

Lights, Bitters, CAMRA Action.

Newsletter – August 2023

Welcome to a bumper August newsletter for the Ely branch of CAMRA. All the local beer festivals are now behind us with just the big hitters in the East Anglia region left with the East Anglia (BSE) and Peterborough clashing in the same week in late August. I've been a busy boy this month and visited Iceland and have a report on the beer scene there and just to get you going; there's a beer bath with warm thermal spring water and majestic views over the Fjord ...oh the opulence!

The 'lewkell' rural pub visits were to The Crown, Littleport, The Crystal Ship, Earith and the Three Kings, Haddenham. Then there are two firsts; the first time a 'no report' on a pub and for the first time I write of a drink in Ely – and about time too! So, we tootled on down to The Yard and next door to the High Flyer.

We have photos of the POTY presentations at 3 of the 4 winning pubs with just the Drayman's Son to go and did you know there's a pub that was under Ely (Cambs) licencing laws for centuries but in the middle of London.... yes, there really was! Then we have a question about summer beers when I make a fair stab at sorting out the subtle differences in Papworth Brewery's gorgeous summer beers and then Fil Utting-Brown has been up to Norfolk again – what chance! Finally, how not to take in a Bruce Springsteen rock concert in the blazing summer sun, not so much Born in the USA as born yester-day!!! This newsletter will, we hope, keep you up to date with changes and what's on in not just your local branch/patch but some festivals near enough to visit. My details are at the foot of the page. We start with news of the festivals.

Beer Festivals coming up

[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.

[Prince Albert Beer Festival](#). M. F. Friday 1st – Sunday 3rd September. 30+ real ales and ciders.

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

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

Key: NC (*non-CAMRA*). M (*music*). F (*food*)

Ely CAMRA Branch Events

'Learn to taste beer correctly' Evening. Sometime mid/late September on a Mon-Thu (18-21 and 25-28). Held at The Maypole, Cambridge. Train to Cambridge and bus across the city. Confirm the days you can make on our Facebook page. Day and date will be confirmed as soon as possible. Fee for drinks but your own transport. TBC soon.

You'll be taught what you are tasting and where in the mouth you are tasting it. All CAMRA members welcome.

Papworth Brewery, Earith. Thursday 7th December. 8.50am at the unit in Earith. Design and create a brew leading to a beer for our Beer Festival in 2024. Just watch the whole process! Expected; All day 9-5pm. Go to the tap room/Crystal Ship drinks afterwards. Bring your own lunch but a Pizza van does get there from around 6pm plus. To reserve a place, go onto our Ely CAMRA Facebook page. Group transport and arrangements TBC but a large taxi there and back is likely to be around £5-£10 total. Crystal Ship bar opens at 2pm. Cost; just transport.

Norwich Beer Festival trip. Date between 23-28 October TBC. A great beer festival. Train trip. If you want to go and you have specific days you want to go for why not let us know your preference?

Ely Branch CM news

The committee met on the first Tuesday of August at the Red Lion, Stretham. Notes are to be stopped dead in their tracks after one month. Nothing much happened and in the future nothing much will happen either. Only when we ratify a month later that we did 'nothing much' can we tell you about it. By then you'd be bored to hear about how we did it so that's all folks..... It's more than my jobs worth; Mums the word.

Lewkel News

The Plough & Harrow, Littleport. Has re-opened. There were promises of it opening two weeks ago and no movement on Facebook but I was on the old site and the new one says that they opened on about the 13th of July. From previously no ale at all, they have gone in with two GK beers, the IPA and a new beer brewed in collaboration with Nethergate Brewery (which GK own) named New Tricks, a light beer with light citra and ginger notes. I can also see Old Speckled Hen on Keg and Ice Breaker but don't get hung up on this, the last landlady had no beer at all and if we don't support Dominic Cummings at the start, please don't whinge later! EVERYONE starts as an optimist so you should be too! Get your backsides there before it turns back into a desert. Among other business, Dom also has the Forbidden Burger Co in Broad Street, Ely.

Last Month's **Old Photo**; Last month's photo didn't raise one answer to 'who are they and where are they', anyone want to try for all the faces and where?

The Crown, Littleport

If listening for that Fen word 'lewkel', I guess the northern village of Littleport would come top of the list. Our Fen accents are at their strongest in this backwater as opposed to the more obvious villages nearer to Chatteris and March or say Mepal and Witcham. So, having tried the Swan on The River and found no ale at the Inn and the Plough & Harrow on the Ely Road being closed, there was only The Crown left in this huge village.

Upon entering for the first time since before Covid-19 I grabbed the only beer on the only pump and the Ghost Ship was absolutely bang on. Not my favourite ale but citra does have a place in my palate for about 3 months a year and that is right now!

