



Issue 10

Swan Supping



Campaign for Real Ale

Aylesbury Vale & Wycombe Branch

FEB/MAR 1999



BUDGET CUTS TO BEER DUTY NEEDED



CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is calling on Chancellor Gordon Brown, to make two changes in the forthcoming budget to the duty paid on beer.

The first is for a 20% cut to create jobs and increase investment in Britain's ailing brewing industry.

The second submission is for the duty paid by brewers to be progressive. Less tax would be paid on the lower levels of production. This would especially benefit small brewers as they have higher unit costs per pint.

If these tax cuts went through and were passed on to the consumer, economic forecasts predict that the changes would pay for themselves within two years.

The predicted increase in pub going would fund investment in pubs and make more of them economically viable. More people would be required to service this increase in trade and this would go a long way to meeting the government's manifesto commitment to create 250,000 jobs for people under the age of 26.

If beer duty continues to increase, such as the penny-a-pint added at the beginning of this year, the only winners will be the beer warehouses in Calais and the bootleggers. It is estimated that over 1.5 million pints of beer a day are brought across the channel and that 70% of this beer is illegally smuggled.

As this represents the equivalent of the weekly sales of 1,000 community pubs, it comes as no surprise that one regional brewer has had to close over 10% of its pubs since the start of the single market. When all the factors are included, the case for cutting beer duty is overwhelming but will the government listen?

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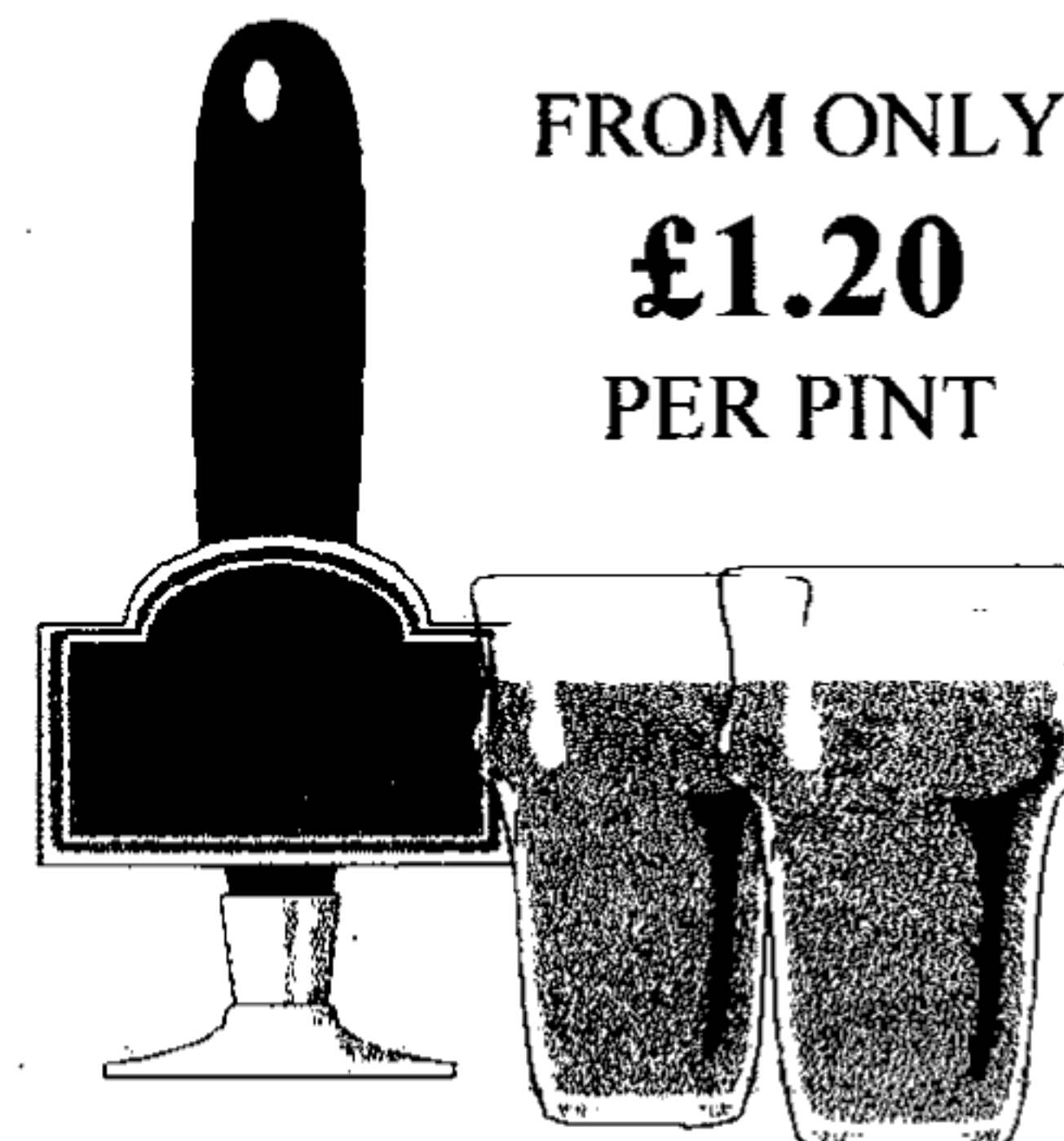
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Local News



AYLESBURY

There has been no further developments regarding the future of the **Old Plough & Harrow** on the gyratory system. Following the departure of the previous landlord, Roy Catten, at the end of last year, the pub has been closed and the only signs of life are from the security firm guarding it. A proposal to convert the site to a fast food outlet was blocked last year by the council planning department.

