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Cambridge & District Branch Magazine Issue 381 March 2017



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Pub News

We open this issue with two pieces of news, both of which could signal the beginning of the end for Independent pubs. The first, which is covered in an article later in this magazine, is the news that small business tax rates are set to rise in April, increasing tax for pubs by a widely reported 19%. Secondly, Heineken has announced its aim to takeover 1900 of Punch Taverns 3000 pubs with the remainder going to investment partner and building developer Patron Capital. Heineken have been keen to accentuate the positives of the takeover describing it as "huge vote of confidence for the Great British Pub." Others aren't quite so keen on the move. Speaking to the BBC, a representative from Scottish Licensed Trade Association expressed "grave concerns", claiming that it would create "a monster Tie which will destabilise an already fragile industry."

The Heineken website describes the move as "an opportunity to provide operational synergies and economies of scale and a strong platform to improve visibility and increase sales of Heineken beers..." Call me cynical, but it doesn't sound as though consumer choice is high on their agenda.

Further bad news in the Cambridge area with



the closure of The Jenny Wren, St Kilda Avenue,

which has been bought by a developer. Whilst this ex- Greene King pub had all but stopped selling real ale, its position in the centre of a housing estate should mean that, given good management, the pub would have been a successful community pub, perhaps in the same vein as the Carlton Arms, Carlton Way. As it stands, the future for the pub looks very bleak, and we need your help if we hope to save it from demolition. (For more details, see Save our Pubs, page 16).

March 2017

Branch Diary

Don't forget that all Branch members are very welcome to attend the monthly business meetings.

Tue 14-Mar: 8:00, Open Branch Meeting, Calverley's Brewery Tap, Hooper Street.

Tue 11-Apr: 8:00, Open Branch Meeting, Lord Byron, Trumpington

Tue 9-May: 8.00, Open Branch Meeting, St Radegund, King Street

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Pub News continued

Meanwhile, The Petersfield, formerly The Back



Street Bistro, Sturton Street, has opened with more of a whimper than a

bang. It seems likely that new owners, The City Pub Company, have been intimidated by the emotional reaction they received from local residents against the improvements the company felt it needed to make to increase footfall and ensure that the pub is a viable business.

Planning permission was granted early in February, resulting in another outcry. Hopefully the company will have less opposition to its next venture, The Waterman, Mitcham's Corner. We



learned of this when chatting with staff in The Radmore Farm Shop,

which has moved around the corner to Victoria Avenue to allow the pub to be extended.

A quick glance at findmypub.com shows a long list of Cambridge and District pubs that are either up for sale or are in need of new tenants, beginning with The Jolly Brewers, Milton (for sale £685,000) and The Hole in the Wall, Little Wilbraham (£550,000). New tenants are required for The White Horse, Barton, The Brook, Mill Road, The Three Horseshoes, Stapleford, The Anchor, Burwell, The Red Lion, Swaffham Prior and The Bakers Arms, Fulbourn. Leases are available for The Free Press, Prospect Row, and The Chequers, Cottenham.

Better news from Harlton, where the Help The Hare and Hounds Steering Committee has announced that



it has exceeded £300,000 in pledges towards buying the pub. The Committee continues to accept pledges and to hold pop up pub events in Harlton Village Hall. (Save Our Pubs, page 16)

Another long standing campaign group, Save



The Pear Tree Inn, Hildersham is now asking for pledges of money to help them save their community pub, which has now

been closed as a pub, having been a furniture shop and a B&B, for three years. (Save Our Pubs, page 16)

New outlets in the CB1 (Station) area of Cambridge include the much-needed Station Tavern. Much publicised in the press and by social media as the first Young's pub in Cambridge, we are hopeful that the beer list will include examples of beer from local breweries.

Another new outlet, Sacre Bleu, situated in the basement of Le Gros Franck, Hills Road, has advertised that it will be selling craft ales. The lure of real ale should ensure that it doesn't draw trade away from the nearby CAMRA award-winning pub The Flying Pig.

From our correspondents:



A number of CAMRA members have contacted us to say that a change of management at The Chequers, Pampisford has

seen a great improvement in the quality of both food and beer.



The main bar of The Queen's Head in Harston is now the main dining area for their Thai food. The remaining small bar has a dartboard and also a Ring the Bull.



There are rumours that the Three Horseshoes, Harston has been sold to a furniture shop. The site is boarded up and the electricity board has paid a visit.



Also in Harston, no one seems to know for sure who has bought the Pemberton Arms, but it looks unlikely to ever reopen as a pub. At the other end of the village, Vujon Curry House, formerly The Old English Gentleman pub, has also closed. Rumours are that it is destined for development.



The Kingston Arms, Kingston Street has had some very tasty dark beers whenever we have visited recently. Bingham's Doodle Stout, Pig & Porter's Cast No Shadow Chocolate Orange Porter, Mighty Oak Oscar Wilde mild and Star Man Porter to name just four.



A recent visit to The Reindeer in Saxon Street discovered some

regular customers cooking their own food in the Aga and a working train set in the bar, which was being enjoyed by the children of a family who had dropped in. The only cask ale on offer was Pitfield Eco Warrior which was a bit cold, but very good. There are lots of bottled beers available including a good selection of Belgian beers.

Stop Press

Congratulations to The Red Lion Kirtling which has won a celebrated Good Food Award for the second year running, and to the villagers in Stapleford who have been given the assurance that, if they are able to raise enough funds and support, South Cambridgeshire District Council is willing to consider a Compulsory Purchase Order to enable them to save The Tree as a community asset.



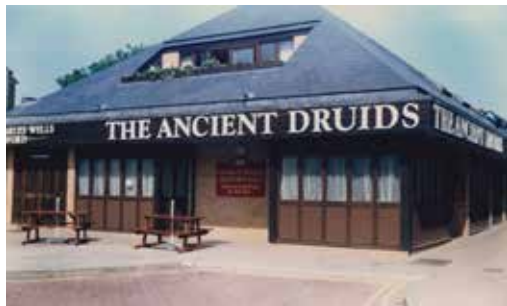
Lost pubs of Cambridge(shire)

Only the ever-reliable Pete Davis admitted to recognising last issue's mystery pub, the former Charles Wells-owned **Ancient Druids**. Surely it's not *that* embarrassing to admit to knowing it, is it?



