

Lights, Bitters, CAMRA Action.

Newsletter – May 2023

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.

This month;

1. Calendar of events. Lewkel news.
2. Cont. Ely POTY. Ale Trail report.
3. Cambridge Beer Quarter; a different type of Beer Festival. Cambridge Beer Festival Run & Trip.
- 4-6. Elliott and Max do Bury St Edmunds.
6. Cont. Brewers on our patch. Downham Isle Brewery.
- 7-9. Cont. The Dambusters Inn.
9. Cont. The Tale End.

Other festivals coming up are (click on the links for further details):

[Wicken Beer Festival](#). NC. M. F. Saturday 13th May, 4pm-12am. Free entry, around 20 real ales, BBQ, currently 2 bands confirmed. Recreation Ground, Wicken CB7 5XZ.

[The Haymakers Beer Festival](#). NC. M. F. Thursday 18th – 21st May. Celebrating 10 years with Milton Brewery. All the Milton Beers plus 10 guest Ales and 2 Craft Beers. 54 High St, Chesterton, Cambridge CB4 1NG.

[Cambridge Beer Festival](#). 22nd – 27th May 2023. Jesus Green, Cambridge. (Ely branch run & trip Friday).

[The Maypole Beer Festival](#). Monday 22nd – 27th May (when else?). Legendary pub for its huge line up of ales, over 50 ales for this one! 20a Portugal Place, Cambridge CB5 8AF.

[City of Ale Festival](#). Thursday 25th May – 25th June. The Waterfront, 139-141 King St, Norwich NR1 1QH.

[North Norfolk Railway Rails & Ales](#). NC. Friday 9th – 11th June. 'Not the usual event' "....focusing on local ales..." further details to follow. North Norfolk Railway, Sheringham Station, Norfolk NR26 8RA.

[The Cutter Inn Beer Festival](#). NC. M. F. Friday 16th – Sunday 18th June. 16+ ales and 2 ciders. 42 Annesdale, Ely CB7 4BN.

[Burwell Cricket Club](#). 23rd – 24th June. Friday 6-10pm – Saturday 2-11pm. Watch a match and have a beer! 10 ales and ciders. Burwell & Exning CC, Exning Park, Exning CB8 7NN.

[Wilburton Beer Festival](#). NC. F. M. Friday 23rd – Saturday 24th June. Wilburton Recreation Ground CB6 3RB.

[Cambridge Quarter Beer Festival](#). NC. M. F. Monday 3rd – Saturday 8th July. 7 Pubs put on extra beers not so far from the station, 250 ales in a quirky 'walk-about'.

[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 National BF. If you like your music, this is the one! Embankment Road PE1 1EF.

[East Anglian Beer & Cider Festival](#). Wednesday 23rd – Monday 28th August. 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.

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

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

'Lewkel' News

Neil who did a good job in his short tenure as manager at **The Maid's Head, Wicken** has moved on to being manager at the **Kings Arms, Ely**. I'm sure he'll have the same positive effect there. **The Three Pickerels, Mepal** has opened again, the fully refurbished pub has a set-aside dedicated bar area. Only open over Christmas and new year in an outside bar and then closed again immediately, it is 'back in the game!'.

Paul 'Joppo' Jopson, the part owner of the **Carpenter's Arms, Soham** hosted Tuesday 2nd May's Committee Meet and the three beers on were excellent. Joppo has hooked up with Moonshine of Fulbourn and is a Timothy Taylor accredited pub too has got the full on AATT right. On entering the pub, he was a full-on lager drinking lad but took up the ales and says he can't go back no more and now samples his own wares. Last October, the mission for the winter was to keep one beer on mid-week and two at weekends but he's been able to keep three on all winter, an excellent effort for any first-time cellarman.

Sometimes he had the wrong mix on with beers just taking sales off themselves but now he's got it and has a session value ale, a high-quality beer and a smaller brewer as well, the combo of the three generally offers a golden, an IPA and something like a citra. What is so frustrating is that his cellar is so small he can only have the three pumps on so there's no real chance of the obscure like your porter, milk stout, red, ruby or brown. I think one day, he's going to give one of the lagers the shove and he'll find room for another pump. Come on Joppo, turn it into a beer emporium!

Ely Branch Pub of the year – it's all gone POTY!