Taking advantage of the wide selection of beer available to them, the **Queens Head**, Temple Square, will have the following guest beers available during over the next few weeks: *Rebellion IPA*, *Tisbury Best Bitter*, *Adnams Best*, *Tolly Original*, *Batemans XB*, *Kitchen Commi*, *Beartown Ambidextrous* and *Ridleys IPA*.

The **Dark Lantern** is closed for three weeks for refurbishment.

BIERTON

The **Red Lion** has a new tenant, Simon Page from Devon. Previously with *Greenalls*, he took over on 12th January. The pub serves *ABC Bitter*, *Courage Best* and a *Tapster's Choice*.

HIGH WYCOMBE

The **Beaconsfield Arms** is sadly due to close and reopen as a Mr Q's despite opposition from a lot of its customers and CAMRA.

LANE END

We have just heard the sad news of the death of Olive Woodward who, with her husband Arthur, ran the **Blacksmiths Arms** end for many years.

Although no longer a pub, the **Blacksmiths** used to be full of character and something of a Lane End institution.

MARLOW

The **Chequers** has been closed since the beginning of January for a £400k refit which will last for six weeks.

The customers of the pub were polled before the plans were finalised and following their advice, the pub will have a larger main bar. There will also be a separate smaller bar which will be music and pub machine free. Future events include comedy nights, live music and pub quizzes.

After over four years in the pub, the landlady of the **Clayton Arms**, Rita Green, will be retiring from the trade on February 2nd.

This **Brakspears** pub, which has featured often in the good Beer Guide, will probably become a managed house and be refurbished.

The **Crown** has reopened after more than a year. Following a refurbishment, which has cost £550k, it has a Marlow history theme with a dock and dungeons. There will be strict use of ID's to ensure no underage drinking. The beers currently available are *Courage Best* and *Theakston XB*.

Local brewers, **Sam Trueman**, have bought the **Crown & Anchor**, Oxford Road. The plans are to refurbish the pub and the planned reopening will be in mid March.

Some of the previous alterations will be removed and heating will be installed. The pub will become a traditional ale house with no lager/smooth/stout pumps on the bar and the only lager will be in bottles.

The only area where smoking will be allowed will be in the Snug bar at the back. The full range of **Sam Trueman** beers will be available plus a guest micro brewery beer. There are further plans to move the **Sam Trueman** Brew House to the back of the pub at the end of September.

SAUNDERTON

The threat to reroute the A4010 through the back garden of the **Rose & Crown** has been removed after 17 years. The co-owners, brothers John and Robert Watson, can now plan for the future with more certainty.

STONE

The **County Arms**, which incorporates the Thai Lotus restaurant, has been up for sale at £265k. Despite the massive increase in its catchment area due to the new housing estate nearby, it is under threat of being redeveloped itself as housing.

SYDENHAM

Hillbilly Bitter from **Batemans** will be a guest beer at the **Crown** during February.

WHEELER END

The **Brickmakers Arms**, Bolter End Lane, has been under new ownership since 21st December last year. They are now offering *Brakspears Ordinary*, *Fullers London Pride* and *Adnams Broadside*.



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Pub Watch Success

According to the local police, Aylesbury's pioneering pubwatch scheme, which was set up three years ago, has had a dramatic effect on alcohol related crime and violence. In the last twelve months incidents of drink related trouble have fallen by 22 per cent. The licensees were aided in the formation of the scheme by Inspector Steve Baker who maintains close links with the pubwatch committee.

Anyone found causing trouble in one of the participating pubs or clubs is immediately banned by all members of the scheme. A hand-delivered letter confirms their ban. A description and, where possible, a photo is circulated to members. The committee meets monthly to determine appeals for removal from the banned list. Appeals for removal are sent to a PO Box number and names are not removed lightly. The committee invites the person to their meetings and look for reassurances that they will not cause further trouble.

Conditions are laid down and they are then put on probation for a year before their names are finally removed from the list. There are currently over 40 known trouble makers whose names appear on lists in participating premises.

Twelve of the 60 members are now linked up by a radio-link system to enable them to alert police should there be any trouble in or around their premises. The radios have a panic button to enable a fast response if necessary.