I was fortunate enough to find some friends sitting with landlord Robbie and so the chat was so much easier as Robbie proved to be a man of fewer words or was it when I dropped in the word 'CAMRA'? We can only surmise but Robbie has reached that point where NOBODY and NOTHING impresses him much. He's been running the pub for the past 14 years of which the last 2 have been with business partner Sara and Sara wasn't short of a word. "Business isn't too bad at all" he said. "We have fair prices here and keep our regulars happy, times are hard and customers haven't much money". I instantly morphed into the 'yes, they are. We're all in it together' mode, slowed it all down to think Lewkel and to see things through his eyes, I might have got away with it, I appeared to have done because a toothless local pointed out that the price of a potato was in fact the leading indicator of the economic cycle and what with the tinnitus and the racket around us (the racket that sounds like £££), I thought; 'God I've missed this'. I needed to meet my other self and although I often rope Soham and Littleport in together, they sometimes appear to have little in common at people level. Littleport is proper Fen still and Soham is not.

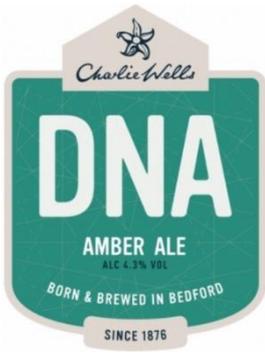
When I asked about having 2 barrels on at once, Robbie pointed out; "We don't sell so much of it, we do swap around a little. We're a Batemans' pub so we have their beers on along with (Fullers) London Pride and (Timothy T) Landlord, we might have two on at a weekend or with a function but we don't want to get caught with barrels (full) of it on Monday".

It isn't an ale destination; it isn't the right pub in a way and I'm guessing the Plough & Harrow will be similar in outlook when it opens again soon (see above). That leaves the Swan on the River and they are probably the pub missing the trick here. A beautifully upgraded pub by the Great Ouse but with only fizz on tap as I reported on a recent visit.

Ely Beer Festival 2023 - looking both backwards and forwards to 2024

First meeting of the Beer Festival sub-committee (BFC) was to be held during August but the old accounts yet again can't be signed off yet but a provisional date of Wednesday 23rd August has been pencilled in, chaired by BF Organiser Tony Gimberty. For the 2023 BF earlier this year, we have lost several hard-working members and add to this we needed Cambridge's great support and must now try and get back to working not so much independently from Cambridge - who have been generous with their help and central too nay, even relied upon - but rather, to enjoy the additional help when required. Please step forward to volunteer again as you have in the past. I know that Michelle had much on her plate as admin and it might be a job for a group of 3. They co-ordinated tickets, payments, induction, letters, money and the whole entrance affair you saw in the lobby, admissions, membership and all. We'll need a first aid officer (and a team of 3-4), a security officer (and a team of 3-4) but most of all just offer to be involved. That's a lot of new people for 2024 but I'm sure Tony will be rallying the new and "les old guard" once more into battle - let's hope it's not our Waterloo - Merde!

The High Flyer, Ely



Recently Paul and Michelle Butler and I took the opportunity to pop into the Punch Taverns owned and Charles Wells managed Ely pub that most of us take to be a gastro only – that's if we're being polite. The Flyer's current manager - a Red Adair type – shipped in by the owner's just two days before and doing the type of job old Red was famous for had two ales on in the form of St. Austell's Proper Job and Wells' very own DNA so why not try the DNA we thought. This 4.3% amber was neither amber in colour or taste but a lovely drop of dark(er) bitter all the same.

He tried to assure us that the whole pub wasn't just some vast restaurant but it was hard to see past the salt cellar and menu on the table near the entry door, added to which, half the bar area is lost to a wine rack just 33% filled. What a waste and just how vain is that by CW.

I'm sure someone has a 'reason' for it but whatever it is it's an insult to drinkers. With 'The Yard' just 100m away, the Flyer has a chance to get back on the circuit which was lost when Deans closed but Deans was further away and they made an odd couple. It's more likely that a 'The Yard' and 'The High Flyer' dual act could happen.

We'd like a new vision but at least our man 'Red' knows what some of us think of it all now. I wish him personally good luck. You can however hear the argument having thrown the beer drinkers out of a pub that has never had a great following over the decades till the 1990s when it relaunched and there were a lot of drinkers there but it was all done half-cocked and you had to drink among the eaters and for every drinker that left, they stuffed another dining table in. How do you reverse it? You can't without a concerted effort and the will of the management; that won't happen.

We are though pleased to say that if you take your own company and fancy two real ales, pop in and give it a try, perhaps the High Flyer never went away, nor is it back but we are happy to say it is at least here and on the radar!

The Yard, Ely

Finally, I had a chance to drink at Ely's newest hostelry; The Yard on Nutholt Lane, very close to the Newnham Street junction and traffic lights. It is doing very well so far with the place rammed on the Saturday we visited. It is quite literally - a Yard and around it is a building and three containers of which one is for beer and two for food. There's no real ale on sale and because they work out of container units, it is difficult to imagine there being so. We expect The Yard to remain an ale 'desert' into the future but perhaps owner Susanne Stent might one day look at Key Kegs and imitate some of 3at3's beers. The 3at3 has a unisex outlook – right up Sue's street I'm sure.

