

Lights, Bitters, CAMRA Action.

Newsletter – July 2023

Welcome to the July newsletter finishing with another Tale End story as usual, non-PC in keeping with this otherwise sanitised world! But I'm sure you'll be entertained by it. This newsletter will, we hope, keep you up to date with changes and what's on in not just your local branch/patch with some festival dates near enough to visit. Contact details are at the foot of the page. This month;

1. Calendar of events. Lewkel News; Ely branch's city and rural POTYs revealed.
2. POTY Cont. About Downham Isle Brewery.
3. The George & Dragon, Snailwell. The Cutter Inn, Ely first BF; a report.
4. Cont. Asda stop many bottled beers. Let down at the pump.
5. The Dyke's End, Reach; a great example.
6. Fresh Ale – a fresh look? A when and where photo? Comments please! Who are they all?
8. Brief CM notes. The Tale End; Taffy's first attempt to buy a beer with fluff on his chin!

Saturday 29th July. The Plough, Little Downham. Supporting local pubs; Food and three barrels of beer are being put on and ALL members are welcome. Try some of Wasana's excellent Thai food! Starts at 6pm £5 per head.

Saturday 19th August in Norwich for a City Stroll. Leave by train, all members welcome.

Beer Festivals coming up. Key: NC (non-CAMRA). M (music). F (food).

[Sutton Beer Festival](#). NC. M. F. Thursday 27th July – Saturday 29th July. £3 entry. St. Andrews Church, Sutton.

[Willingham Beer Festival](#). NC. M. F. Friday 21st – Sunday 23rd July. Willingham Social Club, Fen End CB24 5LH.

[Peterborough Beer Festival](#). M. F. Tuesday 22nd – Saturday 26th August. The 44th Festival and probably the best marquee based. They call it the biggest in the UK after the GBBF. If you like your music, this is the one! About ½ mile from the railway station. Embankment Road, PE1 1EF.

[East Anglian Beer & Cider Festival](#). M. F. Wednesday 23rd – Monday 28th August. A huge festival, half in the Cathedral and half under canvas. Live acoustic music. Trains 1-mile. St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1LS.

[Chappel Beer Festival](#). Tuesday 5th – Saturday 9th September. East Anglian Railway Museum, Station Road, Wakes Colne, Colchester CO6 2DS.

[Norwich Beer Festival](#). F. M. Monday 23rd – Saturday 28th October. [Norwich & District] Likely Ely branch run and trip.

[Ely Elysian Winter Beer Festival 2024](#). F. Possibly Thursday 1st (TBC); Friday. 2nd – Saturday. 3rd February. The Maltings, Ship Lane, Ely CB7 4BB.

[Cambridge BF](#). *TBC* Monday 20th – Saturday 25th May 2024. Jesus Green.

Lewkel News

Ely Branch Pub of the Year!!!

Well, Ely Branch city pub of the year

The Ely Branch city pub tie between two pubs of the year!

Ely Branch rural pub of the year

The Ely Branch rural pub draw between two pubs of the year!

The City POTY was a genuine tie between **The Drayman's Son** and **3at3**. Five nominees were put forward by the committee members and cases for each were made and then 2 votes could be used by each member. Round 2 and the two nominees left were the above two and when a single vote was cast by each member, the score being 5-5. Both pubs were picked out for their 'go forwards' attitude, have interesting ranges of beers and key kegs when no one else has them and well,because I guess they are both now much loved by the CAMRA committee members.



Tom and Bev run the Tharp Arms, Chippenham.



The White Horse, Witcham run by Linda and John.

Whilst the Drayman's has won it not just last year but before that too, the 3at3 is a first-time winner and is rewarded for its full-on attack with key kegs and porters. The ambience is another big plus due to their staff and everyone knows how to 'moon the sun' out on the terrace. Chuck in a tap takeover or two and you have a champion pub.

The rural POTY was as badly organised as the city was good. With only yours truly from the committee having left the city, I listed the two pubs I'd put forwards and they were; in first place, the **Tharp Arms, Chippenham** and in second; **The White Horse, Witcham**. Then in the intervening month nobody visited the two in order to choose or second these two so my opinion was accepted except that it has since magically become a draw and we love draws!!