We still can't announce the winners of both the City of Ely or, the Rural Pub of the Year (POTY) or their runner's up in the branch. We, as a branch haven't visited the two rural pubs and certificates won't be ordered till the two are visited and a decision made, a decision standing at 4 months! The AGM gap of two months also stopped us moving it all forwards. It's safe to say that we can do better and will do in the future, and so we say now; next month will surely see the winners announced-maybe.

Report on the Ely Ale Trail. Held on Saturday 22nd April.

At one time or another some 23 members joined us on a beautiful spring day which started at the West End PH. On entry we were met by those little nibbles of food that are so handy if you've dashed out the door which were spread around the 3 tables that constituted 'CAMRA corner' all laid out by ready-to-rumble Michelle and Paul Butler. I met Chris Lockwood, our renewed Vice-Chairman at the bar and then a new face; Roy Cheesman and daughter who joined us from BSE, very soon in came Dana, Kiera and Lloyd and they were warmly welcomed by all; So, we've got over that first uncomfortable hurdle. We took some time getting out of the West End where the Proper Job and Timothy's Best Bitter had been excellent.

Next was The Prince Albert and as we went out into the beer garden we met two ladies Martha and her partner Tracy and I'm pretty sure the man behind was there for the Ale Trail but he slipped away in the conversation. I won't give a running commentary on the beers though; they were superb everywhere we went. Not so many of us got to The Cutter Inn next where, we all sat outside soaking up the sun again. On then to the 3at3 first because we knew that this was the tail end of the sunshine and heat at 5 o'clock. Yours Truly, had a birthday cake surprise from Michelle with what appeared to be a stage 2 rocket from Cape Canaveral on it and we also dusted off the nibbles; waste not, want not etc.

Downhill to the Drayman's Son and we had more than the one here before The Minster beckoned where we used our discounted CAMRA memberships and had chicken dippers and more, all laid on by Elliott and Max; thank you.

I called it a day at this point and caught the 8.30pm train back to Soham. On reflection it was a great day out and tightened the committee members bond while it introduced us to some new members but if I say 'not enough' then I hope that can be changed for next year and one thought is to put it on the back of the Beer Festival and hold it in early March.



Ale Trail at the 3at3 Number 3, Three Cups Walk. Special shout out to Michelle Butler (second right).

Coming up is the **Cambridge Quarter Beer Festival** – Monday 3rd – Saturday 8th July

Not your usual Beer Festival

Following on from the 2021 success by 6 pubs, the Quarter's back, no not the offense play for the San Francisco 49ers but 7 pubs in Cambridge quite close to the railway station. So, it's the summer of 2021 and we are allowed out at last and so you enter one of the pubs and get your programme with a map, every time you have your first beer in one of the seven pubs they stamp your attendance in your programme. When you get 7 stamps in your programme you go home and don't tell anyone (not even CAMRA members) because nobody really cares and it makes you look like a saddo. What do you want for it? A medal!

You will be one of a group of odd-looking people instantly recognisable by wearing the cushion under the front of your tight T-shirt, this is a special sign that you are 'one of them'. Three of the pubs belong to Jethro Scotcher-Littlechild being; The Cambridge Blue, The Blue Moon and the newly re-opened and first-time entrant; The Kingston Arms which is likely to be the first you visit as its nearest the station. The old Kingston watering-hole is sadly gone and for a little while much coin was spent extending the very small pub to medium size AND it went foodie. I never visited it in this condition and it suggests others didn't either but now it's a drinker's hole again; excellent. Calverley's Brewery (purely Key Keg) are in again, Steve Pellegrini is in this time with the (Ice Cold Inn...) Alexandra Arms and the Geldart and The Petersfield are in again. The Devonshire Arms is out this time which was where you might have started but they didn't make any extra effort last time and while it's also true some of the pubs didn't try 'too hard' 2-years ago, the Cambridge Blue did and had a large Garden Marquee with if I recall housed 60+ ales. The beer did suffer a little in the heat but it was a solid effort.

So, I guess the smart money says that it'll be the Kingston Arms but after you've tried one in either of the two pubs now situated at the station; The Station Tavern or The Old Ticket Office just to get the ball rolling. Then there's always the scene of a CAMRA folly; The Salisbury Arms as well to get you started. Fact is, nobody knew what to expect in 2021 but it was the kind of day out I would enjoy anyway. I'll be going and conquering all 7 pubs because.... Well, 'because it is there'.



