

FREE

The Firkin



Campaign
for
Real Ale

Magazine of CAMRA North Bedfordshire • Vol 45 No 2 Winter 2021-22

The Beers were Back in Town!



CAMRA 43rd Bedford Beer and Cider Festival

EDITORIAL
CAMRA BEDFORD BEER
AND CIDER FESTIVAL
CAMRA HALF-CENTURY
NORTH BEDS CHAMPION
PUBS

WHERE NOW FOR THE BIG
BREWERS?
BREWPOINT TOURS
A SHORT STORY
BRANCH COMMITTEE

The Campaign for Real Ale is a consumer organisation founded in 1971

The Fox at Carlton



**Four real ales, Eagle and London Pride permanent,
two guest ales changing every 3 - 4 days**
**Home cooked food Tuesday - Sunday lunchtimes and
Tuesday - Saturday evenings**
Live music every month – check Facebook for details

01234 720235



[thefoxatcarlton](https://www.facebook.com/thefoxatcarlton)

www.thefoxatcarlton.pub



**Winner of CAMRA North Herts Pub Of
The Year 2012, 2017, 2018, 2019**
**Winner of CAMRA Herts Pub Of The
Year 2019**
**Winner of CAMRA East Anglian Pub
Of The Year 2019**
**Finalist CAMRA UK Pub Of The Year
2019**

The Red Lion Preston

**Hitchin Hertfordshire
SG4 7UD**

www.theredlionpreston.co.uk

01462 459585 for enquiries

**The UK's first community
owned public house and still
going strong...**

**Ever changing array of award winning,
well sourced real ales, ciders, wines,
lagers**

**Award winning, freshly prepared and
locally sourced homemade menu**

Dog friendly

Find us on



Editorial – Welcome Back!

Welcome back to the Firkin!

The last issue published was the Spring 2020 edition, which went to press in February last year, and was delivered to us from the printers in early March. Copies were distributed to our volunteers who between them go round to all the pubs in North Bedfordshire, but only a few pubs had been visited before the pub lockdown struck. So most of those copies remain in the homes of our volunteers, and the issue got very little circulation.

After that, pubs were closed for over three months, and then only those with outdoor seating areas could open. Even when they could serve indoors, pubs did not allow free printed magazines to be distributed in their premises, owing to the risk of infection through several customers touching the same copy. CAMRA's National Executive advised strongly that all local printed magazines should cease. Some appeared in online form, but we in North Beds branch decided that an online magazine wouldn't really offer anything different from our website at www.northbeds.camra.org.uk. We started an online newssheet there called Pubtalk, to give up-to-date information on how different pubs in North Beds were faring during the covid restrictions. So far, we haven't heard of many permanent closures of pubs in our area due to the lockdowns, but if any come to light during our visits in the immediate future they will be reported in our Spring 2022 issue.

The National Executive has understandably been very cautious about restarting CAMRA's traditional activities, but they did allow us to hold our Bedford Beer and Cider Festival on its traditional dates in early October – reported elsewhere in this issue. And now printed

magazines are restarting too.

Usually, the branch runs pub visits once a month, to check on the quality of the cask ale in our pubs. Given the lack of public transport in the evenings over most of Bedfordshire, these trips are made by minibus. So far, though, we haven't thought it wise to use minibuses – not much social distancing in a minibus! But our visits restarted with two tours of Wells's new brewery, Brewpoint, in September and October, also reported in this issue.

We have no Chairman's Corner this time, since there is so little activity for him to report. But Dan Veal is also our Social Media Officer and has been spending a lot of time keeping people informed about North Beds CAMRA, breweries and pubs during the covid period. Now, however, he has found time to compose a little short story, which appears on page 18. He has also supplied a series of articles which will appear in our next few issues, entitled 'Strange Alcohol Laws in _____' (fill in the name of a country in the blank). I'm sure these will make amusing reading!

Finally, a piece of good news for a change! In his October Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a lower rate of tax for draught beer and cider sold in pubs and clubs, compared with other beers and ciders. This is a policy long advocated by CAMRA, and the announcement was warmly welcomed by Nik Antona, CAMRA's National Chairman. He pointed out that real ales and ciders can only be sold as on-sales, and that drinking responsibly in pubs and clubs is an important social activity. Much preferable to solitary drinking of supermarket bottled beers and ciders at home!