It was built and opened in 1984 as a replacement (if that's the right word) for an earlier pub of the same

name, but doubtless different character, on Fitzroy Street, which fell victim to the Grafton Centre development in 1981. I arrived in Cambridge just too late to experience the original, so if anyone out there has fond – or bad – memories, do get in touch.



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Aside from its 'distinctive' appearance, it is most notable for being a brewpub – the first commercial brewing in Cambridge since Whitbread closed Lacon's Albion Brewery on Coronation Street in 1965. It produced two regular beers, Kite Bitter and Druids Special, the only draught ales served. I remember the Special as being, if not exactly special, at least pretty decent. It was not a full-mash operation: the beer was produced from hopped malt extract from Munton & Fison, diluted with Cambridge tap water (requiring treatment in the copper), to which was added treacle and hops. It was then fermented using yeast from Charles

Wells before being conditioned in cask until ready to serve. (R J Flood, *Cambridge Breweries*, Cambridge Society for Industrial Archaeology and CAMRA, 1987.)

Brewing only lasted for about 10 years, however, the plant then being removed to Cox's Yard in Stratford-upon-Avon, where it continued to produce beer, some of which was available in the Elm Tree for a while, but eventually it was considered unviable by Charles Wells and put up for sale at the end of 2002.

The pub, meanwhile, saw itself refurbished and rebranded **Bar Citrus** – with no real ale – in 2000, and then re-rebranded as **The Druids** (with real ale again) towards the end of 2003. In 2006 it was again renamed as the **Box Tree**, with a café-bar feel, serving tapas etc., and at least Charles Wells Eagle and Bombardier on handpump. But two years later the lease was on offer, and in August 2008 the place reopened as a Chinese restaurant.

At the time of writing it languishes empty again. Perhaps someone should take it on, revisit an earlier incarnation and call it Bar Citra, and dedicate it to beers with Citra in their name (if there's enough room on the bar for all of them) – the place would be packed!



OK, another nice easy one for you. There's even a clue in the picture. But who can remember all its other names – in order?

Send in those recollections to pub-history@cambridge-camra.org.uk.

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Black Horse, Swaffham Bulbeck by Fred Laband

In issue 369, Fred Laband visited the Black Horse in Swaffham Bulbeck just before landlords Sharon and Paul moved on to pastures new. He visits again on a damp Monday evening in January to see what has changed...



There are 6 beers available, mainly from the Charles Wells/ Youngs catalogue from Bedford, but there are several guests to tempt too. We are served by Anna who seems to know everybody's names and occasionally greets a new arrival with, "The usual?" The bar itself is central to the pub and provides a bright focal point with the beers and spirits all displayed to good effect. My first beer is Brains SA (4.2%, £3.80 a pint) from Cardiff, a copper hued bitter with malt and sweetness in good balance. Nicola (driving) gets a diet Coke which is priced at £2.10.



We are pleased to see that the Monday night special offer of 2 burgers for the price of one has not changed at all. There are several variants to choose from. We both choose burgers with cheese and bacon at £10.95.



coming from the fire!

My first beer is dispatched quickly and I now go for a Caledonian Cold Comfort (4.5%, £3.80) which seems to have a nutty quality to it with a peppery aftertaste. This adds to the warming sensation



My meal arrives with a thick wedge of Stilton, Nicola's with cheddar, both atop a substantial slab of locally sourced beef. The crispy salad and thick smokey bacon are all squeezed into a lightly toasted brioche style bun. Add a good helping of "skin-on" French fries and we are very happy with our choices indeed. As

pub meals go, we assert that this is extraordinarily good value and will be hard to beat anywhere else.

Landlord James has been here for almost exactly 2 years now and he has made great efforts to expand the availability of local ales in particular. This is not easily achieved as he is limited in his choice of guests by the brewer. He does however run two popular beer festivals (July and December) where he can really celebrate local ales from such breweries as Three Blind Mice, Cambridge Moonshine and Crafty to name but a few. One thing that has not changed is that The Black Horse remains an outlet for what is in my opinion an underrated

classic beer; according to the pump clip, Courage Directors at 4.8% (£3.60 a pint) is a "Superior Ale" and as Anna serves it with a fine foaming crown it is hard to disagree. It is crisp yet fruity with a burnt raisin finish. I have been looking forward to trying the newly branded Charles Wells Bombardier Pale Ale (3.6%), a "new world beer" made with hops from the Southern hemisphere. I am disappointed that the barrel has just been finished so I go for Wadworth's Swordfish, a darker 5% beer which is both rich and fruity.

All 4 beers have been excellent, the food tremendous value with friendly service all in a nice warm pub. It is quietly busy, with a good mix of regulars and burger fans. We are also pleased to see the dart board is being used, as this is something that is disappearing from many pubs these days! There are lots of other offers at The Black Horse including Fish and Chips special night on Thursdays. With regular quizzes and live music, this is a pub that Swaffham Bulbeck should be proud of.



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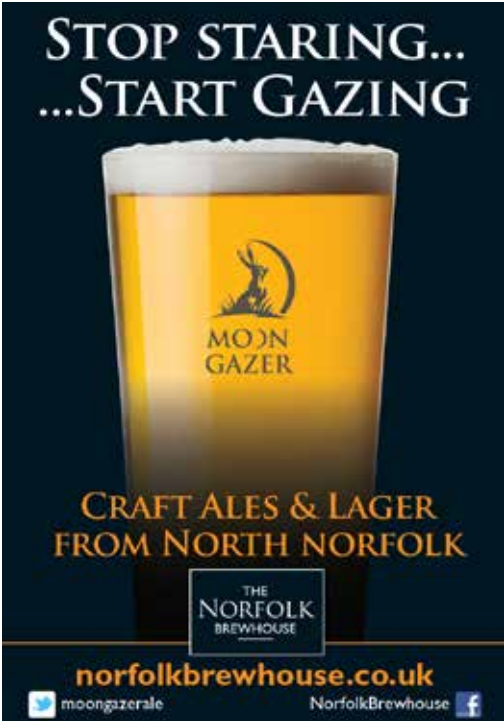
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Brewery News

Award winning breweries!

