

Draught Copy



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Free Magazine

By Maidstone & Mid-Kent
CAMRA
incorporating Gravesend &
Darent Valley, Bexley &
West Kent Branches

Summer 2022 No. 201

Website: www.mmk.camra.org.uk

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/mmkcamra](https://twitter.com/mmkcamra)

Maidstone and Mid Kent branch Winners announced:



Pub of the Year & Cider Pub of the Year: Winner

Larkins' Alehouse - Cranbrook.

Congratulations to Mark, Wendy, Kevin, Julie and the team here on wining. This true community pub wins both awards for the third consecutive time.

Pub of the Year: Runner up
Rifle Volunteers - Maidstone.

Coming in a very close second, well done to Alex and Polly.



Club of the Year: Winner
Marden Village Club - Marden.

Congratulations to Simon and his team in this Grade II listed community hub.



DRAUGHT COPY

Draught Copy is the magazine of the Maidstone and Mid-Kent branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, also incorporating news from Bexley, Gravesend & Darent Valley and West Kent branches of CAMRA. It is published quarterly, in March, June, September and December and has a circulation of 3,500 copies. Opinions expressed are those of the author of the article, and need not represent those of CAMRA or its officials.

If you find a pub selling short measure, allowing smoking in the premises, or other illegal things in pubs, please have a quiet word with the landlord in the first instance. However, if you need to complain about a licensed premises in your area, report the problem to Trading Standards by contacting Citizens Advice, who will pass the details to your local Trading Standards service: Call the Citizens Advice consumer service helpline on 03454 04 05 06 (Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm). We should demand the very highest standards of service in our pubs.

Advertising rates: £85 / £50 / £30 for a full / half / quarter page respectively

Editor and Correspondence: *DraughtCopy.Editor@mmk.camra.org.uk*

Advertising: *DraughtCopy.Advertising@mmk.camra.org.uk*

The copy date for the next issue is 21st July 2022.

For further information about all pubs mentioned in this publication (or indeed anywhere in the UK), please refer to CAMRA's national pub database: *www.whatpub.com*

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Our social diary changes faster than we can print it, so to keep up-to-date we suggest you use the below QR codes to access the branch meetings on our websites.



Bexley



**Gravesend and
Darent Valley**



**Maidstone
and Mid-Kent**



West Kent

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Signed

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for
Real Ale

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Campaign
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Aylesford Station and hourly from 10.20am West Malling Station



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Maidstone and Mid Kent CAMRA
East Malling Beer Festival

BEER FESTIVAL COMPETITION

Here's a chance to win one of two prizes, each of two complimentary entrance tickets, to the East Malling Beer & Cider Festival on Saturday 3rd September at East Malling Research. Please note that this competition is not available to people under 18 years of age.

All you have to do is solve the 24 cryptic clues below. The first letter and length of each answer is given. The second letters of each answer make up the names of six animals (C---, B---, B---, G---, T---, H---) which feature in pub names.

Scan or photograph this completed page and email it (don't forget the animal names!) along with your postal address, to jeff.tucker047@gmail.com. The closing date for entries is **24th August 2022**.

In the event of a tie in the number of clues answered correctly, the winners will be picked at random by the landlord of one of the pubs where we meet on 25th August. Good luck! Answers in the next issue.

Offer it around, then give up	F						
Titled lady is mad about One Direction	D						
Sharing around a bit of salad	G						
Has nodded off - please sort it out	A						
Pity Carla; drunk, very drunk	P						
Got there somehow – a driver	A						
Got there somehow – not alone	T						
Ice-house logo I redesigned	I						
A scab, sir, can be made into a cauliflower!	B						
It's grim at the back	S						
Partly replace Boris with something ineffective	P						
It relates to businesses	C						
Fame is not random – it's what's planned	M						
Later, hop about a lot	P						
Bizarrely, is able to jump off tall buildings	A						
A minor highway in foreign climes	A						
The cost of accommodation is about half a pint	R						
Get hold of some singers, by the sound of it	A						
Soft furnishings suggest imminent death	C						
Topless mum is not this one	O						
I ordered oldies to worship	I						
Method of payment from Eastern Europe, we hear	C						
A meal made from some spare pastry	R						
Gawping at a celebrity with gin cocktail	S						