The Three Kings, Haddenham

Entering this lovely old pub, I had some idea from the ram-packed car park of what to expect but it would be fair to say there were well over 80 diners on tables of 8-12 dotted around the pub and the heat was sub-tropical inside. I needed a drink – and fast. On tap was Greene King's IPA 3.6%, Wye Valley's very sweet HPA - Hereford Pale Ale at 4.0% and Woodforde's Wherry 3.8% which shows a shrewd aptitude by the landlord for recognising that the customers aren't looking to discover new beers – well not too much anyway. The HPA and Wherry were in excellent nick. This alone possibly puts T3K in the Rural POTY chase for 2024 but what sealed the deal was that I inadvertently sat outside next to the old barrels placed against a wall by the kitchen so I had a Butcher's at the labels. It was like a brewer's brew of rare gems, labels all by now weather beaten but dated mostly 'sell before May or June 2023'. This pub deserves another visit I thought, but unless you are eating you need to pick your moment as you have no bar stools, you're in the way of the table service to the front of house and generally it's awkward. However, you do have the outside picnic tables to yourself so I suggest you save this one as a 'beer, to sit outside' trip and then it should be an excellent choice.

If you do have good beer there or at any of the other pubs mainly in the countryside, do let us know as we need to justify all our choices for rural (or city) POTY.

Soham Beer Festival – a second hand report

Unable to make this BF for the first time in its 15+ years word got back to me that numbers held up on Friday but were down on Saturday due to poorer weather. Using the second weekend of July instead of its usual first weekend slot, the scouts were all away for the weekend and unable to fund raise for something usually worth a £1,000 to them making the burgers.

Anyway, the beer. Well, they had 24 ales on but my 'reliable' sources tell me that they didn't bother drinking them this year and went straight for the cider! Unbelievable!!! Both of them only ever drinks ale so you can imagine it was quite a wrench. My sources are now banished unto the hinterland for this and they come under the 'you were given one job'.... and you know the rest. The Cider sold out early on Saturday (with their help, obviously) so I guess that tells a tale in itself and leaves the beers which looked an excellent mix starting with Taffy's delish favourite, Colchester's Sweeney Todd.

If we talk of just results, it looks more and more like a music festival with freeloaders bringing in their own cool bags of lager so it's about time the Soham Rotary Club submitted to the inevitable, that they ran the beer side too warm for too many years and should know that holding a BF around the 7th July (closest day to the Sun) in a thin-walled brick building which is sealed up at night, well, they just give themselves an uphill task, insurmountable even. Time to cash in on all those lager drinkers and take their coin, pop on less real ale while trying to get the temperature right.

As a beer festival it hasn't been a great advert and has probably crystallised Soham people into affirmed NON-believers and Soham certainly specialises in non-believing. So, let's be done with it and get the lager out next year and some Ale and make some money for good causes and end this misery. Serve people what they so clearly want.

The Village Inn, Witchford

On my usual summer Sunday afternoon Village pub walk, I took a drive and then walked to Witchford's only pub, The Village Inn. I chose to park about ½ mile beyond the old recycling yard at Grunty Fen and then walk in a straight line straight up to the western end of the Village on a loosely tarmacked road, this will be kept in the noggin ready for a wet day when I want to keep the feet somewhat dry, the view was good and you get a look at the village Main Street but the view was better coming back. The walk coming back when I crossed from the Inn and weaved through styles and gates initially away from my destination and then suddenly turned back towards it eventually curving around toward the car and evened things up on both distance and time. This is the far better route but for the long July-August grass at this time.

The Village Inn, what can you say, I arrived and waited 20-minutes to be served while the man next to me gave up and left because the barman you see, was in the kitchen cooking. I could see there was no real ale on as the Doom Bar and GK IPA clips were turned and there was nothing in the cooler but a well-hidden bottle of Spitfire which I had. The atmosphere was also Doom Bar! Promises to me of 'the dray arrives Tuesday' are apparently very old and not true. I didn't go back.

Iceland's unique beer scene

On a recent holiday to Iceland, I took in as much as I could of the beer scene there without it taking over the trip, so I just tickled up a few bottles and cans at the start of the holiday and managed a dedicated day on the job near the end of my wonderful trip. The cans and bottles were sipped 2 per evening and even then, I was tired, what with all that fresh air.

In Icelandic law, alcohol can only be sold through government shops named Vinbudin or business' such as restaurants so no club or society can have a bar as the government need to clearly identify the person in charge and responsible thus, a beer festival becomes a business proposition. I just came home though, just before they did indeed have a Beer Festival in Akureyri (pronounced with rhotic Rs) organised by a local restaurant but all the organisers are allowed to say is that they have a beer festival, they can't name ANYTHING else and no alcohol can be in a photo so everyone puts their beers down out of sight for a 'rowdy, happy' photo and then they go find their beers again. The government clearly remembers back 1,000 years to Odin's time when those drunkards no doubt drank their wine directly from a bull's horn! And if it's never been explained to you about the drunken bit well, you'll get the picture if I say to you; how do you put down your full horn of wine?