Fytton Rowland

The Beers were Back in Town



It was just like old times – the first week in October, and the CAMRA Bedford Beer and Cider Festival was on in Bedford Corn Exchange! After the festival had been cancelled for the

first time in forty-three years in 2020, we learned at rather short notice that we could actually hold a festival in 2021. Our festival committee had been meeting since the spring, but its decisions remained provisional until CAMRA's National Executive decided that festivals could recommence. That didn't happen until July, giving us just three months to get everything arranged.

Many things had to happen quite quickly, and did, but even then the uncertain times had a few hand grenades to throw at us. Just a week before we were due to erect the scaffolding to hold up our 100 casks of beer, the fuel shortage suddenly cropped up. We learned that our usual scaffolding supplier couldn't guarantee to deliver, owing to difficulty in getting fuel for their lorries. But the headquarters of CAMRA stepped into the breach and lent us some racking, which served the purpose well. Like all CAMRA festivals, ours is run entirely by volunteer CAMRA members undertaking all tasks. We



are very grateful to all our volunteers, those who worked behind the bar as well as those who put everything up beforehand and knocked it all down again afterwards.

So, at 4 p.m. on Wednesday 3rd October, we opened the doors for a festival that looked much as usual. Sadly, we had no foreign beer bar this year with a range of foreign bottles, as the CAMRA member who has run it for many years has had to retire owing to family issues, and we had no-one else with the necessary expertise about continental beers.



In view of the covid uncertainties, especially social-distancing requirements, we also decided not to have any musical entertainment this year. We said it would be a quiet festival, but quiet was not the word to describe the hall on the Thursday and Friday evenings, when the buzz of conversation rose to high decibel levels!





Supply problems prevented us from producing a special souvenir glass this year, another effect of the short notice, and transport difficulties – most pint glasses come from Turkey and are printed in the UK. To compensate, the miscellaneous range of CAMRA glasses that we used were available to our customers free of charge. Such is the innate honesty of beer drinkers that we got nearly all of the glasses back, to be passed on to CAMRA beer festivals elsewhere.

Nearly 100 different cask ales, together with numerous ciders and perries, a range of draught craft beers, including a small number of foreign ones, and wines offered a huge choice of beverages. Most of the beers were from fairly close by – another effect of the fuel shortages! – but in general they were ones not usually available in Bedford. Some volunteers living in Derby brought a few East Midlands beers down



with them, though. Angelo's provided their usual excellent range of meals upstairs in the Howard Room, so no-one needed to leave the building for food, and you could drink beers brought up from the hall to wash down your meal.



At the time of going to press the financial results of the festival have not yet been published, but observation suggests that numbers of customers were not too far down on previous years despite many people's lingering fears of covid. And the lively atmosphere was just like old times.



If you came, we hope you thoroughly enjoyed this return to normal life! If you didn't come, you missed a treat. And as for us volunteers, it was great to be back. The lack of beer festivals had left a gaping hole in our lives. Please keep enjoying CAMRA festivals, so that we can go on enjoying running them!

Fytton Rowland

Whither CAMRA, after fifty years?

This year, CAMRA has reached its half-century, a cause for celebration. It has achieved a great deal in those fifty years. And it has a way of working that has been very successful. It employs a relatively small headquarters staff, but most of the work is done by volunteers, members of CAMRA. We (yes, I'm one of them) keep local CAMRA activities going in all parts of the UK, and smaller numbers become active at regional or even national level, devoting a large proportion of their time to volunteering for CAMRA. I'm one of the thousand or so who turn out each August to staff the Great British Beer festival at Olympia. It's the only event in the venue's annual calendar that is run entirely by volunteers. But it didn't happen in either 2020 or 2021 – we've all got our fingers crossed for August 2022.

CAMRA's funds go to its chief objective, which is campaigning. Exerting pressure on national and local government, and on the big brewers and pub companies; helping to preserve pubs threatened with closure; publicising the merits of traditional British beers and pubs, and educating the public about them.