The six hidden animals are:

Contact: *Rob Archer at camr@rcher.org.uk or Roland Amos on 07881 316125
www.bexley.camra.org.uk*

Bexley CAMRA's Branch committee now meets on a bi-monthly basis, and remains quite tested in that some of us are doubling up roles. If you are the sort of person interested in some formal involvement at this level, come along to a couple of meetings and see if we fit your bill. Best see our website for dates on <http://bexley.camra.org.uk/events.html>

We met most recently at the **PENNY FARTHING, Waterside, Crayford**, which any of you who have not visited since last summer, will find has changed a bit, now possessing a rear room, known as the Back Wheel. This can take a party group of some 20 to 25 people and is surprisingly comfortable for functions – and fee-free booking! Bexley members voted the Penny Farthing, Branch Cider Pub of the Year and their presentation is tentatively set for June 3rd. This is a real tribute to Keely and Stuart Leach and Dave Middlemiss and helpers. It shows how well they have managed to take over from Bob and Bev Baldwin, and that the assistance they received from the outgoing owners was of high quality.

At our last Branch meeting we came up with some dates for the Branch Pub of the Year competition presentations. The result, admittedly on very poor turnout, was:

1. **The LONG HAUL**, Long Lane, Bexleyheath; presentation date likely to be August 28th.
2. **The ROBIN HOOD** and **LITTLE JOHN**, Lion Rd, Bexleyheath; date, July 13th.
3. **The BROKEN DRUM**, Wellington Parade, Blackfen; date July 27th.

Our Club of the Year was once again the **Dartfordians Community Sports Club**, and the presentation here is expected to have occurred during the May Bexley CAMRA Festival.

We have also learned that further developments are in motion on the micropub front, with an application being processed for a second micro in Blackfen, again in Wellington Parade, and possibly to be known as the **Sidcup Tap** with a July opening date. This all seems like an accelerated

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timetable for a recent application, so we will wait and see. If it comes off, that will make a 15th in the Branch, so a one-day crawl of them all on a summer's day would be something of an escapade.

Local micros are not immune from staffing problems and several have either advertised prominently for hands, or had to lose trading time recently, hopefully a temporary phenomenon. There do not appear to have been any closures of such pubs in this Branch, but revision of opening times on weekday afternoons is not uncommon wherever you look.

On a more positive note, Greene King's extensive program of activities in Bexley reached another milestone in the reopening of the **Guy, Earl of Warwick, Park View Rd, Welling** (next but one to the football ground) on February 24th, with long-term GK operators Ray Irwin and Bonnie Tarleton teaming up for the first time at the helm. On or just after opening day, the beer on the bar was the usual GK range supplemented by Black Sheep. As yet, nothing formal has been announced for the other local GK pub, the **Nag's Head**.

In the past this pub has hosted the Welling Round Table's festival in its large garden annexe, a live music event as it was, and from this year the event will resume just over the road from the Guy, at the Rose and Crown, in a no less large exterior setting. The dates are given as July 29th to 31st.

Earlier this April, I made a Friday evening visit to a new event, at the **Exchange in Erith**. Erith has suffered devastating loss of drinking heritage over decades, so new ventures cannot fail to be viewed in a positive light. The venue describes itself as *"a community-owned organisation that uses the heritage of Erith's Old Library - as a space that was designed and built by local people - to inspire new community-led programmes and activities"*. Certainly, although the Friday evening was quiet, a fair bit was going on, with a number of vocal acts lined up, but of course, I was aiming at the brewery bar, where Bexley brewery were co-hosting beer from gravity and on tap, including their newly-minted lager, Arnsberg. Sticking to cask was good enough for me for an hour or two. The venue otherwise offers a range of activities under the general "craft" heading, not just beer, so it's worth a look at in future.