Let's talk of the country briefly; well, there are lots of trees but the mountains are clear of them (so is Scotland). All the houses are solidly built of reinforced concrete to withstand an earthquake and mostly have red metal panelled roofs screwed down because the wind would have tiles away. Most walls are painted an off-white. There are no solar panels or wind turbines blotting the view as again; the wind would have them all down. Everyone bar the middle of Reykjavik has a panoramic view, and I do mean "everyone". While I was there, I saw the second largest geyser in the world, the largest waterfall in Europe (by volume), drove through a 5.5 on the Richter Scale earthquake, had a Mývatn (silent T) Nature Bath where the steam off the naturally very hot thermal water mingled with the mist BELOW us coming up the mountain to join it while the sun beat down through it all and at 9 o' clock at night; and if you liked the

water; you drank it! There are plenty of whales when Whale Watching, views to die for and I prematurely missed the current volcano by just 12-hours having driven within 0.5 a mile of it. Unfortunately, the Northern Lights are in the winter, spring and autumn but instead I had 9 days of daylight with no sunset.

Iceland is so underpopulated you drive for miles on perfect roads that only gently curve without seeing anyone. But you do have to be a good driver, there's no point in driving being the 8th thing on your mind (School run anyone?), it has to come in the top 2 things you're thinking about because the roads are all elevated above the land so that the snow ploughs can just shove the snow off in the winter. When you run off the road you have about 60cm and then you hit a 50cm piece of jagged volcanic black rock and no way is your Merc with skirts & spoilers going to survive that! It's an incredible island. So, I think that's covered the touristy bit and we're here for the beer...

On a trip to Vinbudin I collected 9 examples of what I thought were ale type beers but alas found 3 of the little lager critters in my hastily gathered basket. You have to be over 20 years of age to drink alcohol and if even caught drunk in your car, no keys and on the back seat; you'll lose your licence. Alcohol was banned in 1915, but wine was soon back on the menu (1922) and all alcohol except strong beer over 2.25% came back in 1935. Finally, full-strength beer only became legalised again on 1st March 1989.

The beer is served very cold, even in winter because the Icelanders are tough, they just like it that way. One Faroe beer crept in and was the pick of the bunch. So, the six that I tried were as follows;



1. Can. Orange can of UL FEY No67 Indian Pale Ale 44Cl 7.5%. "Citrus Mosaic howl at the moon in a juicy cloudy harmony. The hops are certainly not wearing their sheep's clothing in this predatory IPA". Brewed by Burk Bruggþús (Brewery) Reykjavic. Me; Just like 3BM's Juice Rocket if not slightly more hopped, same visual.

2. Bottle. Einstök's Ölgerð Icelandic Arctic Pale Ale, brewed locally in Akureyri. 5.6%. Triple hopped + Icelandic water meets smooth malt, cascade hops to give it the American character while northern brewer hallebau hop tradition add just enough bitterness to make this ale refreshingly Icelandic – everything else 'pales' by comparison.

Me; What a shame! When fresh it is way over carbonated, when finally, it's not over carbonated it is slightly too warm! Best to stir it at the beginning but likely my kind of 'bitter'. Carries a warning against beer and pregnancy which is unclear as to whether it's drink beer and get pregnant or don't drink while pregnant which is obviously designed to put me off especially.

3. Bottle. Föroya Björ Múlafossur Red Ale 5.8% 330Cl Faroe Islands. "We have brewed an Irish red ale with water from famous Múlafoss. Barley malt, hops and barley grown on a field just above the Múlafoes. Very clear red with little head on it".

Me; only 330cl (Babycham size) with a little more hop it would have been superb! A rich drink not quite a ruby/red to the taste but carbonated perfectly.

4. Bottle. Einstök's Ölgerð Toasted Porter 6.0%, brewed locally in Akureyri. "The Toasted Porter was awarded a silver medal in the speciality beer category at the recent International Beer Challenge. Einstök Icelandic Toasted Porter has clear notes of espresso, dark chocolate and a hint of authentic Icelandic coffee. This Porter is dark and rich, offering a medium body that is robust, yet smooth on the palate and easy to drink. Smooth, roasted with some chocolate, toffee and liquorice notes".

Me; Could have been even better if carbonated lightly in the bottle to give it a bit of life. Mine was flat and completely the opposite of Einstök's Arctic PA.

5. Can. Forseti Olvisholt bruggþús session IPA 4.6% 330Cl. (Olivsholt) Forseti means 'President' in modern Icelandic but was the Norse God of Justice and reconciliation. Ölvin was a Viking and the King's poet, he could resolve arguments and the God's often sought his Judgement in their disputes. (Forseti) Ölvir was the son of Nanna and Baldur. His home

Glitnir was made of silver and gold which radiated light a great distance in all directions. Forseti is Olivsholt's summer beer.

Me; A highly hopped and malted beer best served from the fridge; proof of cold IPA! Cloudy and golden to the eye. A very good cold beer!

6. Bottle. Bruggsmidian IPA by Kaldi Brugghús. 330cl 6.0%. (The) water comes from the Solarfgaall (Mountain of Sun) Me; Tasted like an over-hopped lager, like a diluted Leffe. A clear golden colour at the beginning it was cloudy at the end. A Pleasant taste.

All the beers got their taste from their strength because the cold otherwise reduces the flavours, the problem with the flavours is that they only have a narrow range. The Faroes bottle Föroya Björ Múlafossúr, a red beer at 5.8%, tasted lovely cool and down to room temperature and was the pick of the bunch.