The money for the radios was raised by the pubwatch committee with breweries and local companies making donations. With the radios, landlords are able to report incidents to the police even if they occur off the premises, the radios are also monitored by the controllers of the town's CCTV cameras. The chairman of the committee is Alex Jackson of the *Broad Leys*. He says that the radio-link has given town centre licensees peace of mind and added security.

Unicorn Revived

The **Unicorn** in Cublington may not yet be rampant but is certainly reviving. When visited towards the end of January there were plenty of customers and the pub seemed to have taken on a new lease of life under the enthusiastic management of George Dobbie.

It was a very different story this time last year when the pub was in the doldrums and the owner wanted to turn it into a private house. Fortunately a determined band of locals orchestrated a campaign to save the pub and convinced the planning authorities of its viability and importance to the social life of the village.

George is committed to real ale and is now serving five hand pumped ales, all under £2.00 a pint. The regulars are *Wychert* from **Vale Brewery** in Haddenham as well as *Brakspear Bitter* and *Shepherd Neame Spitfire*.

There are two guest beers - on the day of the visit they were *Morrells Varsity* and *Black Sheep*.

Planning permission has been obtained to extend the kitchen which will create more space in both the bar and the dining area. These alterations will take place during this year, hopefully without spoiling the pub's essential role as a village local. We, in **CAMRA**, are delighted that the Unicorn seems to be back on its feet and wish the new management a prosperous future.

Very often, the future for village pubs looks bleak so it is always good to report when things go well.

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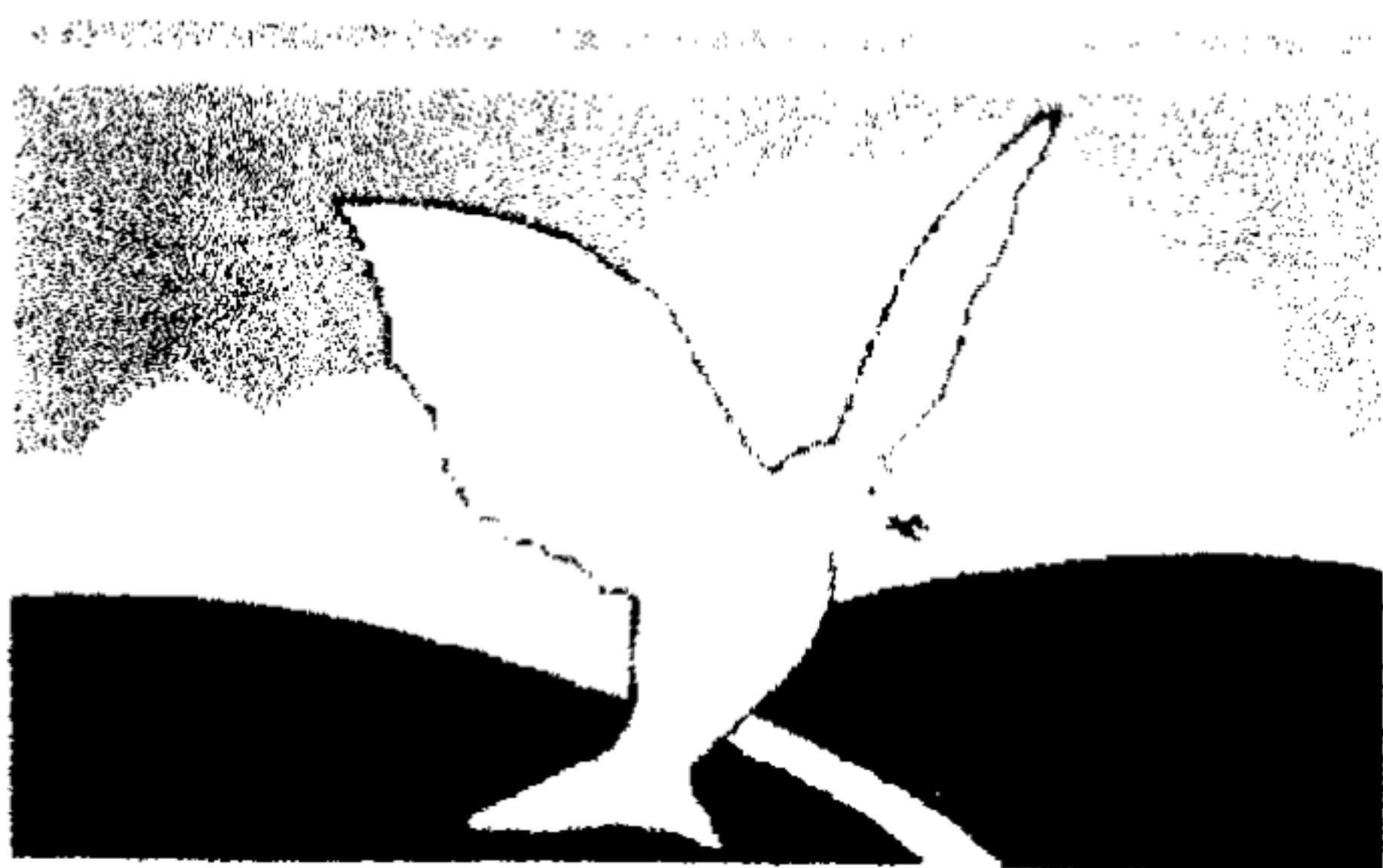
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LOCAL BEER FESTIVAL NEWS



