses cancelled an hour to wait and with a Spoons 100 yards away, we didn’t need another nod to each other – a Redpoint (Taiwan/Shepherd Neame) Disco Macaw 4.8% pale ale enjoyed, a good selection of six non-classic spoons ales on show. Still waited another 40 minutes for our bus and eventually arrived in King’s Lynn and by this time we had persuaded the girls to come and pick us up to get back to Heacham. We did get another bus (Lynx H) to go to Hunstanton and back for a meal at the local Indian and then to the Wash and Tope pub for a Wash and Tope Tipple 4.0% bitter brewed for the pub and a Timothy Taylor Landlord 4.3% pale ale, only bitter I know that complements ice cream. A few minutes wait so a quick one in the Old Marine Bar a Woodforde Wherry 3.8% bitter sank relatively quickly, don’t want any delays this time. The journey back on the bus was uneventful and quite welcomed as it was the last bus before midnight (we might have had to have sneaked in to watch the Stylistics at the local theatre). Home James in the morning. I even managed to sneak in some take away Two Rivers (Denver,Norfolk) bottled beer (cask conditioned of course and unfinned) for home consumption a Happy Hopper (green hop ale) 4.5% pale ale and a Hares Hopping 4.4% IPA which I have yet to savour.

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