

Owzat? Cricketers is our first LocAle pub



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HE WANTS HIS BEER
IN A GLASS WITH
A HANDLE...

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Chairman's Corner

Time marches on and after a dry sunny spring, with all the trees and flowers appearing early, we can only hope for a good summer. It's that time again, as the AGM of North Beds Branch of CAMRA will happen on the 7th July. I look forward to seeing a large turnout of our members, as this is the time to stamp your mark on the Branch. I have decided to stand down as Chairman, as has Ian Higgs our Secretary, so I hope there will be a good response, allowing these important positions to be filled. Of course we will still be there to assist and help a smooth transition to take place.

Also retiring from the Committee is John Martin, a very active member of the Branch who has held many key positions – to name but a few, Chairman, Beer and Cider Festival Organiser, and Socials Organiser. Thanks to John for all he has done for the Branch in building up members' interest. I will miss John's jovial manner at committee meetings, and his great way of getting the best out of people.

Since our last issue the branch has enjoyed an outing to the St Neots Beer and Cider Festival:

Huntingdonshire branch of CAMRA had the idea of having beers available that were around when CAMRA was formed 40 years ago. This was a great way to celebrate the 40th Anniversary, and the twist of collecting stamps and a prize for trying all the historic beers was novel.

The visit to the Hopping Mad Brewery in Olney was another great evening, and David Wright and Matt Hargreaves made our visit memorable.

The Engineers Arms in Henlow, East Beds CAMRA's Pub of the Year, has been voted as the Bedfordshire CAMRA Pub Of the Year, going forward to represent Bedfordshire in the next stage of the competition. I wish them the best of luck in the East Anglian regional heat, and hope that they progress to the National stage.

I hope that our readers have enjoyed my ramblings in the past issues of the Firkin and I'm sure that my successor will keep the column going. I have enjoyed my time representing the Branch and many thanks to all who made this time easier by helping me out and advising me.

*Don Allan
Branch Chairman*

Cricketers Arms is our first LocAle Pub

North Beds CAMRA launched its LocAle scheme, promoting locally brewed real ales, at the 2010 Bedford Beer and Cider Festival but it has been a little slow to get off the ground. Finally in May 2011 our first LocAle pub was launched when the Cricketers Arms in Goldington Road, Bedford, proudly put up its LocAle logos. Paul, the licensee, has fought long and hard with his pub's owners to get permission to stock a variety of local microbrewery ales and deserves recognition for the successful outcome. As we went to press we heard that the Carpenters Arms in Cranfield had become our second LocAle pub in North Beds.



Bedfordshire Pub of the Year

CAMRA's Bedfordshire Pub of the Year 2011 is the Engineers Arms in Henlow.



Landlord Kevin Machin (second from right) and his partner Claire accepting the certificates for Bedfordshire Pub of the Year and East Bedfordshire Pub of the Year



After close competition between the three branch winners, East Beds CAMRA's contender, the **Engineers Arms in Henlow**, has won its sixth Bedfordshire Pub of the Year title. The runners-up, covered in our last issue, were the **Bedford Arms in Souldrop** from North Beds and the **English Rose in Luton** from South Beds.

Once a fading outpost of the Charles Wells estate on Henlow High Street, the Engineers Arms was bought in the early 1990s by Kevin Machin, who re-launched it as a free house offering mainly micro-brewery beers. With Kevin's skill and determination, it soon became widely recognised as one of the premier real ale pubs in the county.

Ten regularly changing real ales are normally available from handpumps in the two bars, plus three real ciders and perry. The pub holds an annual beer and cider festival in October, with even more choice. This is a drinker's pub with no food, except on special occasions such as the festival, but sports and music lovers are well catered for,

with regular live bands, discos and games nights almost every week. The pub's winning formula is good beer, a lively atmosphere and a friendly welcome, attracting a good mix of customers. The Engineers Arms goes on once again to compete with county winners from Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk for the East Anglia Pub of the Year title, which it has won once before in 2003. We hope to tell you the result in our next issue. The regional winner will then compete with the best pubs from other regions for the national Pub of the Year title, to be declared early in the New Year. We wish Kevin and partner Claire every success.

