



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

THIRSTY TIMES

Chelmsford & mid-Essex Branch of CAMRA

The Hop Beer Shop Chelmsford

BRANCH PUB OF THE YEAR 2016



Hop Beer Shop, Chelmsford PUB OF THE YEAR 2016

Chelmsford and mid-Essex CAMRA members voted The Hop Beer Shop in Moulsham St, Chelmsford as their Pub of the Year 2016. The charm of this cosy little one room pub is the combination of companionable camaraderie of the customers and the proprietor John Prior.

Using his carpentry skills John made the tables and seating to be at a height that is compatible with those standing so it keeps everyone happy to be able to converse on the same level. The simple wooden furniture and the cask cabin where four casks of real ale are dispensed were made by John who welcomes everyone as if he is inviting you into his home. It is so compact and friendly that if you were not friends when you arrive you soon are as here, conversation is key and customers enjoy that there is no TV, loud music or fruit machines.

The most local Locales are from Round Tower Brewery in Chelmsford, Bishop Nick from Braintree, Colchester Brewery, Earls Colne and

Wibblers from Mayland. The impressive range of bottled beers to drink-in or take away includes various Essex ales, continental and American beers.

The Essex Cider Shop a few doors away supplies three ciders and a perry, which is great for local businesses to support each other. As well as having at least one dark beer such as a stout or porter served from the cask there are two craft keg beers and wine to whet your appetite.

John Prior said: "I thank all the CAMRA members who voted for The Hop Beer Shop as their Pub of the Year and everyone who has supported us over the last 15 months. As a free trade public house, we are proud to support local brewers and fine ales from around the country and with the addition of ciders and perry The Hop Beer Shop has something for all tastes."

The provisional date for presentation of the award to John is Thursday 17th March at 8pm.

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PUB NEWS

Bar Sport in Braintree High Street (previously Barracuda, Litten Tree, Silkworm) has been closed for some time. Now an application has been submitted to convert the premises to mixed use self-contained units, including residential. Although this wasn't recently a real ale mecca it looks like we have probably lost another pub permanently.

Is the same fate about to befall the White Horse, Witham (GK), which is now closed and boarded up? Fortunately the Woolpack is just a few steps away.

Maybe I'm being a little jumpy but even a change of tenant these days can seem like a crisis. The Beehive, Great Waltham (Hawthorn Leisure) is currently being run by a manager after the tenant left. Fingers crossed for the last pub in the centre of this village.

On to some thriving pubs. Lynne from the **Rodney, Little Baddow** reports that in February they took part in the Guinness World Record for the most pubs doing a quiz on the same evening. Not sure if the record was broken but their seven teams raised £195 for Essex Air Ambulance.

Having no doubt celebrated our own New Year and the Chinese New Year you might like to go along there on Saturday 16th April when they will be serving their Thai New Year Meal.

Details on www.therodneyinn.co.uk or their Facebook page.

The Ale House, Chelmsford is holding a beer festival over the St George's day weekend – details below. As always the third Sunday of the month is an Irish Music Session and the fourth Sunday is 'Steam House' Blues Soul Rock with open mic.

www.the-ale-house-chelmsford.co.uk

News from the **Three Elms, Chignal St James**. Pete and Gill had their fifth anniversary of trading at The Three Elms last December. They have many ideas in the pipeline, including an extra ale and cider festival. December also brought a new record of fund-raising of £450 for Farleigh Hospice during their annual Christmas auction. "The auction is generously supported by customers and packed with all sorts from homemade brews and cakes to dusted-down treasures from various attics."



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PUB NEWS



Fundraising for Farleigh Hospice at the Three Elms, Chignal St James

They are steadily rebuilding their cider list, after the winter clear out. "We actually had only 13 ciders available yesterday, but this has been remedied today." Meanwhile they are putting more emphasis on local ales (four ever-changing). Details of their next beer and cider festival are below. Visit www.the-three-elms.com, or just call in and enjoy a pint or two. Once again The Three Elms has been voted branch Cider Pub of the Year and hoping to repeat or even better last year's Essex award.

Two more of our pubs have been given ACV (Asset of Community Value) status, which lasts for five years. They are our Most Improved Pub 2015 **The Willows, Cressing** and long-time favourite the **Walnut Tree, Broads Green**. While not a guarantee of survival this at least gives local people a chance to make an offer for the pub should a change of use be proposed.

The Woolpack, Chelmsford has its regular Easter Beer & Cider Festival coming up. Details below but CAMRA members please note you are invited to a preview on Wednesday 23rd March with all beers at £2.50 a pint from 8pm-11pm. Bring your membership card, or join there. Look out for the beer list on www.thewoolpack.wix.com/woolpackchelmsford

Will and Donna have a beer garden project planned for April which will extend the garden and give them an excellent outdoor area for the summer months.

Mike and Jacqui at the **Endeavour, Chelmsford** recently held a quiz night to support Ady who is running the London marathon for Farleigh Hospice and raised the fantastic amount of £420. They are planning their next charity quiz on Sunday 27th March. Their quizzes are extremely popular so book a table asap if you want to go. Tables are for up to six

players and the charge is £3 a person which includes sandwiches at half time. There will also be a raffle, all proceeds shared between the RNLI and a local charity. Watch out too for a race night coming soon. "Don't forget we always have our four regular real ales and two guests each week; talk to Mike if you have a particular favourite you would like us to get in." Call: 01245 257717

Finally, not quite a beer fest but close to it. For the Easter Steam Up at the **Compasses, Littley Green** there will be eight beers on the chalk board all over the weekend along with five real ciders. The Steam Up runs from Friday 25th through to Sunday 27th March, with live music on Friday evening and Doctor Busker on Saturday evening. The steam engines will be there over the whole weekend. Food will be available, both the famous Huffers and meals on the board. www.compasseslitleygreen.co.uk

Forthcoming pub beer festivals

Woolpack, Chelmsford:

Thursday 24th to Sunday 27th March

More than 80 real ales and real ciders. Live music every evening.

Ale House, Chelmsford:

Thursday 21st to Sunday 24th April

Thirty real ales with six of the taps being occupied by Round Tower beers. Twelve ciders, with as many local as they can get. Morris Dancers at lunch time. Fish and chips will be available to order throughout the day along with pies from The Cheese & Pie Man. Music in the evening will be in the form of Howlin' Mat-Hard Rockin' Boogy Blues Guitarist.

Viper, Mill Green:

Thursday 28th April to Monday 2nd May

Bakers Arms, Danbury:

Friday 27th to Monday 30th May.

Another 'regular' this, with the usual good selection of beers and ciders in the beer tent. Food available all day includes chilli, curry and their legendary fish and chips. Live music too.

Three Elms, Chignal St James:

Friday 27th to Monday 30th May.

"Music, Food & SUN guaranteed! We will be supporting Farleigh Hospice once more."



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BEER DAY BRITAIN 2016

Here's a date for your diary – June 15th Beer Day Britain, the country's national beer day. Last year saw the first Beer Day Britain and readers of Thirsty Times were enthusiastic supporters. Thank you! The aim of Beer Day Britain is for beer drinkers, brewers, retailers, bars and pubs to celebrate the national drink and have a party and drink beer whether that is in the pub, at home, at a barbeque or a picnic.

CAMRA, SIBA, Cask Marque and all the major beer organisations are supporters of Beer Day Britain but it will only work if beer lovers take ownership of it. Will you join us and help to spread the word and to build enthusiasm for a celebration of our national drink? This is what you could do.



several times during the day with the hashtag 'Cheers BDB' as people around the world raised a glass of beer for the National Cheers to Beer.

Free Pint Giveaways: Several breweries, including Fuller's, gave away free pints of beer in pubs.

If you were wondering why Beer Day Britain is on June 15th it is because that is also the date Magna Carta was sealed in 1215. Ale is mentioned in Clause 35 of Magna Carta. Beer Day Britain celebrates what brings us so much joy and that is something we can all drink to!

• • • • •

Beer Day Britain was instigated and launched in 2015 by beer sommelier, author, and CAMRA member Jane Peyton. Jane is the author of several books including *Beer o'Clock* and *Drink: A Tippler's Miscellany* (the latter book is also known as *School of Booze*).

Buy signed copies from: <http://www.school-of-booze.com/boutique/books>

- Download the Beer Day Britain logo from the website: www.BeerDayBritain.co.uk – it is free to use so please send it to your friends and ask them to pass it on too.

- Start mentioning Beer Day Britain in social media and when you talk to colleagues, friends, fellow pub-goers & publicans. Please follow us on Twitter @BeerDayBritain or FaceBook on www.facebook.com/beerdaybritain.

- Ask your local brewer to brew a celebration ale for Beer Day Britain and to throw a party in the brewery on June 15th. Brewster's Brewing Company brewed Britannia's Brew for 2015 made with English malts and hops and botanicals to represent the four home nations. Britannia's Brew will be made again for this year's Beer Day Britain.

- Ask the publican of your local to throw a party on June 15th and if possible to do a special beer & food matching menu.

- Arrange an ale-trail with friends on June 15th.

- Join in the National Cheers to Beer on June 15th at 7pm (or do it whenever suits you) and if you use social media, send a Tweet, Facebook message or Instagram message using the hashtag #CheersBDB.

These are some of the things that happened nationally for Beer Day Britain 2015.

Media interest: There was a huge amount of interest in the media – newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, and social media. The Daily Star newspaper dedicated the headline, front page and an inside page to Beer Day Britain.

Trending on Twitter: We trended on Twitter

King William IV, 114 London Road,
Braintree, Essex CM77 7PU
www.moodygoosebrewery.co.uk
info@moodygoosebrewery.co.uk

TAP TO TAP IN MALDON

It's all downhill from here!

Maldon High Street undeniably has character and charm although in recent years it has been a bit lacking on the beer front. Now we think with a few recent developments the High Street could become an excellent destination for beer tourists.

At the top of the street at number 10 is the newly opened Mighty Oak Brewery Tap with four regular beers plus one guest served on gravity, sourced from the brewery close by on the West Station Yard industrial estate. On our last visit in February 2016 the Oscar Wilde was on magnificent form and was probably the best British beer I have had in the last 12 months.

The tap is really well fitted out with a comfortable but reasonably minimalist downstairs with chunky furniture; in the Reading Room upstairs are leather armchairs and settees, a coffee table with beery magazines and a writing desk. There are snacks available in the form of cheese and pate boards. They are open from midday until 10pm every day except Monday.



The Mighty Oak Tap Room

If you cross over the road from The Tap and go into Coach Lane, keeping left, you will hit Gate Street where you will see The Carpenters Arms on the right; total walk time three minutes.

The Carpenters has been seen as the best pub in town since the lease was taken over by the current landlord in 2013. It was the branch Pub of the Year 2015 and was originally the brewery tap for Grays Maldon brewery and is still owned by Grays. There are two interconnected rooms each with its own entrance but similar decor. To the right there is a proper comfortable public bar with beams, carpenters tools and pictures of old Maldon as well as a dartboard and a ubiquitous domino foursome in the corner, plus there is a secret garden out the back. In the left-hand bar there is a slightly longer bar with more handpumps and a splendid map of the Blackwater above the fireplace. The beer selection is adventurous with six beers on when we visited, two from Essex and the rest from further afield.

On leaving you find yourself at the rear of Maldon's iconic and historic 14th century Blue Boar Hotel; enter their rear yard, taking in the Maldon Brewery Company in the stables to your left which set up here in 2002 producing Farmers Ales. They brew a wide range of beers available all over this part of Essex including here at the Blue Boar, whose Tap Room bar is entered to your right. The hotel closed during the summer of 2015 for a major decoration and refurbishment following an auction of some of its contents and now there is reinvestment in the place. There are currently three beers available on gravity including at least one from the brewery out the back; on our last visit they had both Puck's Folly and Golden Boar. Parts of large furry animals decorate the walls and there is a massive log fire in winter.