NEW VENUE FOR AYLESBURY BEER FESTIVAL

Following the successful beer festival last year, which raised over £3000 for The Friends of Florence Nightingale House, arrangements have been made for this year's festival.

Unfortunately after four years we are unable to use the Ranch House due to its future plans, and we have had to search for a replacement.

We would like to take this opportunity

to thank Mick Fountain, who owns the Ranch House, for all his work which has gone such a long way to make the Aylesbury Beer Festival the success it has become.

After a long search, a hall at the Guttman Sports & Leisure Centre, behind Stoke Mandeville Hospital, has been chosen. This should make it easier for a lot of our pedestrian drinkers to partake of the fun.

The dates for this year's festival (get your diaries out!!) will be Friday 22nd October (6 - 11pm) and Saturday 23rd October (all day).

The hall is the biggest we have used so far for the festival and it is hoped that we will be able to offer an even wider selection of Real Ale than ever before.

Full details will be given in later issues.

FIRST WYCOMBE FESTIVAL

The Rotary Club of High Wycombe is presenting a Charity Beer Festival at Wycombe Wanderers Football Club on Friday 19th and Saturday 20th of March.

This will be held in the Vere Suite and tickets priced £6 (£5 in advance) are available by phoning 01494 639641. Each ticket will include food and a pint of Real Ale.

For further details, please see the advert on page 6.

COCK, WING

24 real ales will be available under canvas in the marquee behind the Cock Inn, Wing from Thursday 25th of February until they run out when people will have to make do with the six on sale inside the pub.



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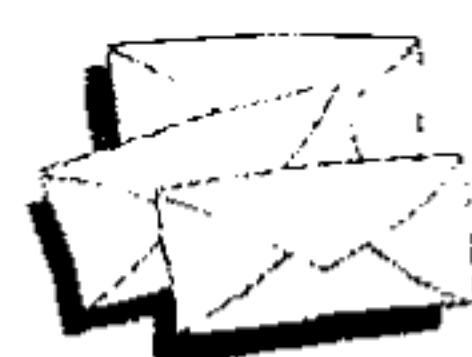
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Send your letters to
the editorial address.

Letters

Send your letters to
the editorial address.



CAMRA Champion Beer of Britain

I was quite surprised and excited when one of my local pubs advertised that it would be selling the beer declared the overall 'Champion Beer of Britain' at the 1998 Great British Beer Festival held at Olympia in August – Coniston Bluebird.

I was unable to sample this brew during my visit to Olympia, but did try a pint at the local beer festival at the Cock, Wing, in October. I found 'Bluebird' to be not unpleasant but somewhat tasteless and lacking in any real character and was mystified as to how the judges could have awarded it the prize of 'Champion' beer.

It now transpires that the 'Coniston' available locally on draught has not emerged from a small micro-brewery in a village in the Lake District of the same name, but is being 'contract brewed' by Brakspears in a Thameside, Henley on Thames brewery.

However clever the brewers' art, and however hard they try to match the water by 'Burtonisation' etc., I find it hard to believe that a beer produced from water of the Lakeland Fells will be identical using the water from boreholes at Medmenham that I drink from my tap at home (and actually tastes pretty good!).

The small plant in Coniston could never meet the demand once the award was announced. My idea of 'contract brewing' is that Coniston pay Brakspear to produce their beer for them (and also distribute it for them in this instance).

But it is only one step removed from a franchise – ie. Brakspear pay Coniston to use their name and trade on their 'award'. I do wonder if the head brewer from Coniston has ever even tried the Henley produced product (and if so, what he thought of it!).

As it is, what in itself is a pleasant enough beer has become something of a sham. I believe CAMRA should either drop the 'champion beer' award or at

least ensure that the recipient has the wherewithal to produce it on their plant in their own home town to meet the not unexpected demand.

John Wood, Halton

(Some very interesting points are raised in this letter.

However, the thought of CAMRA doing away with the 'Champion Beer of Britain', and all the publicity that goes with it, seems a bit improbable. Also, restricting the beers competing to ones brewed by breweries with large capacity would rob the very small brewers of their chance of glory.