At the tail end of my week, I was treated to a Whale Watching trip where humpback whales were feeding in the fjord on crill and surfacing right next to the boat. We then took another trip around the northern coast line from Akuryri (rhotic R's) to a town named Siglufjörður (silent G and that's a D pronounced as a T near the end and rhotic R) is on Tröllaskagi (you're fluent now) where the filming for the nordic noir 'Trapped' took place; one of the 'who dunnits' which I had previously watched as I love my NN's (don't get me started on 'The Killing'!). The fishing town was once the main northern port for the canning of herring up until the 1980s and what a pen & ink that must have been! The small brewery I visited was named **Segull67 (Magnet 67)** and was full of character being an old cod processing factory around the same time. The name 'Magnet' is from Magnetic North as the town sits at about 12 o'clock on **Marteinn Haraldsson (below, right)** the Iceland 'clock' while the '67' is both dad and grandad's lucky number. An old 14" thick door to the old factory refrigerator area was the entrance and led through to a glassed off tabled area where the public



can sit, drink and see the whole brewing process. Son, 'Martin' is the boss of the family run business that started in 2015. Martin had spent time in Germany and England while dabbling with brewing at home before it became a whole family 'live the dream' thing. They concentrate almost entirely on canned and bottled beers but the brewery has its own bar with barrels and so is not just a tap room (for the brewery trips) but a bar as well and drink the 5 or so beers which are chilled and top fizz.

I was treated to a personal guided tour with Martin around the brewery and tried to sound like I knew something. The Svarta María (Black Mary) Stout 5.0% was the first and tasted like any great porter and dissolved on the tongue rather than having it

CO2'd in by the busload, just sell it like that out of the vat Martin. The citrusy Lette Límona (4.7%) was a citra lager and then we had a drop of Original (5.0%) which, is a lager and tasted just like a bitter and a dark one at that. If Martin had said "it's a chilled IPA" I'd have given him a hug there and then and said 'you've cracked it mate!' but apparently; it's a lager, the line between them being almost undetectable when beers are cold.

Three conjoined photos around the bar. Note the anchors and the thick door



After the tour I asked if I could try the drinks at the bar the way a customer would have them and should have tried the Stout again but I suspect it would have been all fizzed up..... so please serve it using gravity this winter! After his generous time with the tour, I then had a 500ml of Original and it was a chilled, gorgeous, hopped er... 'lager' and that with the tasters, it did me. Remember, everything is strong, you can't have a drink and do X later, drinking is all you'll do.

At this point, I'm genuinely impressed at the setting, at Martin and at the service. The problem, if you're an optimist like me and believe that real ale has a place here, is that nobody is prepared to make cask ale even though it would make sense. To start up Martin's business, they went to Germany and we know how early the Germans arise! Iceland brews its beer on the European model anyone but nothing from the UK and other than the words 'pint' or 'IPA'. Ale would go down well in Iceland but it's more difficult to brew although Icelanders have a head start with a cool pub floor or cellar and at no time of year would the beer have to be in a cellar making barrel location easy and adaptable.

Pilsner, Vienna, Wheat, Caramunich and Carafa plus one - All lager Malts used at Segull 67.



The second reason I can't quite get my head around. You see, strong beer over 2.2% was illegal until 1989 and drinking is still not always a social way of life in Iceland, it doesn't have a long history. A typical night out starts at 10 o'clock and goes through to the early hours when you're expected to go home wrecked and not work for a day because the alcohol limit for driving is very low at almost zero, Iceland is gaining a reputation for partying through the night especially so around Reykjavik where they utilise the 24-hour daylight. At Christmas Icelanders drink a traditional mixed drink of orange soda and malt which isn't quite alcohol free.

I noted that after drinking the cans, bottles and now from the tap, everything is up at 4.5% plus but usually 5.5-6.0% ABV and marked 'session beer' when it clearly isn't. The brewers just ramp up the ABV, turn the music up, customers do the Viking thing and nobody remembers a thing the next day. You've got to love those Vikings; wrong wife? Well, just swap her back in the morning...it happens all the time right! I then think back and realise that the drinkers I saw were mostly there for two drinks and then left – presumably while they still had legs to walk with. One group that had started a session at 2pm were pretty much totalled as they weeble-wobbled back home through the village and this is 4pm on a Saturday and oh BTW, Icelanders don't drink around the children, the pub is not a family affair.

The brewery seen through glass panels – reflections included!



Let's say they were there an hour and a half - they were toast. A couple had two drinks (2 x 500ml) and left walking home too. The lady perhaps not wanting too many 6.0% in her 8-stone frame. I surmise this but, she had told me how much she enjoyed English style beers and loved one in Scotland that began with a T to which I replied; 'Tarmacadam's!'. She wasn't impressed.

So, why the hell nobody is putting together a session real ale up there beats me except that the drinking culture has already gone to the Thors, Hells and the Odins with their weekend big hits and so the midweek beer turnover isn't going to be there and we know what ale thinks of sitting for 4 days. You wait for Friday and Saturday and hit it. I'm guessing

the only way out of this is to import a load of barrels for a beer festival with English advice and just do it our way and let people see that just because the Germans woke before us and laid out the beach towels, it is the quality of your day that matters!

