



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Thirsty Times



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Chelmsford and Mid-Essex Branch of
CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale

Issue 004
Winter 2012

Hapstock

YULEFEST

20TH-22ND DECEMBER



THE HUFFER PUB

THURS 20TH DECEMBER

CAROL SINGING 8.30PM

FRI 21ST DECEMBER

THE GENTLEMEN OF ID 8.30PM

SAT 22ND DECEMBER

LOADED DICE 8.30PM

20TH-22ND DEC / BEER FESTIVAL

12 ALES OF CHRISTMAS

INTRODUCING 'ST NICHOLAS'

THE BISHOP NICK CHRISTMAS ALE



**EAST ANGLIA
CAMRA PUB OF
THE YEAR 2012**



THE COMPASSES
LITTLE GREEN

Pub News

Reports in Pub News are provided by local CAMRA members, licensees and Thirsty Times readers. Further news of changes at local pubs is very welcome. Please send news to pubnews@chelmsfordcamra.org.uk.

Familiarity breeds ... well, shall we say, cynicism. With 46 of their pubs in our area (that's 1 in 4) many of us have probably been guilty of turning our noses up at the mention of Greene King. So let's start with news from 2 exceptional Greene King pubs.

Dave at the **Woolpack, Chelmsford** tells us



that he has had some really good beers on their free of tie pump through October and November, notably Titanic

Vanilla & Chocolate Stout, Cairngorm Trade Winds, Sharp's Red, and Tiny Rebel Urban IPA all selling out in 24 hrs!!! And manager Dan has some equally good beers booked up until Christmas and beyond. These have been really well supported with Greene King excelling themselves with some really good guests and seasonals. 'I can honestly say the range of beers this past month has been as good as we've been able to put on in our 8 years at the Woolpack. Greene King current guests include Timothy Taylor Landlord, Brains Merlin's Oak, Titanic 1912 and White Horse War Horse'. Personally I thought that 1799, a porter brewed for Cask ale week in October was excellent.

The Woolie now has a Jazz night on the first Sunday of each month with guest artists, and an open mic. night on the last Sunday of the month. However December's open mic. night will move to Boxing Night and a £5-a-ticket New Year's Eve party is planned with a DJ, nibbles and one free drink in-

cluded.

Steven, Christine and family have transformed the **Wagon & Horses, Braintree**.



There are always 8 real ales on here, 3 or 4 from Greene King and up to 5 other ales, the majority of

these being from Essex breweries. These are served from 2 magnificent arrays of handpumps, one in each bar. And 'now it can be revealed' the Wagon is back in the Good Beer Guide for the first time since 1998 (when Tony & Barbara from the Wheatsheaf, Writtle were there). Congratulations to Steve for the quality and range of his beers and for getting his pub, and CAMRA, some publicity in the local paper with a superb picture and write-up. Oh, and have you seen the indoor, glass-covered well?

The other new entry in the GBG, and for the first time ever, is the **Three Elms, Chignal**



St James.

Gill & Pete have been here for 2 years now and have quickly es-

established a reputation for good food and drink. Trade is increasing steadily which explains how a rural pub can offer 4 regularly-changing real ales and at least 15 real ciders – I doubt anyone can dispute their claim to be 'Essex's Premier Cider Provider'. Their established Festival in August was another great success this year, as was 'Cider Halloween' – which will also become an annual event. Check the website and join

Pub News

the mailing list. BTW a little bird tells me the Elms now has a bar billiard table.

For a country pub tucked away in a small hamlet, the **Windmill, Chatham Green** has



quite a lot going on, and as I've said before it's easily reached by the no.70 bus from Chelmsford or Braintree. If

you're quick you'll catch the Jacob Project, a great local band playing a wide range of music, on Friday 14th December. Again, the website will keep you up to date.



The **Compasses, Little Green** – East Anglian Pub of

the Year don't forget - plans another mini beer festival from 20th – 22nd December. Appropriately named "The Twelve Ales of Christmas", it will include Bishop Nick's seasonal offering, St Nicholas. There will be carol singing as there always is. The Compasses is now using www.perfectpint.co.uk to advise which ales are available each day

Many years ago the Chelmsford winter beer



festival was held at the turn of the year.

Now, as you wait for it to take place in February (NB, at KEGS) you can enjoy a 'Silly season Beer festival' at the **Ale House, Chelmsford** in the week between Christmas and New Year featuring a few of the stronger and stranger beers that are around at that time. Before that John plans an evening of carol singing in the week before Christmas (probably Thursday 20th), and regular Sunday music sessions start on the 13th January.



Dave at the **St Anne's Castle, Great Leighs**, has pulled off something of a

coup with Simon Spillett, "winner of the British Jazz Award for Tenor Saxophone 2011" returning to accompany regular modern jazz quintet Interplay. Friday 14th December for this one, and free entry as for all the Castle gigs. The pub held its annual charity garden party in August. Blessed with good weather the event attracted large crowds and raised £3,307 for Essex Air Ambulance. Another great effort.

I'm sure that many pubs have special events for Christmas but here are some that the landlords have told us about. Thank you to them, and please support these pubs.

The **Cricketers, Mill Green**, a Grays pub, has a couple of musical evenings coming up. On Monday 17th December you can enjoy Christmas carols and songs with Louise Masters and Dee Hepburn on vocals and piano. Free entry again! Then on Wednesday 19th December Louise Masters returns, this time with Darren Bazzoni as the amazing Tom Jones. You'll need to book a

4 Support your local pub - don't give them an excuse to close it!

Pub News

table for this one.

You'll probably be as surprised as I was to learn that some of the lady customers (and a couple of men), who are customers of that



nice respectable pub the **Chequers, Roxwell**, have taken off their clothes for charity. The

result is a calendar, "All For The Love Of Life", which will raise money for Farleigh Hospice, Macmillan Cancer support and Cancer Research UK. You can get one for £5.99 at the pub and see if you recognise anyone while you enjoy one of David's 3 real ales – at the time of writing Adnams Ghost Ship was on. Christmas present idea this one.