Contact: Adrian Moss (01474 363102) / Peter Cook (01322 270589 / 07913 500414)
email: gdvcamra@yahoo.co.uk www.gdv.camra.org.uk

CAMRA's Pub of the Year competition has been revived for 2022 and the branch winner was decided in March. This year for the first time it is the **Compass Alehouse** in Gravesend. The two runners-up are the **Three Daws** and the **Three Pillars**, both also in Gravesend. Well done all of them. Award certificates will have been presented by the time this issue appears. The **Three Pillars** will be receiving a second award as the branch Cider Pub of the Year and one will go to **Dartford Working Men's Club** as our Club of the Year.

The campaign to save the burnt-out **Green Man** at Hodsoll Street has gained momentum since the last edition. The group who are interested in buying it have been trying to get the owners, Stonegate Inns, to reveal their plans for the site but with little success at the time of writing. They are encouraging locals to mail the company to try to attract their attention and held a demonstration outside the site in April. The photo shown was taken then and is included with the permission of Sally Samuels of the group.



Gravesham Council's position on the **Amazon & Tiger** at Harvel has now been explained to the campaign group there. It seems the council agree that the bed & breakfast accommodation is ancillary to the business of the pub, which is now closed. The continued provision of this without the pub will require a planning application, as will the continued occupation of the living accommodation, and the council are pressing for the submission of such applications. When they appear I'm sure there will be a raft of local objections.

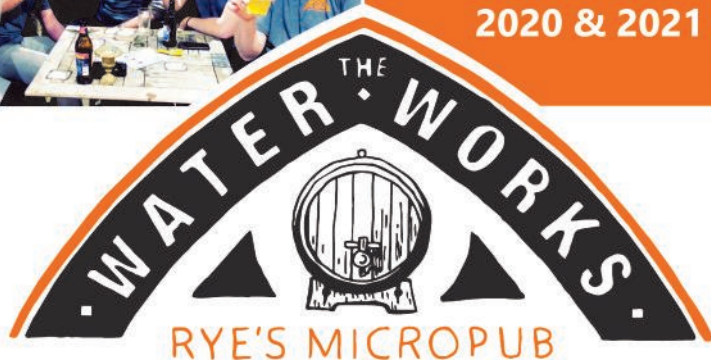
As this is being written rumours persist that the **Black Horse** at Stansted may be about to be sold. However on a recent branch visit it was reasonably lively for a Thursday night, with *Larkins Traditional Ale* and *Constellation Indus* on sale. The nearby **Villager** at Vigo had *Iron Pier Bitter* and *Perry Street Pale*, *Old Dairy Red Top* and *Young's Bitter*. This pub has a separate restaurant with locally sourced food.



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Spa Valley Beer Festival 2021
in association with
West Kent CAMRA
BEER OF THE FESTIVAL

www.harveys.org.uk



In Gravesend the **Cricketers** and the **Grapes** have joined the list of closed pubs. One which has been closed for over five years, the **Crown & Thistle**, was sold quickly earlier this year. The new owner's intentions are not yet clear as there has been little visible change and no evidence of a planning application as yet. It is interesting that the council had, at the end of 2021, rejected an application to renew the pub's listing as an Asset of Community Value on the grounds that there was no prospect of it reopening as a pub in the next five years.

Since the previous edition the **Railway** at Longfield has reopened. No reports as yet though. On the other hand, the **Papermakers Arms** at Hawley is now closed and boarded up. This is a large pub with a Dutch style of architecture. It was one of a number built for Style and Winch in the 1930s, spread across their trading area. I'm not sure where the others were or how many still survive but such roadhouses are now becoming quite rare.



We don't hear much about clubs in our area though there are many and the variety is considerable. It's therefore a pleasure to mention two in Swanley which sell real ale. On recent visits Tony Crawley found *Greene King IPA* and *Abbot Ale* at the **White Oak Bowls Club** and *Shepherd Neame Master Brew* and *Whitstable Bay Pale Ale* at the **Pedham Place Golf Club**.

