

# The Firkin



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

FREE

Newsletter of CAMRA North Bedfordshire Branch

Vol 35 No 4

Winter 2010/11

## Bedford Beer Festival goes LocAle



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**A Merry Christmas and a Hoppy New Year to all our Readers!**

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# Chairman's Corner

I hope you all enjoy the festive season, and I wish you all the best for 2011. Yes, it is that time again, and I hope that 2011

proves to be as successful for North Beds CAMRA as the last year – our membership is increasing, and it is nice to see our socials and meetings well attended. Please come along and meet other members and let us know your thoughts on ways of improving the way the North Beds Branch and CAMRA in general is run. Also if you have any articles you think would be of interest to other members – they can be about anything, maybe you have found a little hidden gem locally or on holiday – we would love to hear from you

The 33rd Bedford Beer and Cider Festival in October once again was a success, with 119 real ales, 36 ciders and perries, and foreign beers, there was a great choice for everyone's taste. I would like to thank all the volunteers, members and non-members, who put in such an effort to make the Festival a real winner. We had ales from many local breweries to help launch our LocAle scheme,

and these proved very popular with everyone. We also had a local cider from Harrold. Over 6,000 people attended across the four days. The entertainment on Wednesday from Dr Busker and on Saturday from the Bedford Morris Men and later Hayley Strangelove was appreciated. Thanks go to the staff at the Corn Exchange who help us make a success of the festival; the food supplied in the Corn Exchange restaurant was once again excellent.

Our new Social Secretary Gary arranged a visit to CAMRA's National Club of the Year 2010, the Historical Transport Society in Rushden. In October we went, as a "thank you" trip for the volunteers at the Festival, to Nobby's Brewery at Guilsborough, Northamptonshire. Nobby the brewer gave us a very entertaining and informative tour and tasting followed by an excellent supper in the brewery tap, the Ward Arms, run by Nobby's wife Kate. Our next trip on 18th November was to St Neots and the Son of Sid Brewery, and our Christmas Social will be held in the Bedford Arms on 16th December.

*Don Allan  
Branch Chairman*

## North Beds CAMRA launches



VISITORS to the recent Bedford Beer & Cider Festival will have noticed 15 local breweries labelled in the programme with a new LocAle logo. CAMRA LocAle is about encouraging the sale of locally brewed real ales in local pubs.

Since the original LocAle was created in Nottingham in 2007, many CAMRA branches have launched similar schemes to encourage local pubs to offer locally brewed beers. North Beds Branch is launching its own LocAle scheme to highlight beers from about 30 breweries within 30 miles of Bedford. Over the next few months, local pubs that regularly offer at least one real ale from a qualifying brewery will be invited to join the scheme, with pump crowners and other point-of-sale material provided by CAMRA free of charge. The benefits of a CAMRA LocAle scheme include:

- Improved consumer choice, with more locally brewed real ales available in pubs
- Helping local brewers sell more real ale, allowing them to expand and benefit the local economy
- Reducing road congestion and pollution by delivering beer from a shorter distance
- Increasing tourist appeal as successful local brewers create greater local distinctiveness
- Increasing local identity and pride

In short, CAMRA LocAle is about consumer choice, local jobs, supporting a sustainable environment, creating local distinctiveness and promoting local pubs. Win, win, all round! Look out for the new LocAle logo in participating local pubs.

# Another festival success!

CAMRA's 33rd Bedford Beer & Cider Festival in October was another great success. Held again in the Corn Exchange, the town's premier entertainment venue, the festival attracted over 6,000 visitors and sold over 18,000 pints of real ale, cider, perry and foreign beers between Wednesday and Saturday.



## Local accent

The festival offered 119 real ales, 36 real ciders and perries, and a wide selection of draught and bottled beers from Belgium, Germany and other countries. Real ales included local brews from 15 breweries within 30 miles of Bedford, highlighted with the CAMRA LocAle logo to mark the launch of our branch scheme to promote locally brewed beers.