Now, sadly, some more pub closures to report. The first appears permanent with planning permission being granted for conversion of the **White Horse, Pleshey** to a private dwelling. This leaves the Leather Bottle as the only pub in Pleshey – do give it your support if you're in the area.

The **Cock, Boreham**, ex Ridleys and latterly Greene King is closed and up for sale. The Green Man, Howe Street closed suddenly and its future is unknown, and the Chequers, Writtle is closed while a new tenant is sought.

Finally, does anyone know what's happening at **Judge Tindal's, Chelmsford**? There appears to have been a lot of internal work going on over many months but no sign of it re-opening. As ever, news on this or any other pub will be much appreciated.

Apart from the Ale House & the Compasses above I'm not aware of any other forthcoming pub festivals but here are some fairly local CAMRA events:

Ely Beer Festival, 11th-12th January.
www.ely-camra.org.uk.

Cambridge Winter Ale Festival, 17th-19th January. www.cambridgebeerfestival.com.

Colchester Winter Ale Festival, 23rd-26th January. www.colchestercamra.org.uk.

Battersea Beer Festival, 6th-8th February.
www.batterseabeerfestival.org.uk.

Chelmsford Winter Beer & Cider Festival (at KEGS), 13th-16th February

Chappel Winter Festival, 1st-2nd March.
www.chappelbeerfestival.org.uk.



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Brewery News

Bishop Nick Brewery

Still concentrating on their three core beers Ridley's Rite, Heresy & 1555, which are still getting into a variety of the Grays estate as well as direct supply to free houses. They will however be producing a Christmas Ale called St. Nicholas. It is intended to be an amber ale with a hint of Christmas spice. It is being brewed as we went to print but they are aiming for around 4.5% abv Apparently making further progress in their search for their own brewery and premises.

Colchester Brewery

Continuing to develop their range of 'retro specials' with Old King Coel London Porter 5.0% abv, a recent addition being brewed in the original way with brown malt. A traditional winter ale is planned. Another addition to the range is Trinovantes Gold. The name Trinovantes comes from a tribe whose territory was once on the north side of the Thames estuary in current Essex and Suffolk, and included lands now located in Greater London. Their name derives from the Celtic intensive prefix 'tri-' and 'novio' - new, so meaning 'very new' in the sense of 'newcomers', but possibly with an applied sense of vigorous or lively - so the name could mean 'the very vigorous people'. Their capital was Camulodunum (modern Colchester), one proposed site of the legendary Camelot. Bottling is due to start shortly and will be carried out in house. All beers will be bottle conditioned with No.1, Red Diesel, Old King Coel London Porter and Metropolis expected to be the first beers available. The Brewery prides itself on sourcing hops from smaller growers with current supplies coming from Wales. Several hop varieties are used including Boadicea, Cascade, First Gold, Fuggles, Goldings and Bullion which is one of the original high alpha hops dating back to 1919.

Crouch Vale

Their beers of the moment are Bravo 4.2% abv which is golden and hopped with the American hop of the same name and Palisade 3.9% abv, very pale and likewise hopped with Palisade hops. They will be brewing Santa's Revenge 5% abv again this year for Christmas Their plans for the new year will involve some New Zealand hops in the store which they are keen to get to grips with and there is a suggestion that they will trial some of the new English (gasp!) varieties sometime soon.

Farmers Ales

Sales are looking good and production is up on last year. For the Christmas period, five beers are planned: Farmer's Christmas Stout 4.8% abv, Lords A Leaping 4.0% abv, Five Gold Rings 3.8% abv, Jolly Holly 4.0% abv and A Winter's Ale 3.6% abv will be available. A new off-site facility has enabled cold storage, cask washing and bottling to be moved off site thus freeing up space at the Stable Brewery to increase production. Demand for bottled beers has increased substantially this year. At present bottled beer is all bottle conditioned and there are no plans to change this. Bottles will continue to be manually filled, labelled and boxed. A labelling machine is on order from Australia, and a new label design is planned. It is anticipated that a 50% increase in bottle production can be achieved. A series of themed monthly specials is planned for 2013.

George's/Hop Monster

Are brewing five new beers, Dragons Gold 3.9%, GB 4.0%, Merry Gentlemen Dark Christmas Ale 6% and Excalibur 5.4% as well as the extremely rare Excalibur Reserve 7.2%. Some of these will be on as well as the Rochford Banshee Porter at the

8 Seek out LocAles in your local pubs. Support your local breweries.

Brewery News

Ale House Chelmsford for their Strong Ale Fest starting soon. See Pub News.

The most excellent Charlie Saville, moustachioed ex Crouch Vale brewer and originator of the award winning Brewers Gold recipe now works with them at George's most Thursdays, where he is allowed to run amok and conjure up whatever he wishes.

He is responsible for Dragons Gold & Merry Gentlemen and will be brewing their new recipe GB. They are also just about to start bottling; the labels have been designed and gone to print.

Harwich Town Brewery

Bit of news from Harwich. They have two new beers for Christmas.

Barwood Bitter 6.2% abv A dark amber/copper winter warmer was available at Harwich & Dovercourt Winter Beer Festival, you may have enjoyed this already. Named after the Barwood family who for over 70 years kept The Drum and Monkey a Harwich pub which closed in 1942 after being open for over 300 years. Predominantly pale malt with Vienna, crystal, chocolate and roast barley. The hop bill is all East Kent Goldings.

Lost in translation 4% abv. Deep Gold. Born of an Anglo-German collaboration. This is a beautiful beer brewed with mostly Vienna malt with some Pale and Caramalt. Hops are Cascade for bittering, and then 1kg of Willamette per brewer's barrel for aroma then fermented at 10°C for 10 days to give a clean crisp beer.