Local Cambridge brewers have been recognised at the prestigious CAMRA Champion Beer of East Anglia Awards. The beers were judged at East Anglian beer festivals over the last twelve months with final judging taking place at the January Colchester Winter Ale and Cider Festival



Cambridge Brew House, in King Street, won awards for its Night Porter ale, taking the gold award in the Porters category, and a silver award in the Overall Champion Beer of East Anglia judging.



Milton Brewery, based at Waterbeach won a gold award in the Stouts category for its Marcus Aurelius beer, a silver award for its Sparta best bitter, and a bronze award for its strong bitter Cyclops.

Moonshine Brewery, based at Fulbourn, won the gold award in the Speciality Beers section for its Chocolate Orange Stout.

Moonshine Brewery, Fulbourn



Simon Reeves, exclaimed how pleased they were that Chocolate Orange Stout had won the gold award for the second year running. He also reported that Moonshine beers, Speciality IPA and the 8.4% ABV Cascadian Light had seen notable success at both the Cambridge and Ely 2017 Winter Ale festivals. A few casks of the latter have been held back for sale later this year.

New beers to look forward to include a “tweaked” and fruitier Passion Fruit Pale Ale, and a series of one-off single hopped beers intended to celebrate the subtleties of their favourite hop varieties. The first of these, Amarillo, is a zesty, citrus Amber Ale



New outlets include the Pantons Arms, Pantons Street, which now has a hand pump dedicated to selling beers from local breweries.

<http://www.moonshinebrewery.co.uk/>

Lord Conrads Brewery, Dry Drayton



Jon Neale, has called to tell us about 2 new beers, both of which are available in cask or bottles. Lobster Licker is a 4.2% ABV red ale made with Yakima Gold hops, whilst

Spectrum is a 3.5% ABV dark hoppy session ale. Easter will see a week of events, talks and tastings to be held at the brewery.

<http://www.lordconradsbrewery.co.uk/>

Black Bar Brewery, Harston

BlackBar Brewery held its final Brewery Tap night on 23rd December 2016. It was well attended and the brewery has now gone into hibernation. Joe and Clare have moved to Coleford just South of Ross on Wye. We suspect BlackBar will be revived at some point but it will be there rather than in Cambridge. The brewery premises has been taken over by a new brewery: “BrewBoard, Brewers of Distinctive Craft Beer”.



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Apples and Pears

Branch Cider Officer Jerry Ladell meets Tom Canning, Manager of The Royal Oak, Barrington.



I settled down for our meeting with a pint of West Meets East from the Simon's Cider range, and what an excellent choice it was – a lovely medium cider bursting with apples, delicious.

We quickly skirted round the 'Tom and Jerry' cartoon references – we're both pretty tired of the lack of originality with the association – but hey!

Tom, tell me a bit about yourself, I know you're from Bradford originally but other than that I don't know too much about your career.

I've been in the industry about 18 years, I started out originally as a chef but 'retired' from that about seven years ago when I went into pub management at the Plough and Fleece, Horningsea - following a community buy out. This didn't quite turn out as I had hoped for and I eventually decided to move on to the Alma in town as a barman.

I then went to the newly opened Royal Standard on Mill Road, owned by Jethro and Terri from the Cambridge Blue; I stayed there until February 2016.

In March, almost by accident, a friend overheard a sidebar conversation that The Royal Oak was looking for a manager – mentioned it to me, and two days later after a couple of phone calls and a hastily arranged interview, I'd got the job!

Why The Royal Oak? And what have you changed since you got here?

I like the challenge of bringing a pub back up to scratch, this seemed like a great opportunity to demonstrate what I could do – from an outside observer's point of view there didn't appear to be too much wrong with the pub – it had four hand pumps and the normal stock of lager pythons, but there didn't seem to be any real enthusiasm with the management as to what they were selling – the ales were all 'run of the mill' beers, the sort that you can get in a lot of tied houses, and as I mentioned earlier, the lagers were the standard fare that again you find in most of the big pubco establishments.

In the first six months I stopped buying Greene King ales, they have enough tied pubs in the East Anglia region not to need Free House custom. I started rotating the beers continuously, giving our clientele an opportunity to broaden their horizons a little – it is refreshing that some of my regular customers, who previously stuck to their particular tipple, are now trying a lot of the new beers coming in. I try to keep some local beers on but also bring some in from various areas of the country to provide plenty of variety.



I have also started stocking plenty of cider (*thank goodness he mentioned this, as this is meant to be a cider related article!*). The cellar has had a total refit courtesy of Adnams

Brewery, which has given me more space to play with. I tried when I first took over to introduce a variety of specialist gins – more as a gimmick than anything but they have gone down really well – so I thought why not give cider a go! I had a couple of meetings with Rob Kerridge (Cambridge Cider Company) and Simon Gibson (Simon's Cider), and after that there was no going back. I now regularly stock eight real ciders with the emphasis on local produce but I also look to bring in some from other areas of the country for my customers to compare. I will also be selling perry when it is available; previously this has also sold very well.

Cider revival! Is it here to stay or just a trendy fad?

I really hope it is here to stay – a bit like the gin experiment (we now have 29 different varieties of gin available), I hope it will go the same way and prove popular with my patrons. At present we are doing about 40 litres per week, which in a small village is testament in itself to how successful the experiment is going. Previously, the pub was selling one keg of standard cider in about eight weeks!

Local festivals give tasters the opportunity to try a vast amount of ciders – I want us to become an access point for enthusiastic cider drinkers, somewhere where they know they will get a decent pint of well-kept cider.

Going back to ale (*if you must*) I have had over 110 different beers on since I took over as manager and like the idea of being able to provide some of the more obscure beers and ciders for our customers to sample.

The pub is set in a wonderful countryside location, what plans do you have here for the summer months and beyond?

If you look a little harder you will notice that the pub needs quite a bit of work: The thatch needs replacing and the general décor needs some attention – this all costs money – hopefully if we continue to be successful we will be able to start some of these works.