Other brews came from Scotland, Wales, East Anglia and elsewhere around England. Although the festival had to close on Saturday with no opportunity to sell the leftovers the next week, careful planning ensured that a decent choice of beers was maintained well into Saturday evening.

## Cider and perry

The cider bar attracted a lot of interest, as it should for a festival during CAMRA's annual Cider and Perry Month. This year the festival even offered a local cider, the **Lambasted Blue Spot** (5.5% abv) from the Harrold Calvados Society. As always there was little if any cider or perry left by the close on Saturday evening.

Although real cider and its stablemate perry (made by fermenting pears) are available regularly in only a handful of Bedfordshire pubs, they have become highly popular at Bedford festivals. As with real ale, there is an enormous difference between real cider or perry and the processed keg products commonly available. But why are they not easier to find in this area? Pubs that offer real cider or perry all year round can now be listed on a national CAMRA website and are offered notices to remind customers that they are available.

## Bamberg beers sell well

As well as real ales, cider and perry in the main hall, a dedicated foreign beer bar in the Howard Room upstairs offered speciality draught and bottled beers from other European countries. This year several brews were available from Bamberg, the Bavarian city not only twinned with Bedford but with its own distinctive brewing tradition. Not a drop of Bamberg beer was left!



With so many of us taking holidays abroad, local drinkers are now better informed about the great beer traditions of our neighbours. More local pubs



now offer fine draught and bottled beers from Belgium, Germany, the Czech Republic and elsewhere, not just the usual imported lagers.

The Corn Exchange in-house caterers did a great job for the sixth year running, serving several thousand hot and cold meals during the week – many of them to the CAMRA volunteers. Thanks to Tracey and her team, feedback on the food and service was generally very positive.

### Entertainment

Local singer and satirist **Dr Busker**, who has become something of a regular at this and other CAMRA festivals, helped launch the event on Wednesday evening with his sharp re-working of familiar songs. On Saturday evening, Staffordshire singer **Hayley Strangelove** entertained while visitors emptied the final casks.

*[An impish thought – if these two acts joined forces, would they become Dr Strangelove? Ed.]*

The Bedford Morris Men, with a couple of visiting dancers from Hertfordshire, performed in the hall on Saturday lunchtime as part of their annual autumn tour of the town. Morris dancers are known for their thirst and for having a keen nose for a decent pint!

### Thanks to the helpers...

Festivals like this need a small army of unpaid volunteers. Chief organiser Don Allan paid tribute to everyone involved in planning, managing and staffing the event.

Organising this festival takes months of planning and enough CAMRA members and friends willing to give their time free behind the bars, glasses bar and the shop, spending chilly hours at the door, working as stewards or behind the scenes. Without a lot of volunteers, it would be impossible.

Helpers included local and visiting CAMRA members and their friends, keen to take part in one of the town's most popular regular events. Colleagues from CAMRA East Bedfordshire ran the shop and tombola, while other festival staff came from as far away as London, Lincoln and the North-west.

### ...and to the sponsors

The organisers were again grateful to **Wells & Young's** for sponsoring the souvenir glasses and to local pubs and companies for sponsoring beer casks on the stillage. Thanks were also offered to the Corn Exchange staff for their help and co-operation, and to the many local pubs and clubs that kindly displayed posters advertising the festival. This year's "medal" logo was based on an original design by Colin Lilley of M&L Engraving, familiar to visitors as resident engraver at the festival. Many thanks to Colin for his help.

The basement cloakroom was run once again by **Bedford Lions** in aid of local good causes. We believe that about £800 was raised through the cloakroom and collection boxes. Many thanks to you all.



