

## Beer and Cider Festival 5th - 8th October



### Dr Busker will be back!

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Engineers Arms

# THE CHEQUERS

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family run pub*

**Autumn Beer Festival**

**Thurs 29th September to Sun 2nd October**

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# It's Festival time again!



BEDFORD's own "Octoberfest" will be here again soon. CAMRA's 34th annual celebration of real ale, cider, perry and foreign beer in the town will be held at the Corn Exchange in St Paul's Square, from Wednesday 5th to Saturday 8th October.

**L**ocal CAMRA members have organised a festival in the town every autumn since 1978. It has since expanded to include cider and perry, then spreading upstairs to accommodate a dedicated foreign beer bar. The 34th annual festival looks like being as good as ever!



## Beer and cider range

About 110 different real ales will be available during the week, with 30-35 brands of real cider and perry, and a wide range of draught and bottled foreign beers. All real ales and ciders will be dispensed by gravity, direct from the cask.

Although only a handful of local pubs sell real cider or perry (made from pears), the popularity of these fermented fruit drinks has earned cider a regular place in the festival's title. As with real ale, there is a huge difference between real cider or perry and the processed keg ciders offered by most pubs. The range may include a couple of ciders from new local producers in villages near Bedford. October is now CAMRA's official Cider and Perry Month.

The festival will sell no keg beers or processed ciders, nor will any be dispensed under gas pressure, as you would expect from the Campaign for Real Ale. The full beer and cider lists are available on our website [www.northbedscamra.org.uk](http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk) during September and will be printed in the free souvenir programme given to you on arrival.

## Real ale is cool

Every indoor beer festival has trouble keeping real ale in good condition. Despite air conditioning, the main hall is bound to warm up during an evening session filled with up to 800 people, but

*continued overleaf >*



heat is not good for beer. To make sure only high quality beers are served, power chillers and cooling jackets will be used around the casks. The pint delivered to your glass will remain in good condition throughout the week.

### Foreign beer and food

As well as British real ales, cider and perry in the main hall, the foreign beer bar in the Howard Room upstairs will offer a wide range of speciality draught and bottled beers from Belgium, Germany and other countries. We hope these will include a couple of beers from Bamberg, Bedford's twin city in Bavaria.



The Howard Room and adjacent balcony also provide a quiet area for sitting out and enjoying hot and cold meals and snacks from the Corn Exchange catering service. A varied menu will be available every lunchtime and evening.

### Lined glasses mean full pints

Souvenir festival glasses sponsored by Wells Eagle IPA will be issued for £2 sale or return. All glasses will be oversized and lined for pint, half-pint and third-pint, supporting CAMRA's campaign for full measure. Beers and ciders will be sold in third-pint

measures for those who prefer smaller samples, but there will be no "try before you buy" this year. Colin, our regular engraver, will gladly personalise your glass or other objects for you, but engraved glasses cannot be returned for refunds when you leave.



### Buy your guides here

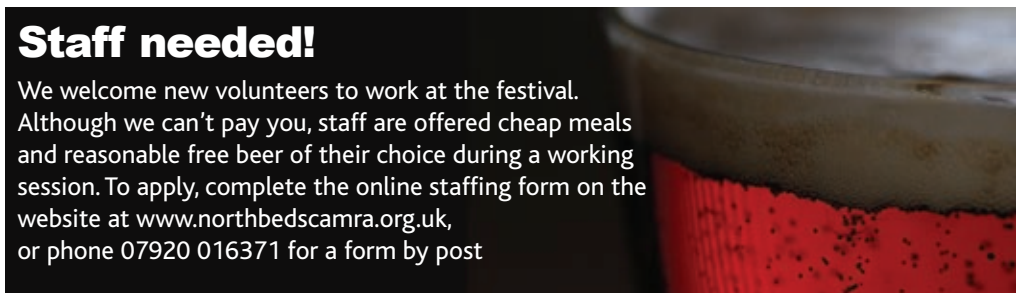
CAMRA East Beds Branch will run the festival shop and tombola, offering a range of clothing, books, breweriana and souvenirs from CAMRA and various breweries. Books will include the brand new Good Beer Guide 2012, hot off the press. You can also win a host of attractive prizes on the tombola.

### Entertainment

There will be live entertainment in the main hall on Wednesday and Saturday evenings. Popular local entertainer Dr Busker and his notorious musical wit will get the festival off to a start on Wednesday, while local group Lost 4 Words will bring it to a musical close on Saturday evening. The Bedford Morris Men are expected to perform in the hall around Saturday lunchtime, probably with one or two guest teams.

