



# CAMRA

*Chelmsford & Mid-Essex Branch*

## **Pub News**

April 2009

*by Nigel Sadler - Pub Liaison Officer*

The end of possibly the longest pub crawl in the history of Essex is in sight! 274 miles and 160 pubs/bars so far. I have to say it has been an interesting and varied experience. I've rediscovered long forgotten places I first visited 20-25 years ago, some of them which were hardly worth a second glance back then have now turned into thriving success stories. Sadly others have now closed, remember the Mashbury Fox? In passing it is also sad to note how few Free Houses are left on our patch.

Unfortunately the response to the LocAle initiative has not improved, this being the main purpose of my recent journeys round our area for those of you who missed earlier editions. I've managed to get 4 or 5 on board so far, a long way short of the 50 I had originally set as a target so it's disappointing in some ways.

I'm sure it's no surprise to many of you but I've got the feeling when going round the pubs that the enduring image of us CAMRA people is still very much that of beards, chunky sweaters and beer with bits in. Whilst that might be fine for some of us guys I think that it's a bit tough on our female members, some of whom are positively wonderful e.g. Eleanor, Jane, Maggie, Alison, Susan etc. (Pay me later girls!).

However there is some good news! We are positively blessed this month with not 1 but 5 pub beer festivals (see details below) taking place on our patch which coincide with **National Cask Ale Week (6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> April)**.

*For those of you who don't know CAMRA has teamed up with Cask Marque, The Independent Family Brewers of Britain, Enterprise Inns and Punch Taverns to launch the first ever National Cask Ale Week. This is intended to be a week of campaigning across the UK to promote the importance and pleasures of drinking real ale in pubs.*

*It is hoped that the Week will provide essential support for community pubs whilst also promoting real ale as the unique selling point for the British pub.*

So there you have it.... another reason to visit your local and have a pint or two.

There has been a lot in the news over recent months about pub closures but perhaps there is a glimmer of hope which might help some of those struggling in the East of England. Last month the EEDA (East of England Development Agency) announced *funding to the end of March to support rural pubs*. This was an *initiative available from Business Link to support hard pressed local pubs which have been closing in record numbers following the smoking ban, competition from cheap supermarket sales and the economic downturn*.

*"Pub closures have an enormous impact on the whole community, especially in rural areas. Pubs are at the heart of their community, supporting local groups and clubs and providing a social centre. Business Link has been working closely with industry experts to provide support to publicans to help them survive and this additional funding will be warmly welcomed"* commented Edwin Jones, Business Link Rural Affairs Partnership Director.

*"85% of UK pubs are independent or tenanted, rather than managed by breweries. They operate as small businesses which are often the owner's home as well as their business. It's these pubs that the funding has been designed to help."*

The funding was designed to *cover up to £1000 towards the cost of additional services such as marketing and training identified following a business health check to help grow and develop the business*.

Maybe this scheme will spread to other areas and help save a few more pubs, let's hope so.

In the meantime if you are interested in showing your support for pubs and to urge the government to take action why not visit [www.axethebeertax.com](http://www.axethebeertax.com) for further information.

Now back to the news and what's on. First on the list are the pub festivals:

***The Woolpack*** - Mildmay Road, Chelmsford will be holding their festival between Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April with over 30 beers plus plenty of ciders and perries. Entry is free with a £2 per glass deposit (refundable). There's live music on both the Saturday and Sunday evenings. Food will be available throughout. Dave has put together a good selection of beers as usual, from across the country, with Hopback Summer Lightning (David Sherman's favourite!), Orkney's Dark Island, Whites' Chilly Willy, Brewsters' Rutterkin and Twickenham's Naked Ladies to name but a few. For more details on beers etc visit: [www.thewoolpackchelmsford.com](http://www.thewoolpackchelmsford.com). *Finally, the first pint is half price to CAMRA members on production of your membership card!*

***The White Horse*** – Townfield St., Chelmsford. New man in town, Chris, is looking to pull in the punters with his first festival since taking over the pub back in January, running from 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> April. Unlike the Woolpack he has decided to concentrate on

our fine Essex micros and launch a “LocAle” Festival. There will be beers from Farmers Ales, Mighty Oak, Brentwood Brewing, Red Fox, Felstar and from the far wilds of the Dengie Peninsula: Wibblers. I’m sure we all wish him success and hope it will become a regular event.

**The Rose & Crown – Writtle.** Barry, *his* daughter Ellie and their *team* are putting together their festival also to run from 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> April with a total of 50 beers from across the country plus cider and perry. There will be live music (8pm-11pm) as follows:

Friday	Maycontainnuts
Saturday	Writtle Zimorones
Sunday	Working Progress

*Souvenir glasses will be available. A selection of hot food will be on offer in the marquee throughout the day along with their full menu in the pub itself. There is also a bouncy castle for the kids and a full children's menu available from 12pm.*

**The Viper – Mill Green Road, Nr. Ingatestone.** *On between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> April with 25 real ales on offer over the 6 days and a good selection of traditional ciders are promised. There will be the usual food available from the kitchen between noon and 3pm along with a BBQ. Live music will also feature. Always a favourite destination pub with many CAMRA members this year's festival looks to be even better than last.*

**Battesford Court – Witham.** Dave the manager of this J.D. Wetherspoon house has reminded us that the whole JD chain will be having a “Worldwide Beer Festival” between Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April - Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May. He says they *will have over 50 ales to choose from over these dates* including some of our fine local brews. *Dave is very keen on the LocAle scheme and hopes to have at least one local brew, if not 2, on permanently in the coming months.*

