



CAMRA

Chelmsford & Mid-Essex Branch

Pub News

December 2009 –The Festive edition

by Nigel Sadler - Pub Liaison Officer

Yes it's that time of year again when we spend hours charging round the shops for gifts, cards and decorations then realise how expensive it all is..... Bah humbug! I've got another idea though why not just nip down to your local and enjoy a locally brewed beer and make a Christmas toast to your friends, family and loved ones? So much less stressful I feel.

As it stands I am sorry to say that this is the last edition of Pub News that I will be producing. I can hear the cries of relief across the Chelmsford & Mid-Essex region already! I've enjoyed typing up this newsletter over the past 12 months but now feel it's the time for new blood and ideas so please if there's a branch member who would like to take over the reins then please step forward.

I have however agreed to carry on the role of Pub Liaison Officer in the short term to ensure the branch has cover in this role. I've also done it out of respect for all the licensees who have been kind enough to take on the various CAMRA promotions whether at local or national level and I would like to extend my thanks to all of them for putting up with me over the past year!

So first of all as I am sure many of you will still be looking to get out and about in the next few weeks here's what on offer.

PUB NEWS

The Square and Compasses, Fuller St. – Victor has kindly sent me the following Christmas calendar: Tuesday 1st December to Thursday 24th December their festive menu will be available at lunch and dinner

Tuesday 22nd December - Traditional Hand Bells and Christmas Carols from 8pm

Thursday 24th December - Christmas Eve - Normal service and the festive menu will be available at lunch and dinner. Join them and soak up the air of excitement of Christmas Eve

Friday 25th December - Christmas Day - Open for lunch time drinks only from 12noon until 2.00pm with complimentary bar top nibbles.

Saturday 26th December - Boxing Day - Open for lunch time drinks only from 12noon until 2.00pm with complimentary bar top nibbles

Sunday 27th December to Wednesday 30th December - Normal service every day – reservations being taken now.

Thursday 31st December - New Year's Eve - Lunch service 12noon until 2.00pm Closed from 3.00pm until 6.00pm. Dinner service 6.30pm until 9.30pm serving their full menu including the seasonal special boards. The Stoke Bar will be open for drinks from 6.30pm until 1.00am. Celebratory music and dancing.

Friday 1st January 2010 - New Year's Day - Open from 12noon until 6.00pm, closed for the evening. Lunch served from 12noon until 4.00pm

Saturday 2nd January 2010 - Normal opening times - lunch and dinner service resumes

The Windmill, Chatham Green – Elaine and Peter have lined up a couple of events and have launched their Christmas Day menu at £49.95 per person. Book now please! Here's a selection of what they will be offering:

Starters: Cream of asparagus Soup served with crusty bread / King Prawns fried in Garlic Butter / Coarse Liver & Bacon Pate / Avocado with crispy bacon & hot chilli sauce.

Entree: Champagne Sorbet

Main Courses: Traditional Roast Turkey & with cranberry stuffing & pigs in blankets / Roast Rib of Beef with Horseradish gravy / Roast Gammon with marmalade chutney / Salmon Steak topped with prawns in homemade marie rose sauce

And for vegetarians theres' a choice of Roasted Tuscan Vegetable Tart or Vegetable & Stilton Crumble

Desserts : Christmas Pudding with custard or cream / Baileys & white chocolate cheesecake / Sherry Trifle / Apple & Cinnamon Crumble / Cheeseboard

Sunday 6th December quiz night in aid of PARC (play & resource centre) A local charity that provides respite care for handicapped children & their carers. 5pm for a 5.30pm start £2 per head entry.

Thursday 31st December come & see the New Year in with them and there's a pantomime theme fancy dress party. Bring your own nibbles as they're not cooking!!!!

Saturday 23rd January. Dig out the kilts and they'll provide the haggis. It's their very popular Burn's Night supper – Elaine says to book early to avoid disappointment

The Cricketers, Mill Green, Fryerning – Marion's Christmas menu starts on 2nd of December and runs right through until lunchtime Christmas Eve. They are having an Abba tribute night on 9th December which sold out immediately so they booked it again for the 10th which I understand is almost sold out again but if there is enough interest they will consider doing a third night. So wh and see why not give them a call and in the meantime see if you can remember the words to all those old Abba favourites.