The **Tharp Arms** has never sold a bad drop of beer in the 46 years I have drunk there and has always had a lower cellar temp than was once fashionable. With 2 ales on, the community owned pub is cool inside and has a beer garden to the rear and tables to the front. At one time, it was the only pub you could get Greene King's IPA that matched the legendary 'Glyn's Prince Albert pint'. I'd say surpass it (only on temperature mind) but Glyn is reaching GOAT status.... And we'd better leave it there.

Equal winners for 2023 are **The White Horse, Witcham** who, like the Tharp, keep two real ales on. The beer is always spot-on and that's why the customers keep coming back. The beer is rotated so that there's always something interesting on and the prices are always competitive at around £4.10 per pint. It's not easy keeping everyone happy in the countryside but this pub achieves it through damned hard work.

All 4 pubs will now appear in 2023 CAMRA's **Good Beer Guide** and the above can expect many visitors to be beer twitchers. Congratulations to all 4 pubs and please remember, next year we can choose pubs for making the greatest of efforts, for improving their turnover or for more pumps because the reasons can be varied, it is up to us to choose and then give a valid reason why we did it, but the beer comes first. If you're from the countryside especially, let us know of top-class real ale service where you are?

Downham Isle Brewery

Had three appearances in the last month at the Haddenham and Wilburton Beer Festivals for owner Cliff Roberts (68) and the last of them, the Ely Folk Festival was this past weekend. Now back up to full speed, Cliff has created a tap room area that looks good for about a dozen people – mind you he has a lovely patio area which could be useful!

Cliff kindly invited me over to try the three ales he is currently running with; the first was Flying Goose, a malted strong 5.4% which I found unique in that I loved the first taste of it but there was no hop finish, I would have to try and get used to that or learn to be pleased of it. I also tried his new beer; a best bitter named Challenger at 4.4% which was very similar, a little more carbonated with a similar rich malty taste, no real hop finish but much livelier being brewed with Challenger hop. I finally came away with a bottle of his West Coast IPA named Main Street Citra which is a sessional 3.7% beer. I tried this one bottle cooled and then at room temperature and was unable to enjoy it. I remind you that I loved his Coronation Ale back in the May issue.

The brewery is also the tap room and is low key with the tour being static with all being in the same room so it's a chance to listen to him rather than view a lot of different equipment. He doesn't make a song and dance of it, just explains what he's done, doing and aims to achieve and Cliff is a charming man to listen to anyway! Look out on [Facebook](#) for more of Cliff's Tour and Tap Room days as he intends holding a few more. The Brewery is just 50 yards from the Crown PH and Cliff's beer is stocked there in bottles. If you align the sun and the moon you could, I'm sure, enjoy the brewery trip, drink and food.

Three Blind Mice are regularly being invited to keep us up-to-date but they tell me they are all very busy currently, but that it will happen! If you're like me you're asking yourself how they are going to split when the East Anglian BF at BSE and the Peterborough BF both come along in the same week in August. You can't make this stuff up, can you?

Carpenter's Arms, Soham 4th tap

'Jopo' at the Carpenter's Arms in Soham tells us that a 4th real ale pump will be going into the pub and he's found room for it in the cellar. Building a reputation for serving excellent ales, it will allow the pub to throw in the unusual beers but Jopo isn't really the quotable type as there's always an expletive every 5 words and he doesn't really mean what he says half the time. So, we'll wait and let the beer do the talking. Watch this space!

The George & Dragon, Snailwell

In the last three months I've walked to the G & D twice for a taste of the two beers they have on handpump. The first time was back on a Sunday in early March and I arrived at 2pm and found both the beers available had a hint of 'cleaning the lines', also the head on the beer was gone in seconds, a sure sign.

The pub was busy with locals a few of whom I know as all the villagers went to Soham VC. The village is picturesque and quiet and the developers haven't even been allowed a sniff of the place and its location isn't at all an 'Ely Fen village' for like Fordham, Chippenham and Kennett, East Cambs or not, they look to Newmarket for everything. The soil is not black, nor sandy but chalk and the white stone is everywhere under your feet when walking from Newmarket. Now, a short history lesson; the reason that Newmarket racecourse, its gallops and entire industry is located here is because it was calculated that chalk was the best soil type for horses to run on and there are very few areas of it in the country and Newmarket is a racehorse town all because of this marvellous chalk so good news for us! I do smile though as well when I note that this is our sitting MPs 'home' village and note how her residence is in one of the 4 villages IN East Cambs yes but OUT of the Fens (Jim Pace MP was the same; he lived in Fordham), I mean call me a cynic! Well look, I think 6-toes are to be admired and embraced Lizzie so there!

