FROM SMALL ACORNS, MIGHTY OAKS GROW
GET TO THE ROOT OF THE REFURBISHMENT OF THE OAK, WALDERSLADE

www.medway.camra.org.uk

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Regular Live Music
Pool League & Table
Real Ales change weekly
Live Sports on 5 HD Screens
Premium beers, wines & spirits
Beer Garden with heated Smoking Shelter
Children & Dog friendly
Open 7 days a week
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Copy Deadline for issue 84:
Monday 28th May 2018
Welcome to the spring edition of the Medway Beer Belly! As I write this editorial, I'm watching the snow fall outside the window and it's difficult to believe that the spring will ever get here. I hope that by the time you have this magazine in your hands some spring warmth will have reached the Medway towns.

I read with interest that London trading standards have recently been cracking down on short measured pints and it made me think just how unnecessary this situation is. As you may be aware, the legal standard for a pint is 95% liquid and 5% foam head, but I can't think of any other situation where someone would ask for a stated amount and find it acceptable to be given 5% less. If you went to a green grocer to buy 1kg of potatoes and you were only given 950g, you would feel well within your rights to go back and complain.

CAMRA have long since understood this situation. If you have been to any CAMRA beer festival you will have noticed that the glasses, as well as being marked up for a third pint and a half pint, are marked as ‘pint to line’. Very simply put, this means that if the glass is filled up with liquid to the pint line, you have the exact volume you ordered, and there is still space for the head.

A quick search on CAMRA’s ‘WhatPub?’ website shows that there are only three pubs in the Medway towns that have been reported to offer ‘pint to line’ glasses, namely the Man of Kent in Rochester, The White Horse in Rainham and The Prince of Ales in Rainham.

I've always found it puzzling that more pubs have not chosen to offer their customers ‘pint to line’ glasses. There tend to be two reasons for this. Firstly, it would mean a potentially heavy investment in new glassware which despite the best efforts of CAMRA are not seen as an industry standard. Secondly there is the belief from landlords that they will be giving away more beer and therefore putting themselves out of pocket.

While there is some grounds to the first reason, the second I personally feel unable to support. How many times have you seen a member of bar staff fill a conventional pint glass to the point of overflowing into the drip tray in order to give you your 95% liquid and 5% head? If ‘pint to line’ glasses are used, the wastage problem can be better managed as the glass will no longer need to be overfilled, which has the potential to save the pub money.

So in summary, maybe it is time to suggest to staff at your favourite pub that you would like to see ‘pint to line’ glasses? After all, with beer prices showing no signs of falling, isn’t it important that you as a consumer get the pint you actually asked for?

Before I sign off for this issue, I want to leave you with the exciting news that the Medway branch of CAMRA is planning a beer festival for this summer. Taking place at the Star Meadow Sports Club on June 2nd, it is the first beer festival our branch has put on in a number of years and I hope that CAMRA members both near and far will come out to support this event.

See you all there!
Anyone is welcome to join us at any of our varied socials and trips. Any changes will be shown in “What’s Brewing” or on our Website: www.medway.camra.org.uk

**Thur 12th Apr:** Rochester to Chatham Ramble - 7pm. Meeting at the Flippin’ Frog, 318 High Street, Rochester, ME1 1BT. Moving on to the Britannia Bar Cafe, Northern Seaman, Thomas Wagghorn and/or Prince of Wales

**Thur 3rd May:** Central Rochester Social - 7pm. Meeting at the Coopers Arms, 10 St. Margarets Street, Rochester, ME1 1TL. Moving on to the Who’d Ha Thought It, Good Intent, Man of Kent.

**Sat 12th May:** Kent CAMRA Regional AGM - 11:30am. Drum Inn, Stone Street, Stanford North, Ashford, TN25 6DN. All members welcome to attend.

**Sat 26th May:** Lower Halstow to Rainham Ramble - 12:30pm. Meeting at the Three Tuns, The Street, Lower Halstow, ME9 7DY. Then a slow walk back into Rainham via the Crown, Brown Jug and Three Sisters.

**Tue 5th June:** Medway CAMRA Open Business Meeting - 8pm. Frog and Toad, 38 Burnt Oak Terrace, Gillingham, ME7 1DR. All members welcome to attend.

**Sat 16th June:** Grain Peninsula Social - Afternoon and early evening pub exploration by the Arriva 191 bus.

**Sat 30th Jun:** Kent CAMRA Meeting - 11:30am. Dartford Working Men’s Club, Essex Road, Dartford DA1 2AU. All members welcome to attend.

**Fri 20th Apr - Mon 23rd Apr:** KGV St. George’s Day Weekend Beer Festival - King George V, 1 Prospect Row, Brompton, ME7 5AL. Further details @ www.facebook.com/kinggeorgevbrompton/

**Thurs 3rd May - Sat 5th May:** 13th CAMRA Bexley Beer Festival - Old Dartfordians, War Memorial Clubhouse, Bourne Road, Bexley, Kent, DA5 1LW. Further details @ www.bexley.camra.org.uk

**Fri 5th May - Mon 7th May:** Frog and Toad Beer Festival - Frog and Toad, 38 Burnt Oak Terrace, Gillingham, ME7 1DR. Further details @ www.facebook.com/thefrogandtoadgillingham

**Fri 25th May - Mon 28th May:** 8th Annual Waggon At Hale Beer Festival - Waggon At Hale, 179 Capstone Road, Chatham, ME5 7PP. Further details @ www.waggonathale.com/forthcoming-events

**Fri 1st Jun - Sun 3rd Jun:** 3rd Flippin’ Micro Beer Fest - Flippin’ Frog, 318 High Street, Rochester, ME1 1BT. Further details @ www.facebook.com/TheFlippinFrog

**Fri 1st Jun - Mon 7th May:** Frog and Toad Beer Festival - Frog and Toad, 38 Burnt Oak Terrace, Gillingham, ME7 1DR. Further details @ www.facebook.com/thefrogandtoadgillingham

**Fri 22nd Jun - Sat 23rd Jun:** The Oast Beer & Music Festival 2018 - The Oast, Granary Close, Rainham, Kent, ME8 7SG. Further details @ www.facebook.com/oastfestival
Musket Brewery is a family owned, Maidstone-based Micro Brewery located at Loddington Farm, Linton, brewing premium REAL ALE at realistic prices. The Musket brewers are CAMRA members, who provide these carefully brewed ales for your enjoyment.