**The Green Man** – Howe Street. Landlady Sarah would like us to know that in addition to her regular steak night on Wednesdays *she has now launched a mid-week carvery on Thursday nights with meals at £7.99 per person. For those with children it's even better because between 6 and 7pm up to 2 children eat FREE per paying adult, how's that for a credit crunch beater for a family night out?* The pub's *big event for the month will be the Steam Up on April 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>. Once again the pub will be hosting a Steam Fare with traction engines coming from far and wide. Entertainment will be provided by Dr. Busker on the Saturday evening (If you didn't manage to see him and his group last year you must this time round but not suitable for young ears I must add!). Pony rides will be available for the children over the weekend. Programme as follows: Friday April 10<sup>th</sup> - Karaoke & Disco (Eve), Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April - Dr Busker performing (Eve), Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April - Easter Egg Hunt (for the children!) - 3pm*

*Sarah adds that during Cask Ale week there will be at least 3 ales available every day and up to 5 during the weekend.*

**Queen Anne's Castle – Great Leighs.** For the music fans amongst us Pat has sent me a string of dates for bands/events coming up in April so it promises to be quite a musical month. Current beers on at the moment are: Flowers IPA, Black Sheep and Woodfordes Wherry. Anyway here are the dates and names for your diary:

- 2nd Jam Night
- 3rd Rebel Souls
- 4th Ash Mandrake
- 5th Prozac Yodel from 5pm
- 7th Open Mic
- 9th Planet Rock Quiz £1.00 entry - teams up to 4 people
- 10th Bill Legend & Tony Williams
- 11th Redwood
- 12th Acoustic Blues Open Mic hosted by Steve Foster Pilkington
- 16th CASEYS - 4 acts
- 17th Lizzie B Experience
- 19th Acoustic Soul Club
- 24th Crossbow
- 25th Joeys Dead
- 30th John Martyn & Nick Drake Tribute Night with Andy McKay

Remember all events are free of charge (except the Planet Rock Quiz) so why not dust off your Glastonbury outfit and head over for a pint and some music. I'm a keen Ozric Tentacles man myself..... ;-)

**The Cricketers – Danbury.** I understand that the new tenants have been selected and are, I believe, from the Romford area. I think they will probably take over the running during the second half of April. As soon as I have further news I'll pass it on.

**The Square & Compasses – Fuller Street.** I am pleased to learn from Victor and Sue that the Essex Chronicle, together with Thisistotalessex Newspaper, is running its second annual Food and Drink Competition and they are proud that they have been invited to enter the 'Best Traditional Pub' category. So if any of you have been to The Square and Compasses recently and enjoyed their fine food, ale and hospitality and feel that you might like to vote for then here's what to do:

By Text – send the following text to 65100

EC PUB THESQUAREANDCOMPASSESFAIRSTEAD or call in person at the pub and pick up a voting form.

**Horse & Groom – Galleywood.** Sorry Dave you don't get a mention this month ;-)

## **BEST LOCAL FAMILY PUB & BEST LOCAL FOOD PUB AWARDS**

As you know we have our annual "Local Pub of the Year Award" which went to The Wheatsheaf at Writtle this year. At the last branch meeting I put forward a suggestion for a "Local Family Pub of the Year Award" and now in addition to this I would like to propose a "Local Best Food Pub Award". Please let me have your suggestions and/or nominations for these awards over the next couple of months and these will go forward and a short list selected for final voting. Hopefully this will lead to

presentation of the awards sometime late in the summer, possibly to coincide with our own "Local Pubs Week" Campaign. Criteria being a good pint of real ale for both, a warm welcome for families (Family Pub) and well cooked (reasonably priced?) food. I would like to see these awards become an annual event so please get involved.

### **PUB REVIEW**

I went to spend a night at the Hare & Hounds over at Layer Breton the other week with my partner Liz. Both of us remember this pub from about 15 years ago prior to the refurbishment and being extended which have made a huge difference. It was also one of those visited on one of our Real Ale Runabouts towards the end of last year when Hobgoblin featured as guest ale. This time there was Abbot and GK IPA and a very good Tim Taylor Landlord which went down very well prior to dinner. The pub has 2 guest rooms at a very reasonable £70 per night for 2 people on B&B basis. Our room was clean and very comfortable, the only blemish being a patch of damp in the corner. Dinner was excellent: Starters were a liver pate for me and Liz went for the garlic mushrooms. These were followed by a couple of very tasty sirloin steaks (cooked perfectly) with the usual trimmings and washed down with a fine Rioja (£17). We certainly slept well after this! Breakfast was the Full Monty (double sausage, double bacon, eggs, tomatoes etc.) and it was an absolute cracker, well cooked and nicely presented, it kept us going for most of the day. All in all I have to say a most enjoyable and none too expensive night away. We give it 8/10

### **BEER COMMENT**

Doomed... we're all Doomed to pinch a well known phrase from that old favourite, Dad's Army. Is it just me or is Sharp's Doom Bar now in danger of becoming another GK IPA in our area? It's everywhere it seems, well to me anyway. I admit it is a damned good pint but, and it's a big but, I fear it is now knocking some of our local brews off the pumps. What do you think?

One last thing, if you've enjoyed this newsletter and want to know more of what's happening in our region for both ales and pubs why not visit [www.tap-room.com](http://www.tap-room.com)?

### **MAY IS MILD MONTH**

*May has been denoted Mild Month by CAMRA and although a few weeks away I have top secret inside info from a couple of our fine local breweries that there will be a couple of extra milds available. Roger at Nethergate tells me that they are going to produce "Mary Mild" at 4.5% and Mighty Oak are preparing another brew to run alongside their excellent Oscar Wilde. There's even a rumour that Roland and Sophie over at Brentwood Brewing are looking concoct a mild if only they can think of a rude name and similar pump clip!!*

***Keep your eyes open for the next issue in May!***