Cambridge Beer Festival Trip - Friday 26th May

We have a Cambridge Beer Festival Run & Trip organised for CAMRA members in our area, the date is Friday 26th May and we'll meet in front of the station for 11.00am and break into small groups for travel discount tickets although I suspect the already cheap prices won't be much cheaper! The afternoon session is 12 noon till 3pm before closing for two hours and opening again at 5pm (perfect for visiting the Maypole Beer Festival, just a 5-minute walk away). 11.17am is the outward train and you can pick your own time for the return but I suspect it'll be the 5.29pm onwards for most but it matters not, there are plenty of trains. Non-CAMRA members can accompany members.

Our Ely City pub checker Elliott Bayle has been abroad.... Well, OK, Bury St. Edmunds but he has left the bosom of Ely and that's a start! Bury has a lot of great pubs to try and here's a few....

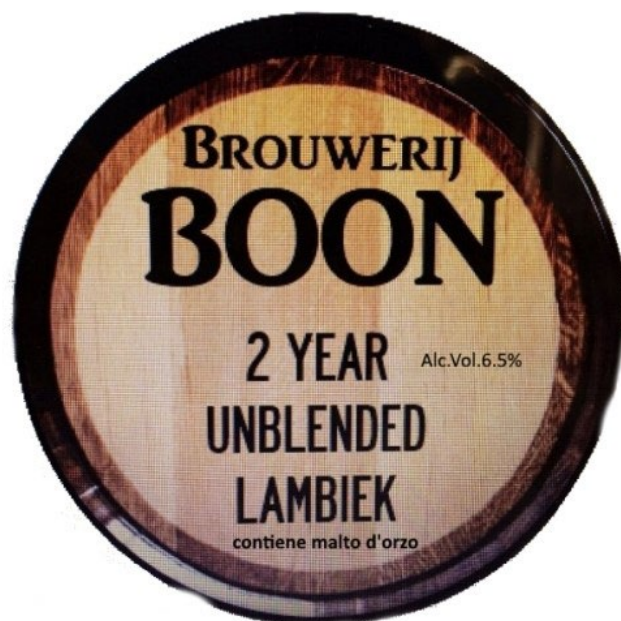
So; Elliott and Max do Bury St Edmunds

Arriving into Bury St Edmund's by train on a crisp Saturday morning, the first stop was a 5-minute walk from the train station - Brewshed.

Brewshed is a brew pub of its namesake. It presents a lovely, curved bar, with loads of seating, a log fire, and superb open and a covered outdoor space with a pizza oven. As the sun was yet to hit the high noon, we only stopped for one. I had 2/3rd of the Brewshed chocolate hazelnut stout (5.5%). As a lover of hazelnuts, I'd hoped for a powerful nutty flavour, the reality fell short of this, not much nut for me – much more chocolate. Max had the Brewshed chocolate orange stout (4.9%). This had a good bitter orange flavour – not too artificial tasting. All in all, a decent start to the day. At the time there were 15 Brewshed ales on, 3 ciders and a couple of guest lagers.

Brewster's was our first stop

Buy two and get a free Basil Brush joke.....



Moving on into town, on another day I would have stopped off at the Old Cannon Brewery on Cannon Street, alas no time today so instead headed straight up to the market area for a stop off at the Nutshell. In a nutshell (boom, boom...), it's a tiny little pub, off the market square, with comfortable space for about 10 punters, but often with quite a few more. If you don't mind the up close and personal drinking experience – or a mummified cat behind the bar - it's a fine quirky little pub where we've enjoyed the company of strangers every time we have been. They only had a few Greene King beers on (a downside depending on personal proclivities). I had an Abbott; it was a well-kept and decent enough pint.

Speaking of Greene King, when in Rome and all that, we popped down the road to the brewery tap room (beer café). Previously, they have had some pleasant surprises in cask and keg, including their black IPA which I'm always happy to see. No such luck this time. The offering could be found just about anywhere, I had a Fireside, decent enough but not much more to say. Moving swiftly on, we headed a bit out of town, to a pub which came highly recommended - The Dove on Hospital Road.

We were not disappointed, even though there is ample seating and tables, the pub is cash only and wet led (with bar snacks). We arrived around 2 pm and the pub was full, with a full contingent of old boys propping up the bar.

At the time, there were 6 cask ales and 3 real ciders on, all of which were very reasonable priced. I had a pint of Kings from the Mighty Oak Brewery (4.2%). The landlord warned me it was citrusy (not a problem for

me). A well-kept, tasty pint, that was indeed citrusy – a win at £2.70 a pint. Max had a half of Thundering Molly ‘bag-in-box’ cider from Celtic Marches (5.2%). The pub closes at 3pm on Saturdays and reopens at 6pm, unusual in this day and age for a city pub (I believe the Landlord was off to walk his dog).