Follow the High Street downhill for five minutes and on the left you will find Maldon's version of Wetherspoons – the Rose & Crown. I don't think this place needs much explanation; however it was good to see that the conversion of the original sixteenth century pub has added a huge extension to give a lot more space. More importantly, there was a good proportion of beers from local breweries such as Wibblers and Hop Monster. Note the splendid marble bar.



The Blue Boar

Turning left and still heading downhill you will pass the Swan Hotel, a Grays pub, which is looking a little down at heel at the moment. However we hear that the pub is going through changes and hopefully in the near future will mature into something special as far as beer choice is concerned.

Beyond that and further down the hill on the right you will find the miniscule Farmers Yard. You cannot fail to fall into conversation with other pubgoers here as the place is so small and intimate. Within minutes we were discussing the copper pipework around the walls, used as an unusual conduit for electrical cables, and whether the compression fittings were more practical, though less handsome, than Yorkshire.



Farmers Yard

Spring 2016

If you want a private conversation you should go elsewhere but if you want a great beer experience, a chat with the locals and great beers served from the Maldon Brewery Company brewed at the top of the street, this is your place. The beers on our last visit in February were Yakima Gold, Captain Ann, Essex Strong Pale Ale and Dark Horse but they also have lots of top bottled beers too, not only their own range but offerings from London, Belgium and the US.

For some reason Essex has not been as swift as some other counties in embracing the micropub revolution – Kent now has 50. Indeed apart from the Hop Beer Shop in Chelmsford, the Upminster Taproom, Mawson's in Southend and the Billericay Brewing Co. micro there are few others in the county except for these two stunners in Maldon.

A good time to visit would be during the Maldon Beer Festival which takes place from Wednesday 6th to Saturday 9th April 2016 at the Plume School, Farnbridge Road. CM9 6AB. Expect to find 60 beers including 20 locals, 20 great regional and 20 of the best from all over the country. On the Friday and the Saturday this year you will even find a choice of 50 beers of all styles from Belgium too.

See www.maldonanddengiecamra.org.uk for full list of beers.

SELL-OUTS AND START-UPS: London breweries update

These are interesting times in the London beer scene: just before Christmas Camden Town Brewery announced that they'd sold up to AB InBev, the world's largest brewing company, for a reported £85m. This caused great consternation among some of the brewery's fans, despite the current owners' assurances that nothing will change as under the terms of the deal they will retain 'full control' – albeit as a wholly owned subsidiary. Many accused the owners of 'selling out', but having now reflected on the news for a couple of months, I can't help but think that if someone offered me £85m for a company I'd only started in 2010 I'd be very tempted to take the money.

One of the reasons the deal caused so much angst was surely because Camden had raised nearly £3m through crowdfunding just a few months before the deal with AB InBev. While this meant that all the new 'Hells Raisers' received a healthy, almost instant return on their investment, most probably hadn't invested to make money but for the association with the brand and because they had some affinity with the brewery and its beers. So selling out right away to a huge company whose values many might not share was never likely to go down well with most of the new investors who had no say in the sale.

BrewDog responded by immediately – and somewhat theatrically – removing all Camden beers from sale in their bars, regardless of remaining stock levels, as they 'don't stock AB InBev beers'. Following on from the sale of Meantime to SAB Miller this means that two of London's best-known breweries are now in the hands of huge multinational beer firms, so where does this leave the sector and who will be next to be 'picked off' by one of the mega brewing companies?

Beavertown's growth continues to astound, and who knows what the future will hold for them, and what offers they may receive – though I can't see them being tempted to sell. But many of London's breweries are, of course, extremely small, and anecdotally we are aware that many find it increasingly difficult to compete for bar space in the capital and further afield. There are frequent complaints about quality and the amount of 'strength in depth' among London's breweries – quality varies from the truly excellent to those whose beers 'need some work'.

Overall the number of breweries in London continues to grow. We now list 80 breweries in London on our comprehensive list, which can be found here: <http://beerguideldn.com/breweries>

But while there have been several additions to the list in the early part of 2016, we've also deleted a couple of the smaller brewpub operations which appear to have stopped almost as quickly as they started. These include the Sultan brewpub in Wimbledon, SW19 and Earls Brewery at the Earl of Essex, N1.

New breweries who've already started or who should start brewing very soon include:

- Reunion Ales who are 'combining modern science with the wisdom of tradition', brewing near Hanwell Park, West London.
- Earth Ale Brewery in Balham, who focus on eco-friendly beers and foraging for ingredients. In this case 'Earth' stands for 'Eco-friendly, Artisanal, Rural, Terroir and Health', giving them an intriguing selling point.
- Husk Brewing has started brewing in its own 2.5 barrel brewery in West Silvertown/Victoria Dock.
- Forest Road Brewing have already brewed their first beer at Brouwerij Van Eecke in Watou, Belgium pending completion of their own brewery in East London. With a strong pedigree – the brewer used to brew at Camden Town Brewery – this could be one to watch.
- Streatham Brewing Co, who are hoping to start brewing in March in a space behind the Railway pub, SW16.

So does the growth in breweries continue to be matched by a growth in the number of pubs and bars in which they might stock their products? The answer is yes. We've added some excellent pubs to our guide in the first two months of 2016, including:

- The King and Co, Clapham Park, SW4: <http://beerguideldn.com/pubs.225>
- The Prince, Stoke Newington, N16: <http://beerguideldn.com/pubs.224>

New openings coming soon include the Waterloo Tap, due to open mid-March under the arches at Sutton Walk, between Waterloo Station and the Royal Festival Hall, SE1. BrewDog will soon be opening in Dalston, their eighth London venue and counting. Craft Beer Co have just announced

that their next opening will be in Croydon at the new 'Boxpark' complex due to open next to East Croydon station this summer.

This venture into the suburbs marks a welcome new departure for one of the leading mini chains we covered in our last *Thirsty Times* article. Will it be the start of a trend? And will this growth in quality beer bars continue? We think it will as there is no sign of a slowdown. Will the growth in brewery numbers continue? We think this is less likely and that more 'churn' – particularly of some of the smaller breweries and brewpub operations – is likely. And when will the next big sell-out happen? We feel this is unlikely to happen in 2016, but as we said, these are interesting and exciting times in London's beer scene, so who knows?

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

The site contains full details of the bars and breweries featured here – including opening times, which you should check carefully while planning any visits. You can also follow Jezza on Twitter @beerguidelondon or @bonsvoeux1 for frequent updates.

LOOK OUT FOR OUR LOCALE TRAIL

Following on from the tremendous success of the 40 Pubs for 40 Years Ale and Cider Trail last year we shall be launching a **LOCALE TRAIL** of pubs selling beers brewed in Essex, where you enjoy the beer at all of the pubs in our branch area which sell Locales and score the beer on Whatpub.com. More details in the summer *Thirsty Times* as the trail will be launched at the summer festival.

Enjoy lip-smacking locales brewed by Essex breweries and help the local pubs prove they sell good beer. You can help get your local in the **Good Beer Guide**. With 28 Locale pubs and 28 breweries in Essex we plan to have a great range of Re-ale-ly great real ale-related prizes.

Details to be confirmed so check *Thirsty Times*, www.chelmsford.camra.org.uk and Facebook and Twitter [cbcf.info](https://twitter.com/cbcf.info).



THE COMPASSES

LITTLE GREEN

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THEHUFFERPUB

BREWERY NEWS

BISHOP NICK *Libby Ridley tells us:*

Is it winter? Have we had winter? Is it spring? No matter, we have all bases covered here at Bishop Nick. Arise (3.9%) is proving as popular, if not more so than at the beginning of last year. This sturdy amber ale, packed with home-grown hops will see you through these dreary inbetween days. Available in cask and 500ml bottles. And Hop Cross (3.8%) is a bloomin' glorious brew with extra pale malt giving it a sunny glow to help the daffs continue to grow.

We will be re-brewing our American-style IPA Martyr in March and that will be available for the rest of the summer.

We've enjoyed the winter beer festivals (Colchester, Chappel and Chelmsford to name but a few). Looking forward to Cambridge in May and Braintree in June.

A date for diaries – our annual Revelry Day is in the planning stages for Sunday June 19th. A perfect family afternoon to celebrate our dads on Father's Day. Keep an eye on our website and Facebook pages for detail nearer the time.

We'll be there in force at the Chelmsford summer beer and cider festival 5th-9th July at Admirals Park and we will be setting up stall for the Essex Festival of Food and Drink again at Cressing Temple Barns on Saturday 16th-Sunday 17th July.

We are thrilled to be supplying both Heresy and 1555 to the newly re-opened Fitch of Bacon, (Little Dunmow), the new pub venture for Michelin star

chef, Daniel Clifford.

Where else can you find us? Our outlets are listed on our website at www.bishopnick.com and new additions include:

Liberal Club (Braintree), The Punch Bowl Inn (Stowmarket), The Three Elms (Chignal St James), The Dukes Head (Hatfield Broad Oak), County Hotel (Chelmsford), Chequers (Felsted), White Horse (Ridgewell), Purple Dog (Colchester), Red Lion (Grantchester) and New Inn (Colchester).

New bottle stockists include: Guntons (Colchester), John Gold Butchers (Rayleigh), Majestic Wine (Chelmsford and Colchester), Four Vintners (Ingatestone), Spencers Farm Shop (Wickham St Paul), Chop House (Braintree) and Liquorice Wine Store (Shenfield).

Our Brewery Shop is open on site to the public. Mondays to Fridays 9.00am-4.30pm. We stock our range of bottle-conditioned ales and gifts including t-shirts, branded glasses and bottle presentation packs. Ample free parking and easy access to Braintree Freeport and the town centre. Come see us and buy your beer at source.

For a full product list see www.bishopnick.com Reach us on 01376 349605 and follow us on Facebook – BishopNickAle and Twitter – @BishopNick or sign up for our newsletter at info@bishopnick.com

MIGHTY OAK *Gill says:*

I don't have much news from the brewery, but the Tap Room is more interesting at the moment anyway... Maldon is becoming a bit of a Mecca for ale lovers; two micro pubs alongside a good number of pubs and bars – and even some restaurants – all serving real ale. Maldon is enjoying a bit of an ale renaissance.

The Wall of Ale, many would say, is what customers love most about the Mighty Oak Tap Room; 11 casks plus 2 real ciders – their taps coming through the wall from the cellar, ensuring that the ale is at a constant perfect temperature.

Having opened in October at 10 High Street, Maldon, our little micro pub has proved to be rather popular with the folks of Maldon and lots of visitors

too – and a huge thank you goes out to all who have shown their support and given us such great feedback.

With a range of Mighty Oak permanent beers plus the one-off specials, real ciders, fine wines and prosecco by the glass or bottle, soft drinks, tea & coffee and the ever popular cheese or pate and biscuits – there is something for everyone. Whether you wish to relax in our comfy reading room, or join up with friends for traditional pub games, read the paper, or enjoy interesting conversation with fellow ale lovers or join in with the occasional off-the-cuff music event – with no fruit machines, piped muzak or lager – the Mighty Oak Tap Room is the place for you in Maldon!"

BREWERY NEWS

BRENTWOOD BREWING COMPANY *Wendy Pike reports:*

In March watch out for Up and Under 4% ABV, available for the duration of The Six Nations Rugby Championship. It's a brown, malty, perfectly balanced bitter. For Easter we have Hot Cross Buns 3.9% ABV. Its lemon and citrus hop flavours combine with spices giving it a truly hot cross bun taste. Also available in polypins.