Mersea Island Brewery

Watch out for their beers on the Christmas market in Colchester High Street, from the 11th to the 23rd of December where they

have their gift boxes for your stocking fillers, and check out their new web site at mersea-brewery.co.uk

Mighty Oak Brewery

Wow! Would you believe that MO has eight new beers available on their "Festive Range" this year. You can try:

- Elfin Safety 3.7% abv A traditional nut brown bitter with well balanced malt and hop flavours
- Yellow Snow 3.8% abv A golden yellow ale, with an initial malt sweetness and floral/ citrus hop aroma, followed by a balancing bitterness and a zesty, long after-taste.
- Auld Fang Syne 3.9% abv A copper bitter brewed using both barley and rye, and with the new Australian hop variety Stella, that has the resinous, fruity character often seen in New Zealand hops, but with an added hint of aniseed.
- White Christmas 4.0% abv A crisp, blonde bitter
- Three Kings 4.2% abv A rich golden beer
- Snow Queen 4.4% abv A clear white wheat beer
- Old Nick's Nog 4.5% abv A traditional rich fruity dark porter
- Bingle Jells 5.2% abv A strong, full bodied, fruity, deep mahogany bitter, with hints of dark fruit, a malt sweetness and balancing bitterness, and a warming finish.

News for 2013 – Next year's theme for their monthly beers is Sporting Nicknames; January is Crafty Cockney 3.7% an amber session ale. Watch out for other famous sportsmen and ladies to follow each month.

Brewery News

Pitfield Brewery

Lots of changes at Pitfield, Martin Kemp is no longer the face of the brewery and is taking a backseat at the moment. Andy Skene the previously brewer has taken over as Production Manager and Head Brewer and has formed a company, to run the brewery, called Dominion Brewery Company, reflecting his background as a Canadian. He will continue to brew Pitfield Ales and also include another specialist brewline for a Ging Seng Beer. It is intended to rebrand and re-launch Pitfield in the near future bringing it into the 21st Century with a proper Website and telephone connections. He has just produced a new pale hoppy session Beer 3% abv called "30 NOT OUT" as Pitfield was founded 30 years ago.

They also have a new beer Yukon Gold, with an alcohol content of 9.7% abv, aged in cognac casks and dry-hopped with lots more hops, this is a beer to seek out.

Railway Tavern Brightlingsea

The brewery is apparently going from strength to strength and brewing some wonderful dark beers. Both a wonderful Olde Ale and a superb Crab & Winkle Mild have been on sale recently at an amazing £2.00 a pint. They also recently supplied two excellent beers to The Harwich and Dovercourt Bay Winter Ale Festival.

Red Fox Brewery

Brewery expansion continues with the acquisition of half of the next door unit due to relocation of a car dealer. This will become the cold store & malt store area. It also allows plenty of room for a bottling plant at a later date. Recent brews include:- Ruby Red Mild - the usual autumn strong mild; Red Vixens - one off brew of a red ale with Citra hops for the 3 Horseshoes, Fordham beer

festival; Equinox - autumn special made with local wild green hops; Best bitter has proved very popular & now joins the list of regular brews. There are some bottles still available of Mr Fox's Choice Reserve, about 6.5% ABV.

Wibblers Brewery

It has been a busy year for us here at Wibblers, we've seen our sales volume triple and increased demand across the county for our ales. We were delighted with our Silver Award at this year's SIBA East Region Beer Competition for Hoppy Helper and to be runners up in the Essex Food & Drink Awards in the Best Drink Product category. Our bottle sales continue to do well and we are now in 11 Asda stores in Essex with further plans in the pipeline. Recently Head Brewer Phil has been running off limited edition ales using our small brewing kit. Beers such as Oatmeal Stout and Spiced Porter have proved to be very popular and we will be producing these again over the winter months along with a couple of others that we have in mind. For the festive season we will be producing Santa's Night Off 4.2% abv, a traditional brew for those long winter nights. Brown in colour with English hops this is a brew to remind us that everyone, even Santa, needs some time off. Then there's our strong dark old ale, Winter Wibble at 6% abv, this proved to be very popular when first brewed in December last year and will no doubt be making its appearance at some of the winter beer festivals in the coming months.

Cheers! Nigel Sadler, Commercial & Operations Manager and Assistant Cask Washer

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Remembering Les

I was reading the article in issue 2 of Thirsty Times about Grays Pubs in Chelmsford and mention of the Railway Tavern brought back some memories.

Very shortly after I started working in Chelmsford a friend introduced me to the



Railway Tavern. What struck me about the place was how old fashioned it was under the stewardship of Leslie Woolard. Best use was not

made of the available space in what was already a narrow building. In all my time there I can never recall the interior décor being changed; the only perceptible difference was that the public bar, frequented at that time by heavy smokers, annually had increasingly darkened nicotine brown walls and ceilings.

The other feature of the public bar was a small aquarium containing a grossly ugly Lion fish. This creature had several spines, the tips of which allegedly contained enough poison to kill a man. How that would have happened these days under Health & Safety is debatable since I feel sure that a person out of control due to alcohol consumption might have tried to test the theory! A particular highlight was the feeding of the Lion fish. A person would bring in a live gold fish. Leslie would take care to explain to the first time observer of this ritual, that the goldfish

was deformed and would otherwise have been taken to the vets to be humanely euthanized. The hapless goldfish would be carefully lowered into the tank, the dunker, being obviously aware that one touch from the Lion fish's spine, would render him fit only for a visit to the undertakers! As the goldfish blinked to adjust its eyes to the glare of the 100watt light bulb dangling above the tank, the Lion fish lurking at the bottom of the tank, would swivel its horrible eyes upwards and, once it had focused on the goldfish, it opened its huge gape, sucking in water and goldfish and, in a flash, it was all over!

I usually frequented the saloon bar, a modest improvement on the public bar; the attraction there was that, during the cricket season, a chalkboard was regularly updated with the Essex score and, if there was a test match on, the service was extended to cover that too.

But the gem of the establishment was Leslie Woolard himself. He spoke with a country burr that I would have thought was north Essex/south Suffolk but, reading the article in Thirsty Times 2, I wouldn't mind betting he was born in the pub! Once Les recognised you as a regular, he gradually got to know about you. He knew of my love of walking, particularly in the English Lake District, and, if I missed a week in the pub, I was invariably greeted with "have you been walkabouts again boy?" He used to admire my photographs, which were landscapes usually featuring rain and snow!