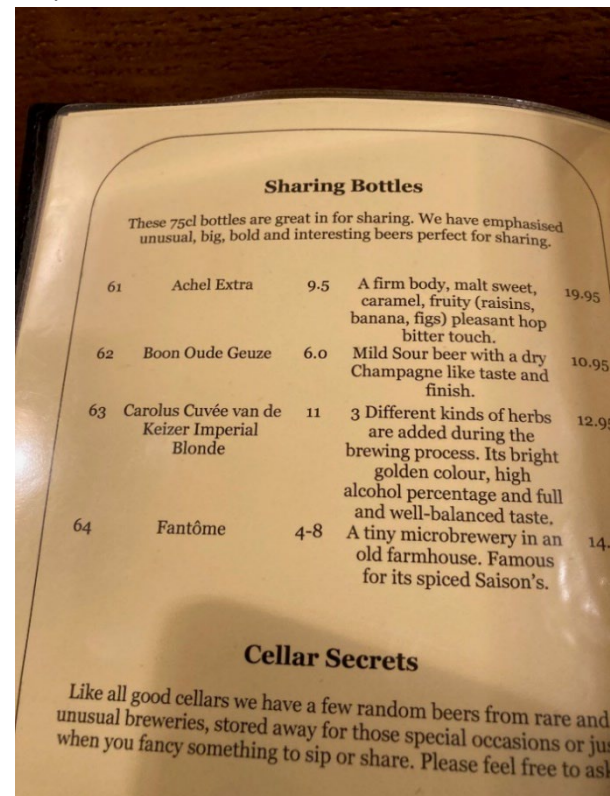
Inside The Dove



Needless to say, I got a quick second pint in, this time opting for a stronger brew in the form of Mahseer from Green Jack Brewery (5.8% and a steeper £3.20...). A decent hop to balance out the strength and again a perfectly kept pint.

Having stopped for a late lunch we were down the home straight, stopping first at the Nethergate tap

Vesper’s beer menu



room (just off the Market Square). This was name dropped as worth a visit too, which was helpful as it's not too obvious walking by that it exists (as a tap room). There's a small bottle shop at the front and a few tables at the back parallel to a wall of taps (I believe there is additional seating upstairs).

The Landlord of The Dove ...Fido gets his just walks



Here, I had a half of Stour Valley Gold (3.7%) – a nice easier drinker followed by a more decadent porter in the Melford Magic (6.2%). I didn't count all the taps but there were at least 6 as well as ciders, wines and spirits. When we were there, it seemed to have a group of regulars and be well-liked by locals but alas, time was against us, and I wanted to finish at Vespers Bar - located just out of the centre on St Andrews Street.

Vesper’s Bottle sharing



Owned by René (who also owns the excellent Beautiful Beers bottle shop in Bury) and run by his son, this place is a gem for Belgian Beer lovers. At the time there are 15 beers on tap (11 Belgian, 4 UK ales) and plenty more in bottles. I had 2/3rd of Boon; a 2-year unblended lambic (6.5%) and Max had 2/3rd of the Boon Kriek (4%) – both were wonderful to have on tap and reasonably priced for the styles (£6.50 and £5.00 respectively). I went back for a second and a third... The downstairs bar is spacious without much seating, and upstairs there's an impressive space that was closed for a private function. I will definitely return here.

All in all, Bury St. Edmunds is a decent day out for a real ale lover. It's not just all Greene King – there's plenty of great beer to be drunk, and it's a quick and easy train ride from Ely. Highly recommend. Elliott

Brewers on our Ely CAMRA patch

Our patch here at Ely has two designated breweries on hand, the first; Three Blind Mice, the other; Downham Isle Brewery. Both are based in **Littleport** nowadays although I believe that TBM started at Pymoor and as the 'Downham' bit in the name suggests, DIB started at Little Downham. At the end of April, I ordered the Coronation Pale Ale for collection and when I read "Main Street", I started wandering up and down **Little Downham Main Street** and had to give up! No fool like an old fool! Luckily Cliff Roberts, owner of DIB was kind enough to drive my bottles over to Little Downham for me.... A star man! I've invited Cliff to tell us of his brewery and keep us up to date and use us as a launchpad because we hope at CAMRA that he succeeds in his dreams.