No St George's Day celebrations should be without George and The Dragon 3.8% ABV. Find the brewery's YouTube Channel to see a prize-winning, thirteen second Pythonesque video of the brewery team promoting this one. Hal and Ethan star, Jaye films and Roland's on sound effects. Uncontrollable laughter is by Mike. Still very much in the pipeline, so yet to be named, a new Brentwood beer is being created to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. Shakes-Beare perhaps?

Trunk out some Elephant School Brewing beers this spring, particularly a popular; black IPA, Odds 'n' Sods 4.3% ABV. Also White Elephant 4% ABV, a golden mild, flavoured with spicy coriander.

Beer Tasting: Join us 10.30am-3.30pm on Saturday 12th March. Try a variety of different Brentwood Beers at our beer tasting event. Entrance costs £5. Entrance is free to Beer Club members.

Easter Offer: Buy a polypin for Easter and get a month's membership to the Beer Club free. This gets 10% off bottles and 20% off draught beers and polypins bought in the Brewery Shop.

Easter Opening Times: Open Easter Saturday 26th March 10.30am-3.30pm. Closed Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday. Remember to

order your Polypins for collection on 21st so there's time for them to settle.

St George's Day Offer: Wear an England shirt to the brewery on St George's Day and get a free half pint of Brentwood Beer. Open Saturday 23rd April, 10.30am-3.30pm.

Celebrate St George's Day: We're joining forces with Old Brentwoods Club to celebrate St George's Day. Lunch costs £16.50. Brentwood Beer will be there along with the chance of some patriotic singing and limitless pub games. The fun starts at Ashwells Road, Pilgrims Hatch, 12.30pm for 1.30pm sit down.

Brewery Open Days: Regular Brewery Open Days continue on the first Saturday of each month 10.30am-3.30pm. Tours (£10 each including free gift and a pint) at 11am and 1pm.

Events: Brentwood Beer will be at The Viper Beer Festival 28th April-2nd May.

Brentwood Festival (15th-17th July) tickets are now on sale from the online box office. Please do not call the brewery about festival tickets. Book via the link on our festival blog post and buy your tickets before 15th March using the code BEERYNEWS and you will be entered into a free prize draw. You could win a prize package for four people for a brewery tour and meal at our brewery tap, The White Horse, Coxtie Green. Follow the link from our blog post: www.brentwoodbrewing.co.uk/brentwood-festival-2016/

Beery News: If you'd like to keep up with all the latest news at Brentwood Brewery, sign up for our monthly newsletter, The Beery News and/or visit the Brewery Blog at www.brentwoodbrewing.co.uk

MALDON BREWING COMPANY *Mike says:*

We are continuing with our Thames Barge themed beers with Centaur (Feb/March) which is a traditional best bitter, copper in colour, using the hop Minstrel which gives a fruity aroma with a touch of orange in the background, and Topsail (March) Topsail is a classic English Pale Ale. We've used English Pioneer hops which give a herbal note to the biscuity flavour of English pale malt. The aroma is lemon and citrus.

To celebrate 400 years since the death of Shakespeare, we have come up with two

more limited edition specials, Titania and Oberon. Our brewers just love experimenting!

Titania is a lovely amber beer at 3.8% and Oberon is slightly stronger and darker at 4.1%. These beers will all be available on draught at Farmers Yard, 140 High Street, Maldon. 01621 854202

To follow these we will have Puck's Revenge and Puck's Delight to complement our ever-popular Puck's Folly. These will be available in June around midsummer day.





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BREWERY NEWS

ROUND TOWER *Simon says:*

Here at Round Tower Brewery we are pleased to report that we have had a great time over the winter. It was great to have a notable mention in the list of favourite beers at the Chelmsford & mid Essex CAMRA Winter Beer Festival in February, and especially that we were in a list with many regional breweries whose beer is widely respected.

Our beer travelled all the way up to the CAMRA National Winter Beer Festival in Derby this year and, to date, is the furthest our beer has travelled.

In February we also celebrated our third birthday (oh how time has flown!) with a Tap Take Over in The Hop Beer Shop on Moulsham Street. It was great to see so many people drinking our beer and enjoying

themselves. We also took the opportunity to release 50 bottles of our celebratory #100, a cracking 8.9% imperial stout. The bottles sold out within two days. We have a few more left that we will release some time in the future. Keep an eye on our Facebook and Twitter to see when.

Looking forward to spring, we are releasing the last cask of #100, now over a year old, to the Woolpack (Mildmay Road) Easter beer festival. We have almost finished our series of beers named after the Blue Plaques of Chelmsford, so see if you can work out the next theme when it appears.

Now, what specials shall we brew for the Summer Beer Festival?

WIBBLERS *Abby writes:*

Crafty Stoot has won Gold in its class at the CAMRA National Winter Beer Festival. We are hoping that it will now be in the GBBF Supreme Champion Beer of Britain Finals in August. Phil and our brew team, along with Flocculation & Crafty Brewing Association UK members who originally brewed this fine stout in 2007, are overjoyed at the win.

Our March special is Hop Springs Eternal, 4.2% – a golden ale made with Amber and Crystal malts and hopped with Challenger and Marynka for a spicy, herbal aroma with a slight floral finish. Springthing 3.4% – another golden ale with hints of blackcurrant from the Bramling Cross hops. These will be the last specials brewed at our current site before the move at Easter to Southminster. Take a look at our Facebook page for the competition we are running to come up with a name for the commemorative First Brew at the new barn once all the kit is set up in early April.

The final push on the new site continues with plasterers and painters working hard to finish so we can have the new floor laid to start moving our cold store and chilling equipment in prior to the brewing plant moving over the long weekend. We are hoping to have the Taproom open in late April/early May although it may not be fully fitted out until July, but we will be serving up our fine ales, along with bottles for take-away as soon as we can.



Open Day on 19th March, 12-3pm: All are welcome to come to our last open day at Joyces Farm. Lots of outside bars planned over the coming months, several at the Museum of Power in Langford.

Be The Brewer days are going well and at least one a month are planned for the next five months. Our Beer and Cider club continues to grow. Sales of cask and keg are going well and we are pushing into London pubs and bars. Exporting continues with our cider and lager to Helsinki and France and new contacts in a couple of other countries that we are exploring.

We are looking forward to the coming weeks and expanding the brew plant to offer even more specials, seasonals and one-off brews.

BRENTWOOD RECLAIMED:

A local odyssey by Justin Mason

At the beginning of January I was asked if I'd like to contribute to this year's #tryanuary campaign by writing a few words for the website as a guest blogger. Obviously I wanted to do something Essex-related but I also wanted to do something that I hadn't done before, something new. That is after all the essence of #tryanuary. Luckily for me my inspiration was close at hand, and I decided to revisit, rediscover and in some cases uncover some of the pubs that I had in my local town that I didn't know.

The Brewery Tap

Towards the bottom of King Street. I used to drink in here when we first moved to the area as an old school friend used to live next door, but it's been more than a decade since I last crossed the threshold. It's not changed much, which is to its credit, and as I sit here on a Wednesday afternoon I reckon it's not a bad place to be.

There's a group of men aged 35-50 discussing the latest episode of Countdown while three women in the corner are gossiping about mutual friends, a half of lager each and a few empty packets of crisps sit ignored on the table in front of them.

Aside from Timothy Taylor's Landlord there's Fuller's London Pride, Adnams Ghost Ship and Southwold Bitter on the bar. The beer tastes good, and as I drain my glass I wish I had more time. It's been a while since I've been in here, but it won't be too long before I'm back.

The Victoria Arms

Just around the corner from the Sainsbury's superstore, tucked into its space on the Ongar Road. Built in the late 1860s this Victorian boozer, a Gray & Sons tied house, could make a very good case for being the most aesthetically pleasing of all of Brentwood's pubs. Head inside, through the unusual internal porch and you'll discover that it's bigger inside than it looks from the street; cleaner and brighter too.

Six hand pumps greet you, and I'm told that there's a fair chance that you'll find a beer from an Essex brewery on one of them. There are four beers from Cornwall, two each from Sharp's and Skinners,

Greene King IPA and Maldon's Farmers Golden Boar, on the bar when I pop in at lunchtime, and if you're so inclined Heineken's Meister lager provides a drinkable alternative to some of the usual brands. A mix of ages of both sexes occupy the tables that keep to the edges of the room, eating, drinking and talking, each absorbed in their own company.

I take my pint and retreat to a table near the door to observe the comings and goings, content to watch the world go by for half an hour or so. The woman who served me comes out from behind the bar to clean the tables as soon as the patrons leave, smiling happily to herself as she does so. I rather like the Victoria Arms and I'm guessing you will too.



The Robin

There's been a beer house on this site for at least the last three hundred years, and in a survey of businesses in 1788 it was notable for being the only one of 11 pubs not on the High Street. It was known as the Robin Hood then, and more recently the Robin Hood and Little John. However a makeover and a change of name from legendary benevolent outlaw to red-breasted Christmas bird has given the building a different feel.

I recall the Robin Hood and Little John having a dubious reputation, but recent refurbishments have transformed the place, I'm told by Tara who works behind the bar and is happy to chat and extol its virtues.

It's a Heineken pub, not a temple of beer with Heineken, Amstel and Moretti on keg, and Deuchars IPA and Old Speckled Hen are the only cask beers ("because they sell well" I'm told) although they are occasionally replaced with seasonal variations.

Situated on the main Ongar to Tilbury road along which once timber from Epping Forest was taken down to the docks, it's taken me 10 minutes to walk here from the centre of town so I'm in need of a drink. The Caledonian Deuchars IPA is the only

sensible choice as far as I'm concerned and I'm delighted to find that it's well-kept and sparkingly bright.

The Robin is the furthest pub in Brentwood from where I live and the beer range isn't exciting enough to entice me across town often, but if I'm passing and want a place to rest and chat then I just might pop in.

The Rising Sun

It's unusual for a pub to open in the middle of the afternoon these days. Three o'clock used to be the time when last orders were called not so long ago, but from Monday to Friday this is the time that the first pint of the day is pulled in the Rising Sun.

Noted as a "beer shop" in an Essex Chronicle report of 1851 and a quarter of a century later as a "beer house", the current building dates from 1912 when the original was demolished and rebuilt in what was its own garden to accommodate the widening of the Ongar to Tilbury road on which it stands.

It is currently the only pub in Brentwood to feature in the Good Beer Guide and consists of two rooms with very separate uses. One is the lounge with a scattering of tables and chairs as well as some stools at the bar, whilst just beyond a smaller brighter space has two dart boards and a fruit machine.

Five hand pumps are arrayed in front of me as I enter, with Timmy Taylor's Landlord, Fuller's London Pride and Sharp's Cornish Coaster permanent fixtures with the other two usually featuring a local beer, at least one of which is from the nearby Brentwood Brewery.

It's clearly a regulars' pub as everybody seems to know everyone who comes and goes, and although I don't fall into that category they're friendly enough and don't seem bothered I have entered their midst. It's relaxed, and I feel comfortable taking my pint to a nearby table to watch the evening unfold. It's fairly busy, not overly so but steady enough and I find myself wishing this pub was on my walk home rather than being in completely the opposite direction. I can't think why I've never been in here before and order myself another pint. I could be here a while.

The Spread Eagle

All journeys, whether good or bad, end with a return home. Or at least to somewhere you feel at home.

The Spread Eagle is that place for me. It's not my closest pub, but it's on my journey home, and in recent times and due to recent changes it has become my local. It's one of those pubs that, if you
Spring 2016

didn't know it was there then you'd easily miss it. A stark white mid-Victorian building its triangular shape at a slight angle to both Queens Road and Coptfold Road at whose apex junction it sits.

Familiar places, familiar faces.