There was a possibility that Dartford Wobbler Brewery might have been sold as a going concern, as John Millis is keen to retire. Unfortunately it seems the deal has fallen through. In April brewing was continuing but the main concentration was on bottled beer for the retail market.



The **Rising Sun** at Cotmans Ash near Kemsing is holding a summer festival of music. Events are planned for the afternoon of the first Saturday of each month, generally from 4pm, with music from the last 70 years in June, a cider festival in July, rock 'n' roll in August and a rock night in

September. Food will be available and extra parking. Intending visitors at other times are still advised to check beforehand that the pub will be open.

This is now the season for pub beer festivals and we know of three in Gravesend, starting at the **Windmill Tavern** from the evening of July 8 to July 10 with music all through. This will be followed by the two well-known regulars at the **Three Daws** (August 5 to 7) and the **Jolly Drayman** (August bank holiday weekend). In each case further information will be available from the pub nearer the date.





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Serving pubs, clubs and micro-pubs throughout Kent and slightly beyond (Musket founder, Tony, still considers Bromley to be in Kent!), Musket has a range of excellent beers to suit most tastes, all available on draught, bottles and 5 litre mini kegs, which are popular takeaways.

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Marden Village Club



CAMRA Maidstone & Mid-Kent Club of the Year 2022
CAMRA Kent Club of the Year 2019



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www.mardenvillageclub.co.uk

Contact: John Mills 01732 840603 or email pubs.officer@mmk.camra.org.uk

For more information on these pubs, see CAMRA's online pub database whatpub.com

Fields, Allington – Internal changes and an enlargement of the exterior seating. The bar has *Marston's Pedigree* and other beers from the company list. fieldsaylesford.co.uk F: fieldsaylesford

Red Lion, Biddenden – Reduced operating times and no food now.

Larkin' Alehouse, Cranbook – Congratulations to the team here, on wining the Branch Pub of the Year and Branch Cider Pub of the Year.

Eight Bells, Hawkhurst – On a visit here we found the usual *Harveys Sussex Best Bitter* plus *Constellation Aquilla*.

TheEightBells.com F: TheEightBellsHawkhurst

Wings Restaurant, Headcorn – Re-opened on the aerodrome site with opening times listed as Mon-Wed—closed; Thurs & Fri—4pm to 9pm; Say & Sun noon to 9pm. wingsbarheadcorn.co.uk

Hook & Hatchett Hucking – This is a remote pub that has plenty of camping facilities for tents and tourers which must be pre-booked. There are lots of events happening here, both singular and recurring. See Facebook for up to date details. On the bar *Fuller's London Pride* and a varying Young's beer are permanent and a Musket beer may also appear.

hookandhatchetpub.co.uk F: HookandHatchetInn

Woodcock, Iden Green – A refurbished kitchen and a new menu were introduced in February. Food is served every day, including breakfasts, on Wednesdays to Sundays. *Harveys Sussex Best* and *Larkins Traditional* are permanent with a guest beer, last reported as *Long Man Long Blonde*. thewoodcock.co.uk F: thewoodcockidengreen



Knoxbridge Inn, Knoxbridge – Has been re-opened by a couple who want to keep it going. A pool table has been introduced. No food at present but one or two ales will be available.

White Horse, Sandway, Lenham – Closed since 2016, now Elite Pubs group are turning this into a sleepover foodie venue with 18 bedrooms under the name **Wishful Thinker**. A refit, with a budget of £2.5m, is to be undertaken to meet the proposed opening winter 2022. elitepubs.com

Harrow Inn, Warren Street, Lenham – This was found to be closed when visited in March.

Brickmakers Arms, Maidstone – Peter Farley is back running this pub. *Fullers London Pride* initially on but more beers will follow as custom allows.

Chequers Inn, Loose – This was the venue for the lunchtime halt during the branch Good Friday walk along the Medway river bank. As well as the usual *Rocking Robin Reliant Robin* and *Harveys Sussex Best*, *Musket Muzzleloader* was found and hopefully others may follow.