We have a really good relationship with the Plough at Shepreth, probably the closest pub to us – we try to ensure we do not 'tread on each other's toes', so we don't arrange events that clash and if we're full or vice-versa, we send customers to the other establishment. We need to attract more than locals though, so hopefully this article will help generate us some additional custom.

We may host a beer and music festival later in the summer (nothing concrete has been agreed as yet) and we hope to be a part of a 24 hour music festival planned for surrounding local villages –keep an eye out on our Facebook (@ROakbarrington) and Twitter (@royaloakbar) pages for more details nearer the time.

Time for your plug!

We offer really good food, really good beer, bloody good cider and good company. It would be great to get this pub back on the CAMRA map, so hopefully this write up will help promote what we have on offer here.



Thanks Tom for taking the time out to talk to me – I know you were extremely busy, so I really appreciate the time you gave me.

And Jerry's view: The Royal Oak is in a beautiful setting, in a lovely village and it should not be overlooked by the discerning cider drinker (or beer, or gin drinker for that matter) – the food is exceptionally good - mine host and his team aren't too bad either!

Jerry Ladell
Branch Cider Representative

Go take a (tax) hike!

Will the imminent increase in business tax, said to be set to rise by an average 1.5% this April, be the straw that breaks the camels back of Cambridge and District's small business pubs?

On the face of it, it would be very easy to think it won't. But look more closely and you find that for some it could prove to be a real dilemma. The problem is that the tax, which is usually re-valued every five years, but probably because the Government didn't want a messy election, was this time delayed to seven, is calculated as a percentage of the rateable value of the business premises.

Businesses in cities such as London and Cambridge, where the rateable value of property has rocketed over the last few years are likely to see a large increase in their tax bill.

There has, of course, been an outcry. The Evening Standard has listed some of the worst affected London pubs, including The King's Cross Parcel Yard, and The Worlds End, Camden which it has reported will suffer an increase of 29%.

Properties that have a rateable value between £12,000 and £15,000 will receive relief, and businesses in rural areas populated by less than 3000 people, could also receive a reduction.

There are concessions: The tax applies to properties that have a rateable value over £12,000. Properties that have a rateable value between £12,000 and £15,000 will receive relief, and businesses in rural areas populated by less than 3000 people, could also receive a reduction.

But it may not be all bad news. The BBC has reported that some parts of the country will see a sizeable fall in their rateable value. Lowestoft, it says may have a 41% fall, whilst the rateable value in Newport in South Wales could drop by 71%!

If any of the above applies to a pub in the Cambridge branch area I would be delighted to know!

Advice from the Government is "Check, Challenge, Appeal", but advice reported by The Cambridge News, as given by surveyors Barket Storey Matthews is that the process is far from simple. The original two stage process of appeal and tribunal has been replaced with a complex three phase appeal procedure, and potentially there are fines waiting for the unwary.



I asked the view of Will Wright, retiree and former landlord of The White Horse, Swavesey, who had once made an appeal using the two stage appeal system. He offered this typically assertive reply:

"Pubs in rural areas do get relief IF the rateable value is less than £15000 p.a., and a small business is deemed to be rate free if the value is only £12,000, suffice to say the rateable value of my old pub was £20,000 and that was after I spent £600 on an appeal which lowered the rateable value by £250 thereby saving £100 a year."

"The rateable value of all businesses is directly linked to the rental value and is calculated on the area, i.e.. square footage the premises occupy, but this is only the starter for publicans as, unlike other businesses, a multiplier is then introduced into the equation which is based upon the turnover of the business. That's a bit unfair you may say but it gets worse, as for the last 7 years the multiplier has been calculated

on the pub's turnover in the financial year 2007/08 which you may remember was the start of the smoking ban and just before the banking collapse which initiated a lengthy recession.

The Valuation Office Agency was originally supposed to initiate a review of business property rateable values in time for 2015, but this was delayed and is now being introduced for the forthcoming financial year 2017/18 and for the next 5 years. As a result of a 14% increase in the rateable property values the business rate bills for the remaining 44,000 pubs across England & Wales are expected to rise by a staggering £421 million, that's £421,000,000 over the next 5 years, which works out at an average of a little under £10 grand a year per pub - say it quickly! It has been estimated that Pubs will have to serve something in the region of 121 million extra pints just to fund the increases, I guess we had better get training then. The large increase in rateable values also plays into the hands of the major pubcos & breweries as it enables them to justify excessive rental & property values as well as

their excessive mortgage borrowings.

Meanwhile, and it will probably come as no surprise to many, supermarkets are in for huge tax reductions on their largest stores as they are set to see the rateable values for their super stores slashed by 5.9% overall.

This places greater emphasis on the totally unfair level of taxation that is placed on the leisure industry in England & Wales, especially when every sale of food or beverage is subject to 20% VAT, unlike so many other countries across Europe and indeed the world. It surely must be time for some serious lobbying in the corridors of power to alleviate this totally unfair tax burden."

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Save Our Pubs!

Too many pubs in the Cambridge and District are either closed or under threat of closure. Every one of them will need a concerted community effort if they are to be saved.

Jenny Wren



In January the **Jenny Wren** pub on St Kilda's Avenue closed after being sold by Greene King. It is not clear who has purchased it or what their plans for it are. Although the Jenny Wren wasn't particularly attractive to CAMRA members it was still the community pub for many people in the Kings Hedges area of Cambridge.

In our view a poor pub can with proper management become a good pub; a permanently lost pub never can. If you are a member of the local community and would like to see the Jenny Wren reopen as a pub in one form or another, please let us know. What changes would you like to see? Are there any facilities that could be incorporated into a reshaped Jenny Wren that would better serve the local community?



Many pubs have diversified by including such things as a post office or a crèche. Others have extended

to include B&B rooms. If you know the Jenny Wren or the community around it please contact us with information and suggestions. We are particularly keen to contact individuals or groups who are already campaigning to get the pub reopened. pubs@cambridge-camra.org.uk

Community Buy-Outs

Many ALE readers will recall the story of **The Pear Tree** in **Hildersham** which closed three years ago and was supposedly converted to a furniture shop that only fleetingly traded.