He had a phenomenal memory too. On one occasion, my son came to visit me in Chelmsford. I introduced Steve to Les and he was greeted with a warm handshake and told how pleased he was to meet him. About nine months later I took Steve there

Remembering Les

again and, as we walked through the door, Les said "hello Steve, nice to see you again". Now that is customer care except the term wasn't used then!

In those days I did something that I rarely do now; I drank Greene King beer! Les kept a perfect pint. One day I said to him, upon entering the pub, "what's the beer quality like today Les?" This was a superfluous question, more in the line of small talk. "Don't know boy, I don't drink the stuff" replied Les. Les's tippie appeared to be very milky tea, or maybe it was coffee not in a mug as you would expect, but in a rather graceful white china cup and saucer. Les would take, maybe, one or two sips and then the drink would sit on the bar. About an hour later the largely untouched drink would still be on the bar and was now covered by a skin resembling an oil slick. Mrs Les, seemingly on the hour throughout the day, would appear in the bar, remove the cold beverage and shortly reappear with a fresh drink, only for it to suffer the same fate. The look of disdain on her face implied that she had tried for years to correct Les's habit but had given up all hope!

An interesting lunchtime food menu was available. Upon enquiry a customer would be told "yes sir [or madam if appropriate]Rolls. Cheese or ham." The order was shouted up the stairs and, shortly, Mrs Les would appear with a freshly made filled roll. The customer was offered optional chutney, which stood on the bar in a large jar. It could have been homemade since there were no labels. A spatula, which appeared to have been specially selected to reach the farthest corners of the jar, sat beside it. My friends and I always enjoyed watching the application of the chutney to the inner parts of the roll since Les's tongue followed exactly the movement of the spat-

ula to and fro across the roll filling. It was always a synchronised spatula spreading exercise.

I was standing in the pub one day when two lively lads charged in. "Got any lager mate?" one said to Les. "Yes boy, go back out of the door, turn right, then left under the arches and then go into The Plough".

There were several notable incidents in the pub, mostly treated with good humour. One balmy summer evening an old chap, worse for wear, decided to sleep on the bench in the back yard. Next morning he was still there, but not alive! After the body was removed a sign appeared on the bench saying "please don't fall asleep on this bench because it upsets the regulars".

Also in the back yard was Les's pride and joy, a lilac tree. It was a white flowered form, loaded with fragrance. Whenever it came into bloom Les had a vase of the cut flowers on the bar. Then a tragedy; a customer used to arrive on a rather expensive bike. One evening the biker didn't feel up to biking home so he asked Les if he could chain his bike to the tree. "Yes" said Les "it will be perfectly safe there". Next day I walked into the pub and Les looked seriously glum. "What's up" I said to Les. "The bike was stolen" said Les "and the thieves sawed the tree down".

Sadly, Les became very ill and passed away. I went to his funeral and was amazed, walking down Duke Street towards the Cathedral, at the masses of people who were also going to his funeral. Apparently customers from the past who had moved away from Essex had travelled back to pay their last respects to a wonderful character.

Graham Price

A 'Rest Day' in Sheffield

Having spent a couple of days walking the Edges above the Hope Valley in Derbyshire my wife and myself needed to give our old joints a rest. So what better idea than to catch the bus into Sheffield and tour some of the hostelries mentioned in the GBG.

So arriving in Sheffield we headed first to the Kelham Island area of the city looking for two well-known pubs – the Fat Cat and the Kelham Island Tavern.

The two pubs are very close to each other separated by just a car park. They are also close to the Kelham Island Brewery and the Kelham Island Industrial Museum. If you are into fire engines then the Sheffield Fire Museum is just 200 metres away.

We decided to have lunch at the Fat Cat. It



serves good solid Sheffield pub food. Steak pie, potatoes and peas for £4.50. Not bad. A pint of beer £2.60. Even better. The pub has a wide range of beers on hand pump and 5 continental beers on draught. I tried the green hop Hop Studio 'Beerjolais' 3.8% ABV – full hops aroma and taste with hints of citrus. My wife, Ann, was adventurous and had the 'Landlord'.

We noticed that the Kelham Island Tavern had a wider range of dark beers than the Fat Cat. I tried the Acorn 'Old Moor Porter' 4.4% ABV – bitterness balanced with chocolate. At £2.40 a pint a nice drink. Ann sipped Thwaites 'Nutty Black' which she described as 'light, malty with a citrus edge'. The pub was doing lunch but I cannot comment on

the quality of the food. It was good to see



the bar staff in both pubs helping drinkers choose between the many beers on offer. Both are very much real ale

drinkers' pubs. Very friendly. Although using sparklers the staff did allow the beer to settle before topping up.

Moving into the centre of town the pubs seem to be trendier and pricier. However, the two pubs that we visited had very relaxed and comfortable atmospheres although I cannot comment on what they are like on a Friday night. The 'Devonshire Cat' in Wellington Street is large and open plan like many other Wetherspoons pubs. Close to student accommodation it had a mixed clientele. It offered a wide range of beers. The Sheffield Brewery 'Porter' 4.4% ABV was malty with hints of chocolate and was very drinkable at £2.80 a pint. I was not so sure about local house brew 'Devonshire Cat Bitter' 3.9% ABV brewed by the Bradford Brewing Co.

Walking back along Wellington Street to the



corner with Cambridge Street we came to 'Henry's' - a large open plan pub with comfortable arm-chairs and settees.

Ann tried the local Brew Company's 'Stumbling Stout' 4.4% ABV at £2.85 a pint - a very Guinness like stout. Say no more. The 'Bass' 4.4% ABV was in good condition and an acceptable session beer.

... Sheffield

Back to the central bus station to catch the bus back to Hope. Ah! The wonders of the free bus pass. If you are ever in the Hope area I would suggest that you visit the 'Cheshire Cheese' to be found on the road out to Edale. A small friendly pub serving good local beer. Although not in the GBG the 'Travellers Rest' is very close to several campsites near Hope and is a decent pub with reasonable food and free Wi-Fi. I particularly liked the Bradfield Brewery's 'Farmers Blonde' ale 4% ABV.