The Generals Arms , Little Baddow – Debbie has also launched a Christmas menu available throughout December for a very reasonable £21.95 per head and features:
Starters: Leek and Potato Soup with a garlic crouton, topped with Parmesan cheese. (V) / Blackstick Blue Cheese & Walnut Souffle served on baby leaves and drizzled with a balsamic glaze. (V) / Ham Hock Terrine Served on dressed leaves with a mustard dressing and granary toast and Classic Prawn Cocktail With Marie Rose sauce and brown bread.
Main courses: Traditional Roast Turkey Served with all the festive trimmings / Slow Cooked Belly of Pork Served on sage and onion mash, with seasonal vegetables / Chargrilled Swordfish Served with green beans, new potatoes and a zest of lime and for vegetarians theres Chef's Rissotto With wild mushrooms and red pesto. (V)
Desserts: Traditional Christmas Pudding Served with custard or brandy sauce / Baked Chocolate Brownie Served with clotted cream ice cream and chocolate glaze / Cranberry Cheesecake Served with fresh double cream and red berry coulis / Chocolate & Pear Tart Served with Swiss chocolate ice cream / Cheese Platter With biscuits, grapes and chutney.

As usual there will be 3 Shepherd Neame beers on tap.

Battlesford Court, Witham – Dave has commissioned a special brew called “Olly Olly Olly!” in support of local X Factor contestant Olly Murs. Brewed by Mighty Oak brewed at 4% ABV it is a full flavoured, thirst quenching amber coloured session bitter with a biscuity maltiness, moderate bitterness and citrus hop aroma and finish and it is proving to be a big hit with the younger crowd.

The Duck Inn, Newney Green – I am sorry to learn that Simon will be leaving the pub in March and Shepherd Neame will be selling the freehold. However every cloud has a silver lining and I am pleased to know that he has just purchased The Spotted Dog, Bishops Green, Barnston, Dunmow and are in the process of giving it a complete refurb ready to open April/May next year, being a freehouse the emphasis will be on good real ale and quality food something for which the Duck is well known. I am sure we all wish Simon well and look forward to the opening night!

The Butchers Arms, Nr Ford End – Brenda and Mark will be holding a Christmas Veggie Night on Friday 18th December. Food will be served between 6.00 - 9.00pm and cost £17.50 per head. As they found on their last veggie evening, live music was much appreciated by everyone, so they have booked “Redwood” to entertain you on the 18th. They performed there a few weeks ago and once again proved very popular as always.

The Endeavour, Springfield Road – Jacqui has sent me their following Christmas programme:

Christmas Eve - Open 11am – 6pm, re-opening at 7pm 'til late for landlord Mike's birthday party and Christmas Eve celebration with entertainment from Bri 'C' and a free buffet. Numbers are limited so please get your free tickets at the bar now!

Christmas Day - 12 midday – 3pm and they will be closing promptly at 3pm

Saturday 26th December – Open 12 midday – late. There will be cold meats, pickles and bubble and squeak on sale all day and you can choose to play poker, Play your cards right or take part in a mini quiz and enjoy the free juke box.

Sunday 27th December – Open 12 midday – 10.30pm

Monday 28th December - Official Boxing Day - Open 12 – 6pm

New Years Eve - Open 11am – 6pm, re-opening at 7pm 'til late. Rock in the new year with your friends and Steve Forward will provide the music. There will be an American themed buffet and optional fancy dress, tickets only £10 but numbers are limited so please buy your tickets now at the bar.

New Years Day – Open 12 – 11pm. Coffee and mince pies available all day and a chance to chill and relax.

The Star, Ingatestone – This Gray's house will re-open on Friday 4th December following a complete re-furbishment in a contemporary style. The good news is that there will be at least two pumps offering real ale and one of these is expected to from Brentwood Brewing Co.

BREWERY BITS

Mighty Oak are well into the Christmas spirit already and John and the team will be giving away yet more beer this year on the High Street in Maldon on the Victorian Evenings - 6.30 - 9.30 on the 3rd and the 10th December. Also they have an Open Day on the 5th December at the brewery when again they are offering free tasting of our Christmas beers as well as sales of Christmas beer.

Ruth adds that their Christmas beers selling out fast so best get over there and enjoy a sample and place an order.

Following my recent effort at Brentwood Brewing, where I had to cook and bash my nuts up with a club hammer to produce Chestnut Stout, my two hirsute friends at **Farmer's Ales**, Charlie and Fez have followed this up by boiling their plums so to speak and have produced a fantastic Plum Stout which is around 5% and lightly spiced. Well worth seeking out and enjoying in the coming weeks. Of course the brewery will also be open on the Maldon Victorian evenings on the dates mentioned above and their usual warm welcome (blazing brazier) and fine ale await.

Mind you this has got me thinking now..... Chestnuts in Chestnut Stout, plums in Plum Stout so what exactly do Wyehwood put their "The Dog's Bollocks"?