The pub is unique for letting you get your pooch cleaned, clipped and preened on site by the landlord; Andrew Goldsack's daughter so have a beer and receive a free dog after an hour. Andy is an ex-Soham boy and one of the few local people who have taken a pub in his own manor, the other that springs to mind is David and Sheena Parsons at the Bell, Kennett. Access around the pub onto the back lawn wasn't available and has to be done via the lounge side where people dine on Sundays.

There are two walks to the G&D, the first is a dull affair if coming from Phantom Cottages, Chippenham which is a straight line walk across tilled fields and it's best to park at the last corner before Chippenham or better still, make it a mega walk and start at Trinity Farm, Fordham and go through the beautiful Chippenham Fen complete with European Buffalo. The other longer walk is in a straight line too but is very good bar one annoying caveat; drive into Newmarket and take the Bury Road from the clock tower, when reaching the traffic lights on the fork go left onto Norwich Road and after 50m the car park is on your left. This walk takes you past miles of gallops and has great views, the first quarter of it though has the racket coming up from the A14 which you cross. OK, we did it in March before the Hawthorn had grown but I don't think that the noisy din would be absorbed enough to help.

The pub is having an August Bank Holiday Beer Festival but Andrew was at pains to say that it was a music festival really (wink) but you know.... neighbours. So, no attempt made there and we don't include it in the festival dates, I have been to one in 2019 and there were only maybe 2 ales on outside.

To give the pub the very best chance, I found time to go back again in mid-June on a Wednesday evening and met Andrew personally this time. The first beer was again the Wordsworth Amber 3.6% but it was vinegar. The pub had been closed Monday and Tuesday. I moved to the Doom Bar 4.0% Amber Ale and this was far better and well served. The chat with Andrew though was hard on my ears; "I always have Doom Bar on and the other one has to be cheap!". The pub is with Carlsberg AB and when I quizzed him on his beer list and about the advice, he gets he said; "yes, I have a list supplied but there's no advice. Both the sales rep and the regional rep are self-employed and not advisers of beers". I winced. As if to kill it for me, he said something that customers get to know (I knew already) that he doesn't drink bitter himself and although it would be harsh to say he doesn't have an interest, it would be true to say he doesn't have a passion for it.

To me, serving my best ales would be an absolute honour, I'd feel privileged but I guess it isn't so easy if it isn't what you drink....

The Cutter Beer Festival – report

Their very first Beer Festival took place in their car park on 17-19th June with 12 real ales and 2 ciders. The beer was kept about 'OK' Friday when the sun was beating down hard due to the help of an external cooler and blocking the sunlight out about 6 hours too late but reports are that it did suffer on the Saturday!

At this time of year, the Porters need to be back in the barrel and out should come the Ambers and lightly hopped beers. You can almost hear the conversation before you start, the pub like to give us - the drinkers - a reasonable choice while we the CAMRA and enthusiast type drinker want to taste some rare hidden treasures. Well, we got the rare but mostly the very familiar in the form of Three Blind Mice's Small Town Hero, Lonely Snake and Milk Worm although the first two deserve to be and are best served as Key Kegs. Milton Brewery gave their usual solid back-up

with Minerva and Justinian and Elgoods' Cambridge Bitter and Cambridge Gold are well-known solid brews. A surprise came in Rocket Ales' Redstone Raspberry Wheat which was on the edge of my taste buds but someone must have loved it! The stand-out ale was from Barsham Brewery (Fakenham) named Golden Close (see right). Ciders were from Oliver's Choice and Oliver's sweetheart.