KENT BEERS!!

MUZZLELOADER
4.5% Kentish Ale

FLINTLOCK
4.2% Best Bitter

FIFE & DRUM
3.8% Golden Ale

TRIGGER
3.6% Pale Ale

POWDER BURN
5.0% Kentish Porter
(Autumn/Winter brew!)

MATCHLOCK
3.8% Kentish Mild
(Spring/Summer brew!)

FLASH IN THE PAN
4.0% Green Hop Ale
(Only available in September!)

BALL PULLER
4.0% Premier Bitter
(New for 2017!)

Musket Brewery offers a significant promotion campaign on initial orders, to help increase beer sales for our valued customers. Musket has earned a well-deserved reputation for providing GREAT beers, supported by exemplary customer service!

Contact Musket Brewery to find out more!!

079671 27 27 8 or 01622 – 749931
info@musketbrewery.co.uk

“There’s more in the barrel” at
www.musketbrewery.co.uk
United Services, Gillingham: The building of this long since closed pub was demolished on the January 30th.

RAMS Micropub 12 Degrees, Rochester: After an unavoidable delay due to illness, refurbishment is set to continue with a view to opening in May/early June.

Prince of Wales, Rochester: The pub has had its licence revoked following a violent attack in the premises on March 10th.

City Wall, Rochester: It was announced in the local press on February 3rd that long serving licensee Sanjay Raval has decided to leave the business following a dispute over noise levels with Medway Council.

Dog and Bone, Gillingham: Following the retirement of Landlord Dave Skinner and Landlady Elayne Wilson, the pub closed its doors for the final time on January 8th. The fate of the building is unknown at the time of publication, but rumour suggests that it will be converted into accommodation.

What The Dickinns, Rochester: It has been reported that the pub ceased trading on March 18th. The future of the business is unknown.

Churchills, Chatham: Reports indicate that the building is being converted into flats.

King George V, Brompton: As a result of a successful tap take over from Mad Cat brewery over the St. Patrick’s day weekend, the pub has announced a further tap take over and ‘meet the brewer’ from the Kent brewery over the forthcoming St. George’s Day weekend.

Cricketers, Rainham: A public notice was posted highlighting their application for minor variation to their premises licence. The changes are ‘to amend/vary conditions as agreed with the police’ and ‘to remove archaic public entertainment licence conditions’.

Railway, Rainham: The Medway Messenger ran a competition on behalf of Wetherspoon’s to find a name for their forthcoming outlet. With 56% of the online vote and 60% of e-mailed votes, it has been decided that it will retain the name ‘The Railway’. Other discarded options included ‘The Temperance Hotel’, ‘The Sayer’s Arms’ and ‘The Solomon Brice’.

Past & Present, Gillingham: After having spent over 3 years at the micropub, Sue and Colin Maskell are due to be stepping aside from the business on April 6th.

Thomas Waghorn, Chatham: As of March 26th, all ales are now £1.99 a pint with the exception of Monday club when they drop down to £1.79.

Thanks to the various Medway CAMRA members and others who have supplied the above information.

If you have any pub news, please let us know (details on Page 3)
If you are a real ale pub landlord, please let us know of changes to your pub. We rely on people contacting us with information.

All news was believed to be correct at the time of publication - changes may have occurred since.
It was also good to see on their social media that despite the snows in February and March, business continued as usual.

On March 10th, it was announced that work had commenced on the Below Decks Brewery, situated under the Northern Seaman micropub, Rochester.

While it is anticipated they will be pouring their first pint from the facility in July, guided tours of the brewery will be available during the Northern Seaman 2nd Anniversary Festival on June 1st to June 3rd. Exclusive samples of their beer will be available during the event.

There has not been much news from the Nelson brewery since last issue, so hopefully this silence is an indication of big things in the pipeline.

Over February, the brewery released their traditional Valentine’s Day brew, Temptress (ABV 4.0%), a copper coloured ale with what is advertised as a ‘mysterious’ hop flavour and maltiness to finish.

The brewery has continued to keep active showcasing their brews at a number of local events, most notably the Historic Dockyard’s Steam and Transport fair in Chatham on April 1st and 2nd, and the Munchies Festival 2018 in Cobham on May 5th.

The discount applies to whole pints of real ale only. If you know of any other hostelries offering similar discounts, please e-mail us.

**White Horse, Borstal**
- 10% discount from the price of a pint.

**King George V, Brompton**
- 10p off a pint.

**Command House, Chatham**
- 20p off a pint.

**Prince of Wales, Chatham**
- 10% discount from the price of a pint, plus every Tuesday all real ales are £1.75 a pint. ‘Ale Collectors Card’ scheme also available to all customers.