Cliff has offered that we take a brewery trip to LEARN THE BREWING PROCESS and see it for real. After a meeting last evening I now know this is on Social Officer Til Utting-Brown's radar and we look forward to a date being found. There's no tap room but on to a pub to round it all off should do an evening some justice I hope!

So, keep an eye out for this event because Cliff does the lot, bottling and all and knows his business. Things haven't been easy this last four years and on top of Covid Cliff has had his own home struggle which has tested the family. Well, everyone likes an underdog that comes through; so, here's a little of his story.

Downham Isle Brewery

A little history about our brewery.

Downham Isle Brewery started in Little Downham Cambridgeshire in 2012. Historically it started in the 1970's in a bucket & bathtub with Boots homebrew in North Finchley, London. Not quite all the gear, and certainly, no idea. In 2012 development of skills and knowledge resulted in Downham Isle Brewery Ltd and many strong beers in bottles which became popular locally.

Over the past 11 years we are now producing several beers for local people in various packaging options and casks for local pubs. This year we have a Specialist Beer Project involving the development, refinement of exciting new beers, or are they lagers? Who best to let us know what they want, and what is missing than our customers? Next time, more to tell on our philosophy of brewing and business acumen.

The very current *Coronation Ale*.



Where you can find Downham Isle beer locally;
The Brewery, 19 Main Street, Littleport
The Crown, Main Street, Littleport
3@3 Real Ale Café, 3 Cups Walk, Ely

Beers being produced currently;
40L Casks

[Main Street Citra](#) is available now
[Goose Ely](#) is available from end of May
[Main Street Challenger](#); is mid-June
[Festival Ale](#) is end of June

20L Kegs will be available soon
(there's an expectant demand. Editor)

500ml Bottles

[Main Street Citra](#) is available at the end of May
[Goose Ely](#) is available from the end of May
[Main Street Challenger](#) is available in mid-June

Specialist Beers Project; Small Batch (Developing-Refining-Innovation-Exciting)

[Howling Goose](#). [Festival Ale](#). [Challenger](#). [Citrusy](#)

Downham Isle Brewery. Cliff Roberts. 07732 927479

A visit to The Dambusters Inn, Scampton, Lincs.

Four good reasons for me to go and three for you.

Intro

Na-na-na..... Stop, stop, stop. No, no....no... I shall resist!

On a recent walking holiday to the Lincolnshire Wolds and I slipped off and went to the Dambusters Inn, the only pub in the small village and a mile down the road from the famous RAF Scampton. RAF Scampton is actually famous for two things; firstly, it is the home of 617 Squadron during the war, The Dam Busters. Secondly, post-war it became the home of the Red Arrows display team.

Meanwhile, there's the Village pub, the Dambusters Inn, now dare I suggest that the aircrews of the day found the best and not simply the local pub or went into Lincoln which is just 3 miles away for a bit of night life? Well, the local Inn doesn't claim to be the airman's local in the war but that it is the actual home of 617 now and all the honours boards etc from when the camp closed and ceased operations are there as a sort of shrine and the only place you can touch the history.



Manager Steve has been in the job six years, and appears to be in a state of Elysium.

The pub is dedicated mostly to The Dambusters and a little to the Red Arrows and they certainly know how to milk a good story! The third special thing about this occasion is because the Dambusters Inn is in the CAMRA book of good beer; 'The Good Beer Guide' and wins regional and national awards for its excellent ales every year and recently went to the national finals in London only to come second, still the boss paid for the trip and they don't claim to have suffered in any way.... On the day I was there, there were 8 real ales on and I naturally enough; tried them all.

Tasting the beers

The first was actually the best and from 8Sails; 'Ploughman's Lunch' (3.8%) a lovely Pale Ale and the tail of it had that 'from the wood' taste and I could have happily stayed on it all day and I can't believe it was only a 3.8%ABV. The second – Rudgate's 'Ruby Mild' (4.4%) was equally nice except in the description as it wasn't really a ruby nor was it a mild. The Milestone's 'Green Man' (4.5%) was a nice golden pale ale with depth and not too rich. The Wilyfox's 'Karma Citra' (4.3%) was a full on 100% citra, no mucking and lovely too.