One thought is that CAMRA could push for 'point of sale' adverts, eg. pump clips, to show where the beer was brewed. As we have been asking for details to be shown for all the 'Australian', 'German' and 'American' lagers to show that they are British copies, this may have potential for a motion at this year's CAMRA AGM. – Ed)



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CAMRA Double Gold Medal winner ! FINALIST ! GBBF 1997.				
Speciality Beers				
Black Swan – Dark Mild	3.3%	£72.00*	£42.00	£21.00
CAMRA Double Gold Medal winner !				
Black Beauty – Porter	4.3%	£76.00*	£46.00	£23.00
Bottled Beers				
Halcyon Daze – English Ale.	4.3%	12 x 500ml Case £18.00		
Good King Senseless	5.2%	12 x 500ml Case £20.00		

NATIONAL NEWS

'DENTING' THE COMPETITION

'T'Owd Tup' from the tiny Cumbrian brewer **Dent** has been named the Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain 1999 by a panel of expert judges at CAMRA's national celebration of beer, the 3rd Great British Winter Beer Festival, held in Manchester, on January 21st - 23rd this year.

The 6% ABV stout is described as having a roast coffee aroma with a warming sweetness and a raisiny, fruitcake taste. At the announcement CAMRA Director John Holland congratulated **Dent** on their ability to produce beers to perform on the national stage with companies a hundred times their size. He said, 'Many of today's beers are bland and unexciting, but the finalists in this year's competition were all of exceptional quality. This is the consumer's choice of the best winter beer in Britain.'

On hearing the news, **Dent** boss Martin Stafford said, 'Brilliant! *Tup's* been a regular brew since 1990 and has grown in popularity as it's an acquired taste. We're keeping brewing great beer in the family as my brother Nick won the award with his *Nightmare Stout* in 1997. Nothing like a bit of sibling rivalry to keep up standards!'

The Silver prize went to Norfolk brewers **Woodforde's** with their spectacular old ale, *Norfolk Nog* and the Bronze award went to **Daleside** brewery from Harrogate for their hoppy and fruity strong ale, *Monkey Wrench*.

Cumbria has proved itself to be the top beer region this year as *Bluebird* from **Coniston** Brewery was announced as the Champion Beer of Britain in August 1998.

MARSTON'S 'PACMAN' DEFENCE

The Campaign for Real Ale has condemned the counter take-over bid by **Marstons** for **Wolverhampton & Dudley** Breweries as strategically flawed. 'The whole thing appears defensive and outside **Marston's** recently announced strategy', said Mike Benner, CAMRA's Head of Campaigns. 'First **Marstons** say they want to concentrate on branded managed pubs and the *Pedigree* brand, then they want to buy a large block of unbranded pubs and two breweries. The manoeuvre strikes of desperation measures.'

The take-over would result in the closure of both **W&D** breweries and the possible securitisation of **W&D's** tenanted pub estate. This, together with the proposed reciprocal deal with **Bass** to brew **W&D** beers, was condemned as offering no benefits for consumers.

Mike Benner added, 'The net result will be two less breweries and the loss of several beer brands. Local choice would suffer in both the West Midlands and the North East and there would be a huge question mark over the future of several hundred pubs. This whole affair is becoming ridiculous. It is our view that the two companies would be better off as competitors and that this would be the best route for consumers in the long-term.'

The tactic of putting in a counter bid for the hostile bidder is sometimes called the 'Pacman defence' after the once popular video arcade game.

BRAINS CHALLENGE

CAMRA is challenging Welsh brewer **Brains** over its tour of destruction of Welsh breweries. **Brains** has announced that it has agreed in principal to buy **Bass's** Cardiff site. The purchase will result in the closure of the old **Brains** Brewery.

Rick Zapple, CAMRA's Welsh Director said, 'Brains closed the **Crown Buckley** brewery in Pontyclun last year after buying the company in 1997. While we welcome the fact that the old **Hancock's** Brewery owned by **Bass** will now be saved, we question the logic of closing two traditional Welsh breweries and moving the whole operation to another. We feel that there is a future for both the breweries in Cardiff and would oppose any move by **Brains** to close their existing city centre site.'

Bass announced last year that it intends to close its Cardiff site this year if a buyer cannot be found. CAMRA has actively campaigned for the brewery to remain open.

Mr. Zapple added, 'The **Hancocks** name is in danger of being lost forever if the sale proceeds. We would like *Hancocks HB*, a traditional and popular Welsh beer, to continue to be brewed at Cardiff under contract and made available to local pubs including those owned by **Bass**. If the beer is axed or brewed elsewhere it will change beyond recognition and that would mark the end of an era for Welsh beer.'