That modest number of staff do have to be paid, though, and some of them have been on furlough. The costs of the smallish office building and the warehouse in St Albans have to be covered. And what are the sources of funds? First, membership subscriptions – until recently, membership was growing towards 200,000, providing roughly £4 million/year. Secondly, sales of CAMRA's publications, of which the annual Good Beer Guide is the best seller. But the profit margin on books isn't large. Most important of all, CAMRA's beer festivals up and down the country provide significant surpluses. We don't run festivals just to make money, of course – their major purpose is to showcase a wide variety of beers beer drinkers might not otherwise be able to find in their own locality. But the organisation has come to rely on those financial surpluses, none the less.

The coronavirus pandemic has seriously harmed that source of funds. No CAMRA festivals took place between mid-March 2020 and August 2021, and only now is something like a full programme of festivals restarting. Throughout the lockdown CAMRA put on a brave face and started up various online activities, but we all know that nothing replaces the experience of having a few drinks in a pub or at a festival with a group of friends together.

CAMRA has effectively stood still since March 2020, with none of its usual activities taking place. But the lockdown has meant that campaigning for British independent breweries and pubs is now needed more than ever, as they've all suffered such a huge hit from the near-total closure of the licensed trade for two periods each of more than three months. We need CAMRA more than ever. So we have to make sure it can be paid for. Please, if you are reading this and you are not a CAMRA member, join now! And if you are a member already, recruit some of your beer-loving friends as new members.

CAMRA members around the country have also noticed that when pubs reopened after the lockdowns, they offered fewer cask ales than before. This is understandable, since cask ale has a short shelf life, and at first publicans had no idea how many of the customers would return after lockdown. Now, numbers in pubs are building up again. But many of them have still not restored their hand pumps to use. It may be that a new threat to cask ale is this lack of retail outlets. If there's nowhere to sell cask ale, brewers will stop making it. Drink cask ale in pubs to help prevent this!

Finally, if you haven't already, return to reopened pubs and drink real ale there. Publicans have been amazingly creative in achieving social distancing and hygiene to protect their customers and staff, while retaining that vital pub character within the rules. Support them!

Fytton Rowland

North Beds Best Pubs for 2021

As noted in our editorial, in February 2020 we made our selections for North Beds CAMRA's pub awards and these were reported in our last issue published the next month. But that issue got little circulation and our awards had little publicity. Nor did our Pub of the Year (PoTY) have any opportunity to progress to the later stages of the national PoTY competition, because that contest was cancelled in 2020. Now, later in the year than normal, we have chosen our champion pub for 2021.

Pub of the Year – the **Devonshire Arms** in Dudley Street, Bedford. Our 2020 PoTY, the



Devvy is an old-fashioned back-street local that emphasises beer, not food, and is well supported by the residents of the Castle Quarter, thousands of whom live within walking distance. We felt that Ronnie and Rebecca Toms, tenants of this Wells house, deserved their chance to go forward into the later stages of the competition, and re-elected them for 2021.

Their response to lockdown was exemplary – when they were allowed to reopen, they managed to find a way to preserve its pub atmosphere while obeying all the covid regulations to the letter. They have six cask ales on from Wells, Marstons, and other breweries, offering plenty of choice, and all always well kept. Friendly and welcoming licensees and staff complete the package –

but don't come here for a meal. It's not an eating pub.

Country Pub of the Year – the **Fox at Carlton**. When our branch PoTY is in the



town, we choose a champion country pub, and vice versa. Again we re-elected our 2020 choice. This lovely old thatched pub is a free house, kept by its owner Alison Thompson, who has four hand pumps. Two are devoted to Eagle and London Pride, which her regular customers like, and two to changing beers from small breweries, all of them excellently kept. She serves high quality pub food – not gastro – at very reasonable prices, and she and her staff always have a friendly word for customers old and new.

Cider Pub of the Year – the **Polhill Arms** at Salph End, Renhold. The Bedford area is hardly a Mecca for real cider, but the Polhill



Best Pubs for 2021 ... continued

– a past branch PoTY – is one pub that can be depended on to have proper cider on draught. It's a Greene King house that has seen a recent change of tenant, with the retirement of long-serving Paul Smith and his replacement by Kelchner's brewery, who also have the lease of the Three Cups in Newnham Street, Bedford, another Greene King house.

Club of the Year – the **North End Social Club** in Roff Avenue, Bedford. The North



End always keeps their beers well, has a friendly welcome, and sometimes hosts meetings of our North Beds CAMRA branch and its committees. Clubs are not so numerous in our area, but the North End is a good example of a traditional one.