Next was Beermats' 'Soulmate' (4.2%) a lovely smooth soft citra, then Portabello's 'Star' (4.3%) was initially a good bitter but lacked depth and Stiff Upper Lip's; 'By the Horns' (3.8%) is a nice light citra while the last one was Little Critters' Single Batch beer; 'El Dorado & Ekuanot' (3.9%) which was a lost drink and in the wrong place. It was probably meant to be a Key Keg or cooled keg but was on hand pump. The landlord had had no notes with it and wasn't happy about the lack of information. I had a dickie tummy in the morning and I need shine the light no further.... It was a Wednesday lunchtime and the 40 or so customers were mostly on ale or driving and the beer was disappearing rapidly. The first two beers; 'Ploughman's Lunch' and 'Ruby Mild' were, along with 'Karma Citra' the best for me but all were well kept.



A walkabout in the pub is really a trip around a museum and indeed, while I was there a short time, there were two tiny tours, excuse me while I smile but one family were eating while everyone stood at the end of the table looking past them at cockpit dials and joysticks and I was chuckling and hope the family found it as funny - on reflection!

The ceiling has plumber's copper pipes screwed along it in rows and on them are packed several hundred bar clips. Hundreds of them! The walls adorned in signed photos and Johnny Johnstone (the last surviving aircrew who died at the turn of the year) was a regular visitor for many, many years. The Honours boards are up making it very much an unofficial home but people were eating and I was bought up that staring is rude! So, this hobby is uncomfortable – best to visit 7 times and sit in 7 places methinks.

Now the fourth reason this place is special is because something truly amazing happened here 40 years ago. I was requested by RAF(H)Ely to help out the service personnel in a mid-week fixture which had to be strictly servicemen only. So, as the only civvie I duly had an extra short trim and was told that if asked what I did, I was to reply; 'theatre tech'. I've no idea what a theatre tech does but luckily when, sure enough, I was asked by an official in the bar; "and what do you do?" I remembered and said "theatre tech sir!" to which he buggered off pretty sharpish.

So, what was special? Well, I was playing the match v the camp team and the Red Arrows were training directly overhead – right on the pitch and no conversation was possible, we couldn't look up (you look up when you are winning – not when you're getting a slap!) but as hooker, my task is to throw the ball in at the lineout and consists of making a call, placing the ball in the right hand well above my forehead and cocking both myself and the ball back to throw it in.

At the moment I went to throw it in, I looked up and the Red Arrows did their '7-finger spread' and split 7-ways around the ball and over the pitch and that moment is burned into my memory forever. Unforgettable. A visual and audible heaven.



The pump clips, several hundred of them.



Two brothers in a tyre

Back to this bar where the manager is Steve and senior barman Paul chatted on these matters when they had a moment. Paul said; "it's all change now, you have to have a licence to train over an airbase and although the Red Arrows have been gone since September to RAF Waddington, it was only on March 30th (ten days before) that the Scampton licence finally ran out. It used to be that all the customers could sit out in the conservatory and watch the Red Arrows training right above them but now the skies are silent".

I had powerful visions of 'Mr Grace' of Grace Brothers Ltd being in attendance with his 'amply qualified' nurse and after a particularly fine display, looking up at her and saying; "hey! I'm ready now" before that last hedonistic dose of morphine is administered. Maybe what I'm saying is well, 'it could be worse!'.

The Tale End (so legend has it...)

This last year saw the demise of a little rugby club named Sawston RUFC. I played against them in their second ever Sunday fixture (1979) up at the Paradise Fields, Ely when they were simply named after the local pub and clubhouse; "Queen's Head", Newton. The front row that day consisted of two 5' 4" props and a 5' 6" hooker none of whom appeared to have a neck and our team didn't "take" the scrum low because it was **already** low and positively scraping the ground! The Hooker was a legend by the name of Harry Golightly, he was a Combined Services player and could have held the scrum up on his own and still have picked his toes. Harry was as wide as he was tall and looked like a Mexican bandido with his walrus tache and slits for eyes. In the bar; he never said a word which added to his enigma but I think Harry's marital status was a bit rocky and he'd started drinking.

After their home games at Sawston Village College, Harry was meant to lock up but instead sat with his back to the optics and drink himself through into Monday mornings and of course the school children started entering the bar to see Harry and he started drawing a bit of a crowd (so legend has it....). The club were aware of this and eventually the club head honcho Martin T had a letter from the Headteacher which basically said; 'I want to make you aware that one of your players is still drinking through to Mondays'. Martin could see the problem and understood the head's concern straightaway and so replied thus; '... I understand your concern about our player but it's OK, he **IS** paying for his drinks'.

If you have a Tale End, please send it in. It mustn't be about drunkenness and the core subject must be relative to our CAMRA aims.

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; courtesy of Google.

David 'Taffy' Lloyd