Coach House, Maidstone – A beer from Tonbridge brewery has appeared here and may continue if appreciated.



Duke of Marlborough, Maidstone – *Tonbridge Coppernob* was reported here and they may try beers from other Kent breweries. *Sharps Doom Bar* has been removed and *Timothy Taylor Landlord* continues. This is a popular venue for sports (7 TVs) and bands in the partially covered outside area at the weekends.

Flower Pot, Maidstone – The annual Beer Festival runs from 22-25 June and will have around 25 beers and include music. The current regular line-up is five guest ales and the permanent *Goacher's Gold Star Strong Ale*. <http://flowerpotpub.com>

Market House, Maidstone – Change of manager with Phillippe Laché now in charge. Popular for food and has music on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. The beers here are *Shepherd Neame Master Brew*, *Whitstable Bay Pale Ale* plus a seasonal beer.

markethouse.pub F: MarketHouseME14

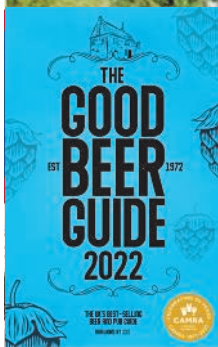
Duke of Wellington, Ryarsh – The annual Beer Festival will return on 6/7 August. Normally *Harveys Sussex Best Bitter* and *St Austell Proper Job* are kept with two others, the last seen were *Adnams Ghost Ship* and *Twickenham Naked Ladies* although *Bedlam Benchmark* has made an appearance. dukeofwellingtonryarsh.com

Kings Head, Sutton Valence –. New people have taken over here following the retirement of Margaret King in April. F: thekingshead.sv

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Mon – Wed	14.00 – 21.00
Thurs-Fri	12.00 – 22.00
Sat	12.00 – 22.30
Sun	12.00 – 18.00
Closed Sunday night	

LARKINS' ALEHOUSE

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THE CURRENT PUB COMPANY SCENE

A pub company is simply a company that owns pubs and there are literally hundreds of them, many with only a handful or even just one pub. We will concentrate here on the bigger companies who, between them, own over half the country's pubs.

Stonegate

Founded in 2010 with the purchase of 333 pubs from Mitchells & Butlers, Stonegate grew quite slowly over the next ten years, making a series of acquisitions including brands like Slug & Lettuce, Walkabout and Be At One, until its pub numbers totalled 765. All the pubs were managed houses. A seismic change came in 2020 when Ei Group was bought for £1.27bn, making Stonegate the largest pub company in the UK with 1,270 managed pubs and, as a result of the Ei purchase, 3,200 leased and tenanted businesses.

Ei was founded as Enterprise Inns in 1991, with 333 pubs from Bass. The company built up its estate, gaining 2,200 pubs in batches by buying them from other companies or taking them over. In 2002, 1,864 pubs were bought from Whitbread and in 2004, 4,054 from Unique. By this time, it owned nearly 10,000 pubs and was in the FTSE 100 list of top companies. However, it was loaded with debt and the 2008 financial crash required a good deal of retrenchment. Ei also started building up its managed estate, including pubs on retail agreements under the Craft Union. By the time of the sale, it was down to fewer than 4,000 pubs.

Punch Taverns

The first article included a brief history of Punch to illustrate the volatility around PubCo development. In summary, it grew quickly to around 8,000 pubs, suffered under the crash, sold many pubs including its managed division and was taken over in 2016. 1,900 pubs went to Heineken and 1,300 to Patron Capital, who retained the Punch brand. At takeover time, all pubs were leased or tenanted but it is also now pushing retail agreements (which it calls Management Partnerships). Some pubs were sold but in June 2021 it announced the purchase of Youngs' tenanted division, bringing the current total to 1,282.