# Winter Beer Festivals

## CAMRA National Winter Ales Festival

Wed 19 to Sat 22 January at the Sheridan Suite, Oldham Road, Manchester M40 8EA (city centre, with trains from all parts, 5 min by bus). Open Wed 5-10.30, Thu-Sat 12-10.30, admission Wed/Thu £2 (concessions £1), Fri £3 before 4.30, then £5, Sat £3, CAMRA members free Thu until 4pm, £1 discount other sessions. More than 200 draught beers, bottle-conditioned beers, foreign beers, ciders and perries. Dr Busker Sat from 7pm, Victorian fancy dress day Saturday.  
<http://www.alefestival.org.uk>

## 15th Cambridge Winter Ales Festival

Thu 20 to Sat 22 January at the University Social Club, Mill Lane (opposite Mill pub, X5 bus terminus at Parkside 10 min). Open Thu 5-10.30, Fri 12-3, 5-10.30, Sat 12-10.30. Admission free Friday lunch, otherwise £2.50, CAMRA, USC and CURAS members free. More than 100 real ales, ciders + foreign beers, hot and cold food. Regular X5 express buses from Bedford, last one back at 10.40 p.m.  
<http://www.cambridgebeerfestival.com/winter>

## 28th Luton Beer & Cider Festival

Thu 24 to Sat 26 February at Hightown Sports and Arts Centre, Concorde Street, Luton LU2 0JD (rail stn 10 min, frequent trains from Bedford). Open Thu 5 to 11, Fri/Sat 12-11, admission Thu £2.50, Fri £2.50 before 6pm then £3.50, Sat £2.50 before 6pm then £1.50, CAMRA members free except Fri eve, then £1.50. About 100 real ales, cider, perry, and foreign beers in two halls. Food available lunch and eves, live entertainment eves.  
<http://www.sbedscamra.org.uk>

## 27th London Drinker Beer & Cider Festival

Wed 9 to Fri 11 March at the Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London WC1H 9AU (near St Pancras station with frequent trains from Bedford). Open Wed/Thu 12-3, 5-10.30, Fri 12-10.30, last admission 10pm. Entry Wed/Thu lunch free, otherwise £3.50, CAMRA members £2. Over 70 real ales, imported beers, ciders + perries. Tombola, table games + excellent food. Wheelchair access, no music.  
[www.camranorthlondon.org.uk](http://www.camranorthlondon.org.uk)

## St Neots Booze on the Ouse Beer Festival

Thu 10 to Sat 12 March at the Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St Neots PE19 2BH. Open Thu 5-10.45, Fri/Sat 12-10.45, admission Thu/Fri before 7pm £1, Thu eve £2, Fri eve £3, Sat £1 all day, CAMRA members free all sessions. Families welcome until 8pm. More than 55 cask beers, foreign beers and real cider, souvenir glass, tombola, CAMRA shop. Hot and cold food, free soft drinks for designated drivers. Regular X5 express buses from Bedford; last bus back after 11 p.m.  
<http://www.hunts.camra.org.uk>

## And please note: Change of date of National Cask Ale Week: **not in March**

National Cask Ales Week will not be at the end of March/beginning of April in 2011; it will take place in October 2011.



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- Thursday 20th January 12.00 - 22.30
- Friday 21st January 12.00 - 22.30
- Saturday 22nd January 12.00 - 22.30
- Food Available All Sessions

**ENTRY PRICES**

- Wednesday & Thursday £2
- £1 Discount for Concessions, NUS, OAPs & Forces, all with ID
- Friday (until 4.30pm) £2
- Friday after 4.30pm £2.50 - Saturday £4
- £1 Discount for CAMRA members except Thursday FREE all day
- Tickets available on the door
- Souvenir Programme £1

**ENTERTAINMENT**

- Saturday Evening - Doctor Busker
- Saturday - Fancy Dress Day - Victorian Theme (optional)
- Great Prizes
- Over 16 live and street Saturday afternoon when families most welcome

For further information:  
[www.alefestival.org.uk](http://www.alefestival.org.uk)  
01727 867201