Meanwhile, Kevin and Claire will have to find wall space for yet another framed certificate! Visitors from Bedford will be pleased to know that the Stagecoach M1 bus service to Hitchin stops near the pub. Even better, there is a late M2 bus back to Bedford that calls down the road opposite the Crown at 10.45pm!

A Brainstorm of a Visit!

On 14 April a minibus pulled away from the Wellington Arms in Bedford. This was the eagerly awaited North Beds CAMRA trip to the Hopping Mad brewery: a large space containing modern brewing equipment of 11½ barrel capacity, with plenty of room for expansion. Both the then current products were on offer to us: **Brainstorm**, a traditional copper-coloured bitter at 4.3% abv, and **Fruitcase**, a paler bitter in the modern style and 4.5% abv. (**Balmy Days**, a summer ale at session strength, has since been added.) Both were excellent, but the consensus seemed to be a preference for Fruitcase. Once we



now selling well. The local element remains important, though, and Matt and David intend to sell only within a 30-mile radius.

Three batches per week of nine barrels each are currently produced but they have capacity for three times as much. A mix of Warminster Maris Otter and Munton's Pale Ale malt is used. Mashing is at 65.5°C, and the resulting malt conversion to sugar is high at 96%. The spent grain goes to a local dairy farm. The boil in the copper is for an hour, though it takes 40 minutes to bring it to the boil. Bittering hops go in at the start and aroma hops 2-3 minutes before the end. Careful control by Matt has now resulted in consistent quality, something not always achieved by small breweries.

Afterwards the bus took us to Emberton. The Bell and Bear has acquired a high reputation since John and Sophie Adriaenssens took over. Their food reputation is very high, and they keep the menu short because everything is freshly cooked by John, who is a trained chef. They are staunch supporters of local suppliers – they even get their vegetables from local allotment-holders. Their cask ales are invariably local, and very well kept. John and Sophie support Hopping Mad, and at our visit they had Brainstorm on handpump together with the Tring Brewery's Royal Poacher, and Silverstone's session bitter, Pit Stop. A buffet of chicken, stuffed vine leaves, chips and other nibbles sustained us for the long (!) journey back to Bedford.



had drunk our fill, Matt Hargeaves, the brewer, and David Wright, the marketing man, described the venture's history and the current brewing operation. They were regulars at the White Hart in Sherington, and had long talked about their interest in cask ale. Two years ago they decided to set up in the brewing business. The outbuildings at the Bell and Bear at Emberton were to be used, but proved too cramped. Once the factory in Olney had been found, the need was for a brewery to put in it. Yates's in Cumbria had outgrown their kit and were installing larger vessels: problem solved. Marketing consultants came up with a large variety of possible names both for the brewery and the beers and 'Hopping Mad' and the slogan 'Brewing just round the bend in Olney' were selected. The current products were settled upon in December 2010, but remained nameless into 2011. David took them around nearby pubs, and let licensees and their customers try them. The reception was favourable and the beers are

Pub News



Gordon Arms, Castle Road, Bedford

Following thorough refurbishment by Charles Wells Pub Company a few years ago, the Gordon Arms has been trans-

formed into a welcoming venue offering a choice of well-kept Wells & Young's and guest ales. New licensee Chris Sweeting took over both the pub and the Ent Shed performance venue next door recently. Chris has previously run various pubs and night clubs in the Bedford area. Call 01234 348668 or visit www.gordonarmsbedford.co.uk

Bell, Odell

Just a few months after taking over this handsome village inn, Will and Katie Healy are holding the first ever beer festival in Odell from the evening of Friday 10th to Sunday 12th June. In addition to a wider range of Greene King beers than usual, a number of real ales will be available from local micro-breweries such as Hopping Mad in Olney. A small range of real ciders will also be on sale. There will be a barbecue on Saturday, while plans for a charity race on Saturday evening were developing as we went to press. Call 01234 720254 or visit www.thebellinodell.co.uk



Bridge Hotel, Sheffield

Welcome to landlord Mark Beal, who now runs this busy pub close to where the railway bridge once stood. Wells Eagle IPA is

available on handpump. The pub holds a quiz night on Wednesday, poker, karaoke and Open-Mic nights on Saturday and pool competitions on Sunday afternoon. The bars are open all day every day, finishing late on Friday and Saturday. Call 01462 338878.