The community campaigned for it to reopen as a pub and now they have a chance to purchase and reopen it themselves. It is on the market



and the Hildersham Pub Co, a Community Benefit Society formed specifically for the

purpose, have had it professionally valued with a view to submitting a bid. They are currently collecting pledges of financial support. If you would like to make a pledge or just find out more, check out their website.

<http://savethepeartree.co.uk>

Two other communities are also gathering pledges and trying to purchase their pubs.



More information on the community buy-out of **The Hare & Hounds** in **Harlton** can

be found on their website.

<http://helpthehareandhounds.org>



Information on a community buy-out of **The Tree** in **Stapleford** can be obtained from

thetreestapleford@gmail.com

Cambridge Beer Festival

As I write this the 44th Cambridge Beer Festival is a little over three months away. On 22nd May at 5pm the doors will open to the public on Jesus Green, letting in the first of around 40,000 people.



This year we're celebrating the 350th anniversary of the publication of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, his epic poem about the fall of man.

If it wasn't for that forbidden apple tree our cider bar – with around 80 ciders and perries – wouldn't be anywhere near as good. Although presumably perry would still be available.

As well as cider we'll have over 200 real ales from across the UK, in both cask and KeyKeg.



We'll have beer from Europe and the rest of the world, and mead and wine from across Britain. The cheese counter will be stocked from around the British Isles and also offer many other savoury goodies – including the ever-popular pork pies.

When I took over as festival organiser I said it would be for four years. After eight festivals this will be my last in the role. During that time the festival has grown, showcasing real ale, cider and perry to more and more people. I'm sure my successors will continue to improve the festival.

Bert Kenward

Beer Festival Organiser

PUBS that Offer Discounts to CAMRA Members

The following local pubs offer a discount to CAMRA members on production of a signed and up to date CAMRA membership card: Please ask at the bar for further details.



The Alexandra Arms, 10% off a pint.

The Architect, 20p off a pint.

The Blue Moon, Norfolk Street, 30p off a pint.

The Cambridge Brewhouse, King Street, 10% off Cambridge Brewing Company Beers.

The Emperor pub and Latin Tapas bar, Hills Road (20p off a pint).

The Golden Hind, Milton Road, 10% off a pint.

The Hopbine, Fair Street, 10% off a pint.

The Kingston Arms, Kingston Street, 20p off a pint.

The Maypole, Portugal Place, 20p off a pint.

The Mill, Mill Lane, 10% off a pint.

The Pickerel, Magdalene Street, 10% off a pint.

The Portland Arms, Chesterton Road 10% off a pint.

The St Radegund, King Street, 10% off a pint.

The White Horse Inn, Barton.

The Three Tuns, Fen Drayton offers 20p off a pint.

The Red Lion, Histon, offers 40p off a pint.

The Crown, Linton, Happy Hour at all times for CAMRA members.

The Black Bull, Sawston, offers 10p off a pint.

The Black Horse, Swaffham Bulbeck, 10% off food and real ale.

The White Horse, Swavesey, offers 20p a pint.

The Bridge, Waterbeach. 10% off a pint.

Twenty Feet from Grain to Glass by Fred Laband



London has around 100 breweries, a number which is growing almost daily. In late November, the MarkoPaulo Brewery (a microbrewery*) opened in Ealing. By little coincidence, on the very same day, they also opened The Owl and The Pussycat Micropub. There are fewer micropubs** (a dozen or so) in the capital. The Owl and The Pussycat is London's first and only MicroBrewery AND Micropub.

The "OaP" is situated on Northfield Avenue in West Ealing and is based in what was once a book shop of the same name. After several months wrangling with leases and red tape,



owners Mark and Paul (both ex-teachers) opened their doors on what was for them a new beginning...



I visit at the end of December and am greeted warmly by Paul, who handles most of the admin side: ordering, accounts, front of house, etc. as well as spending a lot of time serving. Head brewer Mark introduces the resident beers with the

slogan "Twenty feet from grain to glass." They are clearly busy but always on hand to talk about their own beers. I have a choice of a growing number of MarkoPaulo beers served on gravity: Amber Ale (4.8%), Coal Porter (5.2%) and later on, the far from ordinary Owl Bitter (3.5%). Their Hefeweizen also at (5.2%) is served from a keg.

The Amber Ale has a good balance to it with a malty slightly rye quality to it. This is eclipsed by the star of the day Coal Porter which is rich and creamy. Wheat beers are not normally my ticket but the Hefeweizen I find refreshing; it seems to really cleanse my palate, perhaps as it is slightly lower in temperature than the previous beers? The Owl Bitter uses Goldings and Admiral hops to produce a surprisingly robust copper ale with malt and hops in equal balance.

They already have developed two other "go-to breweries" that supplement their own range of beer that so quickly sells out. Tonight's offering from Rebellion in Marlow is Finest Hour (4.2%) which is a delicate pale ale.



This is later replaced by Winter Royal, a ruby beer which has distinct toffee qualities. From nearby Weird Beard they have Black Christmas Stout (4.5%), apparently given the thumbs up as a classic modern Yuletide beer by none other than the Guardian. I decide that I want to judge for myself! It has a lovely caramel head and has real chocolate notes, but is no match (in my opinion) for the Coal Porter.

The micropub itself is nicely appointed with seating for around 25 drinkers. The room has



ample shelving along its left hand side (a survivor from the previous incarnation) which currently houses a range of publications. As you would expect, many beer books/magazines are in place including CAMRA's What's Brewing, The London Drinker which is an invaluable guide to what is going on in the capital and also a few random district magazines including Beer Lines from North Hampshire and a copy or three of ALE magazine which were, to be fair, left by me. One local on seeing the ALE magazine took one immediately stating that it is of course one of the oldest CAMRA newsletters in the world. Good man! The top shelf is made up of maths reference books (a sign of Mark's past). I personally am not interested in axiomatic set theory, but it takes all sorts... There is also a growing number of games including Connect 4, draughts, chess, cards, etc. Local artist, Helen Trevisiol Duff, has produced some lovely



caricatures of Mark and Paul – her works look over the pub with some majesty!

I am offered a short tour of the rear of the premises in which I see several large stainless steel tanks; the mash tun, the boiler, hot liquor



tank and two fermenters named Stanley and Oliver.