Admiral Taverns

Admiral was founded in 2003 by two families and grew quickly to 2,300 pubs by 2007. Many of these were 'bottom end' houses disposed of by other pub companies. The financial crash had the usual consequences for over-extended businesses and numbers were down to 1,700 by 2011 and continued to fall. By 2017 it was in the hands of Cerberus Capital Management who sold up to a joint venture by Magners cider-makers C&C Group and estate investor Proprium Capital Partners, by which time there were 845 pubs. Acquisitions in 2019 saw 137 pubs coming from Marstons and 150 from Heineken. The big one arrived in July 2021 when Admiral bought 674 Hawthorn pubs from property firm New River taking the estate to over 1,500. Admiral's pubs are all tenanted or leased and tend to be wet-led community operations. It has a relatively good reputation in the trade though there's certainly no aversion to selling off pubs as 'development opportunities'.

Star Pubs & Bars

In 1995, Scottish & Newcastle, one of the original 'Big Six' breweries, bought another of them, Courage, making the combined group Britain's biggest brewer. By 2011, the pub arm, then known as S&N Pub Co, had 1,500 tenanted pubs and 600 in management. In 2008, international brewer Heineken bought Scottish Courage and the pub business rebranded as Star Pubs & Bars. Many pubs were sold but then, in 2017, as previously mentioned, 1,900 were snapped up from Punch. Again, there were disposals and the estate currently stands at 2,500. Star vigorously promote their retail agreement scheme, Just Add Talent.

Greene King

In 1995, Greene King was a long-established family brewer with 900 pubs, nearly all in East Anglia and the south-east. It then embarked on a ferocious acquisition trail, swallowing up many breweries (the likes of Morlands, Belhaven, Morrells and Hardy & Hanson) and other pub companies. A billionaire Hong Kong property developer now owns GK itself. It has 3,100 pubs, restaurants and hotels, of which 1,200 are tenanted or leased. Its strategy seems to be to move in the managed direction and the 'Pub Ready' retail agreements are pushed hard.

Rifle Volunteers



Alex and Polly welcome customers old and new to the Rifle Volunteers.

Traditional public house serving Goachers Ale and local cider. Fortnightly fun quiz, beer garden.

OPENING TIMES

Monday: 6pm - 11pm

Tuesday - Saturday: 12pm - 11pm

Sunday: 12pm - 6pm

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GK was once renowned for not letting other people's beers in its pubs but now have a more enlightened attitude.

Marston's

The company was known as Wolverhampton & Dudley until 2007 when it rebranded as Marston's, one of the many breweries it had taken over in recent years. At that time, it owned 2,500 pubs but the total is now down to 1,400. The tenanted estate, in particular, has been reduced through sales such as 200 to New River in 2013 and 137 to Admiral in 2019. In late 2020, the company took on the running of 156 Brains pubs in Wales. Also that year, Marston's merged its brewing operations with Carlsberg but this does not directly affect the pub business.

Mitchells and Butlers

Formed originally out of the old Bass estate, M&B have 1,650 pubs and restaurants. The multitudinous brands include Ember Inns, Toby Carveries, Nicholson's and All Bar One and the emphasis is on food. Pubs are mostly managed although around 50 are on a lease arrangement.

(J D) Wetherspoon

Since opening its first pub in 1979, 'Spoons has expanded to 925 pubs and 50 hotels, all managed. Plans for 18 new pubs are in the pipeline.

Wellington

Owned by the billionaire Reuben Brothers, the company leases all its 850 pubs on a free of tie basis.



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Rushlake Green is a delightful village in East Sussex with an archetypical village pub on one side of an enormous green. The good news is that there is a bus service. The bad news is that it only runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays. And then, only twice a day. But, don't catch it on Tuesday, because the pub won't be open!

I made that mistake at my first attempt, which allowed me to sample a locally-made pork pie from the village shop, but I had to wait for the bus to return. Luckily, it was in the summer.

So, to plan B. Bus 6 or 7 runs to Tunbridge Wells from Maidstone, then the 251 or 252 takes you to Heathfield every half hour. From there, bus 225 is a community-run minibus, which takes you to Rushlake Green on its way to Battle, leaving at 13.40.