The centre of Sheffield is small enough to be able to walk around and yet big enough to have a good range of both traditional and more modern pubs. Well worth a visit.

*Barrie Davis
Chelmsford CAMRA member*



King William IV

A traditional drinking pub serving an ever changing range of Cask Real Ales and Ciders.



We do not offer cooked meals, leaving plenty of room in our compact pub for you to enjoy your drink, however we have a large range of nuts, crisps and snacks which you can enjoy your pint.

The extensive Gardens are host to many events throughout the year such as Beer Festivals and Musical entertainment (see website for details).



Opening Times:
Mon-Thu 3pm - 12 pm
Fri, Sat & Sun 12noon - 12pm

114 London Road, Braintree, CM77 7PU
01376 567755 kingwilliamiv.co.uk

The advertisement is a vertical rectangular image. On the left, there's a view of Big Ben in London. In the center, a large glass of beer is shown with a CAMRA logo on it. On the right, a woman is smiling. Text overlays include 'A Campaign of Two Halves' at the top, 'Fair deal on beer tax now!' on a white card, and 'Save Britain's Pubs!' on another white card. At the bottom, there are two lines of text: 'Campaigning for Pub Goers & Beer Drinkers' and 'Enjoying Real Ale & Pubs'. The very bottom has a yellow banner with the text 'Join CAMRA today - www.camra.org.uk/joinus' and social media icons for Facebook and Twitter.

Way Up North – to Braintree

Travelling from Chelmsford on the no. 70 bus the first pub you come to with a Braintree address is the **King William IV** on London Road just before you hit the bypass.

This ex-Ridleys house was closed for two years after its acquisition by Greene King and its future looked bleak. Happily it reopened as a free house in



December 2009 with Angus & Marian behind the bar.

Popular even at 5pm on a Friday, when we visited there was no sign of food but there was plenty of mainly vertical drinking

This is a small pub with an island bar that also serves a cosy space at the rear. There is a large garden, which is a venue for beer festivals. The King Willy is thought by some to be the last pub in our branch area to have outside loos, we are not certain you, dear reader, may know different?

The beers on our visit were Mighty Oak Venom, Dark Star Hophead, Skinners Betty Stoggs, Dark Star Partridge and Brentwood Maple Mild. All were sampled and all enjoyed.

A brisk 15 minute walk brought us to the **Wagon & Horses** on South Street opposite



the former Courtaulds silk mill. This is a smart, large, multi roomed pub with an equally smart and friendly proprietor. This is a true family-run pub

with Steve's wife Christine and their two

sons and daughter all involved. There were a massive 16 handpumps serving mainly LocAle on our visit. We found a couple of beers from Shalfords, three from Colchester Brewery, plus at least one from Saffron, Crouch Vale, Woodfordes and there was also an odd one or two from a brewery in Bury St Edmunds but we didn't try those. Small blackboards were chalked up with beers coming soon, all the beers we tasted were in excellent condition.

A shorter walk to the east followed to the **Royal Oak** on East Street. This is a large pub, with the club atmosphere, unsurprisingly as it used to be the Lake & Elliott So-



cial Club. Lake & Elliott were major employers in their time but they were taken over and closed. Luckily the pub contin-

ues. When we called they had Mighty Oak Venom and two beers, Red Minis and Harvest Ale from "cuckoo brewery" Hewitts who have their beers brewed at Ha'penny brewery near Ilford. The St Austell Tribute had just run out and the landlord, to his credit, would not serve us the forthcoming Blue Stone Amber as it was still settling – we did get a cheeky taste though.

This was another good refuge from Greene King with all real ales priced at £2.40. Along with a pool table and dartboard there was a real jukebox, and good, friendly service.

Almost retracing our steps, we called in on the Golden Lion in Manor Street. This ex Greene King pub, now a free house had Adnams Southwold Bitter and surprisingly Greene King XX Mild, which was our choice. It was in perfect nick. Here again they had

Way Up North – to Braintree

another real jukebox – is it a Braintree



thing? A basic boozier, this had darts & dominos trophies in force. Although it was only a stone's throw from the centre

it was quiet for a Friday night. It is pubs like this that need your support.

With a view to catching a bus home, the last pub was the massive Lloyds No.1 bar The Picture Palace in Fairfield Road. This was opened in 1998. and occupies the former Embassy cinema which opened in the 1930s to replace the Picture Palace, built 1912. It claims the largest screen in a pub in Essex – we can believe it, and retains some original art on walls featuring radish and

fried egg. The 12 handpumps, carry 10 different beers and when the Wetherspoon Beer Festival takes place there is an even larger choice. It was busy on a Friday night but food was still served promptly.



We were aiming to get to Bensons Bar in Bocking as it came highly recommended but we just ran out of time as the last bus was beckoning ...

A lot of folk seem to think of Braintree as a bit of a beer desert, where all you can get is Greene King IPA. However, it just goes to show that if you get out there and dig a little deeper you are in for a good night with some excellent beer.



8 Real Ales at all times

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40th CAMRA Good Beer Guide

As the 2013 Good Beer Guide arrived I realised that it is the 40th edition, something I'd never have imagined when I bought the first one in 1974. I didn't get one of the very early print run which had to be re-printed after legal threats from Watney's who didn't like the advice to 'avoid their beers like the plague'. In my version it says 'avoid at all costs', still not exactly a ringing endorsement of the brewery which was a focus of early CAMRA activity as it made no real ale whatsoever. All the other big national breweries had some real ales, some were even quite good.



merely 'mediocre' which wasn't too far from the mark.

The pub descriptions were as terse as the brewery ones, sometimes there was no comment at all, just the town/village, pub name and the brewer's name. Sometimes there were opening hours, phone no. or even the street name and a few symbols for the dispense



method of the beer and food availability. It's noticeable that while maybe something over half the pubs did snacks, very few offered meals. Essex had 54 entries compared with around 110 these days. I haven't actually counted them all, but it does look as though Essex may have had more entries in 1974 than any other county, partly because Essex CAMRA was well established and able to survey the county, but mainly because we had Grays and Riddleys with real ale in all their pubs. Only 17 of our 54 pubs weren't Grays or Riddleys!