Mark asserts that

MarkoPaulo

have the capacity to brew in excess of 1,000 pints a week and I believe him.

The Owl and The Pussycat is a short walk from Northfield tube station or can be accessed on the number 51 bus route... I am staying in the opposite direction in a hotel in Ealing Broadway which is ten minutes away. On my return I pass the Forester which is real picture of a pub. A classic U-shaped bar with large windows and hanging baskets. Sadly I do not go in this Fullers house this time, but vow to return to where several scenes of the BBC's New Tricks were filmed.

STOP THE PRESS It is today Friday 20th January and The Owl and The Pussycat are



holding their official opening. As a respected CAMRA penman, I am of course invited, but I am

sadly not the one to cut the tape! The Guest of Honour is Roger Protz,

long time editor of CAMRA's Good Beer

Guide. Roger declares the OaP open with a short

speech. He explains how pleased he is to see porter

available; a beer that thrived in the 19th century,

virtually disappeared in the 20th but is now very much

revived. In fact he declares the Cole Porter to be brilliant. There are now 6 hand pumps, all

sporting MarkoPaulo ales. I am thrilled to sample the unique and grassy Hanwell Hopped

Bitter which could possibly have the smallest carbon footprint of any beer just about

anywhere, as the hops came from Mark's allotment!



What a beautiful micro brew pub you are, you are!

**Microbrewery - various definitions; a brewery that produces less than 15,000 barrels per annum.*

***Micropub - pub usually based in an ex-shop/unit that sells mainly or solely real ale, no hot food, no TV, no piped music, often limited opening hours. (See Cambridge ALE magazine issue 366 "Small Is Beautiful.")*

On the bus again!

February Pub Trip, part 1

A cold sunny Saturday, late morning, in February and Gladys the Jack Russell/ Petite Gryffon terrier is patiently waiting in the Golden Hind, Milton Road car park for the CAMRA tour bus to arrive. She is accompanied, of course, by myself and by her friends Roger and Chalkie. We would love to go into the Golden Hind pub to try the beer, but unfortunately it isn't dog friendly so we elect to forego the pleasure and wait for the tour proper to begin.

At one year old, Gladys has a veteran's knowledge of CAMRA tours, and of pubs in



Conrad, the genial driver

general, and there is no hesitation when the bus door opens and Conrad, the genial driver, and a dozen more of her

CAMRA touring friends, greets her. She climbs the steps into the coach and then finds her favourite seat, usually close to Roger who will be her guardian (because I am too busy taking notes) throughout the tour.

The first pub we come to is the Cambridge CAMRA Rural Community Pub of the Year, The White Horse, Milton. This is a dog and family friendly pub, which Gladys knows well. Part of the Enterprise estate, it has gained a growing reputation for the quality of both its beer and its food. We enter the front door to find two rooms. To the left is a games bar, complete with pool table and darts, and to the right another small bar which leads to a wider dining area. Gladys has her customary photo shoot seated in front of the bar and we take the opportunity to peruse the beers. Our hosts Ava and Alan are not available, the pub is already busy and they are tied up in the kitchen, but a helpful bar person explains the beer list. Sharps Doom Bar and Greene King Abbot Ale are both favoured by the regular punters so are permanently on, and four

other pumps have regular guest ales. I am torn between Purity Wild Goose and Butcombe Bitter (4%), in the end settling for a half pint (it is going to be a long tour) of the latter. It has the right balance of malt and hops, and tastes to me like a classic bitter.



Beer Scoring

Having made our notes and entered our beer scores onto the CAMRA What pub website, we boarded the bus and

headed into the country to visit another award winning pub, Locale Pub of the Year, The Carpenters Arms, Great Wilbraham.

This pub has been registered as an "alehouse" since 1729. Closed for several years it was rescued by the current owners, extended and developed, and re-opened in 2010, but has not lost its original country pub feel. We enter to find



a spacious bar equipped with two beers and warmed by a log burner above which a sign proudly announces "Hospitality, Sit

Long Talk Much".

Unfortunately the welcome doesn't apply if you have a dog. This pub is decidedly dog unfriendly, so Roger and Gladys take a saunter along a sunny Great Wilbraham High Street, whilst I take a look at the two beers on offer. The barn out the back of the pub was once let to the Crafty Beers Brewery and all three available pumps used to offer Crafty Beers. The brewery has since moved to Stetchworth and today only Carpenters Cask (4.2%) is available. Another bitter labelled Hardy and Hanson, Rock On (4.2%), has claimed the second pump. Every

one of us chooses the former.

I take a mouthful and malty sweet, bitter hop blend impresses me so much that I am tempted to order another. But I know that we have eight pubs to go, so I pop outside to look after Gladys, whilst Roger downs a swift half.

A short road trip in the Newmarket direction and we come to our next pub, The Boot, Dullingham. Another ex-Greene King pub, the Boot was sold to the community several years ago because GK said it wasn't viable. The community proved them wrong and pub has thrived. It is very much a traditional village pub. The single room has a central bar and a fireplace at either end. Two TVs situated on the larger of the end walls are showing six nations rugby, and we enter in time to see Scotland's first try in their memorable win over the Irish. The pub relies very much on wet sales for its income, but it does offer traditional food, with Wednesday night fish and chips being very popular. There is a meat raffle on Sundays. Scouting the bar, I notice beside the familiar Greene King IPA and Adnam's Southwold Bitter, and the not so familiar but known, Shortts Strummer, and there is a fourth pump serving Wolf Twenty 17 (4%). Described by the brewery as brown ale – and indeed it is brown – but it tastes to me like a traditional bitter and I enjoy every mouthful. The Boot is a very dog friendly pub. Gladys is one of three dogs visiting that day,

The fourth pub on the tour, The Red Lion Kirtling was also once a Greene King pub. Hard working owners Hazel and Steve are passionate about working with and for the community. Dogs and children are very welcome. Once he has finished serving us, Steve comes out from the



bar to give Gladys a hug and have his picture taken. The pub is festooned with naively drawn pictures,

donated by local children. The main bar, like the welcome, is very cosy. Two beers are on offer, the regular Adnam's Southwold Bitter, and a

guest; on this occasion Colchester Brewery No 1 (4.1%). I have long been a fan of Colchester beers so decide to continue my traditional bitter theme and opt for the latter. It doesn't disappoint. Others in our party try the Adnams and declare that it too is very good. The Red Lion has an excellent reputation for its food, especially the Sunday Roast, for which it is advisable to book a table.