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# Trouble at t' Wells

**T**he local press in Bedford has reported that redundancies are expected at our local big real-ale brewery, Wells & Young's, following the loss of two of its contracts to brew and market lagers. Grupo Modelo, the Mexican brewery that produces Corona Extra, has ended the contract for marketing and distribution of their beer in the UK after fifteen years, transferring the work to Molson Coors in Burton from mid-November. At the same time, but coincidentally, the thirty-year-old contract to market and distribute Red Stripe has been ended by Diageo, parent company of Desnoes & Geddes, the Jamaican company who own the Red Stripe brand. This change will take effect next summer. Both these blows will lead to job losses in the marketing area; the Corona employees have been offered jobs by Molson Coors, but the 80-mile commute to Burton makes this unattractive. At the time of writing it was

unclear whether production and packaging of Red Stripe would continue at Havelock Street – Diageo, also parent company of Guinness, has no brewery in the UK since the closure of Park Royal. W&Y's recent agreement with the Damm brewery of Barcelona for marketing, packaging and maybe eventually also brewing Estrella Damm for the UK market makes sense in the light of these revelations. So does the introduction by W&Y of a lager brand of their own, Mongoose. A welcome consequence is the increased emphasis on their own real ale brands – Young's Gold is now available year-round in cask, Wells Eagle IPA has been relaunched with a new brand image, and much-loved Young's Ram Rod made a reappearance as a seasonal cask ale lately, joining the seasonal rotation. Currently Young's Winter Warmer is the seasonal, for November and December, and is proving very popular.

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## Delirium Tremens in Brussels

**R**ecent pilgrimages to Cantillon in Brussels, to Antwerp Beer Festival and to Poperinge gave me a grounding in Belgian beer.

An evening spent at a table outside Poperinge's Palace Hotel in the company of the chap from the local beer warehouse was educational. He is a qualified beer designer, and has since graduated



to the Verhaeghe brewery, responsible for the Duchesse de Bourgogne, and also its superb kriel which

was available on draught at the 2010 Bedford Beer and Cider Festival. When the rival,



Duke de Bourgogne, ceased being stocked at l'Image de Nostre Dame in Brussels, I was homeless. Until I discovered *Delirium Tremens* – the bar, not the effect. This has done it for me. With more than

50 beers on draught, they really can't miss. It's the blunderbuss approach. Actually the venue is small. There is a cellar bar with some 17 beers on tap aimed at youth, and in the evenings you know what to expect. The ground floor The Tap is less stressed; open 4 p.m. to 2a.m., it offers 27 beers on tap and access to 2,500 in bottles. But recently they opened the *Hoppy Loft*, open 6p.m. to 4a.m., not Sundays, for connoisseurs with choice beers from around the world. Only ten on draught, but they include brews from the USA. There are enough in bottles, and the staff are eager to advise. This year I discovered the circle was being completed. At the Bruges beer festival, as the Hoppy Loft acknowledges what the Americans are doing, so some Belgian brewers are mucking about with their version of the style, IPA or more accurately, APA (American Pale Ale). What exciting times. So much experimenting against a background of traditional dullness.

*John Nicholson*

# Golden Evening at Guilsborough

**O**n 28 October, twenty volunteers from the Bedford Beer and Cider Festival got their reward – a trip to Nobby's Brewery in Guilsborough, a village well hidden in narrow lanes north of Northampton. Nobby's Brewery is behind the Ward Arms, a thatched free house dating back to 1620. The stable blocks around a courtyard at the rear, which now house the brewery, date from 1801. King George VI used to stable his horse there when hunting with the Pytchley Hunt nearby. Nobby himself addressed us after providing each of us with an initial pint; his deep knowledge of brewing and his amusing approach led most present to say that it was the best brewery tour they had experienced.



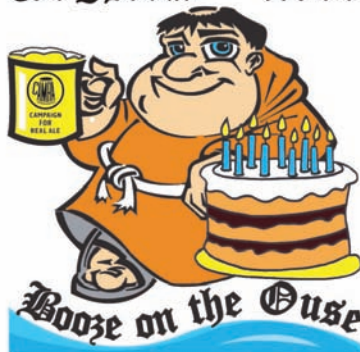
Nobby originally brewed at the Alexandra Arms in Kettering, a well-known real-ale mecca. But he outgrew those premises, which have now been inherited by another microbrewery. He and his wife Kate then bought the Ward Arms. Kate is the pub licensee while Nobby runs the brewery. At one time he had 25 different beers, but now he produces five regular brews plus a different seasonal for each month of the year. He uses a blend of Maris Otter and Pearl malts – but no sugar. The pale-coloured beers use 5% of wheat malt to provide dextrins; crystal malt provides these for the darker brews. The local water supply varies, so he has to analyse it on every brewing day to correct the mineral content. The equipment is modern inside the old buildings.