A chat with Kirsty at the Cutter revealed that they were delighted with the results and the aim was to keep the risk levels low (overheads) this time. They had support from Three Blind Mice and Elgoods; "we'll do it again for sure next year on the Father's Day weekend and we'll likely have a few more beers for everyone to try. We had a broad spectre of beers and yes, we did have temperature issues but we'll learn from that". Surprisingly, yet again Kirsty had not heard of 'Key Keg' so that's another soul that can now go check out what they are about. Let's hope they stretch it to the 16 ales outside next year and find more light, golden and amber beers deserving of mid-summer. Not a bad effort at all though!

Worse Than It Seems

The Asda of Soham store has always had a great variety of bottled ale beers but, the range was decimated a month ago and the ladies there tell me that they won't be back. Prices had gone up nearly 50% in the last year from £1.25 a bottle to £1.80. If rolled out in other areas it'll be worse than it seems because if you recall we aren't going in pubs anymore and instead we're meant to be drinking from home. It also means for the brewers that they are going to be hit hard, nothing will replace the steady income of a supermarket chain. I've been unable to speak with Asda.

I don't drink much at home myself, just rarely late on a warm summer evening really as a reward for gardening. In recent years I've taken to many of ASDA's beers my favourite being the Shepherd Neame's; Bishop's Finger, so it and the Spitfire have been grounded. It has not only gone but following it out the door are Adnams' many beers and Sharpe's; Doom Bar, Fursty Ferret, Golden Hen and even Oakhams have been in on it and the list could reach 20. They've left the Hobgoblin on offer which, if taste were anything to do with it will make it hard to shift - sorry!

A round up of the rural pubs visited so far and how we are let down at the cellar and the pump

Those of you who've read about my trips to various village pubs in East Cambridgeshire this last nine months will know I was in fear of the day I showed my disappointment on one or two trips. Initially I got away with two pubs (Maid's Head, Wicken and The Griffin, Isleham) as they got their act together just in time but it has concerned me just recently with my bad run. I'm generally sure that most breweries are producing good beers but that we are let down at the pump and leaves me with thoughts of what can be done? It's no coincidence that we generally sit around, quaff beer, talk about it and generally fight every battle requiring (instant) cake as reward but the problem for CAMRA and with landlords getting it wrong looks a tough one to sort. It is after all; their business and we are an uninvited guest who may be turned round PDQ if we prove too opinionated!

What can be done about it?

Well, I intend to be proactive and if it goes wrong, it'll go wrong live in this, our monthly newsletter. First thing to do is to recognise the problem, see if there are any landlords interested in a reboot complete with free (good) publicity as a bonus and then turn around one pub or more depending on said help! I have already been aligning my thoughts with one or two successful landlords with good results. I put up the question on CAMRA's web site on their question forum and got nothing from the 'armchair critics'. To give advice, first you have to know something to advise of.

Just off our Patch – The Dyke's End, Reach

Having finally shown my true colours with neither Little Downham pub being to my high satisfaction last month, I feel the need to explain why two pubs that sold perfectly 'delivered' pints frustrates me so I want to compare them to a pub – just off our patch but worthy of a trip and - may I add, Cambridge Branch are happy that we don't have 'strict' rules on this - that I tell you about The Dyke's End, Reach and landlord Dan Marsh.

This photo is taken on Wednesday 7th June and Dan and partner Ruth have three real ales on in a hamlet the size of Stuntney.... Yup Stuntney and three ales. 24 hours before, he'd sold a firkin of Papworth's Fen Skater in 24-hours and that's 68 (72) pints in less than a day. Also, note the gravity on his three beers here; 3.8, 3.9 and 3.8% ABV. All

session beers and all holding the middle ground and taking sales off each other you would think. Many drinkers, obviously enough come from outside the village and being good eggs have to stay within the D&D limit. Dan has often repeated this to me that if it isn't a session beer, they won't drink it. So, he sells what people want. Rumour had it that Cambridge CAMRA were very impressed and turned out that Dan has won *Most Improved Rural Pub 2023*. These three beers are all good (for) summertime beers being golden and amber and not over hopped. Because his beers are changing all the time interest in beer is greatly increased.

Dan and partner Ruth can't find a chef for reasonable coin so the kitchen is closed for all but Sunday Roast nowadays and if the beer doesn't make money, he hasn't any tricks left in the bag. But the wet stuff IS the trick that's working!



Landlord Dan Marsh at the Dyke's End.