Rushlake Green is a mere 14-minute journey, shared with the locals, who all seemed to know each other. I told the driver that I was planning to visit the pub, which impressed the locals. He very kindly not only stopped outside the pub for me, but checked that I managed to gain entrance before he carried on!

The pub, the **Horse & Groom**, was a Shepherd Neame pub at one point,

but is now a free house selling beers from the likes of *Harvey's*, *Timothy Taylor* and *St. Austell*. The hours given on Whatpub.com seem to be correct.



I managed a pint and a half before catching the only other bus of the day at 14.39. The bus returns to Heathfield, but

continues to Crowborough via Rotherfield, where the **Catts Inn** and the **Kings Arms** offer some great local beers between them. Bus 252 then returned me to Tunbridge Wells.

Are you feeling adventurous? Give it a try, but only on a Thursday!

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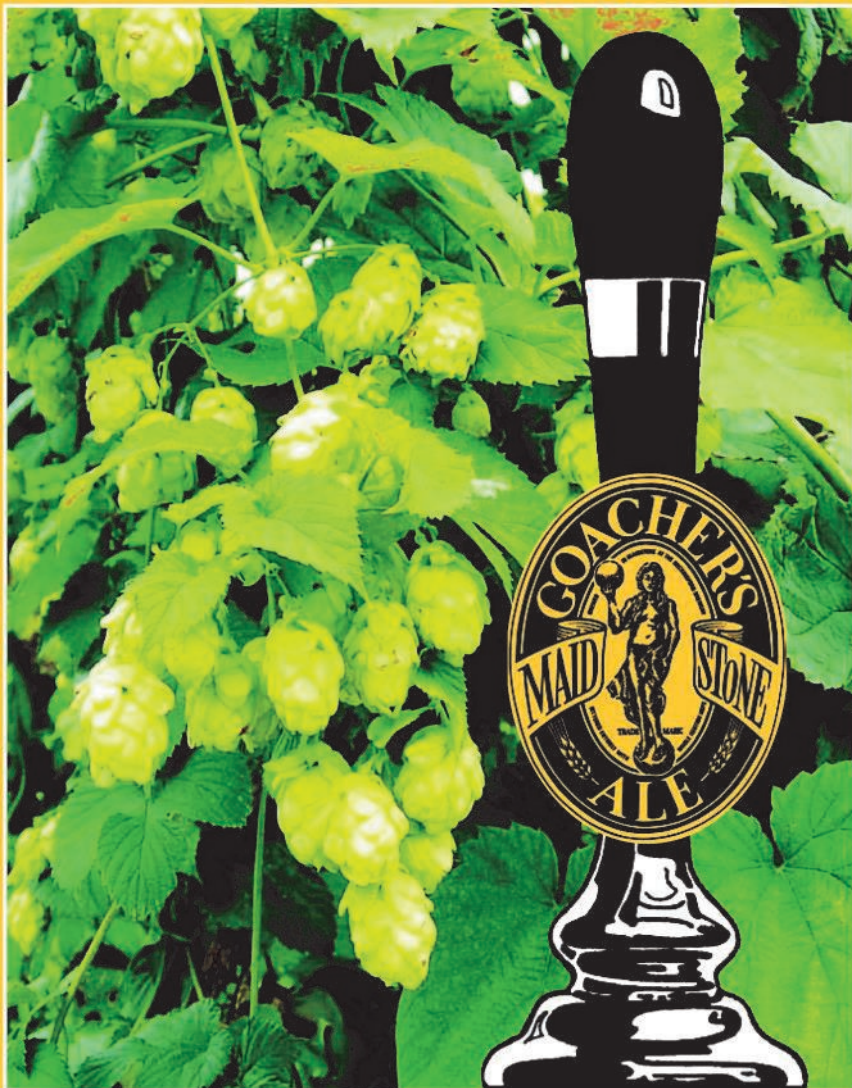


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