**Thomas Waghorn, Chatham**
- 50p off a pint with a CAMRA Wetherspoons voucher.

**Past & Present, Gillingham**
- 20p off a pint and 10p off a half Monday to Wednesday.

**Britannia Bar Cafe, Rochester**
- 20p off a pint

**Golden Lion, Rochester**
- 10p off a pint.

**The Northern Seaman, Rochester**
- 50p off a pint with a CAMRA Wetherspoons voucher.

**The Oak, Walderslade**
- £2.50 a pint and £1.30 a half from 4pm on Tuesday.

**Britannia Bar Cafe, Rochester**
- 10% discount from the price of a pint.
NELSON BREWERY

BREWERS OF FINE KENTISH ALES FROM THE BIRTHPLACE OF H.M.S. VICTORY

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CASK ALE, POLYPINS AND BOTTLES DELIVERED DIRECT TO YOUR DOOR

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The Frog & Toad

BT Sport
Regular live music
Monthly Sunday fun quiz (phone for details)
Dart teams
Card teams

Up to four hand pump ales
Large patio garden
Beer festivals held regularly throughout the year

Burnt Oak Terrace, Gillingham, ME7 1DR
TEL: 01634 852231
Following the vote counting meeting on the 28th January at the Who’d Ha Thought It, Rochester, the pubs and clubs listed below were declared winners. Thank you to the 102 members who took the time to vote and congratulations from Medway CAMRA to all involved.

**PUB OF THE YEAR**

**Past and Present**
2 Skinner Street, Gillingham, ME7 1HD

**CIDER PUB OF THE YEAR**

**Past and Present**
2 Skinner Street, Gillingham, ME7 1HD

**CLUB OF THE YEAR**

**The Smallholders Club**
2 Springvale, Wigmore, Gillingham, ME8 0JG

Each venue will be awarded with a certificate. Please check the Medway CAMRA website for details of the presentations.
A railway themed micropub offering real ales, cider and wine. The garden is bathed in sun all day (subject to weather). There is no traffic rushing past our front door.

Conversation flows at most times and strangers talking to strangers make an interesting evening.

**Opening Hours**

Monday to Thursday 4 - 9pm
Friday and Saturday 12 - 11pm
Sunday closed.

At the rear of 37 North Street, ME2 4SJ, Strood, Rochester, Kent.
07941 449137
THE EAGLE TAVERN

REAL ALE
GOOD BEER GUIDE
LIVE MUSIC
HOME COOKED FOOD
JAZZ
CASK MARQUE

124 HIGH STREET
ROCHESTER
ME1 1JT
01634 409040

Www.theeagletavern.org.uk
James Whiteoak gives his account of his visit to the Waggon at Hale beer festival and the experiences he had there.

On the last sunny September Sunday in 2017 I decided to support Community Cask Beer Week by attending the beer festival being held at the Waggon at Hale public house. This rural pub is just beyond the edge of the urban sprawl of Chatham and sits close to the junction of Pear Tree Lane and Capstone Road with Luton Recreation Ground and Capstone Valley Country Park just a short walk away. I had already been to the festival the previous afternoon when I drank three pints of beer. I had returned on Sunday to drink a further three pints so I could present a stamped card with six stamps to get a reward of a free pint of beer. Knowing I would be drinking a lot of beer I fortified myself with a substantial cooked breakfast at the Beach Hut Café near Grain seafront before making my way to the pub by a succession of buses.

The beer festival was being held in a tent in the rear garden of the pub. The Waggon at Hale is a family friendly dining pub with an extensive rear garden and a play area for children. It also has a separate area for assorted farm animals including an impressive looking pig that I was told is kept as a pet. As all the tables and chairs in the garden were occupied I sat in the beer tent.

Draught beers from Kentish breweries were on offer in the tent. For the cider drinker there were ciders from Biddenden and Kentish Pip. All pints of beer and cider were priced at £3-25p per pint. The beers included Countryman from Tonbridge at 4% ABV, Good Health from Goody at 3.6% ABV and RPA from Rockin Robin at 3.9 % ABV. My favourite beer of the festival was Countryman which had also been brewed using only Kentish grown hops. Festival goers were also entertained by live music and for those needing food to soak up the beer, a barbeque was provided.

All in all I had a pleasant afternoon and where I sat I could admire the scenery through a gap in the tent. Although much like a warm summer’s day this was nevertheless Autumn as was evidenced by the beautiful golden hues of the leaves on some of the surrounding trees. While sitting there I could also see my home in its position atop the Darland Banks. At this point I reflected with grim resignation that it was going to be a long climb to the top and I would need to work out how to get home with the least possible effort.

The 8th Annual Waggon at Hale Beer Festival is due to take place Friday May 25th to Monday May 28th.
Back November I went back to my old home town of Kingston-upon-Thames for our office reunion. Whilst I was there I was able to attend one of the regular open days at The Park Brewery, Kingston’s local micro brewery located in Elm Road. It is situated just a stones throw away from Richmond Park, one of London’s Royal Parks, where the park landmarks serve as inspiration for the names of many of their ales.

Husband and wife team Josh and Frankie Kearns set up the brewery 3 years ago in premises that were previously occupied by a greengrocers with a 640 litre system. Although they are brewing 2 to 3 times a week the demand from the pubs, shops and restaurants that they supply in and around Kingston and South West London, as well as supplying A.B.S., means that they are looking for larger premises to move into so they business can grow and keep up with the demand.

On my visit two of the core beers were available on cask as well as the latest brew to join their stable, a limited edition Double IPA Riot Ice Cream that was unfortunately only on keg.

Cast beers were:

Kilcat Pale: (so named from an area on the S.W. corner of Richmond Park) cask abv 3.7%, bottled 3.9%, a citrusy floral, pale ale that I had already had the previous day in one of Kingston’s local pubs.

Gallows Gold: (taking its name from the Gallows that once stood near Kingston Gate.) cask abv 4.4%, bottled again a little higher at 5%. Again I had sampled this American pale ale with its tropical fruity flavour the previous night.

Ranger Pale: A mix of Australian and U.S. Hops giving a citrus grapefruit flavour to an ale with a cask abv 4.2% (Those of you who know me will know I’m not a great fan of citrus beers, buts as this was within my tolerance level and in the name of research, you just have to go for it.)