While I'm plugging this great pub, I'll mention the most famous earthen works and the walk that gave the pub its name; The Devil's Dyke is a 1,500-year-old earthen works created by Britons to keep the wrong people out and consists of a massive ditch on the western side and that earth is built up onto a sloped ridge. It goes for about 12 miles from Woodditton to Reach and it's a lovely short walk from Burwell for a drink taking in a fraction of the Dyke. Added to this, the pub has a beautiful Bar Billiards table from the 1930s right next to the bar, beer gardens both front and rear and a nice charm to the place.

Dan has, in 14 months learnt his beers and what his customers like, went to the Cambridge BF trade day and was so impressed with Papworth's beers he bought several different barrels and you'll see the Whispering Grass on tap, that Fen Skater pump clip is (obscured) over his shoulder and look up and you'll see Papillon is coming up next. I have to say the Whispering Grass was tops! Please don't tell the trees though because the trees don't need to know....

I know that he also wants to experiment with a bit of brewing himself and he inherited most of the required equipment. You've got to love a fellow enthusiast! Right now, and until September, his customers buy their beer and walk straight out into the sun so he is pleased of a chat so get over there and taste those gorgeous beers and he's sure to have time for you too!

The push for 'Fresh Ale'

Some of you may have seen a great deal of online publicity given to the launch of 'Fresh Ale' by Managing Director of Otter Brewery (Honiton, Devon) Patrick McCaig. With today's mobiles and laptops shovelling forth newsfeeds, this news will no doubt have been read by many of you already. McCaig is calling for a new beer category named 'Fresh Ale'.

Following his line of thought, he suggests that beer is barrelled in Kegs filtering out the lager yeast that's used in brewing the beer and therefore the barrel is no longer a 'live' beer and it's then very lightly carbonated. This lack of a secondary life in the beer means it will last weeks at the pub instead of days.

Surely then the argument is that being weeks old, it's no longer fresh? Shouldn't the argument be that real ale is fresh and that he needs a name that reflects that preserved ale?

"There are two major differences between fresh ale and cask ale," explained McCaig and revealed that "one is that when we put it into a keg, we actually low-carbonate it, so it has a much gentler and softer carbonation which is designed to emulate the carbonation of cask ale as far as taste goes in terms of mouthfeel. The second major difference is that when it is served it doesn't run through chillers in the cellar. Instead, it runs through the python or whatever assets the pub has to allow the dispense temperature to be around between 8.5 – 10°C. So, it is slightly cooler than cask ale, but it is not as cold as keg and it is slightly fizzier than cask ale, but it's not as harshly carbonated as keg. Instead, we have simply moved the product along." Quote; thedrinksbusiness.com.

That lower temperature is appealing and not having beer go off is another because consistency is often difficult to find. But wait, this story coincides with what mate Graham whom I drink with in Soham has been telling me for a few years because Graham you see, has spent a short time in the trade and told me of his own little secret (well it was....!) in that he would rig up his barrels and instead of a spile to let air in to replace the beer leaving, he put a CO2 gas bottle on it at just about 2psi. This CO2 didn't enter the beer or fizz it up but the lack of resultant oxygen on his live ale meant that it kept for days longer than it should.

CAMRA may find this little trick offensive because it is, after all is said and done at the end of the day, simply a way of keeping oxygen out and the pressure adjusts as the beer drops as it looks after itself naturally and with no further work required. Perhaps CAMRA's position will harden on Mr McCaig and be nice to my mate's idea but you suspect a line has been crossed in both cases. You do though, have to admire resourceful people!

Who, where and when is this?



Sent in by Phil Utting-Brown (yes, that is a mullet he's displaying at the back!) here's your chance to rib a few people and tweak a snout or two! Anyone care to drop me a sentence or two on this event? Story to follow then next month!

Brief notes of the Ely CAMRA Branch CM 4th July at The White Horse, Witcham

Full details come in a sister set of attachments for you but in brief, the committee met and presented the White Horse's hosts; Linda and John with their certificate of joint first place for rural POTY in our branch. The treasurer Fil Utting-Brown is now in possession of all the books from last year's treasurer and can now prepare with an auditor for an SGM (to be announced) so they can be signed off. We have gained 2 members this month (gross) and sit at 487. Kings Arms on St. Mary's Street intend to have 'a few' real ales on tap...watch this space! The owner of the Cutter Inn wants to join us next year on our Ale Trail! The Fountain Soham has just the one real ale on nowadays and still only has Ghost Ship or Doom Bar only now one at a time! The Ship at Brandon Creek has an Over-65s meal deal of 2 courses for

£10.95. The presentation of the Tharp Arms certificate will take place on Thursday 20th July at an early 7pm but we want you all there to try their beers and give them a clap!