So, looking back the first guide was far from comprehensive but before that there was nothing at all to help you find a decent beer in strange territory and the GBG has undoubtedly been a huge factor in making CAMRA the success it is. All this leaves me pondering how good my favourite beers of 1974 would taste if I could try them now, I fear they might seem rather dull in contrast to the huge range of styles and strong flavours available to us now.

Chris Mills.

The Essex entries were Cooks of Halstead [whose beers were only available from their own off-licences], Grays of Chelmsford [which sadly closed in 1974], Ind Coope of Romford [which prior to local government reorganisation was still in Essex I think] and Riddleys [located at Felstead, note the old spelling with an 'a']. Riddleys was described as 'totally reliable', which it certainly was in terms of always being real ale from a wooden cask, although I think the quality did vary from pub to pub. Grays was 'excellent', which it was sometimes but Ind Coope was

Branch Diary

Tuesday 4th December Mystery Real Ale Runabout A visit to a surprise good beer destination. Bus departs opp. Railway Stn at 7.30pm, fare £9 mems/OAPS, £10 non-mems.

Friday 7th December Rail Trip to Harwich Beer Festival Meet at Chelmsford Railway Station at 6pm to arrange Groupsaves for the 1812 departure (changing at Manningtree and arriving at Dovercourt at 1920). We'll get the 2230 departure back.

Thursday 13th December Branch Meeting at The Flitch of Bacon, Little Dunmow Bus fare £5 members, £6 non-members. Depart from opp. Railway Stn at 8pm.

Note the change from the usual Wednesday due to the CAMRA lobby of parliament on Wed 12th dec.

Wednesday 19th December Survey of Pubs for Good Beer Guide 2014 The route will be revealed on the night. If you have any suggestions for pubs to survey in this survey period please contact Brian Debenham. Bus dep. opp. Railway Stn 7.30pm, free to mems, £5 non-mems.

Friday 28th December 1st Walking Survey of Chelmsford Pubs for Good Beer Guide 2014 Meet at The Oddfellows Arms, Springfield Road at 8pm to leave by 8.30pm

Thursday 3rd January Survey of Pubs for Good Beer Guide 2014 The route will be revealed on the night. If you have any suggestions for pubs to survey in this survey period please contact Brian Debenham. Bus dep. opp. Railway Stn 8pm, free to mems, £5 non-mems.

Tuesday 8th January Real Ale Runabout to Rochford. Paglesham & Ballards Gore Bus departs opp. Railway Stn at 7.30pm, fare £9 mems/OAPS, £10 non-mems.

Wednesday 16th January Branch Meeting at

The Orange Tree, Chelmsford No bus to this meeting which starts at 8.30pm.

Wednesday 23rd January Survey of Pubs for Good Beer Guide 2014 The route will be revealed on the night. If you have any suggestions for pubs to survey in this survey period please contact Brian Debenham. Bus dep. opp. Railway Stn 8pm, free to mems, £5 non-mems.

Tuesday 29th January 2nd Walking Survey of Chelmsford Pubs for Good Beer Guide 2014 Meet at The Ivory Peg, New London Road at 7.30pm to leave by 8pm

Tuesday 5th February Real Ale Runabout to Harlow Bus departs opp. Railway Stn at 7.30pm, fare £9 mems/OAPS, £10 non-mems.

Wednesday 13th February Branch Meeting at The White Hart, Margaretting Tye Bus fare £5 members, £6 non-members. Depart from opp. Railway Stn at 8pm.

Wednesday 20th-Saturday 23rd February Chelmsford Winter Beer & Cider Festival 2014 Bigger & better at King Edward VI Grammar School, Broomfield Road. See poster for more information.

An up to date listing of social events can be found on the web site:
www.chelmsfordcamra.org.uk, or contact the Social Secretary, Brian Debenham, socialsecretary@chelmsfordcamra.org.uk

Terry's Post Christmas Stroll

If you are looking for something to do between Christmas and New Year why not join Terry on his annual Tour through London on Friday 28th December, meeting at noon at the meeting point at Embankment tube by the Charing Cross exit sign. For more details call 0775798026 or 01394 421149 or see www.chelmsfordcamra.org.uk/news

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Thirsty Times

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**Deadline for Spring 2013
issue (005) is Wednesday 6th
March 2013.**

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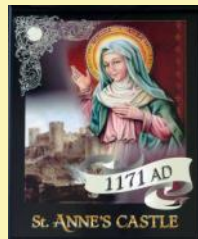
Red Fox Mild 3.6%
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20 Seek out LocAles in your local pubs. Support your local breweries.

Cider Press

Chelmsford Winter Beer and Cider Festival

Continuing my quest to bring the cider drinkers in Chelmsford intriguing supplies to sup I shall feature cider from Yorkshire for our next festival. Yes Yorkshire! Many people are surprised to learn that there are 9 producers of Real Cider in Yorkshire and that it has the most pubs displaying the CAMRA Real Cider Sold Here window stickers of any county in England.

I plan to have cider from all of the available cider makers as the Moorlands medium sweet 6.4% was popular at Chelmsford Summer Beer and Cider festival having won the CAMRA East Midlands and Yorkshire Cider of the Year award in November 2010. It is made with apples from North Newbald in Yorkshire as well as those from Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

This year it is clear, 6 % and in close competition with Orchards of Husthwaite medium sweet 8.4% which is produced by a Co-operative formed in 2009 with the intention of replanting the vanishing orchards of the village and using the fruit to make and sell a variety of products. Yorkshire's Cider of the year 2011 was Udders Orchard Whisky Cask Dry Cider 7% from Huddersfield and should satisfy dry drinkers. Fusion made by Pure North is a very drinkable medium dry cider 6.5%, fruity, clear and made using a blend of traditional organic cider apples and those grown in the Holme Valley at Holmfirth in Yorkshire. Understandably it won the Yorkshire Cider Competition in October 2012. Ampleforth Abbey cider is made by the monks at the abbey which is the largest Benedictine community in Britain.