White Hart, Sheffield

Welcome to licensees Rebecca Philpott and Mathew Lyttle, who now run this handsome old pub near the traffic lights. Greene King IPA, Abbot and Old Speckled Hen, plus a monthly guest beer are available on the pumps. Food is served every



lunchtime and Monday to Saturday evenings until 9pm, and on Sunday through the afternoon until 6pm. Accommodation is available, with four bedrooms. Call 01462 811144 or visit www.whitehartsheffield.co.uk

Duke, Kempston

The Duke looks very smart after a short closure for refurbishment and a "grand re-opening night" on 21st April attended by some local CAMRA representatives. Wells Eagle IPA, Bombardier and guest ales are still available on handpump. Call 01234 857201.

English Rose, Old Bedford Road, Luton

South Beds CAMRA's Pub of the Year 2011 will host its 6th beer festival from Thursday 9th to Saturday 11th June. More than 20 beers are available, plus the cider and perry always available. A popular street corner pub with an interesting rear garden, just five minutes from Luton rail station. Call 01582 723889 or visit www.englishroseluton.co.uk

Pig 'n' Falcon, New Street, St Neots

This leading real pub just across our north-eastern border will hold a Birthday Beer Fest from Thursday 7th to Monday 11th July. Details to be confirmed, but more than 30 real ales and ciders may be available. Just 5 minutes walk from the X5 bus stop. Call 07951 785678 or visit www.pignfalcon.co.uk



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Next Bedford Beerfest!



CAMRA's 34th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival will be held at the Corn Exchange in St Paul's Square from Wednesday 5th to Saturday 8th October.

Perfect timing!

Local CAMRA members have run a festival in the town every autumn since 1978. All except one has been in the Corn Exchange. Now CAMRA have announced that National Cask Ale Week this year will be 1st to 9th October, and that October is Cider and Perry Month. So our dates couldn't be better chosen!

Over 100 real ales

This year's festival will be similar to last year, with about 110 different real ales, 30-odd brands of real cider and perry, and a range of draught and bottled beers from Belgium and other European countries. Even though only a handful of Bedfordshire pubs sell real cider or perry, their growing popularity has earned "Cider" a regular place in the festival's title. There will be a broad selection of real ales from local brewers and around the country. The full beer and cider lists will be printed in a free souvenir programme given to visitors on arrival and posted on the branch website in September.

Help required

The festival is run entirely by volunteers – working behind the bars, the shop or the glasses counter, admitting visitors at the door or helping the stewards. There are also jobs to do behind the scenes, or helping set up and dismantle the bars and stillage. All local CAMRA members and their friends are welcome – no experience necessary! We can't afford to pay you, but helpers get a generous ration of free beer or cider of their choice, and have the pleasure of helping run one of the most popular events in Bedford.

To volunteer, email staffing manager Maureen Goodge at staffing@northbedscamra.org.uk, or complete the online staffing form at www.northbedscamra.org.uk

Sponsor a cask of beer!

Promote your business by sponsoring a cask of real ale at Bedford Beer & Cider Festival. For just £50, your advert will be posted on the main beer stillage throughout the festival. For further details, visit www.northbedscamra.org.uk



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Summer Beer Festivals

9th Welland Valley Beer Festival

Fri 10 to Sun 12 June, hosted by ten pubs across the Welland Valley. Wide range of real ales and ciders, including many local breweries, traditional pub food including a barbecue, live entertainment and accommodation. Supported by, but no longer organised by, local CAMRA branches. Official programme available from participating pubs or online. East Midlands trains from Bedford to Market Harborough.

www.wellandvalleybeerfestival.co.uk

7th Braintree Real Ale Festival

Thu 16 to Sat 18 June at the Institute, Bocking End, Braintree CM7 9AA (easy access by train or bus). Organised by local CAMRA and Braintree Lions, with proceeds to local charities. Open Thu 4.30-11, Fri 12-11, Sat 11-10.20. Admission £2, free before 4pm Fri and to CAMRA and Lions members at all times. About 50 real ales plus cider and perry, hot food and outdoor drinking area.