Bottled beers were:

Park Porter: adv 4.3% (cask 4%) brewed with lactose to balance out the dark malts acidity, a smooth coffee flavour and
chocolate aroma.

**Isabella:** (Named after the enclosed Isabella Plantation. A lovely woodland garden that is at its best in spring and a must see place) This is an American brown ale (small batch seasonal brew bottled abv 4.2% cask 4%) a really nice hoppy ale chocolaty and nutty fruity flavour.

**Dark Hill:** (again takes its name from an area of the park near to Kingston Gate.) This is a dark IPA abv 6.2% (cask abv 5.9%), very hoppy and aromatic. Tropical fruits from the cascade, simcoe and amarillo hops; even with the dark malts used it’s not heavy.

**Two Storms:** (Two storm wood is an area near Sheen Gate that was planted out to replace some of the trees that were lost in the park to the two violent storms of 1987 and 1990) abv 6.8% (cask 6.4%), an earthy powerful brew hoppy and rich in flavour.

**Spankers IPA:** (Spankers Hill is the highest point in Richmond Park.) I didn’t get to try this but this is, and I quote, a “bold and juicy IPA. Heavily hopped this has a good rich backbone of malt and uses some of the best hops from the USA which provide a complex mix of citrus and orange flavours.”

**Gallows Gold, Kill Cat and the Ranger** were also bottled.

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All these bottled beers were on sale to bring home in a presentation box if so wished. I did pass on some of the contact details for some of our local pubs and micro pubs to Frankie Kearns. The ball in now in her court. I do hope that she does make contact so we all can experience more of The Parks Brewery’s Ales here in Medway.

If you’re interested in finding out more you can find details at www.theparkbrewery.com

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**Editors note:** Since this article was submitted for publication, Graham has forwarded me an e-mail from the brewery that includes the following statement:

‘As you probably know already, we’ve moved out of the unit on Elm Road. This was always the plan, it just happened a little quicker than we had anticipated. For anyone who has come to an Open Day or seen the set up, I’m sure you’ll agree that, cosy as it was, it wasn’t really set up to be a brewery. We had a great time building up the business from there, and loved our monthly open days, but now is the time to upscale and take The Park Brewery to the next level. Exciting! We’ll keep you informed of our progress.

For now, we’re cuckoo brewing at Reunion Ales, up the road in Feltham and will probably hop around various breweries of different shapes and sizes to keep production going.’
Wayne M Coveney
Technical Sales
sales@structuralsteelconsultancy.co.uk

Structural Steel Consultancy

Servicing London
& South East England

Mobile: 07872 304221

www.structuralsteelconsultancy.co.uk
THE NATIONAL BEER SCORING SYSTEM

There is one way in which every CAMRA member can be an active CAMRA member, and that's by contributing to the National Beer Scoring System every time you enjoy a real ale.

In my travels around the pubs of the Medway towns, I often find myself in conversation with CAMRA members who lament the fact that they feel unable to spare the time to become more active within the campaign. There is however one way that every member can be involved, and that is by contributing beer scores using CAMRA’s National Beer Scoring System.

During the year, Medway CAMRA members will make hundreds of visits to local pubs, so if your opinions on the range of beers and their quality are recorded, the results can be used in a number of ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Your potential reaction(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No real ale available</td>
<td>“There’s isn’t anything on sale here that I’m interested in. Let’s go to another pub”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poor - Beer that is anything from barely drinkable to drinkable with considerable resentment.</td>
<td>“I’m surprised the bar staff didn’t notice how out of condition this beer was when they poured it… I’m going to take it back to the bar”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Average - Competently kept, drinkable pint but doesn’t inspire in any way, not worth moving to another pub but you drink the beer without really noticing.</td>
<td>“This beer is ok, but it isn’t anything special”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Good - Good beer in good form. You may cancel plans to move to the next pub. You want to stay for another pint and may seek out the beer again.</td>
<td>“That’s a nice, well kept beer. I’m going to recommend this one to my friend when he gets the next round in”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Very Good - An excellent beer in excellent condition</td>
<td>“I’m definitely going to make some time to have a couple more of these… I’m going to let my friends know that they deserve it to themselves to try this”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Perfect - Probably the best you are ever likely to find. A seasoned drinker will award this score very rarely.</td>
<td>“Wow! This is the best beer I have ever tasted! It is the perfect combination of the brewers craft and cellarmanship… I’m going to tell everyone about this beer and I’m not leaving the pub until closing time”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example they can be analysed to:
- Monitor the overall quality of real ale in the Medway
- Provide guidance on entries next year’s Good Beer Guide
- Provide supporting evidence for the Pub of the Year competition
- Give suggestions for destinations for our social events

The scores are based on a 5 point scale as shown in the chart below. If you can’t decide on a score the NBSS allows you to enter half scores.

Information updated by thousands of CAMRA volunteers

Thousands of pubs at your fingertips!
whatpub.com

Featuring over 35,000 real ale pubs

Over 96% of Britain’s real ale pubs featured

Created by CAMRA who produce the UK’s best beer & pub guide
How do I score a beer I don’t like?
Ideally a beer should be scored to reflect how it has been kept. In other words its condition. However the ability to distinguish between a beer that is in poor condition, is unpalatable to our tastes but is meant to taste like that, or has been poorly made is going to be difficult for the untrained taster. In these cases it is better to score the beer as it honestly tastes to you. After all even if you don’t like carrot and coriander ale, others may well do and therefore score it higher.

How do I ensure I am scoring appropriately?
It is important to realise that the scale is not linear. Only 0.5 and 1 indicate poor beer. This allows a wider range of scores for beer that is anything from uninspiring to perfection in a glass. Most worthy Good Beer Guide pubs tend to score either a 3 or 4 for their beers. Bland, uninspiring beers score a 2 and a 5 is something given once or twice a year. It is always worth reminding yourself of the descriptions associated with each of the numbers.