There are two hot liquor tanks, one at 65°C for mashing and one at 75°C for sparging – though the first has to be adjusted both for ambient tem-

perature and for the type of beer being made. Mashing takes one hour, then the wort is transferred to the copper for a ninety-minute boil with hops; bittering hops go in at the beginning, flavour hops ten minutes from the end, and aroma hops one minute from the end. After the boil, the wort is cooled to 24°C – a heat exchanger recycles the heat to the hot liquor tanks, so they try to brew on consecutive days to conserve energy

We sampled Wild West, a dark mild with a surprisingly bitter finish, and Guilsborough Gold, a pleasantly hoppy golden ale, which soon ran out! Nobby then tapped a firkin of Nobby's Best, a traditional bitter, his 'bread and butter product' – but none the worse for that. We then adjourned to the Ward Arms, which nowadays has a substantial food trade, and were served with an excellent meal accompanied by more Nobby's products from the bar.

## Beer and Cider Festival St Neots — 2011



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VENUE Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St Neots, PE19 2BH

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ADMISSION (including programme)  
Before 7pm: £1, After 7pm: £2 Thu, £3 Fri, £1 Sat all day

CAMRA members free admission  
Families welcome until 8pm

[www.huntscamra.org.uk/festival](http://www.huntscamra.org.uk/festival) for more details

# North Beds CAMRA

## Trip to R.H.T.S.



**A** small but resolute band of CAMRA members gathered at Bedford Bus Station on a sunny Saturday morning for a trip to Rushden Historical Transport Society, CAMRA's national Club of the Year for 2010. The day proved most enjoyable with the opportunity of a short steam train ride, a look round the wonderful museum of memorabilia (Gary particularly enjoyed the reminder of Birch Bros Buses which used to take him to school in Bedford many moons ago), a view of their model train layout and a most informative video of the work done by the society.

On top of that we had trad jazz provided and an excellent array of fine ales (seven pumps giving us a choice of ten beers during our visit.) at the award-winning club bar. Although a visit to Souldrop was precluded by the need to use public transport, I think it fair to say that we all had a jolly good time!

*Gary Mudd*



## The Firkin

Published every three months by the North Bedfordshire Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale.

The Firkin is produced and distributed by volunteers to most pubs and clubs in Bedfordshire north of a line joining the M1, Clophill, Shefford and Tempsford.

We welcome correspondence and any relevant features for publication. Views expressed here may not be those of the Editor, the Campaign for Real Ale, or its North Bedfordshire Branch.

Items for publication in the next issue should reach the Editor by the date at the foot of this page.

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**e-mail officers via our website**

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## 28th Luton Beer & Cider Festival

Hightown Sports & Arts Centre, Concorde St, Luton LU2 0JD

**Thurs 24th - Sat 26th February 2011**

About 100 real ales plus real ciders and perries  
plus imported bottled beers and British country wines

Opening times and admission prices		CAMRA Members	Non- CAMRA
Thursday	5pm-11pm	Free	£2.50
Friday	Noon-6pm	Free	£2.50
Friday	6pm-11pm	£1.50	£3.50
Saturday	Noon-11pm	Free	£2.50
Saturday	6pm-11pm	Free	£1.50

Live music from 8.30pm  
in the Theatre Hall:

Thursday - No music

Friday - TBC

Saturday - Cerberus

(Main hall is music-  
free at all times)



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**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

**No change in admission prices from 2010!**

No admission to persons aged under 18. Proof of age may be required.  
We reserve the right to refuse admission. Last admission 10.30pm.  
All details correct at time of publishing and may be subject to change.