In front of you is the bar which has a few high stools, and on which stand three hand pumps serving draught Bass, Sharp's Atlantic and Adnams Broadside, all kept in immaculate condition by Jack, an experienced landlord despite his relatively young years. The keg fonts have Shipyard IPA and Greene King East Coast, with Estrella, Amstel, Moretti and Staropramen the lager options, but you might see Brooklyn Lager in the place of the latter in the not-too distant future. Bottles from Brewdog, Sierra Nevada, Goose Island and Curious Brew can be found in the fridge, offering a safe but tasty diversion if you'd like a change from the usual.

My usual is the Atlantic, at least for my first drink, and I ordered a pint when I came in. It tastes great and after a minute or two replying to a work email I wander over to the bar for a chat with Jack, and we swap anecdotes while he expands on ideas he has for the place we've discussed on a few occasions.

I return to my seat as there are customers requiring service, and I look around the bar with a contented sigh as soft soul music plays in the background. I finish my drink and decide whether to have another or head home. Looking at my watch it's later than I thought. Maybe just a half.

The Gardeners Arms

In the oldest part of Brentwood, just behind the High Street, you'll find the Gardeners Arms.

Built in the early eighteenth century as a workhouse for the poor of the parish, it fell under the ownership of the Billericay Union Workhouse in 1835 before being sold as an inn two years later.

It stood on Back Street in those days and overlooked fields leading to Thorndon Woods, but times change and so did the name of the road and it now stands stoically on Hart Street.

The first thing I notice on entering is how dingy the place is. I cross to the bar and have a choice of



Continued on page 18

I DID NOT JOIN

GYLES FAWCETT, commentator

on all things that don't make sense, climbs the apple mountain to shout the case for CAMRA not supporting cider

Greene King IPA or Sharp's Doom Bar so I opt for a half of the latter. It's poured in silence, the barman only speaking to tell me the price, and he takes my money and retreats to a stool on the other side of the counter.

The beer is passable if unremarkable so I quickly finish the last third and head out into the rain.

The Hutton Junction, Hutton

It's Wednesday night and I've arrived back at Shenfield station a little earlier than I expected. Finding myself with a half hour to call my own I forgo my usual route up Mount Avenue, push on past my turning and head to the Hutton Junction.

Dating from at least the mid-1880s when the local railway station had the rather longer name of Shenfield and Hutton Junction due to the fact that it lies on the parish boundary of both, you'll notice that it's not actually a Brentwood pub. I'm sure you'll forgive me this indiscretion as it's a pub I've not visited before despite working just up the road for six years and only being a half hour walk from the centre of Brentwood itself.

It's a Gray's pub now, one always meant to go in but never quite made it. A 'not quite but nearly' pub that always fell at the final hurdle. Tonight I bite an 18 year bullet (I don't live that far away either), head inside ... and wonder why it's taken me so long.

Walking up to the bar, the conversation around me is relaxed and friendly and the smile I get from the woman who serves me puts me at ease in an instant. There are five cask beers to choose from this evening, Greene King IPA, Pendle's Blonde Witch, Belhaven Burns Ale, Greene King XX Mild, and, the beer I opt for, Cottage's Full Steam Ahead. I take my pint to the only unoccupied table and take a seat just as the bell for last orders rings.

Looking around, the sounds are muted and respectful considering the late hour, and I recognise the faces of a few customers from work and one or two others who live locally. We smile and nod and carry on. No more is necessary.

I finish my pint and wind my way home just as the glasses are being collected. The perfect end to a good evening. I make a mental note to get a slightly earlier train home next time I'm in London so that I can squeeze in one more drink at the Hutton Junction.

Follow Justin at: masonjust.blogspot.com or find him on Twitter at [@1970sBoy](https://twitter.com/1970sBoy) and [@BeerInEssex](https://twitter.com/BeerInEssex)

Visit www.chelmsford.camra.org.uk for a longer version of this article



Okay, I know it comes in the same-sized glasses and since they took the brass bits out of the system you can serve it from handpumps, and I know someone is going to say that it's a drink with a noble history and all that, a sort of poor man's wine by the pint, but it's not beer. It isn't anything like beer, it is a rival to beer and most of its tastes horrible.

I don't mind it tasting horrible because it's an authentic real cider and just not my kind of drink but I do mind it tasting horrible when it's a fake. Most of it smells fake and tastes fake. And as apparently there aren't enough cider apples in the whole of Europe to make the amount of cider that is spewing out of every marketing company in Britain nowadays, it sounds like most of it is just that – a fake.

Don't get me wrong. I am not saying cider doesn't have its uses. After a long day at the office, dreaming of a time when I can retire to the country and live the dream, I sometimes feel like getting tankered so far out of my tree that I will have to be stretchered home. But what to do without letting down my credentials as a stalwart of the real ale cause? At those moments, thank god for cider!

And thank god for CAMRA's support of it. Gets me off the hook a treat. We can't drink Stella but we can get bladdered on Thatchers and feel like a 100% jiggling Morris Man all the way.

I wouldn't mind so much if it wasn't turning up everywhere. Little Rosie's Sumptuous Farmhouse Cyder from Pootling St Mary, with pictures of orchards and farmyards and red-cheeked maids in crinoline and booties, twinkle in the eye, winking at geese. Every inch the London marketing agency's view of what the punter wants from something smelling of that essence of apple they put in the concentrate before adding water and passing it off as Tropicana, pips-style.

Has nobody got the joke yet? Drink AB Inbev Cidre

CAMRA TO PROMOTE CIDER

– have to say Seedrer – it's as traditional as witch-dunking. Europe has an apple glut. Lovely fruit, just too much of it. So rather than turn the land over to something else – hops might be a bright idea given the world shortage right now – farmers get subbed to flog off the apple mountain for pulping in factories that make megakeggeries look cute.

Let's face it, most cider drinkers couldn't tell a cider apple from a supermarket muncher and CAMRA does little to help their ignorance. Ciders are listed under beers in every bar. Tourists are having it explained that cider is beer made from apples. People are talking about cider being brewed. It's the new alcopop, you morons, only it gets government subsidies instead of being taxed out of the range of children.

Cider has had its time living off the ale drinkers' bank account. It is time for us to let it go its own way.

If you're going to waste my campaigning money on some other drink, make it something that is not trying to undercut beer or take over the hand-pull space on the bar. Or tell me what I'm missing. Get me all enthusiastic about the ancient apple wine of olde England, tell me what I should look out for in a really great-tasting cider grand cru – or on the other hand don't bother. Why don't they make a proper British saké? Or how about chichi from South America? I hear it's made from quinoa. That would go down well at the spa. Good name too.

I have no idea how we got here but CAMRA seems to be becoming a beer organisation that talks more about bloody cider than beer. Clear proof we are losing the plot, surely? Has anyone noticed that by the end of the year a third of the world's beer will come from one company, or did that one not get mentioned in the St Albans Gazette?

At best, cider is a distraction. If there are that many CAMRA members who are seriously interested in it, great. Let's give them a chunk of the organisation – a room upstairs at HQ maybe and a couple of PCs. Set up a cider group that has Cider in its name, Spring 2016

not Ale, dedicated to saying something sensible and concerned about Britain's favourite alcoholic fruit drink. If there are not, shouldn't we just park it and move on?

I am not meaning to sound rude. I imagine there must be some serious issues in the world of cider right now. The Bulmers, Magners, Somersby-Carlsbergs, Kopparbergs, Stellas and other brand-name cider-poppers of this world look like they are playing big money games as much if not more than the big brewers, which most of them are. The only difference is that a lot of the small cider makers look to be just as bad, which means fermenting rehydrated apple juice concentrate from eastern Europe with lager yeast, allegedly.

But is it really good enough to have beer drinkers making the case for traditional cider making and cider-drinkers' issues? Isn't that about as sensible as having a bunch of wine drinkers making the case for proper beer?

No, my friends, love it or hate it, cider has had its time living off the ale drinkers' bank account. It is time for us to let it go its own way. Time to leave the nest and start to fend for itself. We will always be friends and will carry on working together. We'll show up at each other's festivals. We just won't meet for breakfast every morning.

It's time to get back to concentrating on the main event – the fight for ever-better beer. If we have to take on a new cause, it is far better that we start thinking about what to do about all the new types of good beer that aren't cask.

Beer and cider don't mix, unless you want to wake up with an almighty headache.



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TIME TO TOAST LONDON'S BEER

The young William Blake had a vision of angels in a tree on Peckham Rye Common. I had a revelation of a different kind in more-or-less the same spot.

Towards the end of a lengthy six months researching 467 beer venues for the second edition of The CAMRA Guide to London's Best Beer, Pubs and Bars (published on 2 July 2015), I visited a newly-opened shop, Hop Burns and Black, on East Dulwich Road. The first thing I saw when I walked in was a big shelf unit labelled 'South East London'.

I stood in wonder for a while. Just four years previously, when the first edition of the book was in preparation, no more than two bottling breweries would have qualified for these shelves. Now there were approaching 25 potential suppliers. And 'London beer' was a term now insufficiently granular to express their geographic loyalties. Jen Ferguson, the shop's New Zealand-born co-owner, confirmed these local beers sold the most, despite competition from some of the world's greatest brewers on neighbouring shelves.

The facts put my little revelation in context. London was once the world beer capital but brewing here suffered relentless decline through the 20th century, culminating in a new low in 2006 when the closure of Young's, one of our two remaining historic independents, left only nine breweries.

But then a trickle of promising start-ups appeared, and by 2010 the London Brewers Alliance had emerged specifically to promote London beer. Some of the newcomers were directly inspired to fill the gap left by Young's, such as Duncan Sambrook, who told me early in 2011: "The London market's so big, I think it could support all of us and more." He couldn't have known how right he was.

When I submitted the manuscript of the first edition in March 2011, Greater London had 14 operating commercial breweries including brewpubs, the highest figure since 1981, including some now-familiar names like the Kernel, Redemption and Sambrook's.

Just before the book went to press, we heard about another soon to start, Moncada, and congratulated ourselves on being so bang up-to-date by squeezing

it in. As it turned out, Moncada encountered delays and didn't finally launch until October, by which time another six breweries had appeared.

The brewery total by the end of 2011 was 22. A year later it was 36, already a higher tidemark than at the peak of the Firkin era in 1998. By the end of 2013 it was 45. When this edition was signed off early in 2015 it stood at 70, and by my calculations it's since reached 78, almost certainly the highest figure since at least Victorian times.

While there have been a couple of casualties and a handful of short-lived projects since, the rest of the class of '11 have grown significantly in size and capacity.

I do wonder where the previous customers of these places now go to drink and meet their mates

Truman's, then just a beer firm, is now supplying major pub chains from its own brewery at Hackney Wick, and many that appeared since have been forced to consider expansion plans within days of first opening the books. Beavertown has perhaps the most remarkable story – from a corner of a pub kitchen in February 2012, it's expanded twice, and now has one of London's most modern and capacious microbrewing setups in Tottenham.

Brewery numbers don't equate to overall volume, of course, and many of the newcomers are still very small. Derek Prentice estimates that in the days of the Big Seven, nine or 10 London breweries were producing seven million barrels (11.5 million hl) a year between them.

Today, seven times the number of breweries barely manage one million barrels (1.6 million hl), and that's including all the Bud lager currently made in Mortlake. But it's hard to argue with the claim that the overall diversity in London, and the quality from the best brewers, has never been bettered.

One of the many positive aspects of the new wave's

says Des de Moor

fresh approach is the direct relationship brewers now cultivate with drinkers. The old breweries were industrial black boxes, but most of the current crop welcome the public to taprooms, open days and tours, and those that don't would love to if only they had the facilities.