How do I input my beer scores online?
Follow the steps as shown below either on your computer when you get home or on your smart phone while you are still at the pub.

How do I edit my scores?
To edit your scores go to http://data.beerscoring.org.uk.

---

**HOW TO INPUT YOUR BEER SCORES IN WHAT PUB**

**Step 1**
Go to www.whatpub.com and log in with your usual CAMRA username and password. Once you are logged in, use the search box to find the pub you are currently drinking in.

**Step 2**
Once you have found the pub, click the ‘Submit Beer Scores’ tab

**Step 3**
Use the on screen slider to set the score for the beer you have been drinking, input the date of your visit, the name of the brewery and the name of the beer. To make the process even quicker, once the brewery is specified, you are given a list of their most popular brews to select from. When all the information is completed, just click the ‘Submit Beer Score’ button and the job is done.
The Who'd Ha Thought It
FREEHOUSE

9 Baker St, Rochester, ME1 3DN
Tel: 01634 830144  www.whodha.co.uk  info@whodha.co.uk

- Real Ales
- Beer Garden
- Sky Sports & BT Sport
- Snug Area and Open Fire
- Quiz Night
- Summer BBQ's
- Beer Festivals
- Free Wi-Fi
(See website for monthly events)

THE FLIPPIN FROG
ROCHESTERS FIRST MICRO PUB

3rd Flippin’ Micro Beer Fest
Fri 1st Jun - Sun 3rd Jun

Opening time:

Wed., Thurs.: 3pm to 11pm
Fri., Sat.: 12.30 to 11pm
Sunday: 12.30 to 9.00pm
Times may vary

Local Drinks
318 High Street
Rochester

Local Food
318 High Street
Rochester

Traditional French “Croque Monsieur” with a local Kentish Twist
Local Cheese Board or Cheese & Charcuterie Board
Goat Cheese & Honey Croustillant salad
Vegan, Vegetarian, Carnivore Dish "du Jour"
Desser: "du Jour"
And of course our popular baked camembert in local cider!

@TheFlippinFrog  07889214000

Food

Wed., Thurs.: 7 pm - 8.30 pm
Fri., Sat.: 12.30 - 2 pm
7 pm - 9 pm
Sunday Roast: 1 pm -4 pm
Times may vary
You've been at The Oak for 11 years this March and the beer quality has always been very good, where did you learn your trade?

The last pub I had was The Old George Inn in Beckingham High Street. I was there for 5 years. Then further back I was in north west London at a pub called the Honey Pot in Stanmore for another 5 years. Then before that I was working in a grade 1 listed building in Mill Hill. That was the first pub that I had as an independent manager. It was quite similar to The Oak in the way that it was locals led. It was in the middle of nowhere, right at the top of a hill. I was only there for about 3 years when a bus drove through the front door and completely demolished the pub. I was stood and I could see it coming through the window. I can remember thinking afterwards I must be injured somewhere. You could see bricks that had gone past me, others that had skimmed in between my legs, picture frames that were stuck in the bar behind me, but luckily nothing had hit me. So there I was on the 9 o'clock news shouldering old grannies off a bus while the whole building was falling down at the front. I got in a bit of trouble, because when the pub got boarded up the next day one of my friends, who used to install bus stops, put a temporary bus stop sign outside then we wrote on the boards ‘drive through opening soon’. We actually had people phoning up saying ‘it’s a grade 1 listed building, you can’t convert it into a McDonalds’. I even had the bus company phone me up and tell me to remove the bus stop sign as it was bad advertising for them... All I could think was ‘had they not seen the 9 o’clock news!'? It caused some serious damage which led to the pub being shut for a couple of years.

I've been in the business for almost 25 years now. I did my training in a pub called The Middlesex Arms in South Ryeslip. The manager there is the same person that trained me all those years ago and we're still good friends now. I've worked for Greene King now as it is, and before that Spirit for almost 11 years.
Greene King is a much better company to work for, they are very proud of their buildings, very proud of their name. With Spirit, you never saw the name Spirit anywhere, but now everywhere you look, the name Greene King is proudly placed. I know a lot of the managers had mixed feelings with the change over, but for me it has been nothing but a revelation. The way we run, the way we do business is much better and much more professional.

Speaking of names, one of the big things that happened during the refit was the change of name. This is obviously not a decision that anyone takes lightly. What was the thought process behind that?

Nothing had been done to this pub for over 20 years, it was literally being held together with gaffer tape and some paint, and the reputation the pub had, prior to us coming in, was that of a boisterous, male environment. In the last 11 years, especially with bringing up our son here, we’ve consciously pushed it down a more family orientated route. We wanted to project a completely new image, but we didn’t want to completely detract from the past. This is where the decision came to simply drop the word ‘Sherwood’, but to keep half of the old name. After a bit of discussion we decided that “The Oak” had a nice ring to it, reflecting back to the past and giving us a new platform to move forward with all the changes. Long serving regulars are always going to call the pub ‘The Sherwood’ and it has become a running joke with them, but new comers are absolutely loving it, whereas they wouldn’t come in here before. The outside looks dramatically better and the signage is much more prominent. It’s not to insult or ignore the past, but the change has certainly worked for us.

After the refit, what has been the big advantages for you?

First off it is having better facilities with the kitchen. Before it was very dated, very small and difficult to work with. The dishwasher used to be behind the bar and in a modern pub it shouldn’t be like that. Now we have everything laid out like a modern pub should be. I don’t think that they’ve changed the pub so much that it detracts from what it is and what it has always been as a building. Opening up the bar area, which is a more modern thing, has brought everyone together. It used to be three separate bars, with three different groups that didn’t really interact. They all knew each other, they all knew each other’s children, they’d politely say ‘hi’ as they walked past on the way to their little corner, but now it is all one community and people are mixing. You still have elements that segregate themselves in one area on a Friday night, but now you’ll see them in elsewhere in the pub during the week, which they never would have done before.