Visit: **[www.lutonbeerfestival.com](http://www.lutonbeerfestival.com)** for latest details

# Adnams Brews ... and Distils

*CAMRA's Eastern Regional meeting took place on 6 November in Southwold, Suffolk. The meeting wasn't fascinating, but the tour of Adnams Brewery which came first was!*



**H**idden within a historic brewery right in the centre of the town is a modern brewing plant – and a brand new distillery! The brewhouse was modernised in 2007 and the fermentation plant in 2001. The cask filling line lies within what appears to be a row of cottages, their facade preserved.

Adnams are versatile, running hotels and a wine merchants' business as well as the brewery and pubs, and they have decided to go into the spirits business – though their whisky won't be available for a few years yet, as it has to mature in oak casks. But Adnams gin and vodka are in the shops now. The Adnams family bought the Sole Bay Brewery in 1872 and some of the family still work in the business, as do some of the Loftus family who became involved at an early stage.

Their malt is all East Anglian, 90% of it pale ale malt, the rest crystal, chocolate and brown malts added in small quantities to provide varied flavours and colours to the different brews. Pelletised hops are used, mostly English (Fuggles,

Goldings, Boadicea and First Gold), plus foreign varieties for certain brews. Their water used to come from a well, but its aquifer extended under the sea and became contaminated with salt water, so now they used town water and Burtonise it.

Their yeast is a mixture of two strains and came originally from Morgan's of Norwich – a now defunct brewery – in 1942. Their modern brewhouse resembles Wells & Young's but on a smaller scale; they brew twice a day. The 'wash' for making spirits uses the same brewhouse equipment, but it is mashed for longer to obtain complete conversion to fermentable sugars. No hops are added, so boiling is not necessary.

An energy storage tank recycles the heat from the copper back to the mash tun for the next run – this saves about 30% of their energy bill.

The fermentation tanks are top-fermenters. Excess yeast, hop debris and any waste beer are sent to an anaerobic digester to make methane and power a generator.

Afterwards – the tasting! As well as the standard Bitter and Broadside, the following were available: Exhibition (past its sell-by date, and tasted so); Bokbier; Old Ale; Spiced Ale; Ghost Ship – an excellent pale bitter at 6% brewed for Halloween; and Yuletide Ale (understandably not really quite ready yet). Supplies of these were also brought over to the Swan hotel in pinlets for our refreshment during the meeting, for which Adnam's also provided the cold buffet lunch free of charge. A vote of thanks to Adnams for their generosity was passed by acclamation!



*Fytton Rowland*

# Pub News



## Prince of Wales, Bromham

Welcome to David and team, who recently took over this newly refurbished Charles Wells pub near the Budgens supermarket. While it remains a community pub, the two old bars have been converted into a smart, comfortable through lounge. Families are welcome, with an improved play area in the rear courtyard garden. David offers Wells Eagle IPA, Courage Directors and a changing guest ale on the pumps, with daily lunches and evening meals Monday to Saturday. Call 01234 822447. [www.princeofwalesbromham.co.uk](http://www.princeofwalesbromham.co.uk)

## Bear, High Street, Bedford

Congratulations to landlord Paul Shillenday for completing 25 years in charge of this traditional town centre pub. The anniversary was marked with a party for the regulars at the end of October. The Bear offers Greene King IPA and usually an interesting guest ale on handpump, with good value pub lunches on Monday to Friday. Call 01234 401020.



## Crown, Northill

The Crown is now in the hands of Adrian and Victoria Doughty, owners of Doughty's Brasseries in Hitchin and at the GL-14 health club at Fairfield Park, Stotfold. The attractive old pub, close to the church and village pond, has been refurbished and re-opened as a smart pub/restaurant. Greene King beers are served. Lunches and evening meals are available daily except Sunday evening. The large

garden includes a play area for children. The pub can accommodate private functions with space for up to 60 guests. Call 01767 627337 or visit <http://doughtysbrasserie.com>



## Gate, Harrowden

Welcome to Lis and Peter May, who recently took over this attractive pub just off the A600 near Short-

stown. The pub serves Greene King beers and is open all day from 12 noon, except on Monday, when the door opens at 3pm. Lunch is available Tuesday to Sunday and evening meals on Tuesday to Saturday. Call 01234 740308.