Time is moving on and we still have six pubs to visit. We are also hungry, so it is with great joy that we enter the current Cambridge CAMRA Pub of The Year The Crown Inn, Ashley, because we know that Steve the organiser has arranged for us to eat here. And what a feast they had prepared for us! A buffet of traditional pub food! Pork pies! Cheese! Pickles! Chicken drum sticks! I notice that Gladys (and Roger) stays close to the food. The Crown Inn was first registered as a pub in 1712. I am sure it has changed a great deal, but it still maintains a rustic "local" feel. It has a strong village following and is home to darts, pool and petanque teams. Landlady Sarah leaves the crowd that she is



chatting with and introduces us to her beers. Mighty Oak IPA is the regular beer,

and today's guests are JW Lees Dragon Fire, Fullers London Pride and Upham Brewery Silver Blaze (4.2%), which is described as a ruby red ale. The Silver Blaze is new to me, so I have to try it. It is delicious, and by far the best beer I have had so far. A caramel citrus blend to start, leading to a bittersweet after taste. I break my own rule, and have another one...

This concludes part one of the Cambridge CAMRA February Tour of pubs.

Tours are held 4 times a year and are open to Cambridge CAMRA branch members. The only obligation is that participants take part in What Pub scoring of the beers they try. If you would like to take part please attend an open branch meeting and register your interest.

Your Bard!

An evening with the Cambridge Pub Poetry Group

Not many people know this, but I used to be a poet. Entangled in a net of, at first the angst then later the ambition and determination of a teenage muse, I used to pen poems reflecting the teenage condition in graphic – and not always poetical – terms. Having said that, I was lucky to have a handful of poems published. Some in local anthologies, others in national “art” magazines, and I have always held in high respect those who are able to portray emotions and nuances of complicated life in so few words.

So it was with enthusiasm last August when on a balmy summers evening I approached The Queens Head, Newton where I was to meet The Cambridge Pub Poetry Group.

The Group, who’s first meeting “about 20 years ago” was in the Cambridge Blue, Gwydir Street, have since been meeting and performing twice a year, using bars and backrooms of various pubs, The Alexandra Arms and The Earl of Beaconsfield to name but two, and café’s as makeshift stages. I could tell, however, that The Queens Head, which is an annual venue, has become something of a spiritual home.



since passed on to David’s son), who informed us that unfortunately the pub garden and usual performance area was indisposed, and who promptly led us across the road to a small roadside hillock and picnic area which, he

informed us, “...still belongs to the Bishop of Ely”.



We gathered in the shade of a spreading tree whilst organiser and founder member Colin Shaw took us through the running order of who will

read their poems and when. David, who had slipped back into the pub, returned with a large bowl of very potent looking punch and the evening was set to begin.

The Queens Head is one of the very few pubs to have been included in every edition of the Good Beer Guide. Deservedly so, I thought, as I sipped a flavoursome pint of Ghost Ship and gazed into the setting sun enjoying the rise and fall of rhythmic verse as each poet took their turn.

Each reading was greeted with enthusiasm and supportive applause, and it became apparent that I was in the company of experienced poets. All but a few are published, and some are famous. Norfolk poet, publisher, and fellow organiser William Alderson, was runner up as 2015 Fen Poet Laureate competition, whilst actress, playwright and Shelley expert, Jackie Mullen, has published a biography of the poet, “*Percy Bysshe Shelley, Poet and Revolutionary*”. At the other end of the experience scale, 8-year-old Tanoki Dean, performing his first ever poem, received the loudest applause of the evening.



The evening ended with some important announcements. After 20 years in the role, former Guardian journalist Colin will be standing down as organiser and

William will be taking on the role. More importantly, the group meetings have become so popular it is felt necessary for them to increase the number of meetings to four times a year!

The Cambridge Pub Poetry Group has produced three anthologies of their work, Cloudburst (2011) and Cloudburst 2 (2013) and Cloudburst 3 published January this year.

The group has since performed in the Earl Of Beaconsfield, Mill Road and at the launch of their 3rd volume Cloudburst 3, which was held in Alex Wood Hall, Norfolk Street and which

raised £120 for the Syria Crisis Appeal

If you would like to take part in future readings, or like me, prefer to sit and listen take a look at the Facebook page:

<https://en-gb.facebook.com/CamPubPoets/>

Will Smith

IN PRAISE OF PUBS

What a blessing is a well-run pub.

There the almond-eyed young

can taste the magic potions

of Bud Ice, Red Stripe tops,

Vodka Hooch, Tiger,

Norfolk Norkie and Triple Jamesons.

Egyptoid, speaking in hieroglyphics,

they take on the strength

of ancient gods.

Colin Shaw

From A Word In Your Beer

Festivals and Events

MARCH

2-5 - Spring Draught Beer Festival. Cambridge Blue in association with Three Blind Mice.

9 - Thornbridge Tap Takeover, Blue Moon, Cambridge.

12 – Opening of Station Tavern, Cambridge .

16-18 - Booze on the Ouse, Priory Centre, St Neots, Cambs.

22 Mar – 2 Apr Wetherspoon Real Ale Festival.

APRIL

4-20 - Battle of the Brewers, The Mill, Cambridge

4 - Swan & Angel – new Wetherspoon pub – opening in St Ives, Cambs.

6 - Tiny Rebel Tap Takeover, Blue Moon, Cambridge.

9-15 - Craft Ale & Cider Bottle Shop, Lord Conrad Brewery, Dry Drayton.

14-17 - Easter Aperitif beer festival at the Red Lion, Histon.

19-22 - East Anglian Beer Festival, Apex, Bury St Edmunds.

27 Apr - 1 May - Beer Festival, Six Bells, Fulbourn.

28 Apr - 1 May - Beer Festival, Sun, Waterbeach.

MAY

4 - Alphabet Brewery Tap Takeover, Blue Moon, Cambridge.