When CAMRA members hear about a refit at a pub, there is always a worry that real ale might disappear from the bar. Was that ever considered?

Oh no. I was trained by an absolute real ale fanatic. When I first started to train to be an assistant manager, over 27 years ago, I didn’t really know what real ale was. I was a young lad in my twenties, I drank lager and Jack Daniels. One of the rules I was given was that I could drink in the pub after work as long as I only drank ale, and to teach me to do it, he would allow me to drink it for free. He also gave me toothbrush with my name on it and told me I had to spend 2 hours everyday cleaning. That kind of training you don’t forget.

At ‘The Oak’ our lines are cleaned after every single cask. We try to have a reasonable different selection and always take feedback from the regulars. If someone says ‘can you get this’ and we can, we’ll try it and if it sells we’ll get it back in again in the future. Being Greene King, we are expected to stock some Greene King products, so we always have Greene King IPA on, a rotation of 6 other Greene King ales that changes 2 or 3 times a week and a guest ale that varies. For example, recent guests have been Harvey’s, Timothy Taylor and Belhaven. Regardless of what real ale we have on, we like to make sure that the quality is 100%. In my experience, while some ale drinkers are very fussy with brands, if the quality is right, that is more important to the vast majority of people.
Within a few months of you starting here, the pub got Cask Marque accreditation. How important was that for you?

To get recognised by Cask Marque for putting out a good product helps generate business, gets you known and gets your pub trusted. If there ever is a quality issue, it will be because the beer is at the end of barrel. If you are the unlucky one to get that it is just replaced, no questions asked. If you don’t know one of our products, you can just ask for a taster. Any member of staff will give you a small sample of our ales, from all three handpumps if necessary, to help you choose. I’d much rather you had exactly the beer you wanted rather than take a chance on something you are not too sure about. We’ve always done that, and I feel it gives people confidence to try new products, rather that sticking to something you’ve tried before.

We are very proud of our ales and very proud of making sure that the standards are right. I always take feedback seriously, no matter what. Ale is not a pre-conditioned product like keg lager so it changes everyday. It’s very important that we have the right product on so that we can sell it within the correct amount of time so that it doesn’t go off in the barrel or the quality starts to drop. There is a key window where it is exactly perfect. The first day, it is almost there, but it’s a little bit young, the second day is probably the day when it is absolutely bang on the money. The third day is when you want to make sure the barrel is going. It’s still brilliant, it’s still good quality, but if you get it to the fourth day or the fifth day, the quality is not there and you can really taste the difference. The temperature of the building is important, as even though the lines to the hand pumps are insulated, the temperature in the bar can have an effect. That’s why in the winter we’ll turn the heating off at night, so it allows everything a chance to cool down. It’s the little touches that can make the difference.

Whenever I visit ‘The Oak’ you always have at least 2 real ales on, and more often you regularly have 3 real ales on. Some pubs are having difficulty with that kind of turnover, what do you think you are doing differently?

I think it comes down to consistency. There’s been the same manager here all the time, I’ve had the same assistant manager for all the time I’ve been here and I can rely on him to do things the way I want them. My wife’s been here for the same amount of time as I have, and some of the members of the team have been here 10 or 11 years. The very first person I employed to work here, is still behind the bar every Sunday. Anyone new who is allowed to deal with the ales needs to be taught how it is done, to make sure that consistency continues. That’s given us the ability to maintain and grow trade over the years, which means we sell enough product to ensure it is turned over. There is certainly is never any ale left sitting in a barrel being forgotten about, just waiting on the off chance that someone might come in and want it.

‘The Oak’ is on the outskirts of the Medway CAMRA area, however it is easy enough to get to from Chatham and Gillingham as the Arriva 176 and 177 buses towards Walderslade drop off a couple of minutes walk from your door. Why do you think CAMRA members should head out in your direction and give the pub a try?

We try to give something that is unique, we try to give service that is personal, we try to maintain the quality with the ale, the food and the environment. We work hard to make sure that the pub is always clean and tidy. We always have the right number of staff on so that you don’t have to wait too long and I think we are still trying to keep that local, village feel. A lot of people like the laid back and friendly environment. It’s not often we have loud music but even if there is a party with a DJ playing, we do make sure that there is somewhere where you can be comfortable with friends or even just sit with your own thoughts. This is a pub where you can bring your friends, your partner, your parents, your grandparents and your children any day of the week, sit outside or inside and be sure of a great time.
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Opening times are subject to change
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So how are we doing? Well if Medway is to go by, not too well. Yes we have had some new pubs in Medway but many are closing and becoming flats, shops or takeaways.

So why the failures. The re-found love of decent beer has not stopped a wave of pub closures across the UK. Between 2009 and 2013, 3,800 coffee shops opened. During that same period 4,500 pubs called last orders for the final time. Worried? Well we are.

A number of factors have conspired against public houses. Tax on beer is higher than most of the rest of Europe, which adds an extra 52p to the price of every pint served. Alcohol is much cheaper in supermarkets, and there is now competition from places which conventionally haven’t served alcohol, such as coffee shops.

Many of the pubs under threat represent, the campaigners say, beautiful slices of history. The Royal Oak pub in Kent, which contains a beam thought to be nearly 350 years old, closed September 2016. Campaigners are angry it has been sold to a developer, and could potentially be demolished, rather than return to its former glory.

“Many pubs have yet to properly adapt to life after the smoking ban and offer a pleasant environment to relax in with good food - especially those that are struggling with beer ties” said Allison Parkinson from the Save the Royal Oak campaign in Frindsbury.

CAMRA has often said that beer ties have had a detrimental effect because they allow owners to rent the pub premises from the company or brewery that owns it, often for lower than market rates. However, it locks the tenants into buying beer and other drinks from the parent company. At the end of 2014, MPs voted to end the tie which should now allow landlords an independent rent review and to buy their beer on the open market.