www.braintreebeerfestival.co.uk

Derby City Charter Beer Festival

Wed 6 to Sun 10 July at the Assembly Rooms, Market Place DE1 3AH (rail stn 10 min). Open Wed 6.30-11, Thu-Sat 11.30-4, 6.30 (Fri 5)-11, Sun 12-2.30. Admission charge from free to £6 according to day and arrival time, but CAMRA members always free. Live music all evenings and Sun lunch, fancy dress night Sat. East Midlands trains from Bedford and Luton. Over 150 real ales, from rare to popular and LocAle to national. Beer list and admission details online.

www.derbycamra.org.uk

3rd Bishops Stortford Beer Festival

Thu 28 to Sat 30 July at British Legion Club, Windhill, Bishops Stortford CM23 2NG. Open Thu 6-11, Fri/Sat 11-11, admission free. More than 25 real ales, live music Sat eve.

www.heb-camra.org.uk/bsbf

Amphill Rugby Club Beer Festival 2011

Sat 30 July at Amphill RUFC, Dillingham Park, Amphill MK45 2HX. Open noon to midnight. Real ales, ciders and perries, music and barbecue. Bus J2 or Grant Palmer 42 from Bedford.

www.amphillrucf.com

Great British Beer Festival 2011

Tue 2 to Sat 6 August, Earls Court Exhibition Centre, Warwick Road, London SW5 9TA (near Earls Court tube stn). Open Tue 5-10.30, Wed-Fri 12-10.30, Sat 11-7. Huge range of real ales, ciders, perries and international beers. Traditional pub games, live music, hot and cold food, tutored beer tastings. For advance tickets and tutored tasting tickets, visit gbbf.camra.org.uk/tickets or phone 0844 412 4840. For general information visit www.gbbf.org.uk

34th Peterborough Beer Festival

Tue 23 to Sat 27 August, 2011, under canvas on The Embankment, Bishops Road PE1 1EF (city centre 10 min). Opening and admission Tue 5.30-11 (£8), Wed 12-2.30 (£4), 5.30-11 (£8), Thu-Sat 12-11 (£9), CAMRA members £4 off. Entry price includes a glass, £3 refunded on return. Full details online, including beer and cider list. Use the X5 bus from Bedford to St Neots station, then train. www.peterborough-camra.org.uk

A CAMRA Event with no beer?!

Well, not for the first hour, anyway. North Beds CAMRA's Social Secretary, Gary Mudd, had noted that there was an extra Bank Holiday on 29th April this year for some reason, and decided on a first – a CAMRA Breakfast. The White Horse in Newnham Avenue, Bedford, had a Local Beer, Food, Talent and Charity Festival over the four-day holiday weekend, so a group of CAMRA stalwarts met there for breakfast at 10 a.m. An excellent if unhealthy Full English was had by all.



Your editor tucks in!

At 11 a.m. service of the festival beers began, and 'landlord Nigel Anstead had kindly offered not only his usual 20p/pint CAMRA discount, but a double discount on each member's first two pints. The beers on offer were (with one exception) local. The festival specials came straight from the casks. From B&T in Shefford came Dragonslayer, SOS (Shefford Old Strong) and their one-off special for the day, Bride and Joy. Potton Brewery sent their regulars, Shannon, Shambles and Village Bike. White Park at Cranfield had supplied Bedford Best and Cranfield Bitter. From Milton Keynes, Concrete Cow beers present were Old Bloomer and Midsummer Ale. From a little further afield, Buntingford Brewery in Hertfordshire was represented by By George, Citra and Sunstar.



The resident Wells and Young's beers were on the handpumps, of course – Wells Eagle and Bombardier, Young's Gold and Courage Directors. The one foreigner was Bryson's Union Flag 1606 from Morecambe in Lancashire. A range of real ciders, including several draught ones from Millwhite's, was also available.