Young Members' Pub of the Year – the



Beerfly in St Cuthbert's Street, Bedford. Something between a bottle shop and a micropub, the Beerfly has quickly established itself as a favourite haunt of younger generations of beer-lovers. A very wide range of bottled beers are available for both on- and off-sale, and several keg lines rotate between a wide variety of draught beers, many of them rarities in North Bedfordshire. Before covid, Beerfly had a cask ale line as well, though this has not re-appeared in use, and the bar was rumoured to be going to brew as well. We await its future plans with interest, as there are also rumours of a joint operation with a local restaurant on the empty former Mexico restaurant site on Riverside North, Bedford.

Most Improved Pub of the Year – the **Gordon Arms** in Castle Road, Bedford.



Another Wells house in the Castle Quarter, the Gordon had already been closed for renovation when the covid emergency began. Understandably, Wells didn't hurry to recommence the building work while the future of pubs was so uncertain, although it was known that their intention was to convert it to a managed house. Previously it had been a tenanted house, and there had been a fair turnover of tenants in recent years. Although it had several handpumps, different tenants' degree of interest in cask ale had varied, and we had therefore not felt able to consider it for an award. One great merit of the Gordon is its ownership of the Ent Shed, the only venue in the heart of the

Castle Quarter for entertainment events such as music and comedy. The Gordon reopened after its complete refurbishment just a few weeks before the meeting to make our 2021 awards, but it was already clear that the 'new' Gordon was a massive improvement on the old. It keeps four cask ales from Wells, though no guest ales so far. It keeps them well, understandably when one of their management staff, Dan, was trained by Ronnie Toms at the Devvy! It has an excellent food offering at lunchtime and evening. The pub has been extended slightly into the Ent Shed area, making the latter a bit smaller, but still plenty big enough for the events it hosts.

Community Pub of the Year – the **White Horse** in Newnham Avenue, Bedford.



Another Wells House, which reopened on the first permitted day after each of the lockdowns. Steve and Lucie Fuller are very popular tenants of this large interwar suburban pub, which provides the only pub for the Newnham area of town, and which has a strong tradition of charitable fundraising that began under its previous licensees, the Ansteads, and continues with Steve and Lucie. In addition to well-kept cask ales, they also offer good value pub food, served both inside and in the garden.

Fytton Rowland

P.S. Other pub news

No full Pub News article this time, just a few snippets of news that have come to the editor's notice.

The Bedford Arms and the Cricketers in Bedford had both closed down before the covid crisis struck. The Bedford Arms, sadly, has undergone conversion into four flats. Although they are not yet occupied, it seems unlikely that the pub will ever reopen. The Cricketers remains for sale; it could in theory reopen if someone were to buy it to run as a pub. One permanent pub closure resulting from the pandemic is that of the Chequers on the Ampthill Road in Houghton Conquest parish.

On a happier note, two new pubs opened in Bedford since our last issue appeared are The Burrow at the Blues, at Bedford Rugby Club, and Ours, in St Peter's Street, Bedford. More on them anon!

Presentations to Award Winners

Full report in our Spring 2022 issue



Presentation to the Devonshire Arms



Presentation to the Gordon Arms

What Future for Large Cask Ale Brewers?

There are small number of large cask-ale brewers who produce a large proportion of the cask ale sold: Greene King, Sharp's, Fuller's, and the Marston's group. There are also smaller but long-established family firms, including Adnams, Shepherd Neame, Elgood's, Robinson's, Thwaites, Everard's and our own dear Wells. But wait. Thwaites has closed its historic brewery, plans to build a smaller one, and sold its national brands, Wainwright and Lancaster Bomber, to Marston's. Sound familiar, doesn't it, to anyone from Bedford – Wells did exactly the same, selling the Bombardier and Eagle brands, except that in their case they also sold their large brewery to Marston's. Everard's has closed its big brewery and is downsizing. All of these, except Sharp's, also own a significant number of pubs.

Then there are a large number of small breweries, some of them even one-person businesses like Milton Keynes' Concrete Cow brewery, founded in recent decades. Some are now quite big, like the Oakham brewery, but most are still small. All of these have one problem: where do they sell their beers? Cask ale needs to be sold for drinking on the premises, and most pubs are restricted by their owners in their choice of cask ales.