Prince Charles said the disappearance of pubs risks “pulling threads” from the “delicate tapestry” of the British countryside. He is almost certainly right.

The seemingly unstoppable march to demolish or convert pubs into flats shows no signs of abating, according to James Hughes, a conservation adviser at the Victorian Society.

“Often pubs are the most architecturally interesting buildings in a local area and provide a cultural hub for a community. Victorian pubs which survive in anywhere near an original state are becoming ever rarer. Pub companies and landlords should see their historic features as an asset not a burden.”

The squeeze on the number of pubs will potentially affect small breweries who are competing in a crowded marketplace for the same customers.

“The good pubs are surviving, they are ones that are ahead of the curve. The pubs that are tending to go are those serving the same old rubbish week in week out and not giving people any choice. It’s probably survival of the fittest although there are exceptions. You have to offer something out of the ordinary.” The micropub is showing the way because it offers a personal service to the table and a vast choice of beers and something new every month, but even these have their issues. Some still think background music is required or are worried by an opening profile that means only regular drinkers have an idea when they open.

What should CAMRA in Medway do? We hope that the wider decline can be halted before these mainstays of British life are gone forever.

Tell CAMRA what you think. E-mail medwaybeerbelly@gmail.com and tell us what you think pubs should do to ensure they stay open. Your comments are most welcome.
What better way to beat the January Blues and start the New Year as you mean to go on than by having a pub walk? A healthy contingent of 18 members decided to do just that on a gloomy January evening and put the New Year resolutions that they made in a moment of weakness to one side.

The starting point for our ramble through the back streets of Gillingham was the Will Adams, a branch pub of the year on more than one occasion who can proudly claim to have made it in to twenty-five editions of the Good Beer Guide. Two beers from Oakham, Citra and Bishop’s Farewell, were on offer along with Mauldon’s Dickens Ale. Most were wise enough to avoid the Bishop’s Farewell so early in the evening, but enjoyed sampling the others.

From there, it was a short trip across the High Street to our current pub of the year, the Past and Present where we were greeted with two ales from the new 3 Piers brewery in Fylde, the strong Tower Power and a Christmas brew, Sleighed. I settled for the slightly weaker, but hoppy Minerva from the Milton Brewery and
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A selection of real ciders and a perry
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was not disappointed.

As the Thursday night P&P closing time of 9pm approached we wandered off to the Frog and Toad. It was Ladies’ Darts Night and there was a lively atmosphere to the place. Sheps’ Whitstable Bay and Black Sheep Bitter were the choices and I was surprised to find, as not a great fan of pale beers, that I preferred the Whitstable Bay.

An intrepid five of us made it to our last venue, Marston’s new Mast and Rigging. If you are a fan of their new range of large family eateries, this will not disappoint. Regular beers, Hobgoblin, Wainwright’s and Pedigree were tried and found to be in excellent condition. For last orders, we didn’t get a bell, but a visit from the barman who served us at our table which was welcome so late in the evening.

All that was left was to stagger off into the night, happy and in anticipation of the next Branch Social.

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In this article, Geoff Juby discusses the measures Medway council have put in place to stop anti-social drinking.

In 2010 Medway Council in partnership with Kent Police in Medway created more Alcohol Control Zones in place to control anti-social behaviour and street drinking in Chatham, Rochester, Gillingham and Strood.

I think most will agree that much of vandalism and anti-social behaviour is alcohol fuelled. The Alcohol Control Zones should be helping reduce anti-social behaviour and make a real difference for people living, working and shopping in the relevant area. The Strood zone was the second in Medway. The first trial was introduced in Rochester in 2003. Now Chatham and Gillingham have theirs.

The orders don’t not mean a blanket ban on drinking in public but does mean a Police Officer or Authorised Council Officer can prevent anyone drinking alcohol if they are behaving anti-socially. They also have the power to confiscate and dispose of alcohol and fine people up to £500 – Failure to comply can lead to arrest. Under 18’s can have their booze taken any time anywhere.

Pubs and clubs in the area are not affected by the Zones as long as drinking takes place within their premises. Whilst this may be the plan it’s not quite happening that way. When drunk enough many of our high octane drinkers try to top up in our local Pubs. This leads to disputes when they are refused.

So are these Zones really working? I don’t think they are because the Police and the Council are not enforcing them strongly enough. We all want responsible drinking and that comes with proper enforcement and certainly in some parts of the Borough it just not happening. For example a trip to the area outside St Mark’s Church in Gillingham or the Smith Square area of Gillingham High street one will regularly see cans of super strength beer being consumed. These are often the areas of misbehaviour caused by excessive drink. The pubs locally are not at fault its the Police who fail to enforce the control zones. Medway Council must act to get Kent police to take action.

Let Medway CAMRA know what you think. Have we got it wrong? Are the Zones working?

For CAMRA’s May cider promotion month, Chris Rouse takes us through the different styles of cider and perry.

Styles and Attributes

All the styles and attributes described in this article also apply to perry (which is fermented pear juice), and pyder (which is a mix of perry and cider). It is difficult to separate styles and attributes. Styles are generally considered to be geographic in origin, and attributes are generally considered to be based on taste, appearance, or production method. The widely accepted cider styles are West Country Style, Eastern Style, and Kentish Style. Taste attributes include tannic, sharp, fruity, cask matured and wine-like. Appearance attributes include clear, hazy and cloudy. Production method attributes include single variety, blended, cask matured and keeved.
An important aspect of real cider and perry is that the taste and appearance can not only vary from year to year, but also vary from batch to batch. This is because apples and pears vary from year to year, and from orchard to orchard.