I tried Citra, a single-hop 4.0% ale made with the newly-bred Citra hop, a pale golden beer with intense bitterness and a citrus tang; Old Bloomer, a dark 4.7% bitter with flavour from the deep-roasted malt; By George, the least strong beer there at 3.5% abv, which tasted much stronger than it was, a traditional-style bitter; Village Bike, which I had found 'sold out' at various festivals and had never actually run to earth before – a very enjoyable auburn-coloured 4.3% bitter with complex hoppiness; SOS, a dark and malty 5.0% Old Ale – not really my taste, I'm more of a bitter man; and Cranfield Bitter, White Park's stronger offering at 4.4%, a full-flavoured amber ale. My favourite? By George, I'd like to have a session with this excellent session bitter!



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Sisters are Brewing it for Themselves!

According to the beer historian Alan Eames, the creation of beer is credited to women in religious myths of ancient societies.

Around 4000 B.C., brewsters (women brewers) enjoyed status and prestige, making a wide range of beers in Sumeria. Sumerian brewsters as tradespeople were allowed to have their own private deities. The daily ritual of brewing was overseen by the goddesses such as Ninkasi – the goddess of beer. The Sumerian Hymn to Ninkasi contains one of the most ancient recipes for brewing beer.

Women ran beer halls and taverns, and a code of laws written by an ancient ruler of Babylon, Hammurabi, included one which stated "If a tavern-keeper (feminine) does not accept corn according to gross weight in payment of drink, but takes money, and the price of the drink is less than that of the corn, she shall be convicted and thrown into the water".

An article from *Scientific American* reported that archaeologists had uncovered evidence of female brewers in Ancient Peru: the remains of a brewery together with decorative shawl pins which were only worn by high-caste women.

In Ancient Egypt, beer was the national drink, with women brewing it in the "pure" part of the kitchen for consumption in the home. It is thought that many beer styles were developed by women, including Nubian "boosa" – thought to be where the word "booze" originated.

Ancient Finnish legend credits three women, Osmotar, Kapo and Kalevatar, preparing for a wedding feast, with creating ale. Bear's saliva (yummy!) and honey were mixed with beer which apparently made it foam. Between the 8th and 10th centuries A.D., Norse men were spending their time rampaging through Europe, leaving the women at home brewing and managing the homes. Norse society had clearly defined roles in law, including women being responsible for everything performed in the home. All brewhouse

equipment was legally the property of women only. Sounds like much more fun to be at home brewing than travelling round Europe!

According to Judith Bennett's *Ale, Beer and Brewsters* in England, in 1300 virtually all English ale-brewers were women, with approximately one-third of them also selling the ale they brewed. This meant they earned extra income for the family but also they paid taxes on the profits. As well as brewing beer, women were tavern owners, the two going hand-in-hand. It was thought to be a socially acceptable way for widows to support themselves. Women selling beer in this way were known as "ale-wives". Beer was considered as food, and dishonesty in selling it was punishable by flogging. In the case of married women, their husbands had to hold the tavern licence and were flogged instead of the women for any transgressions.

Brides sold ale to help with wedding day-expenses with the term "bride-ale" becoming "bridal". At the recent nuptials of someone fairly well-known, I noticed that beer had been banned. I feel it is particularly disappointing that an opportunity to showcase the finest of British ales was missed.

By the start of the late 18th century, new methods of beer production meant that women's contribution declined. However, a search on the Internet shows that women are nowadays playing an ever-increasing role in brewing, with many running their own breweries. A recently launched brew, Venus Jade, is a collaborative brew between five brewsters from the UK and Ireland. The team decided on a series of brews using roughly the same recipe but with local variations, and the recipe was put together with input from all concerned, communicating via Facebook. At last – Facebook being used for something meaningful. Initial reports of the brew are favourable. I look forward to sampling it!

Thanks to Beer Beauty for the headline!

Lynne Ratnett

Not the Last of the Summer Wine



A group of old pals are to be seen every week converging on Bedford Bus Station and then disappearing off in various directions. Here are some of our favourite destinations and our opinion of the pubs. None of them are in North Beds CAMRA branch territory.

The Cannon, Newport Pagnell.

A good-value, traditional real ale pub in the centre of the town. Banks Bitter is always available at a rock-bottom price, plus Pedigree and at least two other brews. Adam, the landlord, takes pride in discovering new local beers. The bay windows offer a fine view of the passing populace. There is no food, but evening entertainment includes music and quizzes. The staff are friendly and don't mind if you nip out to get a baguette (no chips allowed, however!). The bus from Bedford is the Stagecoach 40.