Establishing this practice is one of Kernel founder Evin O'Riordain's many achievements – his modest shop and taproom inspired a movement that has turned Bermondsey's railway arches on Saturdays into an unlikely zythophilic promenade (though sadly the Kernel itself has been so overwhelmed by the crowds that it now opens for off-sales only).

Is there a downside to all this? Speaking to a US journalist recently, I noted the link between beer-friendliness and gentrification and all its attendant problems. Local microbrewers now press all the right buttons with prosperous arty metropolitan types, and as young middle class families move into deprived inner city areas like Hackney, Peckham and Walthamstow, small breweries and craft beer bars inevitably follow.

And while I'm delighted to see fine old pubs in Homerton and Clapton lovingly restored as beer and food emporia with yoga classes and cycle repair workshops, I do wonder where the previous customers of these places now go to drink and meet their mates.

Devotees of traditional cask ales may also be concerned that much of the growth is elsewhere, in 'craft keg', bottles, cans and US-inspired styles. Pretty much every London brewer now produces a pale ale liberally dosed with New World hops, but a good few see no reason to offer a best bitter. I've even had to add a section on saison to the style guide.

Now, I'm an eclectic drinker: I love many of these new beers and the huge variety of flavour now on offer. But subtle, low gravity, gently carbonated cask session beer is something British brewers, almost uniquely, do well and it deserves pride of place in the capital.

Pubs and many customers still very much want to drink it; several licensees told me they wished more London brewers did good cask. And more than one

North American beer tourist has reminded me they visit London to drink great cask, not clones of beers they can easily find at home. Some brewers need to get better at overall consistency and quality too if London brewing is to secure its future.

Jaega Wise of Wild Card is one of several professionals who told me that "beer in London is now fashionable". Indeed the archetype of the keen beer fan may even have shifted from the gent in jumper and sandals with an untidy beard pontificating over a pint of Old Crudginton's to the snappily tansured and tattooed Hackney hipster rhapsodising over the New Zealand and Japanese hop aromas in his, or increasingly her, two-thirds of Session IPA.

But it's an occupational hazard of being fashionable that you can rapidly and unexpectedly become unfashionable again at the flick of an eyebrow – is there a danger of this happening to London beer?

Peter Haydon, a fine brewer immersed in pub and beer history, says in the book that London won't re-enter the premier league of beer cities "until Londoners at large think about their city and their beer in the same way as the citizens of Munich, Brussels, Denver and Bamberg do".

I'm hopeful that we're some way there, and great beer and world class brewing are already just about firmly enough re-embedded into London's social and cultural fabric that they'll survive fickle fashionistas finding something trendier to post about on their tablets.

Meanwhile one of the best things you and I can do to ensure this happens is to continue to enjoy the fruits of all this frenetic activity.

So raise your glasses, please, for a toast to London brewing. You've certainly got the widest choice ever of appropriate libations – Beavertown Smog Rocket, Brick Peckham Pils, Brixton Electric IPA, By the Horns Lambeth Walk, Hammerton N7, The Kernel London Sour, Pressure Drop Stoker Brown, Redchurch Hoxton Stout, Redemption Hopsur or Sambrook's Wandle are all possibilities that spring to mind.

But perhaps the most appropriately named beer with which to wish the London brewers health, long life and prosperity is still one of the oldest-established: Fuller's London Pride.

SAFFRON BREWERY:

Beer brothers by Justin Mason

It's mid-November, and there's a definite chill in the air as I walk down the drive of Parsonage Farm towards the Saffron Brewery, the imposing shadow of the church of St Mary the Virgin blocking out the sun making it just that little bit colder.

I've made the visit to Henham, a small picturesque Essex village that is by distance a few miles north of Stansted Airport, although a world away in time, with David Ginn of Essex Food.

He has kindly driven us both there, and after a brief stop to take some photographs of the 'chocolate-box' thatched cottages across the village green we find ourselves right on time for our midday appointment. I went to a Meet the Brewer event that Saffron did in Chelmsford in the summer and recognise James as we get nearer, pacing up and down outside the main entrance with his mobile phone glued to his ear. He waves his acknowledgement but continues his earnest conversation before finishing abruptly and shaking our hands warmly introducing himself

Another door opens, from what I later learn is the office and shop, and his brother Ed appears rolling up his sleeves and shakes our hands too. The warmth of the welcome and the ease with which we fall into conversation has made me briefly forget the temperature outside, but after chatting for about ten minutes or so we all decide that it's best if we head inside. The first phase of Saffron Brewery started in May 2006 when the then owner and brewer Tony Barrett launched its first official beer at the 33rd Cambridge Beer Festival. The beers soon developed a strong local following and sold well, so much so that the only pub in Henham, the Cock Inn just across from the brewery, continued to stock it despite being ordered not to by Punch Taverns.

Tony was joined soon after by Dave Hill in order to expand the business, and he took over control of the operation, briefly sharing the site with Bishop Stortford Brewery, before the Hoskins family stepped in and bought Saffron outright in 2013. I ask them why they decided to go into brewing, and James informs me that it was a natural progression for him.



"I'd run the pub (the St. Radegund in Cambridge) since 2009, and before that I was in the building trade. We used to stock the beers, and when the opportunity came up it seemed like the logical thing to do." Despite some early problems, they managed to get the brewery how they wanted it and began adding some of the beers that they wanted to brew to the range that they inherited. As with many smaller regional breweries however, they don't get to experiment as much as they, or at least Ed, would like. "We have our core beers and our seasonals, and they are proving very popular," he tells me, "and when you have a limited amount of kit it's hard to find time to plan and brew another beer. Our customers ask us for specific beers, and we don't want to let them down."

I get a sense that Ed would like to brew a few more different beers though and occasionally gets his own way, the recent Saffron Galaxy with its distinctive sci-fi themed label being particularly memorable, the Galaxy hop's beautiful passion fruit and mango flavour, its tropical aroma bursting from the glass. They've also recently brewed their first collaboration beer with Daniel Nelson of Original Gravity magazine and comedian Ed Byrne. 'Humour Me' is described as a golden harvest ale, based on their Saffron Blonde with a higher caramalt content, but this has fermented out beautifully leaving a deliciously-lingering brown sugar sweetness. If you're lucky you



might still find some bottles out there; I believe Ales By Mail have some, but it sold very briskly I'm told.

Inevitably I have to ask them what's next. James becomes quite guarded here, and pauses before answering, choosing his words carefully. "Well, we already have the St. Radekund in Cambridge as our brewery tap, but we're in the process of buying and converting a new pub locally, just outside Saffron Walden (from which the brewery gets its name) but I don't want to say too much about that at this stage, just in case." That pub is the Bluebell Inn, in Hempstead, Essex, I can now reveal, and will hopefully be opening relatively soon so keep an eye on their website for details of that. As far as beer is concerned, I'm told that they will be trying a few different things in January and February with a Pilsner-style lager and 6-7% abv US-style hoppy IPA beers to look out for. The afternoon passes quickly in beer and conversation, particularly as we are generously treated to a tasting of the full bottled range. I make some cursory tasting notes and buy quite a few, ready for the third and final part of my Essex bottled beer series which you can expect to see in a month or two.

We take some final pictures and head off home

just as the sun is setting on what has been a thoroughly enjoyable day. I hadn't written too much down but I was taking away some good memories, as well as a very heavy bag full of beer.

It's been two months since my visit and things have moved on apace. There's more to come from Saffron Brewery and you'll be hearing from me again soon about some quite exciting developments. Watch this space, as they say.

Saffron Brewery can be found at: The Cartshed, Parsonage Farm, Henham, Essex CM22 6AN / 01279 850923 /

On twitter at: @Saffron Brewer and on Facebook at: Saffron Brewery

They have a shop on site where you can buy bottles, glasses and mini-casks, and will be hosting a series of tasting evenings at the brewery itself, the first of which was on 22nd January, so if you're in the area or just fancy an evening in the Essex countryside with an extra attraction then keep an eye on their website for further details.

You can follow Justin at: masonjust.blogspot.com or find him on Twitter at @1970sBoy and @BeerInEssex.

NORWICH: City of Ale

26th May – 5th June

Time to Visit Norwich!

Eight compelling reasons to organise a trip to Norwich City of Ale!



1. More than 40 fantastic pubs taking part

More than 40 Norwich pubs take part in City of Ale, many of them historic beauties, all of them offering ales from local breweries and running their own events and promotions. As you delve your way through the picturesque streets of the city, you'll struggle to be much more than a stone's throw away from a participating pub – and a terrific beer that's new to you.

2. 40 amazing breweries involved

City of Ale is all about beers from Norfolk and close surrounds. The fantastic array of breweries from within a 40-mile radius of Norwich provide rich pickings in terms of beer choice for the participating pubs. Different styles and flavours abound. Extraordinary when you think how at one point Norfolk was a veritable brewing desert! Many of the breweries offer tours – so you might like to build time into your trip for a jaunt out to see them.

3. Ale

It's not called City of Ale for nothing. After all, it's a city. And it has ale; lots of ale; lots and lots of ale. There's a fabulous Ale Trail awaiting your discriminating palate.

4. It was unique when it started – and it remains the best city celebration of ale

This is not a festival tied to a single venue, rather an experience extending across a whole city. Since 2011 when it started, other towns and cities have followed suit and create terrific beer events of their own, but Norwich City of Ale remains the inspiration – and showpiece of ale celebration.

5. Grain to glass like nowhere else

This region, with its light soils, low rainfall and sunny climate grows some of the best barley in the world – and local maltsters create exceptional malt from it. So, it's hardly surprising that so many craft brewers

in the area source their main ingredients (barley and other cereal malts) locally.

6. The city is beautiful

Norwich is a gorgeous city filled with historic architecture intertwined with chic modern buildings. It is home to a fabulous castle, a lovely cathedral, a traditional market, art centres, theatres and, by the way have we mentioned – an array of fantastic pubs? It's a happening place – with more than ever happening during Norwich, City of Ale!

7. Branch outings

City of Ale holds everything (or almost everything) your branch could possibly want from an outing. To do it justice you'll really want to stay over for a night or two.

8. It celebrates entrepreneurship

The beer and pub industry is full of entrepreneurs – nowhere more so than Norwich and the region that surrounds it. And there are also the two legends



who created the concept and set up the whole event. Norwich City of Ale is the brainchild of Dawn Leeder, creator of PintPicker, which has profiled more than 16,000 beers (look it up if you don't believe it) and Phil Cutter, licensee of the award-winning Gardeners Arms, better known as The Murderers (check out the

story, which just in case you were worrying, is long before Phil's time). If you're lucky enough, you'll meet them on your way round the Ale Trail, and can have a chat over a pint. But in any case be sure to raise your glasses to them, and to two of the things that are best about Britain: our beer and our pubs.

So, City of Ale is a fantastic opportunity for CAMRA members, or CAMRA branches, to visit Norwich and take in the sights and ales. The fun starts on the 26th of May and lasts until the 5th June, with a whole host of events crammed in between. Why not get a group together, make the trip down, and enjoy Britain's City of Ale? There's plenty to drink to.

Further info: www.cityofale.org.uk

Facebook: Norwich City of Ale

Twitter @CityOfAle

Sommelier Jane on beer, whisky, vodka and every beverage known to drinking kind...

Beer O'Clock: Craft, Cask and Culture **School of Booze: an insider's guide to libations, tipples and brews**

Jane Peyton, Summersdale, £9.99 each

Jane Peyton is a force of nature. She endlessly lectures and extols the virtues of beer. She's an accredited Beer Sommelier but spreads her wings wider through her School of Booze, which is also the title of her second book. I'm tempted to ask her how she manages to write two books at the same time but it's not a treadmill I care to join.