Typical Taste Attributes

- **Sweetness**: the level of sugar in the drink.
- **Fruitiness**: the taste of fruits (as opposed to sweetness).
- **Sharpness**: the taste of fruit acids (malic or citric acid). Not to be confused with vinegar, which is acetic acid.
- **Tannin**: the sensation of drying in the mouth (astringency), similar to that found in tea and red wine.
- **Wine-Like**: see Kentish Style below.
- **Cask Matured**: the taste of oak, whisky, rum, wine, or sherry you get from maturing the drink in a previously used wooden cask.
- **Other tastes** include tart, sour, bitter, and “farmyard”.

**West Country Style**

This is cider made from cider apples, which are not pleasant to eat. These apples contain tannin, which causes the juice to go brown when exposed to air. As a result, West Country style cider is often dark in colour.

**Cider apples are often classed as either Bitter**

Sharp or Bitter Sweet. Bitter Sharp apples are high in tannin and high in acid. Bitter Sweet apples are high in tannin and low in acid. Some well known cider apples include Kingston Black, Dabinett, Yarlington Mill, and Stoke Red. Traditionally, perry is made using perry pears, which are high in tannin and acid, and are not pleasant to eat.

We now use the term West Country Style, rather than West Country as such cider can be made in any part of the country. Traditionally, cider apples were only grown and used in the West Country (Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall) and Three Counties (Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire). However, Dorset, Wiltshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Wales are also known for their West Country style cider. Ciders from the West Country tend to have a high degree of acidity and have less clarity than those from further north in the Three Counties. They also tend to be darker in colour, but there are always exceptions!

**Eastern Style**

This is cider made from eating and/or cooking apples. These apples contain little or no tannin, which normally results in the cider being pale in colour.

Eating and cooking apples are often classed as either Sharp or Sweet. Sharp apples are low in tannin and high in acid. Sweet apples are low in tannin and low in acid. Some well known eating apples used for cider include Cox, Discovery, Spartan, and Gala. Eastern style cider often has more of an apple taste than West Country style cider. Dessert pears are used to make an Eastern style perry.

Traditionally, Eastern style cider was made in East Anglia (Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Hertfordshire). However, this style is common in all areas that do not traditionally grow cider apples. It is sometimes made in the West Country and Three Counties.

**Kentish Style (Wine-Like)**

The Kentish style can be considered as a sub-style of the Eastern Style. It is made from eating and/or cooking apples, but tastes much more like wine than cider. This is achieved by using certain wine yeasts rather than cider yeasts. Not all ciders from Kent are wine-like, so do not conform to the Kentish Style. Wine-like ciders can be made anywhere.

**Single Variety Vs Blended**

A single variety cider is made from just one type of apple, whereas blended is made from more than one type of apple. In general, a blended cider has a good aroma, initial taste, main taste, and after taste. A single variety cider often lacks most of these elements, however, a few varieties can have most of them, for example, Kingston Black.

**Keeved (naturally sweet cider or perry)**

This is cider that has been made using a process called keeving, where the yeast is intentionally starved of nutrients before all the sugar has been fermented to alcohol. Starving the yeast is achieved by encouraging a pectin gel to form at the top of the cider that absorbs the nutrients. Without these nutrients, yeast will stop fermenting.
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I/we wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association these are available at camra.org.uk/memorandum

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Date .............................................................................

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Surname ____________ Surname ____________
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Tue AM/PM  Wed AM/PM  Thur AM/PM  Fri AM/PM  Sat AM/PM  Sun AM/PM
Please circle if you have any specialist skills: first aider / cellarman / local knowledge / logistics / customer service / other.
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Prince of Wales
Ship & Trades
Thomas Waghorn
Waggon at Hale

Cliffe & Cliffe Woods
Six Bells
Cliffe Woods Social Club

Cooling
Horseshoe & Castle

Cuxton
White Hart

Gillingham
Canterbury Tales
Conservative Club
Cricketers
Frog & Toad
Hastings Arms
Monarch

Napier Arms
Past & Present
Scruffy Duck
Ship
Sturdee Avenue WM Club
Upper Con. Club
Will Adams

Halling
Five Bells
Homeward Bound

Hempstead
Flying Saucer

Higham
Sir John Falstaff
Stonehorse

High Halstow
Red Dog

Isle of Grain
Hogarth

Hoo
Hoo Institute
Windmill

Lidsing
Harrow

Rainham
Angel
Concorde
Dewdrop
Green Lion
Hales & Moore Fish Bar
Mackland Arms
Prince of Ales
Rainham Social Club

Rose
Three Mariners
Three Sisters
United Services Club
White Horse

Rochester
Britannia
Coopers’ Arms
Crown
Eagle
Flippin’ Frog
Golden Lion
Good Intent
Granville Arms
Kings Head
Man of Kent
Medway Rugby Club
Northern Seaman
Ship
Two Brewers
Who’d Ha Thought It

Strood
Sportsman
Steampacket
Three Crutches
10:50 from Victoria

Lower Stoke
Nags Head

Upnor
Kings Arms
Ship

Walgarslade
Oak

Wigmore
Smallholders Club

Wouldham
Medway Inn

Off Licences
Ace Wines, Strood

OUTSIDE MEDWAY

Dartford
Dartford WM Club

Faversham
Elephant
Phoenix
Railway

Gravesend
Compass Ale House
Jolly Drayman
Three Daws

Lower Halstow
Three Tuns

Maidstone
Cellars Ale House
Flower Pot
Fishermans Arms
Thirsty Pig

Sittingbourne
The Paper Mill
The Fountain of Ale
Three Hats

Upchurch
Brown Jug

Gillingham, Higham, Rochester & Twydall Libraries
Visitor’s Information Centre - Rochester
Medway Archives Centre - Strood

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First Name
Surname
Email

Members’ Weekend Coventry Advert.indd   1
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10am to 1am Friday & Saturday*
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(*extended hours only available to those served
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