The Engineers Arms, Henlow

This year's Bedfordshire CAMRA Pub of the Year – see elsewhere in this issue. Kevin, the landlord, often creates bizarre news items relating to beer for the local papers, runs trips to breweries and provides lots of music events. The Stagecoach M1 bus service to Hitchin stops near the pub, with a late M2 bus back to Bedford at 22.45 from Clifton Road.

Rushden Historical Transport Society

Deservedly winner of the 2010 CAMRA Club of the Year award, this Victorian railway station is preserved by volunteers together with a steam engine, rolling-stock other transport items. The waiting room retains a gas lamp, open fire and

railway and beer memorabilia. For a fee of £1 non-members can imbibe and meet some of the members. Open only from 7.30 p.m. on weekdays, but from 12 noon at weekends. Beer usually include Phipps bitter (from Grainstore) and five other cask ales. Steam days are held regularly, and there is a railway museum in the station.

See www.rhts.co.uk Stagecoach M50 buses from Bedford to Kettering take you within a short distance.

Pig n Falcon, St. Neots

Amazing prices, especially of Potbelly Bitter. This pub can be reached via a short passageway from the Market Square. There is an excellent range of beers and a very enthusiastic landlord. The seating area outside makes a good venue to watch the world go by. There are often free sandwiches for customers, and sometimes samples of the latest beer discovery. The X5 coach to Cambridge stops in the Market Square, and there are late trips back to Bedford at 22.30 and 23.15.

The Albion, Ampthill

This is how a pub should be! Comfortable seating, clean and smart, quality décor, interesting memorabilia, no music, and an excellent range of ever-changing beers. This friendly pub is served by Stagecoach J2 and Grant Palmer 42 buses from Bedford. Rolls are available. Ampthill Park is close, for the more energetic drinker or dog-walker. (Dogs are allowed inside the Albion.)

The Malt Shovel, Northampton

A very comfortable pub with interesting memorabilia and a large range of beers including foreign ones, situated opposite the Carlsberg brewery. Excellent snacks, and the Oakham range of beers; Frog Island Natterjack is a favourite also. The friendly landlord and staff make you welcome, and on warm days you can sit out on the patio. Alight from the Stagecoach 41 bus from Bedford at Victoria Promenade rather than continuing to the bus station, then walk past Morrison's.

Alan Hawkins

Forty Years On...

Graham Lees Remembers



FORTY years ago a young journalist and three friends set out on a mission to improve their nation's beer. To celebrate this special anniversary, *The Firkin* talked to founder Graham Lees about how CAMRA was set up following a pub crawl in Chester and how he was joined by fellow members recently to recreate this historic moment in the organisation's history.

As a young *Chester Chronicle* journalist Graham Lees got some of his best stories while having a pint in one of the city's many historic pubs. A lifelong fan of decent ale, his growing disappointment at the beer served to him during his time as a junior reporter led him to become the driving force behind a new organisation which has led a 40 year campaign to revive the greatest of British brews. With the help of three friends, Graham founded CAMRA, the Campaign for the Revitalisation of Ale, now known to its 120,000 members as the Campaign for Real Ale, often described as one of the most successful consumer groups in Europe.

To celebrate its 40th anniversary, Graham joined fellow CAMRA members to retrace the Chester pub crawl where the idea to improve British ale was first discussed. In March 1971, Graham's drinking pals, fellow journalists, Bill Mellor and Michael Hardman, and brewery worker, Jim Makin, met Graham in Chester the night before they left for a boozy break to Ireland. During a pub crawl around Chester to mark the start of their holiday, the friends came back to their usual lament of the lack of good quality and varied beers coming out of the pumps.

Graham, 63, who now lives in Bangkok where he is an editor for the Associated Press, said: "There was a monopoly on beer at that time in Chester by the brewery Greenall Whitley who were based in Warrington and owned many of the pubs in the city. So there was not a lot of choice at all and the beer really wasn't that great either."

During their trip to the Emerald Isle the following day, things didn't improve with little else being on offer but Guinness and other stouts. Returning to Chester, it was Graham who seriously mooted the idea that something should be done to improve beer in Britain and his friends vowed to join his fight. Graham said: "I always say CAMRA may have been conceived in Ireland but its gestational period was definitely in Chester. It was where we seriously decided that something must be done."