She writes well, with short, snappy sentences, an engaging style and a sharp sense of humour. Beer O'Clock is a canter through the history of beer, from its inception in the Old World of Babylonia, Egypt and Mesopotamia where brewing was a gift from the gods and such goddess as Ama-Gestin, Dea Latis, Ninkasi and Siduri were worshipped by imbibers of the juice of the grain.

Jane stresses that beer, far more than other intoxicants, is the beverage that pleases and soothes the world. She underscores the point by listing the myriad names for beer and ale found in just about every language on the planet.

She details the key ingredients used in the brewing process and explains how beer is made, all in an approachable style. The list of hops, while not exhaustive, gives useful notes on the aromas and flavours created by the ingenious green plant. The main body of the book is devoted to outlining the vast number of beer styles available throughout the world, from Abbey to Witbier.

Jane follows this with a summary of the aromas and

Spring 2016

flavours developed by each style and then suggested beers for matching with food. This includes beers for each meal of the day: I shall try many of her suggestions, though I may draw the line at Heather Ale with my morning porridge. I'm still at teapot stage at breakfast time.

She bravely takes on the anti-alcohol lobby by championing beer not only as a sensible drink but also one that consumed in moderation is beneficial, brewed with pure water, malted grain and hops that are all small storehouses of goodness. This won't stop her getting letters in green ink from Alcohol Concern and other health Jesuits.

It all adds up to a delightful book. It would be deeply patronising to say it's a book for beer beginners. We're never too old to learn and I not only enjoyed this stimulating read but also picked up useful tidbits of beer knowledge.

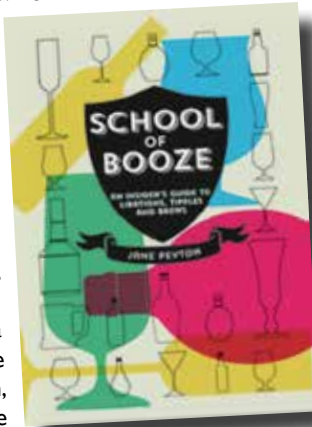
School of Booze underscores Jane's admirable knowledge of all alcoholic drinks. This is a fascinating description of every known form of beverage and their histories.

Beer features again, naturally, but you will also learn how the likes of absinthe, bourbon, vodka, whisky and whiskey, Cognac, gin, rum, wine and Champagne are made.

Encouraged by her enthusiasm, I'm tempted to make my own Scotch whisky. It sounds simple enough: boil it, distil it and then – oh dear – leave it for three years

to age. I think I'll stick to a pint of bitter.

Thanks to Roger Protz for these reviews taken from <http://protzonbeer.co.uk>



CIDER PRESS by Claire Irons

The Thirsty Scarecrow

Having worked at The Rack of Ale in Dover, Kent, and seen the increasing range of ciders on offer, Kieran Redmond and his partner Katy Tatham decided to open a cider house in Dover following the same principles as the other four micro pubs in the town. They opened their cider house in November 2015, in what was previously the Corner Cafe in the High Street. A small set of stairs leads to the chilled cellar room, which has 20-25 ciders, and perries and a cask of ale on gravity dispense. He told me that 60% of his stock is from Kent cider producers with a range from elsewhere to give a variety of styles such as Somerset scrumpy.

In addition, on offer is wine, including Prosecco, and bottled Belgian beer.

Katy is a hairdresser and runs an appointment-only hair salon in the back room. Surely, it is unique to have a combined cider house and hair salon! However I have been to Gallaghers Pub and Barbers in Birkenhead which is a barbershop and a free house pub with a real cider and perry in summer. How's that for malty-tasking or even malty-casking?

Kieran told me that it is proving to be great success and he is pleased to be featured on CAMRA's Whatpub.com website.



I look forward to visiting and comparing to my experience of Ye Olde Cider Bar in Newton Abbott, Devon that is more than 100 years old. Cider houses are not a new concept but I wish them well for this project where the march of the micro pubs in Kent has spread. People enjoy the simple things in life: good real cider (or beer), and good conversation in a clean and safe environment to socialise.

Results For Chelmsford Winter Beer & Cider Festival

Customers were invited to vote for their favourite beer, cider, perry and pyder of the festival so they may be chosen for future festivals and in order to present awards to the brewer/cider maker.

Details to be confirmed at time of going to press so check our website or contact me: cider@chelmsford.camra.org.uk / 07773 093399.

Beer of the Festival (joint): Green Jack Baltic Trader (Stout/Porter) / Thornbridge Cocoa Wonderland (Stout/Porter)

Cider of the Festival: Delvin End Winter Festival (Spiced)

Perry of the Festival: Berties Cider Co Galanthus Perry

Pyder of the Festival: Berties Cider Co Con-Cox-Tion

I plan to present the cider awards at Chelmsford and Mid-Essex Cider Pub of the Year: the Three Elms at Chignal St James.



PRESENTATIONS

Ian Reynolds, Quality Controller and Producer at Berties Cider Co, collecting his award for Cox-A-Ruby-Do which was voted as Cider of the Festival at Chelmsford Summer 2015 celebrating 40 Years of Chelmsford Mid-Essex CAMRA. He should make room for more awards following the voting at this year's winter festival at KEGS.

Apple Cottage Cider Company

Apple Cottage Cider Company uses fruit grown locally to them in Baldock, Hertfordshire to minimise food miles, with most of it from their own orchards

The fruit is hand-picked from trees that are never sprayed. No synthetic chemicals such as sulphites are added to their products. Slow fermentation keeps all the natural flavours rounded and mellow. Having started making cider as a hobby at home 17 years ago Gayle Edwards was persuaded by her friend Rob Scahill, landlord of The Orange Tree in Baldock, to go commercial so she got licensed in 2009.

The Orange Tree has stocked Apple Cottage Cider ever since which has helped them become the Hertfordshire Pub of the Year and Cider Pub of the Year 2015, now that they have four of the Apple Cottage range of ciders and perries permanently.



Gayle Edwards receiving awards for Perry & Pyder of the Festival Chelmsford Summer 2015



The wall of cider at Apple Cottage Cidery

Gayle and her husband Paul have moved premises twice to expand the operation with a larger press, bottle-crowner, labelling system and a machine for filling the bags for the Bag-in -Box dispense system although they do still supply in barrels for festivals.

They have won many awards for their range with Filthy Tramp Juice (FTJ) being Cider of the Year 2014. Last year was a very successful one with FTJ being Cider of the Festival at Grantham Beer & Cider Festival; KT single variety cider being Hertfordshire Cider of the Year and Perry Coma being Hertfordshire Perry of the Year.

They scooped the double at Chelmsford Summer Beer & Cider festival with Pyder of the Festival and Perry of the festival with Fred's Perry, which were also on the cider bar at this year's winter festival.

Cider news

For May being Cider Month and Mild month we have a trip to Baldock Beer and Cider festival on Sunday 1st May as well as a cider safari and mild meander of pubs which sell Real cider and mild in Chelmsford, starting at The Railway Tavern at noon, Saturday 21st May. Contact Martin Joy, Social Secretary for details: 07878 624443 / socialsecretary@chelmsford.camra.org.uk

- We shall be showcasing Essex Cider and Real Ale at the Young Farmers' event at Boyton Cross, near Roxwell on Sunday 22nd May, including free samples, so come along and try some!
- From May Berties will have four new products

available: Panfield Cider, Panfield Perry, Cox SV (single variety) and Con-Cox-Tion Pyder (from conference pears and cox apples).

- In addition, there will be a Berties Summer Festival Cider (to be named by festival volunteers) and Summer Festival by Dawn Leworthy of Delvin End Cidery in Sible Hedingham at the Chelmsford Summer Festival: One of the best places on the planet to try a wide range of real cider and perry according to CAMRA.
- Delvin End also has Celtic Storm matured in a Scotch whisky barrel and Sailor's Ruin matured in a rum cask so the flavour mellows over time.

STOP PRESS: The Branch Cider Pub of the Year 2016 is the Three Elms at Chignal St James, which has a range of 16 ciders and was Runner Up for the East Anglia Cider Pub of the Year 2015. It will go into the Essex round so I shall be able to announce the County Cider POTY in the summer edition of Thirsty Times along with tasters of the Summer Festival Cider Bar.

Runner-up in the Cider Pub of the Year competition is the Compasses at Little Green, which has four real ciders on with plans to have five in the summer, aiming for a range of dry, medium and sweet plus a perry or pyder (made from apples and pears).

SOCIAL CALENDAR

MARCH

Wednesday 9th March. Branch Meeting at the Battersford Court, Witham.

8pm for 8.30pm start. Community bus from opposite Chelmsford station at 7.30pm. Cost £5. Usual Chelmsford drop-off circuit afterwards

Saturday 19th March. Chelmsford Pub Crawl.

Joint Social with Maldon and Dengie Branch. Meet 11am at the Ale House, Chelmsford and visit all the best real ale and cider pubs in the City.

Friday 25th March (Good Friday).

Our annual Good Friday pub crawl.

Broomfield Road and Duke Street crawl ending the evening at the Woolpack for its Easter Beer Festival. 12 noon from the Angel, Broomfield. The plan is to visit as many of the pubs as possible along Broomfield Road and Duke Street.

APRIL

Friday 1st to Monday 4th April. CAMRA AGM and members' weekend, Liverpool.

See CAMRA website. Make your own arrangements for travel and accommodation.

Saturday 9th April.

Walk to Maldon from Chelmsford.

You are all invited to join our planned walk along the river from Chelmsford to Maldon stopping off for refreshments at Papermill Lock on the way. Proposed departure from Railway Tavern, Chelmsford at 11am. Optional breakfast at the Railway Tavern at 10am. (Price is usually £6). Arriving at Maldon the plan is to visit the beer festival and some of the fine drinking establishments this town now has. Returning to Chelmsford by bus/ taxi at your leisure. Cyclists and those wishing to do only part of the journey are welcome to join in.

Saturday 16th April.

Essex Cider POTY judging.

Free campaigning minibus. 17 spaces for members only. All-day event visiting the best cider pubs in Essex as chosen by each branch. This is a judging trip so those wishing to partake must be prepared to complete score sheets for each pub we visit. Depart from opposite Chelmsford station 11am. Optional breakfast at the Railway Tavern at 10am (Price is usually £6).

Wednesday 20th April. Branch Meeting at the White Hart, Margaretting Tye.

8pm for 8.30pm start. Community bus departs from opposite Chelmsford station at 7.45pm. Cost £5.00 which includes Chelmsford drop-off circuit afterwards.

Tuesday 26th April. Evening Runabout.

Visiting the Leather Bottle, Pleshey, Butchers Arms, North End, Chequers, Felsted and Flitch of Bacon, Little Dunmow. By community bus departing 7.30pm opposite Chelmsford station. Cost £7.50 for members, £9 for non-members, includes Chelmsford drop-off circuit afterwards.

Saturday 30th April. Essex POTY judging.

All day event visiting the best pubs in Essex as chosen by each branch. This is a judging trip so those wishing to partake must be prepared to complete score sheets for each pub we visit. Depart from opposite Chelmsford station 11am. Optional breakfast at the Railway Tavern at 10am (Price is usually £6).

MAY

Sunday 1st May. Trip to Baldock Independent Ale and Cider Festival.

All Day Runabout by minibus. Cost £10, members only. Departing 11am opposite Chelmsford station. 100 Ales, 60 Ciders and Perries. Foreign Beers, Music, Entertainment and Food. Also branch presentation to Apple Cottage Cider will be made. Festival finishes at 8pm so we are likely to make a mystery stop on the way home. May 2nd is a Bank Holiday so no need for us to rush home. Usual Chelmsford drop-off circuit afterwards.

Friday 6th to Sunday 8th May.

Weekend trip to York (2 nights).