We moved on leaving one fjord and headed back using three mountain tunnels to get us back to our 'home' fjord named Eyjafjörður and a nice restaurant in the hamlet of Árskógssandur which has a population of 120 of which 12 work at the [Kaldi Brewery](#), restaurant and spring bath making it Árskógssandur's biggest employer! First, let's mention the thermal heated natural spring bath at Kaldi's brewery it's beer bath plus also next door's dedicated beer bath at

[Björböðin's](#) which are about 1,000 feet above the Fjord where with the binoculars you would see the very whales that fed near myself not 3 hours earlier. Icelanders like "chillin out" sitting in a natural spring bath of hot water - remember, the hot water is totally free and natural - and beer - I kid you not! You heard it right; 'beer' because 'beer is good for your skin' so the Icelanders bathe in it! Can you imagine one in naughty England? There's always one, you know it don't you! Yup, always one.

Quite literally 'bathing in beer'



I was invited by the very confident young barman to try all the beers and that I did, I sipped a little of the 9.3% Belgiskur Tripel beer which I liked and the Kaldi Nordur 5.4% beer but suddenly found myself with a glass of each because he'd 'misheard me' - THAT old one! Well, I like being misheard now and again and well, the Belgiskur Tripel was a cool, crisp, delicious rich Belgian beer on the Beer Richter Scale and by the time I got to the Nordur I was a bit überglücklich. I'd made my apologies before I started; that's apologies for my absence later that evening, "Why, where are you going" she said? Well, three hours later it became very apparent. The barman

was apologetic that the bitter wasn't on and was sure I'd have liked it the most.

So, I'm just left wondering what Iceland is doing? It's a cold country for 9 months of the year, cool for the other 3 and ale would be perfect for all 12 and our session ales (under 4.0%) brewed by Icelanders should be front and centre but aren't. When you think about it though, only the Americans have gone for our style of ale amongst every other type that they also like and that's because they appreciate British things and our beers whereas the Icelanders have dropped straight into middle-Europe and seek lager. We can hardly blame Icelandic brewers for looking to lager; the way it travels and keeps, the consistency and it's just so easy to hedge your bets.



What's the best real ale?

That's a question for CAMRA members and 'twitchers' of the art to mull over but ask any landlord or landlady and they'll tell you something similar to 'what sells!'. I have been surprised how few summer ales landlords have had up this summer and how the heavily-hopped dark beers are still there and this writing malarky makes you look at this kind of thing. Hopefully, your local should be a two-pump pub as this is the minimum to float people's boat and at this time of year at least one should be a light looking ale possibly an amber or a citra. The most obvious citra is Adnams Ghost Ship but the original daddy of them all; Oakham's Green Devil should have a turn too.

There'll always be an Ely – but in London!

Perhaps like myself you didn't know just how far the diocese of the Bishop of Ely reached, turns out it is far further than across the Barton Road car park to the Prince Albert but used to go as far as the middle of London. An anomaly of times gone past is that a part of London known as Ely place was under our Diocese's administration. Going back centuries, a pub in a back alley just off the square at Ely Place; Ye Olde Mitre Inn, kept its licencing agreement not with the local Borough Council but Cambridgeshire Council, this ancient system was finally knocked on the head in 1965 no doubt when the old Bish never came back on Monday to pay off his tab.

Anyway, [here's a link](#) to read up this and other interesting and historical Inns and pubs of London.



(above) Ye Olde Mitre, Ely Place just off Ely Square

Papworth Brewery

Founder Chris Jones worked as a scientist before he gave it all up to pursue his hobby. After meeting him on the last day of the Crystal Ship BF for a chat he explained that Papworth are one of the few beers locally that don't just use the local tap water but they add various chemicals including gypsum (plaster to you and me) and he felt compelled to do it because his science background gives him a deep knowledge of his subject and how important it is.



Crystal Ship, Earith Thursday lunchtime

The brewery started in 2014 in a garage in Papworth (hence the name) and moved to larger premises in Earith in 2017, when Chris was joined by Richard Harrison and production was upscaled to a 10 barrels per brew plant. Then in 2020 they took on another unit setting up the Crystal Ship Bar with Dan Wilderspin as a co-owner/director who looks after it but I noted in my visits that they are truly all involved. Although it's technically a separate business – it's essentially a Papworth Brewery taproom.

The Crystal Ship, Earith – and its Beer Festival

The Crystal Ship is the Papworth Brewery's taproom in a separate unit on the same industrial estate to the brewery. The normal opening days are Thursday to Saturday, but for the beer festival in late July, they extended the opening hours from Wednesday to Sunday. They were delighted with the numbers attending and the Saturday with its live music was packed. Unlike the usual BFs they stuck to their 8 cask pull pumps plus a few tapped barrels in the store room and some keggled ales more usually casked in the bar. The keggled beers weren't as nice, you just can't do that to Papworth beers as their beer's hop count is so low the taste disappears when cold and carbonated.

The Crystal Ship usually has 8-10 of Papworth's cask beers (that's what CJ told me!) and one guest cask on as well as their own keg lager or helles plus one more keg beer and several real ciders on tap. They have regular live music on at least once a month, classic car and quiz nights, and often host other events (they've recently had wine tasting, gin tasting and a meet the cider maker night).