Mick and Wendy Rolley

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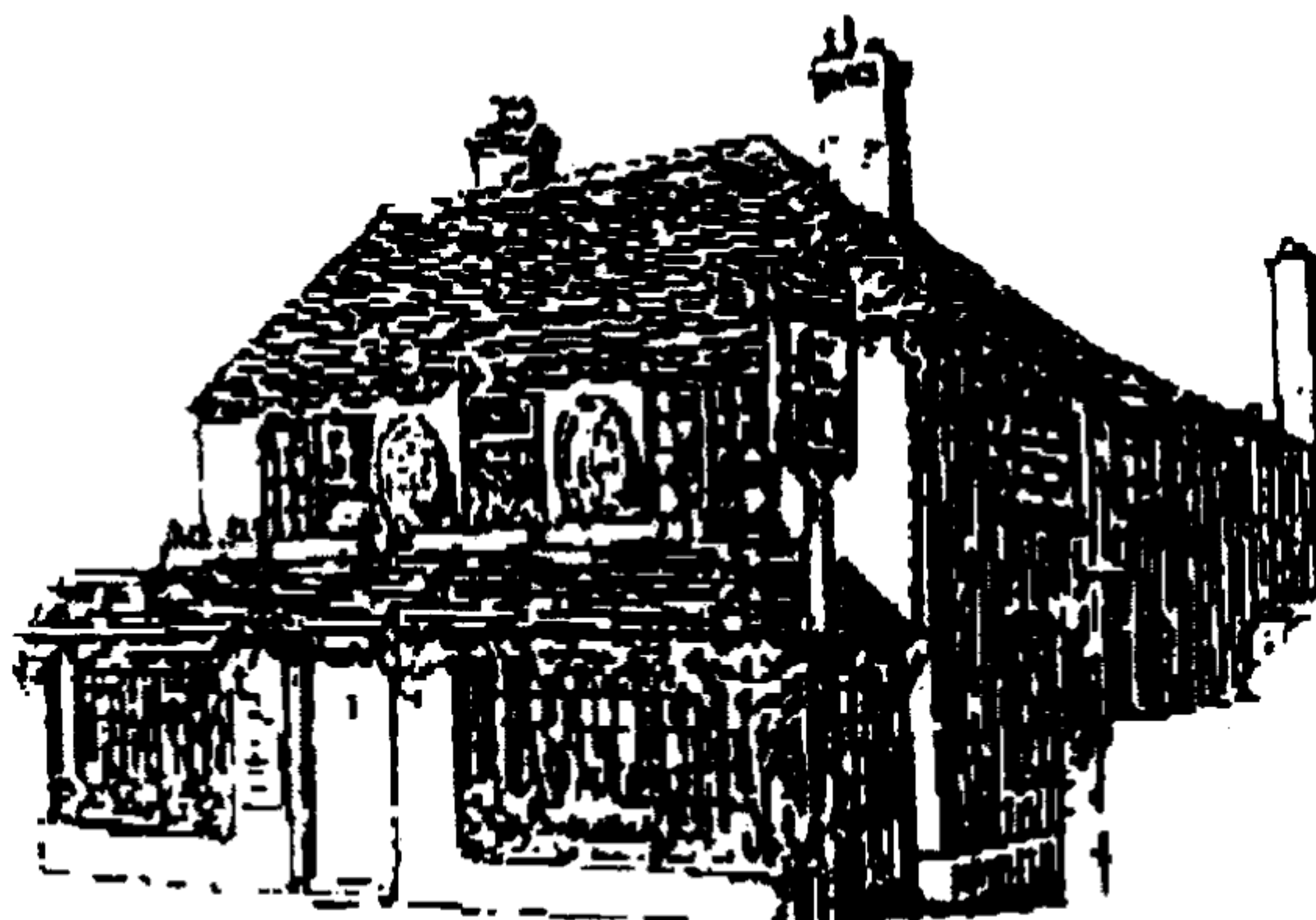
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BEER FESTIVAL DETAILS

10th BATTERSEA BEER FESTIVAL

February 11th-13th (Thursday-Saturday) at the Battersea Town Hall, Town Hall Rd (rear of Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill), London SW11 (near Clapham Junction). Open Thursday & Friday 12-11pm; Saturday 11-6pm. Admission at all times £2 (CAMRA members £1) except Friday eve when it's £2.50 (CAMRA members £1.50).

90 kils of beer from around the country, plus traditional ciders + perries, Gales country wines, together with Dutch, Belgian + German beers. Food available at lunchtime and evenings. Free LA beer and soft drinks for drivers. Family room available on Saturday.

Contact Chris Cobbold 0181 674 0556.

LONDON DRINKER BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

March 24th – 26th at the Camden Centre, Bidborough St, London WC1 (close to Kings Cross/St Pancras). Open Wednesday & Thursday 12 - 3pm + 5 - 10.30pm; Friday 12 - 10.30pm. Last admission 10pm.

CAMRA members admitted free Wednesday & Thursday lunchtime, and for 50p up to 1pm on Friday, at £1.50 all other times (non-members £2.50). A range of regional beers, beers rarely seen in London, cider, perry + imported beers. Hot & Cold food. Kit Packham's One Jump Ahead live on Friday eve. Breweriana auction Wednesday evening. Thursday quiet night.

Staff are always needed. If interested, contact Christine Cryne on 0181 452 6965 (h).