Lovely courtyard garden



Annual Beer and Cider Festival

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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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All Aboard the Beer Bus

Beer lovers can now get out and about in Yorkshire without all the usual hassle of planning a break this summer. A new business "Beer n Buses Yorkshire Days Out" has put together information packs for the day tripper, using the most scenic public transport routes in the White Rose county.

CAMRA members Paul Kirby and Brian Thackray came up with the novel idea of combining their two interests. Paul said "Many holiday-makers and day trippers would prefer to leave their car at home so they can enjoy a pint or three. We make it easy for them to do that. There are lots of fantastic rural pubs in the Dales & Moors that can be reached by bus and train."

The info packs include over 100 traditional inns, two-thirds of which are in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2011. Examples are the charismatic Fanny's Ale House in Saltaire (where John Peel's wife was born), the small but perfect gem that is the Blue Bell in York, and the perfectly located Station Inn under the Ribbleshead viaduct.

There's the chance to taste over 50 real ales including 'Millstone Marjery's Tiddlywink' and York Brewery's 'Wonkey Donkey', as well as the popular favourites from Black Sheep, Copper Dragon, Timothy Taylors & Sam Smiths Yorkshire breweries. Visits to the Theakstons brewery at Masham and York Brewery are possible on two of the days. There are nine different packs, and prices start at £11 each.

More details at www.beerandbuses.co.uk

Beer duty increase in Budget

In the Budget in March, the Government put beer prices up by another 7.2% - or 10p on a pint. This takes the typical duty and VAT bill on a pub pint of a standard bitter to 90p. In many parts of the country and for stronger beers the combined duty and VAT bill is well over £1 per pub pint.



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Alternatively you can send a cheque payable to CAMRA Ltd with your completed form, visit www.camra.org.uk/joinus or call 01727 867201. All forms should be addressed to Membership Department, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW.

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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

JULY

Saturday 2 – First Visit to East Anglia Pub of the Year contenders

Minibus trip for members of the three Bedfordshire branches of CAMRA. To take part in the voting, you must attend both visits, but those who cannot attend both may come on one visit only if space permits. For details, visit www.northbedscamra.org.uk or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk

Thursday 7 – Branch Annual General Meeting

At The Eagle Centre, Wells & Young's Brewery, Havelock Street, Bedford, at 8 p.m. CAMRA members only. For full information, visit www.northbedscamra.org.uk or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk

Saturday 16 – Second Visit to East Anglia Pub of the Year contenders

Minibus trip for members of the three Bedfordshire branches of CAMRA. To take part in the voting, you must attend both visits, but those who cannot attend both may come on one visit only if space permits. For details, visit www.northbedscamra.org.uk or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk

Thursday 21 – Branch meeting

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

Saturday 23 – Bedfordshire CAMRA branches joint London trip

For details, visit www.northbedscamra.org.uk or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk

AUGUST

Thursday 11 – Branch social

Details to be announced. For full information, visit www.northbedscamra.org.uk or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk

SEPTEMBER

Thursday 15 – Branch meeting

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

OCTOBER

Wednesday 5 to Saturday 8 – Bedford Beer and Cider Festival

At the Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square, Bedford. See article elsewhere in this issue for full details. Many volunteers are needed! To volunteer, e-mail staffing manager Maureen Goode at staffing@northbedscamra.org.uk, or complete the online staffing form at www.northbedscamra.org.uk

Corrections and Apologies

My attention has been drawn by the licensees in question to two mistakes in the Spring 2011 issue of *The Firkin*.

We stated that the Bedford Arms in Bedford had joined the CAMRA Discount Scheme but we had been misinformed and this pub is not in the Scheme. We also said that the Crown at Little Staughton "doubles up as a fish and chip shop on Thursday and Friday evenings". In fact this pub has a full meals menu provided by a professional chef, so although takeaway fish and chips are indeed available on those evenings, it is far more than a mere fish and chip shop.

Our sincere apologies go to both licensees for these errors. As Editor, I take full responsibility for the mistakes. I will check my sources more carefully in future.

Fytton Rowland

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