Socially, we are being hosted by Norwich CAMRA on Saturday 19th August for a City stroll (more details in the next newsletter). The trip to the Plough, Little Downham is on the 29th July and £5 PH for food. All members welcome! Next CM is Tuesday 1st August at the Red Lion, Stretham at 7.30 for 7.45pm start. We have an SGM on Tuesday 5th September at the Cutter Inn where last year's books will be presented and signed off., Again; 7.30 for 7.45pm start.

The Tale End

A rite of passage used to be; to try and buy your first beer under age!

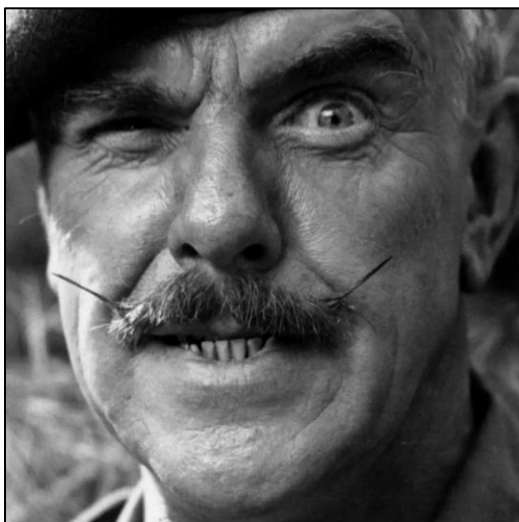
As long as under-age drinking has been illegal young people have tried to buy their first alcoholic drink in the pub. My story is perhaps not so different to others but it is a thing of its age and yes, I WAS under age when I purchased it. It is the summer of 1977 and I've just turned 16.

The story of how, in my particular case, I got there starts with a moped at the age of 16 and the freedom to go where I liked – bar a motorway of course – and my plan was not to buy that first drink in my nearest and likely 'local' pub; The Chequers at Fordham because I'd already realised that being told 'no' by the man I served petrol to weekly wasn't going to feel too good and that's before everyone in the village got to know about it as well!

No, the smart thing to do here was to buy my first a drink in a nearby village and so I visited my friend 'Alfie' who had been drinking since he was 14 in the Tharp Arms, Chippenham and asked him if he thought I could 'get in' as well? A major consideration was the bum fluff on not only my chin but the very stuff Alfie had on his as well. "I have a chance here" I thought.

Next, was how to approach the bar? If I walked in like I felt, I'd be turned straight round and if I went in all cocky, I'd be turned round doubly quick (a red card for the arrogant little brat!) and also be making a proper twit of myself as well. I figured 'quiet' was the best approach. My overriding worry was a strange one to most readers here, in that yes, I knew I wanted to drink 'beer' but more specifically, to drink ale and whilst I knew that lager is beer but what was the English stuff called? As you'll find out in a story I'm saving, I'd been exposed to all kinds of ales as a youth and therefore had 'more than an idea' and I couldn't work it out. I could visualise it yes; "Pint of beer please?", Landlord replies; "which one? This is a beer, that's a beer, all these are beer! Are you 18? Get outta my pub!". I knew that ale had several types; I knew that there was mild, pale, light, dark and bitter and if I said the wrong name I'd be getting 'outta his pub' - again!

No, no. This was no good, it needed another look here. I knew that lager was lager, I knew there was only one type of lager and it was called lager. Right, that was it then, I'd visit the Tharp and ask for a lager in a quiet, unassuming but very confident way as if I've done it 100 times.



Windsor Davies – hello lovely boy!