City/Southwark pre Lent stroll Friday 12th February

5:30pm – Lamb, Leadenhall Market, near Bank or Liverpool Street or Monument underground stations

6:00pm – Cock and Woolpack, 6 Finch Lane, just off Cornhill

6:30pm – Vintry, Queen Street over Southwark Bridge, then turn left

7:15pm – Wheatsheaf, 6 Stoney Street

7:45pm – George, 77 Borough High Street

8:30pm – Royal Oak, 44 Tabard Street. Close to Borough underground station

All the pubs are in the 1999 Good Beer Guide!!

As this pub crawl coincides with Battersea Beer Festival (see this page), why not take the opportunity to do both!

LOCAL BREWERY NEWS

OLD LUXTERS

Old Luxters have seen a large increase in the number of pubs serving their *Barn Ale Bitter*; *Special* and *Dark Roast* (4%, 4.5% and 5% ABV respectively).

They are also planning to launch a new bottle conditioned lighter beer called *Luxters Gold* to add to their existing bottle conditioned *Barn Ale* and *Dark Roast*.

Bottling contracts have included a strong fruity ale for Aylesford Newsprint (with Kentish hop aroma), and a rich 5% ABV flavoursome, fruity ale called *Diplomatic Privilege Ale* which will be supplied to British and other diplomatic missions world-wide.

REBELLION

The **Rebellion Brewery** is on the move, literally.

The brewery is moving to a new site at Bencombe farm

in Marlow Bottom.

The move should be completed early this year and the new brewery is due to be fully operational in mid March.

Rebellion are hoping to produce a special bottled beer to commemorate the move.

They will continue to produce their usual beers *IPA*, *Smuggler* and *Mutiny*, along with seasonal specials such as their Christmas ales *Roasted Nuts* and *Old Codger*.

VALE BREWERY

Black Swan Mild won the prize for best Mild at the recent Luton Beer Festival. *Spring Gold*, one of **Vale Brewery's** range of seasonal beers will go on sale towards the end of February. Following the trend towards weaker beers, the strength has been reduced from 5.2% ABV to a more modest 4.6% ABV.

JOIN CAMRA TODAY

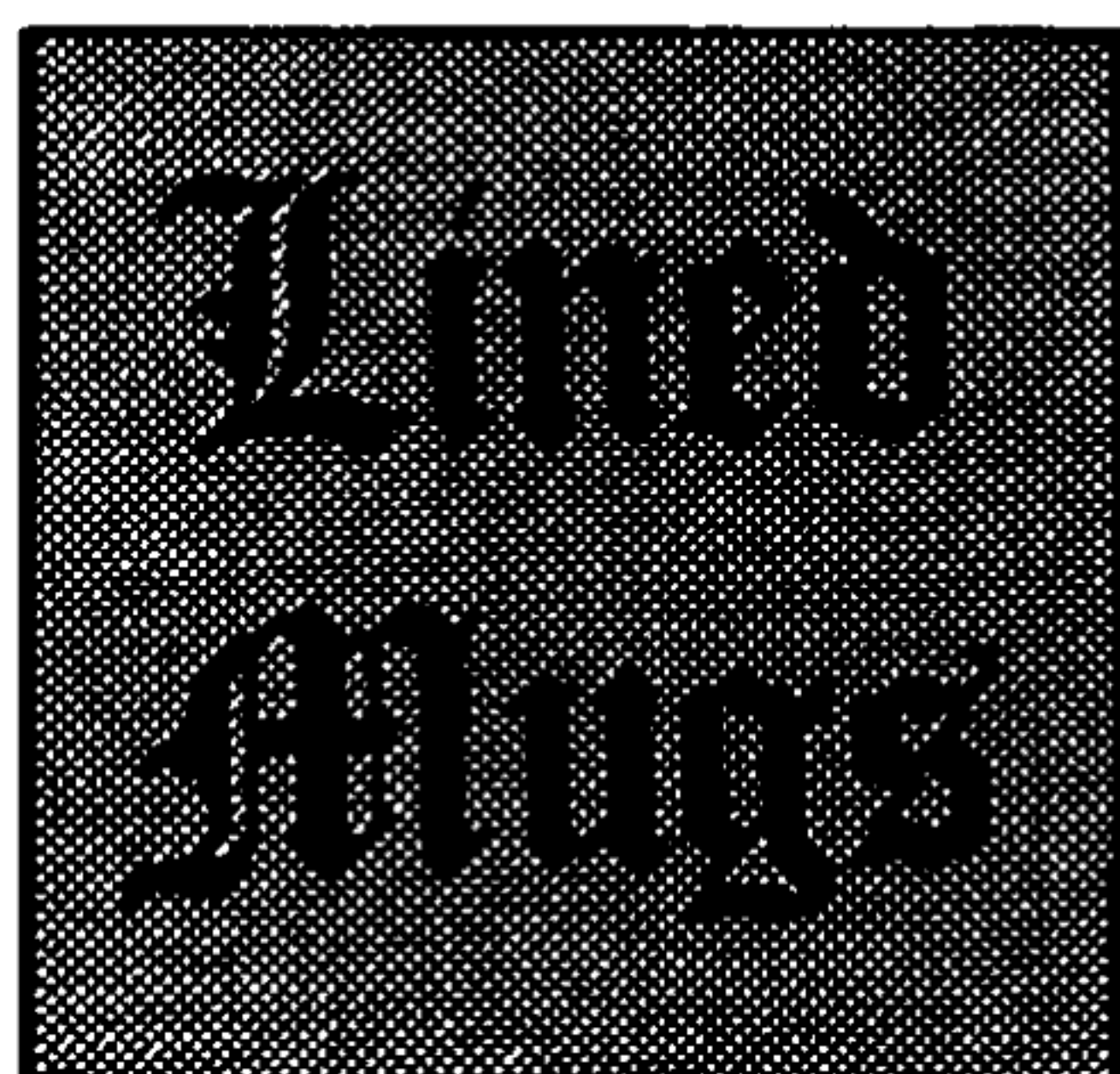
Just fill in the form below and send your remittance (payable to CAMRA) to Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW

Rates are Single £14, Joint £17 (at same address), Student/OAP/Unemployed/Disabled £8, Joint OAP £11 (at same address), Under 26 £8 date of birth

Name(s)
Address
Postcode

I/We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Rules.

I/We enclose a cheque for £..... Date
Signature





Branch Diary

Everybody welcome to all socials and meetings!

February

Thursday 4th Wycombe Town Centre Crawl

8:00pm Hobgoblin, 8:45pm Falcon (Wetherspoons),

9:30pm Firmament & Firkin, 10:15pm Hogshead

Tuesday 9th Worlds End, Wendover, Social

9:30pm End of the World

Friday 12th Pre Lent City and Southwark Crawl

Full details given on page 7

Tuesday 16th Beaconsfield Social

9:30pm Greyhound

Monday 22nd Marlow Mini-Crawl

8:45pm Prince of Wales, 9:30pm Carpenters Arms, 10:15pm Clayton Arms

Thursday 25th onwards Cock, Wing, Beer Festival (see page 4)

March

Monday 8th Thame Social

9:30pm Swan

Monday 15th Weston Turville Social

9:30pm Chandos

Friday 19th and Saturday 20th Wycombe Charity Beer Festival

Vere Suite, Adams Park, High Wycombe - tickets priced £6 (£5 in advance).

See advert on this page for details.

Monday 22nd Committee & GBG Finalisation Meeting

8:30pm Rose & Crown, Saunderton

April

Saturday 17th – Sunday 18th CAMRA AGM

Hove, Sussex

May

Friday 7th London Pub Crawl

Details in next issue

Saturday 15th Adnams Brewery Visit

Provisional Date – details to be confirmed

June

Saturday 26th Black Country Coach Trip

Further details next issue

October

Friday 22nd - Saturday 23rd Aylesbury Beer Festival

Guttman Sports & Leisure Centre, Stoke Mandeville

Further details next issue



Beer Festival Diary

February

4th - 7th Gainsborough, Eight Jolly Brewers, Ship Court

5th - 6th Chesterfield, Winding Wheel, Holywell St.

5th - 6th White Cliffs festival of winter ales, Maison Dieu (Town Hall), Dover

11th - 13th Battersea, Battersea Town Hall, Town Hall Rd, London SW11

(See page 7)

12th-14th Mansfield & Ashfield, Countryman Inn, Park Lane, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Notts

12th-13th Salisbury & South Wilts, Castle St Social Club, Salisbury

18th - 20th Fleetwood, Marine Hall, The Esplanade, Fleetwood.

19th - 20th Bristol, Council House, College Green, Bristol

19th - 20th Stourbridge, Town Hall, Stourbridge Town Centre

19th - 20th Gosport Winter Beer Festival, Thorngate Halls, Bury Road, Gosport.

25th - 27th Sussex at Hove Town Hall, Norton Rd, Hove

25th - 27th Bradford, Victoria Hall, Victoria Rd, Saltaire

25th - 28th Cock Beer Festival, Wing (see page 4)

March

4th - 6th Wigan, Mill at the Pier, Wigan

11th - 13th Rugby, Railway Club, Hillmorton Road

18th - 21st Darlington, Arts Centre, Vane Terrace, Darlington

18th - 20th Leeds Beer & Cider, Pudsey Civic Hall

19th - 20th High Wycombe, Adams Park, Sands, High Wycombe (see page 4)

24th - 26th London Drinker, Camden Centre, Bidborough St, London WC1 (see page 7)

25th - 27th Oldham, Queen Elizabeth Hall, West St, Oldham

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Each ticket includes a free
pint of real ale and food



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Swan Supping

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