By minibus. Members only, cost £35. Leaving early morning on Friday 6th returning evening on Sunday 8th. Very limited places so you will need to check for availability on the bus and then book your own accommodation. This trip was already advertised on our website and places are filling fast.

Tuesday 17th May. Branch Meeting at the Queens Head, Boreham.

8.30pm start. By minibus from opposite Chelmsford station departing 7.45pm. Cost £7.50 for members only. Usual Chelmsford drop-off circuit afterwards.

SOCIAL CALENDAR

Saturday 21st May.

Mild May and Cider Crawl

Pub Crawl Promoting Mild Ale and Cider month. Visiting the pubs in Chelmsford that regularly have Mild as part of their portfolio and others that are especially putting it on for the occasion plus some of the pubs also providing real cider or perry. Meet at 12 midday in Railway Tavern, Chelmsford. All welcome.

JUNE

Saturday 4th June.

All Day Trip to Eastbourne and the National Cider Centre at Firle, near Lewes Sussex.

Day trip by Luxury Coach. Cost £25 members £28 non-members. Departing opposite Chelmsford station at 10am. This is a full-day trip to Eastbourne, visiting this splendid seaside town which boasts numerous pubs in the Good Beer Guide. (Details of these will be provided on the day and you will be free to visit them at your leisure). It's also the venue for CAMRA's AGM weekend in 2017 so a good chance to do some research beforehand.

Optional short excursion for anyone who wants to visit the National Cider Centre where literally hundreds of Ciders and Perries are free to sample and of course purchase.

Depart Eastbourne at around 6pm for a stop at a CAMRA-accredited pub in Sevenoaks on the way home. ETA in Chelmsford is 10pm. This is open to members of other CAMRA branches as well.

Saturday 18th June.

All Day trip to Gibberd Garden Beer Festival

By minibus departing opposite Chelmsford station at 12 midday. Cost £7.00 for members only. £3 entrance fee to Festival. Beer Festival organised by Herts and Essex Borders (HEB) branch of CAMRA. Located near Old Harlow, the Gibberd Garden is an inspirational, Grade II listed garden, full of beauty, peace and tranquillity, where every turn reveals another aspect or a work of art. Over 35 Beers supplied by small, local and Craft breweries from around East Anglia and London. A Selection of Real Cider & Perry from East Anglian small producers. Two large Marquees just in case the Great British Summer delivers a bit of rain. As the festival finishes at 8pm we plan to visit a couple of pubs on the way

home to Chelmsford. Usual Chelmsford drop-off circuit afterwards.

Wednesday 22nd June. Branch Meeting at the Chequers, Felsted.

8.30pm start. Minibus from opposite Chelmsford station departing 7.30pm. Cost £7.50 for members only. Usual Chelmsford drop-off circuit afterwards.

Tuesday 28th June. Suffolk Evening Runabout.

Minibus from opposite Chelmsford station departing at 7.30pm. Cost £8.00 for members. Visiting pubs in Bures, Lamarsh, Fordham and Henny Street. Usual Chelmsford drop-off circuit afterwards.

Places for trips must be booked with Martin Joy on 07878 624443 or by email to socialsecretary@chelmsford.camra.org.uk. Please give your contact details when booking and ensure you obtain confirmation that you have been added to the list.

Please see the website and the next issue of Thirsty Times for full details of the following:

Wednesday 13th July.

Branch meeting at the Queens Head, Chelmsford.

Thursday 21st July.

Evening Runabout to Bishops Stortford Beer Festival.

Saturday 23rd July.

Regional POTY judging trip.

Saturday 30th July.

Day Trip to Ongar and Epping Beer Festival.

Wednesday 17th August.

Branch Meeting at the Three Compasses, West Hanningfield.

Thursday 18th to Sunday 21st August.

Possible Thames Barge sailing trip from Ipswich to Maldon (3 nights).

Staying on board an original Thames Barge (Pudge) and sailing along the coast and Orwell estuary, visiting riverside pubs along the way. Estimated Cost is £256 per person for a full board package. Please indicate your interest for this trip as soon as possible so that we can gauge numbers and make the necessary bookings.

Saturday 27th August.

All day visit to Broadstairs and Ramsgate micropubs.

BRANCH TRIP TO LONDON

Branch trip to London following the 205 bus route, Tuesday 29th December, 2015

After arranging our GroupSaves and Travelcards at Chelmsford station we arrived at Liverpool Street at around 12.30pm, where we had arranged to meet some people from other branches. It was especially good to see Lisa and Francis from SE Essex branch.

Our first stop was the very impressive **Hamilton Hall** (EC2M 7PY). It's a Wetherspoon pub on a truly grand scale and the former ballroom for the Great Eastern Hotel, located at the station. It was quite an elegant place to grab some lunch and enjoy our first pint of the day. A few of us opted for Titanic Eight Bells, which went down very well and probably ended up being my favourite beer of the day.

A quick jaunt across the road and into the **Magpie** (EC2M 4TP). It's a Nicholson's pub serving some good ales. I went for a half of Harviestoun Old Engine Oil, which I had only ever seen in bottles. Needless to say it was a most welcome sight to see it on hand pump and most enjoyable.

Then on to the bus for our first planned port of call on the bus route. A 135 bus had to be taken due to re-routing of the 205.

We had decided to visit the **Old Fountain** near Old Street (EC1V 9NU). It has had some great reviews and usually serves eight real ales and nine craft keg beers. It's also very close to Moorfield Eye Hospital and we left the bus to follow the green line on the pavement which leads to the hospital. The pub is situated just a few streets along; however when we arrived it was closed and we discovered that it was not due to open until New Years Eve.

We then decided to visit the **Wenlock Arms** (NI 7TA), just a few minutes walk away. Another highly-recommended pub and well-known to some of our members. However, learning from our first mistake, we decided to check if it was actually open. Unfortunately it wasn't and was only due to open much later that afternoon so another cunning plan was scuppered.

Needless to say we didn't let these two disappointments get us down, so it was back on the

bus. We had decided to go to Paddington and work our way back to Liverpool Street during the day. With the bus passing many of the pubs we planned to visit on our return leg we eventually arrived at Paddington station.

Although the **Mad Bishop and Bear** in the station comes highly recommended we took a short stroll from Paddington Station to the **Victoria** (W2 2NH). It's a grand and stylish pub in the heart of Paddington, an historic building that's as old as Paddington Station built in 1838. It's claimed that Queen Victoria stopped off on her way to Paddington station, so it was named in her honour and afforded an opulent atmosphere to reflect the royal. Charles Dickens is also reported to have written one of his stories at the pub. It's a Fullers pub, full of history and of course serving a full range of their beers plus guests. I had the Oliver's Island blonde/golden ale, which I have never had before. Quite a refreshing ale and easily quaffable at 3.8%, it was soon followed by a swift half of the wonderful Adnams Ghost Ship.

The upstairs bar is something quite amazing. It's decorated like an old-time theatre, with royal boxes, plush carpets and ornate surroundings. The landlord must have seen us all arrive and duly introduced himself and proceeded to give us an insight into the room we had all occupied. We discovered that the original back bar was taken from the Gaiety Theatre in Aldwych, which had been bombed out during the second world war and which was finally demolished in 1956.

A brisk walk for those who felt athletic enough while others jumped back on the bus towards Marylebone.

Next pub on the list was the **Barley Mow** (W1U 6QW) described as a Victorian pub with wooden drinking cubicles, serving a good selection of ales. But alas, it was another pub closed during the period between Christmas and the New Year, so a short diversion to the next pub on our list.

The **Metropolitan Bar** at Baker Street (NW1 5LA) is another grand Wetherspoon pub and where we had decided to stop and have some lunch. It was Steak Club day and £8.95 for a steak or chicken and rib meal with a pint of ale was very reasonable for

London. I had a pint of Windsor and Eton Mandarin Christmas Ale, which although drinkable was probably not in the best condition and was getting a little tired, shall we say.

Refreshed and fed it was another short stroll to the next pub **The Albany** (WIV 5QU) in Great Portland Street. This city pub had a good selection of four real ales on and 29 craft ales in bottles plus countless wines. I opted for the Timothy Taylor Golden ale which was adequate but followed by a half of the UBU Purity which was much better.

Another longer walk for those who dared, or short bus ride for those who didn't, to **The Euston Tap** (NWI 2EF). This is a craft ale paradise situated in the gate house to the old Euston Station. Serving eight cask ales and loads of trendy keg craft beers, plus countless numbers of bottled beers, it is well worth a visit if you want to try something out of the ordinary.

It was a bit cramped and the upstairs bar at the top of a spiral staircase was also small and busy. The toilet also located upstairs was not very private to say the least much to the amusement of some punters. It has a small undercover garden area which I am guessing would be very nice during the summer.

They had a list of cask ales on offer and I am ashamed to say I did not recognise many of them. I opted for a stout from micro brewer Cloudwater, whom I discovered is based in Manchester, followed by a half of the very nice Luppul from Clouded Minds Brewery in Banbury.

Located across the road is the other gate house which used to be the **Euston Cider Tap**. Unfortunately, and much to the disappointment of our cider drinkers, it was closed. Apparently business had not been great and they had decided to close it. There is hope that it will re-open once summer returns when cider and perry becomes a much more favoured tittle for the London socialites.

Leaving the Tap we headed for our next stop located just behind Euston Station, the **Bree Louise** (NWI 2HH). A proper real ale and cider pub with award-winning pies on offer, it's been North London CAMRA's pub of the year on a couple of occasions. Perhaps a little run down and in need of a lick of paint, it still had an excellent selection of ales and ciders on offer including the impressive Plum Porter from Titanic and there was a real warm feel about the place.

Sadly we discovered that this pub is probably to be

demolished along with a row of houses, to make way for the HS2 terminal and platform at Euston station in 2017.

Some of us passed while others decided to pop into the **Doric Arch** (NWI 1DN) with its white tiled entrance. It is a Fullers pub serving a full range of their cask ales and guest beers. It is also a railway-themed pub located in the front of Euston Station and ideal for a swift one while waiting for your train.

Just a short stroll further along the Euston Road, you reach one of the most impressive railway stations in London, if not the world. Entering St Pancras International Station we headed for the **Betjeman Arms** (NIC 4QL), described as the "last pub before Paris or the first pub back in Blighty".

With a reasonable selection of ales on offer it is probably fair to say that its location is what makes it quite remarkable and with a heated outside terrace underneath the impressive arches of the Station and close to the giant statue of the Lovers, it's a really romantic rendezvous.

Anyway, back to our trail, and the last port of call was to be the **Parcel Yard** (NI 9AL). A short stroll through St Pancras station and across the road to Kings Cross railway station passing the Harry Potter shop and platform 9¾, up the stairs and into what used to be the main sorting and parcel area but is now an impressive pub. It's another Fullers Pub offering a great selection of ales, although a tad expensive. It overlooks the platforms and has loads of memorabilia with small rooms on either side of a long corridor.

Last half pint for me, which was a London Porter, and then back onto the bus to Liverpool Street where we caught our trains back to Essex.

Overall I must say that it was a really interesting day, visiting some impressive and historic pubs. I would thoroughly recommend this tour, but as you know London can be a little expensive with some prices being a lot more than you would usually expect to pay. I would also check to see the pubs you plan to visit are open as we discovered to our frustration! A special thank you to everyone who came along and helped to make it a very enjoyable and memorable day.

Martin Joy

NB. Comments and opinions are those of the social secretary and may not be shared by everyone.

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HOW CAN WE HELP BRITISH BEER TO GROW UP?

TIM WEBB is a much published, award-winning writer and campaigner for better beer. He has just finished compiling with Stephen Beaumont the second edition of their *World Atlas of Beer* for Octopus Books – due out in September. We asked him to compare the world of beer in 2016 with the very different world that existed when he joined CAMRA in 1974.