Meanwhile back at **Brentwood Brewing** the Christmas beers are well underway and these include Canary Beaver at 3.8%, a blonde number with Styrian Golding hops at both the front and back ends. A lightly spiced Winter Warmer, a golden ale with a hint of ginger and orange. Finally there's two old favourites Rum'py Pumpy and Brandy Snap to keep out the chill. Brentwood Brewing will be at the Ingatstone Victorian evening on Friday 4th December with some good cheer on offer at their stall.

OTHER NEWS

Now for something completely different, this arrived in my mail yesterday from Paul Kirby and Brian Thackray:

Unique New Holiday Company in Yorkshire – **Beer n Buses**

Two friends have come up with a novel business idea combining their two interests – beer and buses. Paul Kirby of Wetherby and Brian Thackray of Wakefield, were chatting one night (down the pub, where else?) and realised there was a gap in the market for holidays specifically catering for fans of real ale and traditional pubs who enjoy travelling on public transport. "And where better than in Yorkshire with the stunning scenery of the Dales, Moors and Coast and its highly regarded transport system, particularly in Summer. We are incredibly lucky to have all this on our doorstep and we thought we should let others into the secret" enthused Paul. "We believe there are many people out there who share our passions and don't want the stress of driving everywhere whilst on holiday. They can give the car a holiday and enjoy a pint or two in a nice pub without the worry of being over the limit".

Paul added "I am surprised that there is not a single holiday company in the UK offering this type of package. Coach holidays are all well and good but you can't just get off when you feel like it, and you don't get the chance to mix with the locals as much. You can meet some real characters on rural buses and the views from double-deckers are far better than those from a coach. For example, the Coastliner service to Whitby is now completely double-deckered, giving fantastic views as you sit back and enjoy the scenery of the North York Moors. And we have the first ever coach-standard service double-deckers on the Ripon to Leeds route – the famous 36 - on which you can relax in leathered-seated luxury and watch the red kites and deer in the grounds of Harewood House".

Beer n Buses holiday-makers are provided with travel tickets and all the information they need for the day out, including maps and a detailed timetable. They are not accompanied on every day of the holiday but CAMRA member Brian says "We will be with them for the brewery visits, like the one to the Black Sheep Brewery at Masham. People don't want to be shepherded around and told what to do all the time so our timetables provide different options for them. Travellers can stay longer in a particular place they like, or move on and

explore somewhere else. This flexibility is a major selling point, we believe, as well as the variety of trips during the eight-day holiday”.

Brian, a Data Analyst, admitted that the holiday will, at first glance, probably attract more men than women but he promises there is no need to leave the wives and girlfriends at home. “On the *Beer n Buses* itinerary there are plenty of interesting places for the partners who aren’t necessarily into pubs and real ale. Included are the TV locations in the West and North Ridings of Yorkshire that are known to millions around the world. We couldn’t miss out on the charms of ‘Last of the Summer Wine’ country around Holmfirth, or the Dales countryside in the much loved ‘All Creatures Great and Small’. Perhaps the most well-known TV location is the village of Goathland of ‘Heartbeat’ fame and the hospital featured in ‘The Royal’ on Scarborough’s south shore”, said Brian. “The picturesque town of Knaresborough will have a market on the day we visit, and the ladies can always have a day on their own in the excellent shopping centres of Leeds and York”, he added.

It’s not just buses that *Beer n Buses* holiday-makers will travel on, it’s trains as well – namely the historic Settle-Carlisle line and the scenic North East Coast mainline. The journey to Berwick is the beginning of a day out travelling down the dramatic Northumbrian coast with its castles, islands and white beaches. The day ends in Newcastle where there’s the option to enjoy a bit of Geordie hospitality until the last train back at 22.45.

The travellers stay in the modern city of Leeds and historic city of York. Prices start at £370 per person but as Paul explains, “The numbers we can cater for is limited because of the restrictions of some of the buses. It is a shame that we cannot offer more customer places to reduce costs further, but it does give us the chance to get to know our customers better and give their experience a more personal touch” Because of the limited numbers Paul recommends early booking for the holidays, which begin on 8 May 2010.

All details are on their website www.BeerAndBuses.co.uk. Contact info: Email: BeerandBuses@gmail.com Tel: 01937 581029

How will our very own Steve Simister, a keen bus fan react to this? Come on Steve start up a holiday company here in Essex!