The next thing was the moped. In a little village like Chippenham, they will hear the scream of the ringy-ding-ding and I'll have dobbed myself in before I've even started! I can't park in front of the pub, and if I drive out the back, he'll see it's a moped anyway as I go by the window. I guess I'll have to park down the street but what to do with the helmet and gloves and the leather jacket? Why wear one if you don't have a motorbike with you? "You must be on a moped! Are you 18? Get outta my pub!" OK, so park down the street and leave the helmet and gloves and jacket in a bush. Great idea, might even have a family of thrushes in it when I get back - idiot! The answer I fell on in the end was to park the bike just before the pub having arrived quietly and carry in helmet and gloves. I also thought to have a story ready; 'Oh yes! My bike is a 500cc Yamanacker and I've passed my test ages ago (can't be specific...it's too long ago now), I shave three times a day donchya know!'. Excellent that's that sorted, he'll fall for that – easy!!

Right, last minute check with the tone and amplitude of voice checked for best effect:

The confident deep base Windsor Davies type; "hello lovely boy! I is 'avin a pint of your finest lager!"

My normal voice and then to finish, I tried my best Don Estelle; "may I-I-I-I-I I'll have a pint of la-lager p-l-e-a-s-e Mr?". The worry! Think I'll stick to the normal voice.

Another problem then struck me, what do people pay for a pint? I mean do they all have the right money? If you have the right money, you drink regularly, right? So, I'll slap the right money on the counter. Hand over a pound? No, that's a sure giveaway, that means clueless; "oh! outta my pub!!!"

So, I gathered my change in my two front pockets. If it was 40p I'd go into the front right pocket (past the sticky sweets) and if it was 50p I'd go into the front left (past the rabbit's foot). If it was more than that I'd have to muddle through.

Cometh the hour, cometh the boy and I was shivering with nerves, the ride over to Chippenham hadn't helped, it had lowered my body temperature and now with nerves shot my knees bouncing under my jeans. I walked into the pub and straight up to the nearest part of the bar, the landlady then stepped back out of the bar which seemingly was to avoid the bloody confrontation she may witness, because I was now going to be eaten as well! The volume of conversation slowly dropped as customers twigged the under-age newcomer and all cocked an ear to make out what the landlord would do with this one. The landlord, a huge man was talking to his customers and seemed to be taking his time getting to me, he'd 'clocked' me and his words to another customer became slower – as if his mind were elsewhere – 'oh no! now he's thinking of something demeaning to throw me out with as well!'.



The boy didn't know where to cast his eyes but fixed them on a sign over the bar and tried to take them in; "WHAT YOU SEE HERE....." it started but I wasn't seeing it.

He came over to me and put both hands on the bar; "right young man, what can I get you?" and I missed the subtle lack of; "what would you like to drink?" for I was already spitting out my very first order; "a pint of lager please?" to which the reply with a touch of sarcasm was; "oh really, and which one would you like?"

"oh! Errr, there's more than one is there?" I said but my eyes were glazed over, I wasn't actually reading the pumps. "yes son, I've got Skol, Black Diamond and Carlsberg?"

I got my first drink and it was 38 pence my plan with the money working and as if being anointed Peggy re-entered the bar; "your Tea's ready love" leaning against the door post again - it had been bloodless. While I stood there, I checked the prices and the names of the beers because I needed to get off the lager ASAP and soon another customer approached the bar; "bitter please Derek?" and there it was, all the information I needed.... 'bitter' it will be and at 37 pence per pint and my landlord is 'Derek'. So, Derek drew up his pint and I drew in the information. The second drink, a casual "a bitter please?". I was in!

Fast forward 2 years to my 18th birthday and I entered my, by now, 'local' and I was congratulated by customers on reaching this heady milestone in life. I asked Derek, now that I was 18, what he'd made of it all? He replied; "I've known all along you daft bugger! My Robbie's only one year older than you so all I had to do was ask him! It didn't matter. As long as you were sensible....I kept my eye on you, you little bugger!"

Please help us tell others; if you know something then tell us about it and we'll pass it on. If you have something to discuss and debate, a taxi, a train you want to organise; why not join the Facebook page; ['Ely & District CAMRA'](#) and belt it out there? If you have any news for this newsletter then drop me a line via email at david@taffmeisters.co.uk or text me on 07951010542. The views expressed here are those of myself and don't necessarily represent those of the CAMRA committee. Photos this month; Windsor Davies – The Telegraph. David 'Taffy' Lloyd