## Banker's Draft, High Street, Bedford

For some time this Wetherspoon pub in the town centre has been able to offer real ales outside the company's standard list. It regularly features Adnams Broadside and beers



from Oakham Ales in Peterborough, one of our most innovative breweries. In September it was the first JDW pub in the country to join the Oakademy of Excellence. Phone 01234 342931.

## Salutation, Blunham

Welcome to David and Donna Wisbey, who took over this attractive old village pub in July. Greene King IPA, Abbot and a mystery guest ale are served on the pumps. As well as a large bar, the pub offers a small pool room and a rear function room that can be used as a restaurant. Call 01767 640620.

## Crown, Willington

Welcome to Dave and Isobel Underwood, who moved into this popular local pub on the Village Loop during the summer. Greene King Abbot and IPA are available on the pumps. Call 01234 831752.

# B&T's Other Island

*The Elm Tree, Orchard Street, Cambridge*

A trip to Cambridge and a little time to kill, so I sought out the one B&T pub that isn't in Bedfordshire – the Elm Tree, tucked away in a tiny street between the historic city centre and the Grafton Centre. (There are two other real ale pubs in spitting distance, the Free Press and the Cricketers, both Greene King houses.) The sign says 'Charles Wells', who are the freeholders of the building, and two Wells & Young's ales are always available. B&T leases the pub, and has applied its usual formula – lots of handpumps, several B&T products and guest ales available as well as the W&Y's. Larger and better lit than the Wellington Arms in Bedford, not quite as traditional and basic as the Globe in Dunstable, it has the usual B&T displays of bottles and brewers' advertisements on the walls. They do some food – cold only, based on cheeses and sausage from a local Italian deli, so a bit of a Real Food pub as well as a Real Ale one. Their particular speciali-

sation is Belgian bottled beers, of which they had 27 ranging between 4 and 10% ABV.

On my visit the available cask ales were Young's Bitter and Directors from W&Y, B&T's Dragon Slayer, Golden Fox and Dark Mild, and guest ales Northumbrian Gold Farne Island, Springhead The Leveller, Oldershaw Regal Blonde, and Bath Ginger Hare. I'd had the last-named a day or two earlier, so I tried the other guests. The Leveller is a dark ale at 4.9%, but didn't have the body that this ABV implies, in my view. Farne Island, a palish bitter at 4%, was more to my taste but I'd have liked more hoppy bitterness. The Regal Blonde (4.4%) was very pale; not much aroma but a pleasantly light flavour. All were in good condition, as one has come to expect in B&T houses.

*Fytton Rowland*

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## Regional Champions

In our last issue we listed the CAMRA National Champion beers for 2010. Here is the list of 2010 regional finalists from the East of England region.

**Mild:** Greene King XX Mild

**Bitter:** Elgood's Cambridge Bitter and Woodforde's Wherry

**Best Bitter:** McMullen's Country Bitter and Milton Pegasus

**Strong Bitter:** Woodforde's Admiral's Reserve

**Golden Ale:** Farmer's Puck's Folly

**Speciality Beer:** Fox Grizzly Beer and Pitfield London Porter

**Real Ale in Bottle:** Red Squirrel Conservation Bitter

No Bedfordshire products there, sad to relate. And no joy for our county in the 2010 regional Pub of the Year and Club of the Year competitions, either. The East's POTY was the Dove in Bury St Edmunds and the COTY was West Herts Sports Club in Watford.

## CAMRA Discount Scheme

Some pubs now give a discount on the price of real ale to CAMRA members on presentation of their current membership card. At present in the North Beds Branch area, The White Horse in Newnham Avenue, Bedford, does so. As other pubs in our area sign up, we will include the info in future editions of the Firkin.

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0709



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# N Beds CAMRA St Neots Trip



**O**n Thursday 18th November at 6:30pm a happy, full coach-load of us gathered at the Wellington Arms and set off expectantly for the Far East! (Well towards St. Neots anyway.) The atmosphere was jovial and it was splendid have our friendly driver Trevor to take us.