Back in 1974, when I joined CAMRA, it was easy. There were two sorts of beer. Cask was good and the rest was not. Pubs sat in the same place as they had for generations and had familiar names. Beers bore names that told you what they were. Things are not like that any more and with the exception of the last point are unlikely ever to be again.

Back then the biggest brewery company was Bass Charrington. Based in Burton-on-Trent and London, it owned around 20% of Britain's pubs, hitting 17,000 at its peak. With five others – Allied, Whitbread, Imperial Tobacco (Courage), Watney Mann Truman, and Scottish & Newcastle – it made up the Big Six breweries that between them produced about 80% of UK beer in 75 breweries that were being closed rapidly.

We had around 100 independent breweries that between them owned 18% of the pubs and supplied a similar proportion of the beer. No British brewery was foreign-owned unless you counted the Guinness plant in London's Park Royal. Little beer was imported or, compared to Britain's brewing heyday between 1750 and 1914, exported.

Good beer was a rarity abroad too, though those on business or military service in Bavaria often found weird sorts of lager that looked just like the British stuff but tasted loads better. Czechoslovakia was cut off behind an Iron Curtain and Belgium had yet to rediscover its brilliant small breweries. Beer had hit its global low point, only four countries having any significant residue of heritage breweries or beer styles.

The brave new world

In 2016 things have changed unrecognisably. There are now over 60 countries in which at least a handful of breweries are making a range of historic beer styles, a majority of these British ales. Some are true to the original, others modern takes on older

themes. Two dozen countries now have in excess of 100 new breweries, most created since 2002, few predating 1995. That number should top 30 by 2018. CAMRA is rightly proud of the fact that Britain has 1,600 new breweries, or one per 40,000 population, though this only makes us the seventh most brewery-rich nation in Europe after Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Lithuania, Iceland and Denmark, with several traditionally wine-drinking countries, like France (760 breweries), Italy (900) and Spain (350) catching up rapidly.

Germany's total has stayed around 1,500 but while in 1980 this made up more than a third of the global total, now it represents less than 6%. Expansion is so rapid that it is impossible to keep track of the numbers but the consensus is that the global total is 'well north of 20,000 but still south of 30,000'.

In 2015, the Netherlands, South Africa and Brazil all saw an average of one new brewery opening per week. While many of these new enterprises remain tin pot affairs, founded on the brewer's redundancy money, a correspondence course on salesmanship and a home brewing prize or two, lots are not. It is not unusual to find set-ups funded to make and sell cleverly-designed beers in 20-hectolitre (15-barrel) brew runs right from the word go.

Limitless choices

Local choice has transformed too. In 1974 I lived in Birmingham, infamous at the time for the "duopoly" of M&B (Bass Charrington) and Ansells (Allied Breweries), the two companies owning between them 93% of the city's 750 or so pubs. In a city of a million people it was only possible to find eight cask ales.

In the three-pub, 2,500-inhabitant Cambridgeshire village where I lived for the last few years I could find nine cask ales on a typical weekday evening and more at weekends. A short cycle ride to neighbouring villages usually doubled that and, were I of a mind

to do so, I could order a case of any of over 2,000 different beers from 20 or more countries to be delivered to my door within a couple of days.

It is easy to believe that the news for beer consumers is all good but think on this.

Late last year the world's second largest brewery company, SAB Miller, accepted a bid from the world's largest brewer, AB InBev, which is currently sliding past the world's various competition authorities largely intact. It looks likely that by the end of this year this new behemoth will be responsible for brewing roughly one-third of the world's beer.

Just in case you think this does not matter, click on the advert that appears at superbowlcommercials2016.org/Budweiser/ – not the deft, socially-responsible effort featuring Helen Mirren but the other one. Designed to show the might of Budweiser, with the chilling closing line “Not backing down”, this first showed during American football's 2016 Superbowl final – US TV's biggest advertising slot of the year.

The overt disrespect shown for smaller-scale brewing is odd, given that the company is busily trotting round the world buying up better-known craft breweries like they are coming into fashion. But can they run them if they disrespect the product?

Whatever is a beer lover to do?

So how should the discerning beer drinker respond to the new world? It depends on whether you are a punter or an organisation.

As an individual, the best advice is to go out there and explore all its newness, though if you are British and looking for reliable and independent advice on how to do that. I wish you luck in finding a useful independent guide.

There are lots of rave reviews out there about great new beers or ventures but finding a comprehensive guide to what's good and what's not is impossible. For the consumer this is a shame, given the consistent quality gap between The Kernel or Beavertown on the one hand and the rancid sludge oozing onto the market from some others in the name of craft beer.

For an organisation, the challenge is that having been well ahead of the rest of the world in preserving our beer culture and hitting back against the industrial vision of 4 to 5% ABV frothy-topped, fast-fermented blond lager for all by 2020, the UK is now falling behind much of the rest of Europe.

We still have our delightfully eccentric and culturally important cask light ales, but do we have anything else? The rest of the world may be taken with beer in

styles that reflect older traditions of British brewing but in the UK we are wary. A generation of beer writers like myself have misled British punters into believing that all beers are best served by being served from the cask, and a century of making mainly diluted beers has left us believing that any beer over 5% ABV is dangerously strong.

Some good old-new classic beers are emerging – Thornbridge's Jaipur IPA springs to mind – and there is some great exploratory stuff going on from Cornwall to Aberdeenshire but no group monitoring and commenting on this.

Britain needs a guide to its good beers.

Inconvenient truths

With the arguable exception of Germany, the UK is currently the only country in the world where the proportion of beer that comes from industrial brewers is rising. Cask is doing reasonably in the pub trade but that sector has now fallen below 50% of the UK beer market for the first time in history, and the shortfall created outstrips craft beer's gains in the rest of the market.

Strip down the numbers in publications like the annual Cask Report in a way that bypasses the real ale propaganda machine, and even the good news is pretty insipid. Yes, we have loads of new cask ale brewers but for the most part these are taking sales from the regional and family breweries that laid the foundations for the globally important real ale revival three decades ago.

The UK beer market remains dominated by six industrial breweries, the difference being that nowadays none is British owned.

AB InBev and SAB Miller (soon to be married); Heineken and Carlsberg (said to be dating); Molson Coors; and Diageo (Guinness) are respectively the world's first, second, third, fourth, seventh and sixteenth largest brewery companies and hold as much control over UK brewing as the old Big Six did back in the day.

What has changed is that where the UK's hundred or so independent breweries used to supply around 18% of UK beer, its 1,600 independent brewers now supply only around 12%. Hey ho.

For the real successes of Europe's beer revival look to Scandinavia, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Spain and Poland, with Austria, Ireland, Greece, Portugal and much of Eastern Europe looking hopeful. Here in the UK? You work it out.

MR GRUMPY'S GRIPE!

I am aware that warfare has moved on since World War II. I am also aware that Britain no longer rules the waves. However, was it really necessary, following government cutbacks, for the Royal Navy to sell all its surplus camouflage paint, previously only ever found on battleships, to our pub companies? Their designers, developers and decorators only seem to use this camouflage-coloured paint these days. Boring! Boring! Boring!

Now, although I was never a smoker, I always felt comfortable with yellow walls and ceilings stained with varying degrees of nicotine in our pubs. Perhaps some pub designer/decorator will go retro and invent a fine nicotine-coloured spray for staining our pub walls and ceilings in order to bring back the good old days of pub decor!

And another thing!

Why do most of the ever-increasing number of fledgling micro-breweries have to impose pale, citrusy, hoppy beers upon us? If they sat back and thought about it, they would have realised that it is the 'grey' pound that they should be brewing for.

Us old gits drink brown bitters and milds, not over-hopped but nicely balanced between the sweetness of the malt and the bitterness of the hop. We do not want or need hop soup! Over-hopped and under-thought is a phrase that I've heard more than once recently!

And one more thing!

Why do so many CAMRA members behave like the animals in George Orwell's Animal Farm – Four legs good; Two legs bad? "Microbreweries good; Long-established and family brewers bad." Many of our well-established brewers seem to have become unfashionable. Well, trust me, there's nowt wrong with Sam Smith's Old Brewery Bitter, Theakston's Old Peculier, JW Lees Bitter, Wells Bombardier, Robinson's Unicorn etc. Our new breweries brew some very fine beer (not always over-hopped) but isn't it time for us to revisit some of the beers that helped to save real ale from the sea of tasteless, fizzy keg beers in the 1970s?

Mr Grumpy



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LOCAL CAMRA BEER & CIDER FESTIVALS

We will not be running minibuses or organising trips to these festivals, but as they are local we would encourage our members to support them where possible.

Wednesday 6th to Saturday 9th April. Maldon Beer Festival, Maldon.

At the Plume School, Maldon.

Tuesday 31st May to Saturday 4th June. Colchester Summer Beer Festival.

At Colchester Arts Centre, Church Street, Colchester. CO1 1NF. More than 120 beers, ciders and perries, plus a Belgian Bar and live entertainment and food.

Free entry to card-carrying CAMRA members. Check with social secretary for possible groups visiting the festival on specific days and times.

Tuesday 7th to Saturday 11th June. Thurrock Beer Festival.

CAMRA Beer Festival run by SW Essex branch at Thurrock Civic Hall, Blackshots Lane, Grays, RM16 2JU. More than 150 real ales, 30 real ciders and perries, plus a selection of English country wines and mead, with food and live entertainment.

Free to card-carrying CAMRA members. 100 Bus from Chelmsford to Lakeside and train to Grays Station located 1.9 miles from festival.

Thursday 9th to Saturday 11th June. Braintree Beer Festival.

Run by NW Essex Branch of CAMRA and the Lions Club. At The Bocking Arts Theatre (formally Braintree Institute).

Hot food available at all sessions.

The 2016 theme is still undecided, but as is always the case with the festival they will have an interesting range of beer, cider and perry.

Proceeds from this year's Festival will be donated to LIBRA, MIND, and other local charities.

Thursday 24th to Saturday 26th June. Billericay Beer Festival.

As in past years the sixth Billericay Beer Festival will be held at Billericay Town Football Club. 100 Bus from Chelmsford will get you there and back.

This has now become an annual event that the people of Billericay and surrounding areas can come along to and enjoy a pint or two of real ale while being able to enjoy listening to some live music and also having something to eat at the same time.

If you have not been before, please come along and try some of the 50 different beers and ciders that will be on offer this year.

By doing so, you will not only be able to enjoy yourselves but you will also be helping the Lions raise money for local charitable causes at the same time; and how good can that be? See billericaybeerfestival.co.uk for further details as they become available.

Tuesday 5th July to Saturday 9th July. Chelmsford Summer Beer and Cider Festival.

At Admirals Park, Chelmsford. CMI 2PL.

Tuesday August 9th to Saturday 13th August. Great British Beer Festival.

This summer the Great British Beer Festival (GBBF) will once again return to London's magnificent Olympia exhibition centre.

See more at: <http://gbbf.org.uk/the-event/about-the-venue#sthash.Otv8mhfb.dpuf>

All members are encouraged to attend and support this event, and why not even try volunteering if you fancy a change.

Wednesday 24th to Saturday 27th August. Clacton Beer Festival.

Festival is organised by Tendring branch of CAMRA. At St. James' Hall, Tower Road, Clacton-on-Sea. CO15 1LE.

More than 65 real ales, ciders, perries, Essex wines, and Belgian and other European beers and free soft drinks for designated drivers.

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Spring 2016

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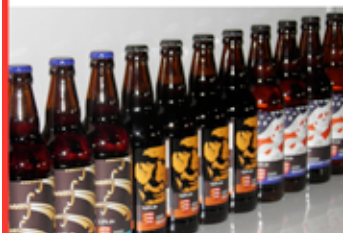
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