Marston's are the biggest brewer of cask ale in Britain, which probably means in the world. They own the original Banks brewery in Wolverhampton (now Marston's HQ), Jennings in Cumbria, Ringwood in Hampshire, Wychwood in Witney, the Eagle Brewery in Bedford and the original Marston's in Burton. They also own the Brakspear's brands and brew Tetley's beers, under contract. So it was with considerable dismay that CAMRA heard Marston's have joined with the Danish-owned Carlsberg, one of the world's biggest brewery companies: its new name is Carlsberg Marstons Brewery Company. In the short term little will change. But what does this

augur in the longer term for all those British breweries and brands that Marston's owns? Including, of course, Bedford's Eagle Brewery.

Sharp's, producer of the best-selling single cask ale of all, Doom Bar, belongs to Molson Coors, another of the Big Four, an American-Canadian company. Greene King has been taken over by a Hong Kong-based company interested in property development. Do they really just want all those pub sites, rather than actual pubs? Fuller's belongs to Asahi – that takeover seemed ominous at the time, but now seems positively benign compared with the Greene King and Marston's situations! Star Pubs, who own lots of pubs, belongs to Heineken, yet another of the Big Four – who also own various British beer brands including John Smith's and Newcastle Brown. And like Carlsberg, the Dutch company is essentially a lager brewer.

And then came coronavirus. Now CAMRA's success over fifty years seems very fragile. How many small real-ale breweries will survive – they need independent pubs as their outlets? How many of the Marston's brands will still be with us in a few years' time? What is Greene King's future? Can Heineken be trusted with all those pubs? London Pride will survive, no doubt, but will all the other Fullers, Gale's and Dark Star beers?

These developments mostly took place during the pandemic. But they mean that CAMRA is almost back to square one, 1971. Those who love traditional British ales and British pubs will have to work all the harder to regain the ground lost in 2020-2021. If you're not yet a CAMRA member, join now! And if you're a member but haven't been very active, resolve to do more for the fight for real ale and real pubs.

Fytton Rowland

Welcome to Brewpoint

When North Beds CAMRA decided that conditions now allowed us to restart pub and brewery visits, there was an obvious destination for our first one. No minibus was needed, it had only just opened for visits, and it is Bedford's main local brewery company.



Brewpoint, Wells and Co's conspicuous new building at Fairhill, just off the Clapham Road, opened for production, and for drinks and meals outdoors in late 2020, but brewery visits started only in September 2021. Visits are restricted to twelve participants, and the price per person covers two pints of their beers (which can be a flight of six third-pints if you like) and a pizza, as well as the one-hour tour. Our first group of twelve booked up in no time, so a second was arranged in October, and your editor managed to get a place on that one.

I was once a tour guide at Wells' big brewery, built in 1976 in Queens Park, which they sold in 2017 to Marstons along with their main beer brands. They said they would build a new smaller one, they've kept



their word, and an impressive place it is. Ultramodern, with state-of-the-art German brewing equipment by Braukon visible from the bar, it has the look and feel of a very large American brewpub – except that it brews and sells English cask ales as well as a range of keg and canned beers.



Tour guide Tim gave an exemplary tour, informative about the history of the company and the technology of the brewery – accurate and entertaining, far better than I ever managed at the old site! He explained that the Eagle Brewery at Havelock Street had been designed for an earlier era of drinking and pub-going, when regulars visited the same pub every evening and drank several pints of the same beer. So the brewery was designed to produce large amounts of a small number of different beers. The brewing vessels each held 30,000 litres, so every brew had to be of at least that size. Wells just couldn't brew small batches of seasonal or special ales. Pub-going is different now; even real-ale enthusiasts like us CAMRA members don't go to the pub every night, and when we are there we don't always drink lots of the same beer. Total beer sales are lower than they were in the 1970s, and the new breed of small breweries can make small batches of many different brews. Now, Wells can compete with them.