Of course there will be cider and perry from

all over England and Wales with some old favourites and many new ones including single variety products. These include the ever popular Hecks from Somerset Blakeney Red Perry 6% and Hendre Huffcap Perry 6.5% which are fermented in oak barrels giving interesting depth and character.

To whet your appetite on the opening night Millwhites Hedge Layer 4.5% will be in the half price promotion. There will be a range of Millwhites ciders to chose from throughout the festival including this year's festival winner Rum Cask 7.5%; Rooksbridge Reserve and single variety ones such as Dabinett and Michellin.

Please note that all stock is subject to availability.

Claire Irons.



The Ship

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Well established family run pub

Good selection of six real Ales

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Close to Chelmsford Train and Bus station

FRESH FOOD SERVED

- Breakfast from 10am
- Lunch 12 - 3 All Week
- Evening 17.30 - 9 exempt Sundays
- Sunday Lunch 12 - 4

Grant, Jo and William wish Chelmsford CAMRA a successful Beer Festival

National Cider and Perry Trip

On Saturday 13th October 2012, having departed Reading station at 10.30am our first port of call was to Hampshire for Mr Whiteheads Cider. A founding member of Swamp Donkey Cider, Angus Whitehead decided to expand and set up on his own in 2003. Since then the business has expanded greatly to encompass a large range of ciders and perries, both draught and bottled, and has been featured in Wetherspoons cider festivals and Tesco's. Almost all of the apples and pears used are grown on the south-east facing Hampshire Downs of the neighbouring Blackmoor Farm Estate in Selbourne. However he has diversified to press carrots and beetroots to make juice for the organic fruit and veg company Abel and Cole using a concertina press from America, one of only two in Britain. The double pressed Discovery cider is made using apple pulp soaked for a second pressing to extract the remaining juice to produce a low ABV of 3.8%. At the other end of the spectrum we also had Devil's Device at 8.4% which was dry, delicious and in my opinion the most scrumptious scrumpy of the day. The Midnight Special perry was as pleasant and easy drinking as always made from a blend of dessert and perry pears to produce a 5% medium perry. We also sampled Heart of Hampshire 6% medium dry; Boxing Dog 7.5% made from Worcester and Cox apples; Cirrus Minor 5%, Royal Gala, Braeburn, Spartan and Lord Lambourne lower sugar varieties.

Lunch was at the Bell in Aldworth which is a classic rural pub of small rooms. And is listed in CAMRA's national inventory of historic pub interiors. Over the years it has collected many CAMRA awards, including National Pub of the Year in 1990. We enjoyed local Upton Cider which has stopped production this year and was unusual for the

area in that traditional cider apples were used rather than eaters.



Whilst doing our Wassail Toast which comes from Middle English Waes Hael, meaning "Good Health" or "Be Healthy" it started to hail so various jokes were made regarding Real Ale, Real Hail, What Hail? And Wassail. The correct response is Drinc Hae! Meaning "Drink and Be Healthy" which of course we do all year and not just Old Twelfth Night (17th January).

Suitably satisfied we journeyed on to Tutts Clump which is much smaller scale than Whiteheads. Tim Wale started making cider in Tutts Clump in 2006 using eating and cooking apples from within West Berkshire. Having gone commercial in 2009, he now also uses supplies from South Oxfordshire and North Hampshire too. Royal Berkshire medium sweet 7% was originally made to celebrate the wedding of Kate Middleton to Prince William when it was known as Royal Wedding cider. Berkshire Diamond medium 4.5% was formerly Diamond Jubilee cider made to celebrate the Queen's 60 year reign. Special Reserve dry 6% and Repress medium sweet 3.5% and the Rum Cask medium dry 7.5% gave us a great choice and a great time.

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Winter Beer and Cider Festival

Here's something to look forward to – it'll help fight those mid-winter blues. Chelmsford CAMRA Winter Beer and Cider Festival will be taking place from Wednesday 20th February to Saturday 23rd February 2013 in a **new bigger and better venue**. We are moving to **King Edward VI Grammar School** (KEGS) in Broomfield Road, CM1 3SX, so put the date in your diary now.

KEGS is just a 5 minute walk from the main bus and train stations, closer than Admiral's Park where we hold our summer festivals. Several buses stop just outside the school so you may not even need to walk to or from the bus station. You can get buses directly to KEGS from Braintree, Galleywood and Springfield and the good news is that the last buses to each of these destinations don't leave until somewhere between 10.50 and 11.10pm so you won't miss much drinking time. If you are not going to use public transport and instead have an amenable, non-drinking car driving friend who will kindly agree to ferry you back and forth, there is plenty of car parking space available, something that we didn't have at the Triangle Club.

Not only is access to KEGS good but the inside space we will have is much bigger. The school is kindly allowing us to use their main hall and dining hall. This means that we will be able to accommodate almost twice as many people as in previous years so hopefully far more of you will come along to sample the great range of beers and ciders we will have on offer. And that, of course, is what the Festival is all about, giving you the opportunity to try a wide range of top quality drinks that you haven't necessarily come across before or which may not be readily available in our local hosteleries, or try a new style of ale, or maybe just enjoy an old favourite. Over the period of the Festival

we will have 200 real ales and over 50 ciders and perries on offer as well as a wide selection of international beers. We are sure that we will have something to suit all tastes. We will, as usual, have a range of good festival food available throughout the day as well. There will be no need to go hungry!

The Festival will be open from 5 - 11pm on Wednesday 20th February and from 12 – 11pm on Thursday, Friday, Saturday 21 – 23 February 2013. This is the half term holiday for schools so you won't be bumping into any of the KEGS students and there is no danger of ending up at the back of a classroom wondering what on earth is going on! Entrance is FREE on Wednesday and before 6pm on the other days. As usual you will pay a deposit for your glass as you enter. This deposit will be refunded when you return your glass as you leave unless you wish to keep it as a souvenir. Watch out, too, for special deals on both beer and cider from our sponsors on the opening day (thank you, sponsors). You'll need to keep an eye on our web site, www.chelmsfordcamra.org.uk, for up to date information.