Real Ale sales up and up in 2022

A belated check online finds the 2022 figures for ale sales with the UK's number one seller being Sharpe's Doom Bar at the top followed by Timothy Taylor's Landlord. Timothy's finest overtook Greene King's IPA sending it to a watery grave (sorry!) in third, fourth is Fullers London Pride, fifth is GKs Abbott Ale and sixth is St. Austell's Tribute. Seventh was Wainwright's Pedigree and eighth was Marston's Pedigree (that's what it says here). Butcombe's Original and Young's London Original close out the top ten. All these breweries saw massive 90% hikes in sales AND profits over their old covid numbers and Timothy was hot with an increase of 182% in the one year. Source; The Morning Advertiser.

But warnings come though from London Town where some areas are becoming ale deserts as trends change and the ales are off, no doubt the footprint on the seat of the breeches is marked Beaver/Camden Town. But maybe the job

is just too technical for people, maybe they are one-move chess players, the beer right now should be light ales, citras, blonds and low hopped beers. This is NOT the time of year for dark and heavy beers, there are no points for loyalty either for them or for you the punt....I mean the customer; just what works, we all need to remember that.

Ely City Pub of the year = 1st (The Drayman's Son next month)



That many staff we presented it twice, well done girls!

They did it their way!

Rural Pub of the Year = 1st. The Tharp Arms, Chippenham and the White Horse, Witcam



Landlady Bev. Tharp Arms Chippenham

Owner's Linda and John. White Horse, Witcam

Years of graft went into their overnight success.

A Light Summer Ale

If you and I have just a similar taste in ale; mine is centred on Black Sheep, a very un-sweetened dark bitter, you might, just get to a time of year when the taste of the beer lingers a little too long in the mouth and you yearn for a change. I get to the summer and want for something almost under hopped and I've found a brewer that delivers.....

Let's step back here a moment and pretend you've drunk a beer when it was room temp at let's say 5am the morning after say; a party, and you woke up in someone's living room and your mouth was like the bottom of a parrot's cage. You think; 'I'll just take a swig of that lager I didn't finish' and the stuff tastes awful and leaves a taste I've always called 'leather tongue'. That was until I taught myself new terms such as 'hop', 'hoppy' or 'over hopped' etc. I don't like that after taste so much in the summer. It seems to me in my self-taught world that the correct hop-taste when the beer is cool or being served goes drastically awry in the second half of the pint as it warms up when the hops flood through, so better drink it quick then!

Indeed, I'd recommend you try a simple little trick I use to see if the Landlord has the temperature right or a little too far either way. If the cellar is cold, you lose the flavour, at the Papworth Brewery tap room I actually ordered my next beer at the same time so cold was the beer. There, the very cold first half had lost its taste but the second half had it, then picking up the second beer it was pretty much lovely all the way through and the hop taste was what the brewer wanted when he brewed it. If slightly warmer (far more prevalent), the second half of your pint won't be as nice as the first half. Temperature IS important and if too warm as it used to be at the Maid's Head, Wicken, I would drink in

halves and damn the look of the staff. Sometimes you can simply ask to pay for the pint and get it in two staggered halves but the problem with this is 'your attitude to their beer'. You're not making any friends here, are you?

When drinking in the summer, you may want more of a fresh mouth feel which isn't so important in the winter and so with this job at the front of my mind, over the last 3-4 months I've been searching for the right taste for the summer and nodded at two or three beers in appreciation but with a memory like a sieve it's all forgotten and in no particular order in my mind. But one brewery has run a thread through all this in that every time I drink a Papworth beer, I love them and they leave me without any hint of the old 'leather tongue' afterwards, they are therefore at the start of my 'summer beer' journey.

In late July, while visiting their tap room The Crystal Ship at Earith and decided to try all their beers and get the names right for once. I went for two consecutive days followed on Friday with the Sutton BF instead at which three missing Papworth's were on. I then had a day off and went back on the Sunday and bought 4 bottles to try at home which was to jog the memory of two rascals not available right now. This then gave me the full picture.

So, I invite you to pop over to the Crystal Ship while the summer is here and see if you will give Hop Priest, Whispering Grass, Papillon or Off the Lip a 10/10? Would you give Fen Skater or Crystal Ship a 9/10? Even the weakened Tooty Frooty at 3.5% is a lovely beer, perhaps it's a weakened Hop Priest if just lacking depth with an 8/10. So many other brewers go to citrus which is the usual 'get out' when describing summer beers, now granted, The Whitfield Citrabolt does have only a light touch of citra taste but nothing else in their beer list has defaulted to that easy get out clause.

Even with the name, '**Hop** Priest' it is, if anything, under-hopped but maybe by their own standards they had 'really let go on that one!', but no. So, while we have a bit of the summer left, try a few of their beers and why not drop me a line on your findings?