Welcome to Brewpoint ... continued

The brewhouse vessels contain 3,000 litres, and the fermentation vessels are of several sizes: 3,000, 6,000 and 15,000 litres. So one brew, two brews or five brews can be fermented together, depending on demand. The monthly changing Brewpoint cask ale is just a single batch of 3,000 litres, to a different recipe each month. There is even a 120 litre plant, little bigger than some home brewers' kit, used for 'project beers' that are sold only at the Brewpoint bar itself to try new recipes out.



This little plant sits at the side of the room where we started and finished our tour, and ate our pizzas. In between, we ascended to the balcony that overlooks the brewery and bar, as Tim pointed out the mash tun, lauter tun, kettle, whirlpool and heat exchanger that make up the brewhouse through which the beer progressively passes. Mashing takes an hour at about 65 degrees, then the sediment settles out in the lauter tun, before the wort goes into the kettle with the hops for an hour's boiling.

We descended to floor level to see the fermentation tanks: the English ales use Wells' traditional yeast, and the lagers use Red Stripe yeast, by agreement with the Jamaican company. Fermentation takes one week for English ales, but up to eight weeks for lagers, which are fermented colder and slower. Then the beer is centrifuged to remove all the sediments, though one-third of each batch of cask ale bypasses this step to leave residual yeast for cask conditioning. Finally the beer goes into the finished beer tanks.

The keg and canned beers are carbonated with added carbon dioxide, and in some cases nitrogen gas too, before final packaging. But nothing is pasteurised! Almost all of Brewpoint's products are sold through Wells' own pubs, including Brewpoint itself of course, though a free-trade manager is trying to interest free houses in the products. Already the 'new' Charlie Wells regular cask ales – Origin, Legacy and DNA – have become well-known to Bedford drinkers, and the Brewpoint keg beers are gaining fans too. Chocolate Toothpaste Stout is liked by devotees of dark beers; I tried it for one of my 'free' halves and found it pleasant, not as bitter as a certain Irish stout.



What of the recipes? None of them are direct cribs of the brands that were sold to Marstons along with the brewery, though the stout is not dissimilar to Young's Double Chocolate stout, and DNA perhaps has a faint family resemblance to Bombardier. None of them tastes anything like Eagle! And oh yes, the pizzas were excellent too. If you haven't been on a tour yet, I encourage you to do so – Tim adjusts his presentation to his audience, so he got quite technical with us CAMRA members who could be assumed to understand beer jargon. But if his audience wasn't so expert about beer, he would make his talk suitable for them too.

Fytton Rowland

Locked Down – a story by Dan Veal

She would never forget the moment the news was broken, holding on to that hand pump, glass slipping from her hand and smashing onto the floor. “All cafes, pubs, bars and restaurants to close tonight and not to open tomorrow.” Announced the bumbling voice on the news clip.

Chloe stood motionless, she had only become the landlady of this pub a few months ago. Spending her life savings on renovating the place, sanding and varnishing the bar with her own hands until they became blistered and sore. The conversations with independent breweries and local suppliers to get the best selection of food and drinks for the customers. The never ending paperwork of opening a business, this was her pub, this had always been her dream. Now here she stood, being told to close her doors and turn customers away.

Panic set in around the room, as some customers finished their drinks to get home. Others rushed to the bar to get as many drinks in before their forced imprisonment. Chloe snapped out of it and ensured her customers would have a fantastic evening. “It will only be a few days” she kept muttering to herself, as she planned out the next steps. As the final customer left for the evening, she bolted the door with a clunk and sat down staring into her beer watching as the head slowly dissipated. Sending the group message to her staff was the hardest part, knowing that they relied on their wages to live.

Those few days turned to weeks, and soon months. The bills were due, but there was nothing to pay them with. There were government grants, but they covered very little. She tried opening for take-outs, but the local council had denied her application for the licence. But what was the point? The breweries had closed, she couldn't get stock in. Even if she could,

how would she pay for it? Sadness set in, this was supposed to be the dream.

Owning and running a pub, the ultimate goal she had had since sipping that first pint of ale all those years ago. That was when she noticed a corner that hadn't been painted, she must have missed it in her excitement and rush of getting the pub ready to open.

Chloe rushed out to the shed in the corner of the pub garden, moving aside parasols with various beer names on them and finding the tins of leftover paint. This gave her hope. She spent the following weeks sprucing up the bar, doing the little jobs she didn't normally have time for. Inventing a simple cocktail menu, researching craft beer and the best independent breweries, finding some local cider producers, redesigning her food menu. She would reopen with a bang, when it was allowed.