We have been very lucky to secure the support of local estate agent, The Home Partnership. They are doing a lot to help advertise and promote our Festival and this includes putting up boards in people's gardens. If you live in Chelmsford, Braintree, Witham or surrounding areas and would be willing to have one of these boards on your property, please contact Bryan Grimshaw at graysblo@chelmsfordcamra.org.uk. The board simply has the name and date of the Winter Beer and Cider Festival and the venue, and of course, the estate agent's name, The Home Partnership, written on it. We think that it will help to advertise the Festival more widely than in previous years

Moves To A New Venue

if we can erect them in prominent positions in as wide an area as possible. The boards will be put up and then removed by someone from The Home Partnership – you don't need to do anything. I think that The Home Partnership deserve a big thank you for all their support.

We will also distribute flyers in the city centre before and during the Festival, as we have done in previous years. In addition we hope to give them out at local venues such as Chelmsford City Football Club. If you have any other ideas about how we can advertise more widely or places where we can distribute flyers please contact us via our website. We would love to reach more people and spread the word about the good work that CAMRA does.

We are confident that the forthcoming Winter Beer and Cider Festival 13 will be even bigger and better than ever. If you're one of our regulars, I'm sure you'll agree once you've visited us. If you've never been to one of our festivals before, why not give it a try. I'm sure you will be converted into a



14TH CHELMSFORD WINTER BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL 20-23 February 2013

Brand new central location five minutes walk from Bus and Train Stations
King Edward VI Grammar School (KEGS), Broomfield Road, CMI 35X

200 REAL ALES, OVER 50 CIDERS & PERRIES
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HOT & COLD FOOD AVAILABLE ALL SESSIONS

Opening times

Wednesday	20th February	5pm - 11pm
Thursday	21st February	12 noon - 11pm
Friday	22nd February	12 noon - 11pm
Saturday	23rd February	12 noon - 11pm

Admission

Card-carrying CAMRA members receive free entry

Non-members admission:

Wed free entry

Thu - Sat free entry before 6pm

After 6pm Thu £4, Fri £5 & Sat £3

Refundable glass deposit £3



www.chelmsfordcamra.org.uk

regular. It really is a great way to brighten up those dark winter days and nights with excellent ales, international beers, ciders and perries in the company of a friendly bunch of people. Why not give it a try? See you at KEGS in February.

Ann Davis

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Spotlight on Grays

The **Wheatsheaf at Writtle** has appeared in the Good Beer Guide 37 times, a record for our branch, and has been ever-present

since 1983 – 31 consecutive years. That's an amazing feat for a small village pub and a tribute to successive landlords who have impressed a generation of real ale drinkers.

Look in any of those Guides and these are the words you will find most frequently in the pub's description – "quiet, friendly, unspoilt village local". That's exactly what it is.

Outside is a splendid sign with the design replicated on the front of the building where a window might have been. Look up and the weathervane is also a small wheat-sheaf. There is a small outside drinking area with seating and an awning, and 2 entrance doors. The

left leads to the public bar and the right to the saloon, although traditionalists may be disappointed to find that once inside there is a connecting door between the two, which nevertheless retain their individual identities.



The building dates back to 1813 but it is first identified as a beerhouse in the 1851 census when it is named as the

Wheatsheaf with Naomi Gigney as a beer seller. In 1867 it was sold to brewers Charles & Walter Gray for £210. It continued to be described as a beer-house, i.e. it had no spirits licence, up to the second world war, and towards the end of the 19th century

some tenants were described as "baker & beerseller" with the bakery side of the business where the front glass cover is now. As recently as 1986 when Michael & June Cutting moved in all beer was served direct from casks behind the bar. The current tenants are Tony & Barbara O'Boyle, who moved here in 1998 after eight years at the Wagon & Horses in Braintree. For the last 6 of those years the Wagon was also in the Good Beer Guide. Quite a track record.

Let's start in the public bar. We know that's where we are because a sign on the wall tells you so. A selection of ancient harvesting implements decorate the

same wall. Opposite and above the bar is an unusual mesh sign advertising Grays as Brewers, Maltsters, Spirit & Corn Merchants. They haven't brewed since 1974; how long since they traded in corn and spirits I wonder?

The saloon is even smaller than the public, snug would be a good description, but it shares the same bar and both rooms have a fireplace giving a homely feel.



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Spotlight on Grays

From Tuesday to Saturday lunchtimes you can enjoy a baguette or a home-made dish of the day, expertly prepared by Barbara. Outside of these times the pub is for drinking, particularly real ales. There are always 8 on offer, 6 on handpump and 2 drawn straight from the cellar. Regulars include Adnams Bitter, Farmer's A Drop of Nelson's Blood, Mighty Oak Oscar Wilde & Maldon Gold, Sharp's Doom Bar, Wibbler's Apprentice and there'll be 2 guests which tend to be from the smaller Essex brewers.

You can pass the time with a game of cards or dominoes. The sadly underused dart board's place has been usurped by a fruit machine and there is a TV which may be switched on for major sporting events but is inaudible above the hum of conversation. That's what most people come here for – a good natter with friends. It's also a focal

point for several local groups including Chelmsford Morris Men, the Writtle Singers & the bell ringers – all thirsty work – and on the third Friday of the month there's a folk evening.



In 2009 the Wheatsheaf was voted branch Pub of the Year. It went on to become Essex and then East

Anglian POTY and the picture shows Tony & Barbara with their well-deserved award.

How to get there? Walk or cycle – it's only 2½ miles from Chelmsford station, or hop on one of the frequent buses – the 45 runs every day and stops outside.

Laurence Phillipe Wines

26 Seek out LocAles in your local pubs. Support your local breweries.

*Merry Wibble
&
A Happy New Year*
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*Enjoy the festivities
but please
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