The Hill House, Happisburgh in Norfolk by Fil Utting-Brown

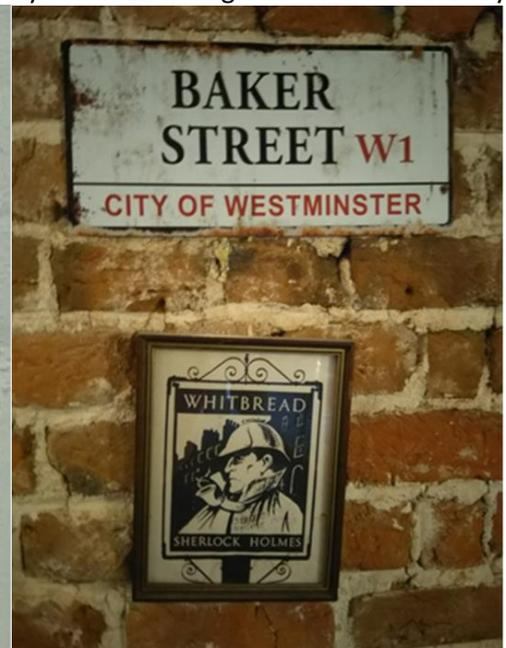


Meet Clive Nixon, landlord of The Hill House, Happisburgh (they call it Haze-borough) which is situated right on the north-east Norfolk Coast. I briefly considered running a 'name the pub' theme similar to Steve Linley in Cambridge branch's Ale magazine but so many of the Branch appear to be familiar with the pub so the idea was swiftly abandoned. Suffice to say that Clive has been at the helm of The Hill House for over thirty years, through thick, thin and COVID, although it has been around a good deal longer being built in 1540 and becoming an inn with a coach house in 1610. Initially appearing to be curmudgeonly, with the well-worn complaint that representatives of North Norfolk Branch rarely venture beyond Norwich Clive, (after a couple of excellent Island Brewery's; Earl's RDA a rich dark ale, 5.0% ABV – and that's me, not Clive) became almost affable and was happy to chat about some of the pub's history.



Featuring in the GBG 2023 a microbrewery sits in the back, named 'The Dancing Men Brewery' where, Conan Doyle wrote 'The Adventure of the Dancing Men' and the pub is not shy of its association with him and I looked everywhere in the garden for a lemon tree but without success.

What I did find was the staging left over from the pub's annual Summer Solstice Festival, featuring forty ales, fifty ciders and four days of live music. The beers on tap during our visit were Grain's 'I Am Not a Robot' 3.7% ABV and from the same brewery 'Three One Six' 3.9% ABV [although the Humpty Dumpty dray pulled up just as we were leaving so this will change]. Five ciders 'from the cellar' were also available including the 'Old General' 8.4% ABV; a little too challenging for me. Clive is not brewing at present. He is a bit short handed and, now in his seventies, finds the rigours of the industry rather daunting but with staff recently



taken on including Tom the manager's son, he hopes to resume in the near future. Surviving on the passing trade of tourists and a few locals there is always food available: a regular reasonably priced pub grub menu leaning unsurprisingly towards sea food with a 'specials' board featuring 'turkey and stuffing' [in July? Well, I guess we are in Norfolk] but it is the exterior of the building that I find intriguing. Accommodation is available within the pub itself but



also in a railway signal box. Built in anticipation of the hordes of holidaymakers travelling by rail along the north Norfolk coast, the railway was never started as the company went bust before any track was laid. A Free House in Norfolk

with a railway and Conan Doyle history? Short of Jimi Hendrix performing in the bar it doesn't get much better for me. And I loved the brass ashtray on display - a fragment from a near-miss bomb from a barrage balloon.

I'll bet it's killed more people as an ashtray!!

Fil

All photos this month by Taffy or Fil with one addition, the guy in the bath! Thanks to; Bjórböðin's.



This month's Tale End again comes from Taffy. In the absence of your involvement, I shall continue with another tale but as usual, if you have a great story; we'd like to hear it.

The Tale End

Always read the label

Back in the 1980s I had the chance to go and see 'The Boss' the nickname of Bruce Springsteen who was touring the UK with the E Street Band and Bruce's concerts were known for high energy and being relentless at over 4-hours long! He likes to give value does our Bruce!

A mixed group of us met and took the train to the Wembley Stadium and were about to take the famous 'Wembley Walk'; a one-mile stretch of raised concrete walkway to the hallowed stadium with its twin-towers but first though was the matter of drinks on this very, very hot summer's day and on entering the store just outside the station, I walked the 12' length of the open topped fridge past the fresh room temp packs of beer just added and went to the furthest corner where, left tucked up all alone tight in the back corner as far away as possible was a pack-o-four cans of frosted Carlsberg. Perfect I thought!

I dashed for the four-pack feeling oh so lucky to get the only cold beers left in Wembley and proceeded to the concert. Not knowing much about lager because I don't drink it, I hadn't read up or taken in anything about it either. Lager was something wet you drink at a party coz that's all they had, right? And its Carlsberg, they make that weak stuff in my local don't they? So, ho-hum just another lager.

We watched the backing band and then on came Bruce, (oh boy! Have I waited for this) and hit the stage running with his anthem 'Born in the USA' followed by many more hits such as

Try and avoid Carlsberg Special Brew at 8.0% ABV on a hot, hot day.
Still, Bruce does do a lovely encore!

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.

David 'Taffy' Lloyd