Finally, the day came. “Pubs, bars and restaurants can open with seated customers, in outdoor areas.” This wasn't ideal but now was her chance to shine. Seeing her staff returning gave joy, the old regulars with smiles across their faces as they returned to the pub. New faces looking relieved to be outside of the prison of their homes, drinking that first pint, soaking in the atmosphere of a community.

Months passed and it all seems a distant, however recent, memory. The rumbling of customers chatting, the whooshing of the beer from the taps, the rattling of ice into glasses, the roaring of the log fire. “This is the dream.” She thought as she looked around her pub smiling. She would never forget the hardship, but seeing people back in her pub and making the most of life would always be special for her.

Local CAMRA Committee

Our branch meetings are generally open to all members of CAMRA who live in the North Beds area, but we do have a branch committee which may occasionally have to hold a private meeting for some specific reason. The current branch committee, at the time of going to press, was as follows:

- Chairman – Dan Veal
- Secretary – Peter Argyle
- Treasurer – Roger Stokes
- Social Secretary – Gary Mudd
- Firkin Editor – Fytton Rowland
- Festival Organiser – yet to be appointed for 2022
- Young Members' Rep – Dan Veal
- Webmaster – vacant
- Cider Rep – vacant
- Social Media Officer – Dan Veal
- Committee member – Helen Mudd
- Committee member – David Dupont

If you are a local CAMRA member and would like to volunteer for a committee position, please contact the secretary on secretary@northbeds.camra.org.uk

The Branch Diary that regularly appears in the Firkin is missing this time as the programme of local CAMRA events had not yet been fixed when we went to press. It will be back in our Spring 2022 issue. Until then, please refer to the North Beds CAMRA website or our Facebook page for an up-to-date diary.



A quintessential village pub

Real ales - Greene King
IPA & Abbot regular,
plus up to three guest ales

Relaxed charm of a
village local with a
varied menu of quality
home cooked food

*No gimics - just a great
British pub!*

Bell, Odell

Horsefair Lane
MK43 7AU

01234 910850



TheBellInOdell

Opening times:
Mon-Thu 11.30-2.30,
5-11; Fri-Sat 11.30-
11.30; Sun 12-10.30



17th century
thatched and
boarded traditional
village pub with
character and
charm

Experience a
relaxing welcoming
environment

Enjoy fine beers and
wines, quality food
and friendly service

Cask Beers:
Greene King IPA,
St Austell
Tribute, Timothy
Taylor Landlord

Welcome to The Three Compasses

Wellingborough Row
Upper Dean
PE28 0NE



(01234) 708346

Open: 4-11 Mon-Fri
12-11 Sat & Sun

thethreecompasses.co.uk
info@thethreecompasses.co.uk
TheThreeCompassesUpperDean



MERRY CHRISTMAS

- FROM THE SUN @ FELMERSHAM -

Now taking Christmas Bookings

in our Dining Room and Yurt



WWW.THESUNFELMERSHAM.COM

Tel: 01234 781355 Email: info@thesunfelmersham.com
The Sun, Grange Road, Felmersham, MK43 7EU

LEGENDARY BEER FROM HERTFORDSHIRE



IN 2020 OUR MONTHLY SPECIALS WILL BE RAISING FUNDS AND AWARENESS FOR...



WEEKLY DELIVERIES IN YOUR AREA



Dunsley Farm, London Road, Tring HP23 6HA

☎ 01442 890721 🌐 www.tringbrewery.co.uk



THE DEVONSHIRE ARMS

*Serving Real
Draught Cider and
Fine Wines*

*A local community pub
in the Castle Road area
of Bedford with a warm
welcome and friendly
atmosphere.*



*Lovely courtyard
garden and
free Wi-Fi*

*Serving a range of Quality
Cask Ales — Eagle IPA,
Adnams Ghost Ship,
Courage Directors and
range of three guest ales.*

CAMRA North Beds Pub of the Year 2013, 2020 & 2021
Cider Pub of the Year 2018, Town Pub of the Year 2019

For forthcoming events please view website

www.devonshirearmsbedford.co.uk

32 Dudley Street, Bedford MK40 3TB

Tel: 01234 301170