Our first stop was at the Rivermill Tavern in Eaton Socon, a converted flour mill on the Ouse in a lovely setting (note to go back in daylight in the summer!). We were welcomed with pints of Buntingford Willamette and Adnams Ghost Ship. We then moved on to St Neots, visiting the Pig'n' Falcon, Hunts CAMRA's 'most improved pub of 2010', and had a wide range of beers from Pot-belly and further afield. This was an excellent hostelry with a 10% discount for card wielding CAMRA members! Then we walked off some ale, going round the corner to the Lord John Russell

and another fine welcome in this Bateman's house. Pints of Autumn Fall were enjoyed greatly.

We rejoined Trevor and negotiated the twisting lanes of Cambridgeshire to Little Gransden and the last stop of the evening – the Chequers and the Son of Sid Brewery. Bob was his usual jolly self, providing excellent food and his usual popular ales plus a new Wheat Beer, which I think met with general approval. Bob never ceases tinkering with recipes and brewing up new ideas! He imparts his knowledge readily to all who are interested and for those who hadn't been before, took us for a tour (stand) in his tiny brewhouse. We finished the evening in good spirits in this splendid pub with real fires and then Trevor saw us safely home and we found our taxis waiting after an excellent trip.

*Gary Mudd*



# Branch Diary



CAMRA North Beds Branch business meetings are normally held on the third Thursday of alternate months, e.g. January and March. Social and campaigning events are usually held on the second Thursday of each month.

Guests are welcome at social events, but members have priority on brewery visits. For latest information check *What's Brewing*, or visit the branch website at [www.northbedscamra.org.uk](http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk)

## DECEMBER

### Thursday 16 – Branch Christmas Social

At the Bedford Arms, Bromham Road, Bedford, from 7.30 p.m. To book, please Contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk)

## JANUARY

### Thursday 13 – Rural Pub tour 1

Minibus tour, leaving the Wellington Arms, Wellington Street, Bedford, at 7 p.m. Bookings to Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk) – a small charge is payable on the night

### Thursday 20 – Branch meeting

Business Meeting at the Three Cups, Newnham Street, Bedford, 8 for 8.15 p.m. CAMRA members only

### Date to be announced –

### Walking tour of Bedford town pubs

For date, time, and meeting place, please visit [www.northbedscamra.org.uk](http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk) or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk)

## FEBRUARY

### Thursday 3 – Rural Pub tour 2

Minibus tour, leaving the Wellington Arms, Wellington Street, Bedford, at 7 p.m. Bookings to

Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk) – a small charge is payable on the night.

### Thursday 10 – Extra Branch Meeting

Special Meeting at the Three Cups, Newnham Street, Bedford, 8 for 8.15 p.m. CAMRA members only

### Thursday 24 to Saturday 26

### 28th Luton Beer & Cider Festival

At Hightown Sports and Arts Centre, Concorde Street, Luton LU2 0JD. Contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk) – or visit [www.northbedscamra.org.uk](http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk) – for timings of a North Beds CAMRA excursion to this Festival.

## MARCH

### Thursday 10 – Branch Social

Details to be announced. For latest information, visit [www.northbedscamra.org.uk](http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk) or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk)

### Thursday 17 – Branch meeting

Business Meeting at the Three Cups, Newnham Street, Bedford, 8 for 8.15 p.m. CAMRA members only

## Save the Pub Group and CAMRA meet Community Pubs Minister Bob Neill MP

Greg Mulholland, Liberal Democrat MP for Leeds North West, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Save the Pub Group, along with CAMRA, had a meeting with Community Pubs Minister Bob Neill on 17th November, to discuss how the government can work to support and protect pubs.

Bob Neill, Conservative MP for Bromley and Chislehurst, was recently appointed as the Minister responsible for Community Pubs with cross-departmental responsibility, working from the Department of Communities and Local Government. The Save the Pub Group raised many issues including the need for more planning protection for pubs, the abolition of restrictive covenants, the beer tie and pub ownership, licensing, regulation and supermarket pricing.



Shaun and Lisa welcome you to

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