13 - Wicken Beer Festival, Cambs.

13 - Landlord's Leaving Party, White Horse, Barton.

18-21 - Great Yarmouth Beer Festival.

22-27 - Cambridge Beer Festival.

25-29 - Lion and Lamb 6th Annual Beer Festival, Milton.

With thanks to Pints and Pubs

<https://pintsandpubs.wordpress.com/>

Events highlighted in **bold** are CAMRA Beer Festivals.

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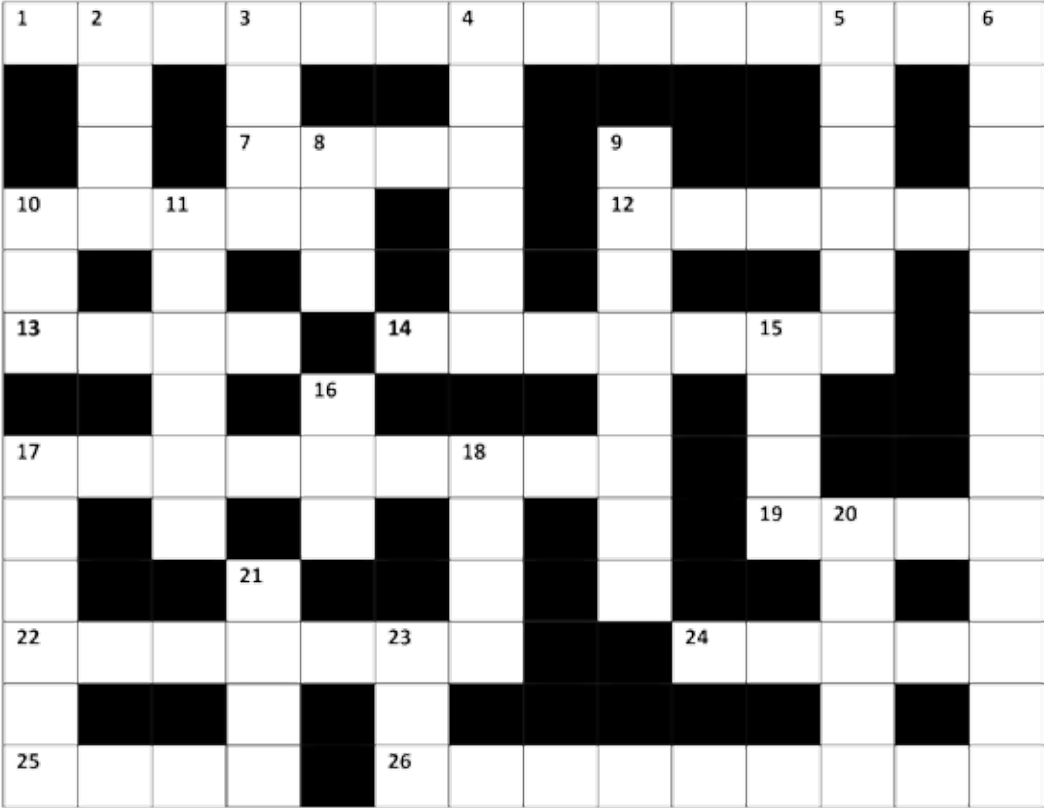


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Cambridge Beer Crossword Number 7 by FRED



- Across:

1. Regent Street pub owned by the City Pub Company. (3, 7, 4)

7. White _____ Brewery, based in Cranfield, make Bedford Best at 4.1%. (4)

10. The featured brewery in issue 379 of ALE magazine – all the way from San Antonio? (5)

12. The Everards Rose and Crown pub is on the corner overlooking the green and pond in this village. (6)

13. Is this new red ale from the Caledonian Brewery really that hard to find? (4)

14. The Black Bull in this village held its first beer festival in this village at the end of August. (7)

17. The Three Horseshoes adorned the cover of ALE issue 379 – which village is home to it? (9)

19. _____ - cum- Quay is home to The White Swan and The Wheatsheaf. (4)

22. Portugal Place pub serving up to 16 real ales, with a 20p off a pint discount for CAMRA card holders! (7)

24. Tiny brewery from south Wales famous for Cwtch? (5)

25. Corkers near Ely hand cook a powerful sea _____ and black pepper crisp, on sale in the Cambridge Blue. (4)

26. Newmarket Road pub renowned for its Thai food. (9)
- Down:

2. The Shed opened in late October in this village. (4)

3. Initially a black India Pale Ale? (1, 1, 1, 1)

4. Crouch Vale _____ Gold is made with hops all the way from Washington State. (6)

5. Village home to cosy 6 down hostelry. (6)

6. Our heir to the throne surely does not drink here? (6, 2, 5)

8. Dorset Brewery producers of Art Nouveau and Hip Hop. (3)

9. West Wrattling community pub: The _____ Tree. (8)

10. _____ Hill home to The Fox, just off the A14! (3)

11. _____ Ales from Near Peterborough include the recent Bones at 5.8% named after a BR diesel locomotive. (6)

15. Would Edward Lear find these wise creatures or Pussycats in a new micro pub in Ealing? (4)

16. Colour of Lions in Swaffham Prior? (3)

17. Nene Valley Brewery "Release The _____" is anything but an everyday Indian Pale Ale! (6)

18. Charles Wells pub "The Elm _____" in Cambridge – also excellent outlet for Banks and Taylor beers. (4)

20. The White Horse in Swavesey has one of these with mushrooms and balls on it! (5)

21. Old _____ sausages are on the menu at The Shed. (4)

23. Drinking AND driving is against the _____. (3)

Answers to Crossword 6 (Issue 379): Across: 1 Gun Hill, 3 Mosaic, 6 Lighthouse, 11 Jack, 14 Nene, 16 Tally Ho! 17 Southwold, 18 Blue, 19 Roasted, 20 Head, 21 Best, 22 Exning Down: 1 Golden, 2 Nog, 4 Over, 5 IPA, 7 Tea, 8 Oak, 9 Dry Hopped, 10 Broadside, 11 Jester, 12 Crystal, 13 Castle Inn, 15 Explorer. The missing beer was OYSTER STOUT.



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