NEWS FROM HQ

As you know CAMRA's National Pub of the Year competition has been running throughout 2009. CAMRA members assess thousands of pubs across the UK, scoring on various aspects which make a great pub, including the welcome, service, atmosphere, customer mix (i.e. 18-80 year olds), décor and, of course, the quality of the real ale. Our very own Wheatsheaf at Writtle made it all the way through to East Anglian Regional Winner but unfortunately not to the last four.

The four CAMRA National Pub of the Year 2009 finalists are:

Central Southern

Royal Oak Inn, Wantage, Oxon, OX12 8DF
Tel. 01235 763129, www.royaloakwantage.co.uk



'Photographs of ships bearing the pub's name adorn the walls in this street-corner pub. The lounge bar features a wrought-iron trelliswork, largely hidden by over 300 pump clips. The smaller public bar attracts a younger crowd. A mecca for the discerning drinker, the pub is a primary outlet for Pitstop and West Berks ales in the area- two beers carry the landlord's name.'

Paul Hexter, Royal Oak landlord, said: *'We are thrilled to be in the final. I've been promoting real ale for the 26 years I've been at the Royal Oak, and having won the Regional award twice before, it's great to reach the National final. Our regulars are really thrilled for us, and to celebrate we are cracking open a few aged bottled beers!'*

Greater Manchester

Crown Hotel, Worthington, Gtr Manchester, WN1 2XF
Tel. 0800 068 6678, www.thecrownatworthington.co.uk



'Local CAMRA Pub of the Year 2006 and 2008, this country inn offers eight cask beers and two scrumpy ciders, and acts as the brewery tap for Prospect beers. High quality home-cooked food is served in the bar and conservatory restaurant, while a large decked sun terrace at the rear has patio heaters for cooler evenings. Mini beer festivals are held about four times a year.'

Daniel Prince, Crown Hotel licensee, said: *'We are really pleased with this achievement and it's a real boost for everyone at the pub, and for the beer drinking folk in Wigan. It puts everyone in a good mood, and it helps us to raise our game. With a lot of hard work we've turned this pub around from what it was a few years ago. Selling good beer is good business.'*

Surrey and Sussex

Royal Oak, Friday Street, West Sussex, RH12 4QA
Tel. 01293 871393



'A lovely, isolated, low-beamed, narrow free house that is well worth finding, with seven handpumps for real ale, three for cider and two for perry. Ales are usually from local micro-breweries and are constantly changing. CAMRA National Pub of the Year Runner-Up in 2009. This is a real gem.'

Sarah Blunden, Royal Oak landlady, said: *'We are very proud to be in the running for the title again. I do feel, however, that I accept these awards on behalf of all the locals who regularly use this pub. Our pub is about people as well as beer and I think we have the best of both.'*

Yorkshire

Kelham Island Tavern, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S3 8RW
Tel. 0114 272 2482, www.kelhamislandtavern.co.uk



'Selected as CAMRA's National Pub of the Year in 2008 after previously picking up many local and regional awards, this small gem was rescued from dereliction as recently as 2002. An impressive 10 permanent handpumps include two that always dispense a mild and a stout/porter, so you are sure to find something to suit your mood. In the warmer months you can relax in the pub's multi-award winning beer garden.'

Trevor Wraith, Kelham Island Tavern licensee, said: *'Since winning the National award last year, we have been working to the same pattern, always keeping the beer of a consistent quality. It's marvellous to be in the final again this year, and we will be sticking to our*

formula, which involves keeping our staff well-informed and passionate about their beer.'
Julian Hough, CAMRA Pubs Director, said:

'This is a really strong year for the competition, with four outstanding community pubs vying for the National title. These pubs have got to the final after being judged on their quality many times throughout the year by CAMRA branch members and regional directors. It's going to be very difficult to decide on an overall winner, as I know each finalist brings great pleasure to a lot of people, not least within their respective local communities.'

The winner of the CAMRA National Pub of the Year 2009 is to be announced in mid-February 2010.

CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

Yes we're going to finish the year with a light-hearted competition. The prize is a copy of Pete Brown's excellent book "A man walks into a pub" which traces the history of beer drinking and pubs in this country.

So as usual it will be first correct answer drawn out of my tankard that wins and that's final!

Competition Question: What was this year's Supreme Champion Beer?

Send you answers by email to the address shown below or by snail mail to 31 Moss Path, Galleywood, Chelmsford CM2 8YG. Closing date for entries is 20th December 2009 and the winner will be contacted. Make sure you give a contact number with your entry.

Finally I would like to wish you all
a very Merry Christmas
and a
Happy, Peaceful and Prosperous New Year

**For further news on pubs and breweries visit: www.tap-room.com
My contact details: nigsad@yahoo.co.uk and **07798 764198****