## Staff needed!

We welcome new volunteers to work at the festival. Although we can't pay you, staff are offered cheap meals and reasonable free beer of their choice during a working session. To apply, complete the online staffing form on the website at [www.northbedscamra.org.uk](http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk), or phone 07920 016371 for a form by post



### Help local charity

The cloakroom service in the basement will be run by the Bedford Lions Club to raise funds for local charities. Please give generously.

### Arrive early – but no children please

Check the advert printed in this issue for opening hours and evening admission charges. Get in free before 5 p.m. and remember there may be a queue at the door by mid-evening, especially on Friday. CAMRA members get in free at any time. If you plan to come several times, why not join CAMRA on day one and get in free for the rest of the week?

The hall lift will be available for visitors with restricted mobility. Ask festival staff at the door to arrange lift access direct from the street.

To make the best use of space for drinkers, no one under age 18 will be admitted to the festival. Proof of age may be required at the door.

### Pass-outs for smokers

Although smoking is prohibited inside the Corn Exchange, smokers and others needing a quick trip

outside will be allowed short pass-outs, leaving their glasses with door staff inside.

Drinking alcohol in the street is not permitted.

### Don't drink and drive

If you must come by car, take advantage of the free soft drinks, make sure someone else drives, or take a taxi home and retrieve your car the next day. The festival office will hold local bus and train timetables.

## Sponsor a beer cask!

Put your business on the bar by sponsoring a cask of real ale at Bedford Beer & Cider Festival.

For just £50, your company name and logo will be posted on the beer stillage throughout the four-day festival. Call 01234 344388 or visit [www.northbedscamra.org.uk](http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk)

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BREWS TO DATE

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## 20

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## 30

**Pig's Easter Beer Festival**  
Ales & Ciders  
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# Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SL

**Wed 5<sup>th</sup> - Sat 8<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

110 real ales and over 30 ciders and perries  
Wide range of draught + bottled foreign beers

**Our  
34th!**



Logo by Colin Lilley  
M&L Engraving  
[www.tankardengraving.co.uk](http://www.tankardengraving.co.uk)

## Open

Wed 4-11pm

Thu-Sat 11.30am-11pm

## Admission

FREE before 5pm

From 5pm: Wed £2, Thu £3, Fri £5, Sat £1

CAMRA members free at all times

**NO ONE UNDER AGE 18**

Evening pass-outs for smokers

Wheelchair access to all floors

## Entertainers

Wed eve: Dr Busker

Sat lunch: Bedford Morris Men

Sat eve: Lost 4 Words

## Volunteers needed!

Complete e-form on website  
or phone 07920 016371

- \* Souvenir glasses £2 sale/return
- \* Pint, half + third pint measures
- \* Tasty hot and cold food
- \* Free soft drinks
- \* Tombola
- \* Clothing, books and gifts
- \* Engraver

## Sponsor a cask of ale!

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CAMRA North Bedfordshire  
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[www.stalbanbeerfestival.com](http://www.stalbanbeerfestival.com)

*Open:*  
11am - 11pm  
Wed 29th Sept - Sat 1st Oct

*Admission:*  
£3 Wed - Fri, £4 Sat  
CAMRA members free at all times

*Thursday night on stage:*  
Classic Covers from Co-Jones

*Rockin' the Arena on Saturday:*  
John Otway (lunch)  
Nine Below Zero (evening)



Don't drink and drive. Use the train or bus. NO ONE UNDER THE AGE OF 18 CAN BE ADMITTED

2011 Beer & Cider Festival



20th Letchworth

Thur 22nd Sept. 5pm - 11pm  
Fri 23rd & Sat 24th Sept. 12noon - 11pm  
Plinston, Broadway, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3NX



General Entry £2 - CAMRA, EBCU members & OAPs FREE  
Family Area available Saturday till 7pm

Check [www.camranorthherts.org.uk](http://www.camranorthherts.org.uk) for info

Organisers reserve the right to refuse admission  
Logo by [www.rollins-design.co.uk](http://www.rollins-design.co.uk)



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12 October 5pm - 11pm (Wed)

13-15 October noon - 11pm (Thu - Sat)

Music Thursday, Friday & Saturday evenings

**Venue:**

The Buzzy, 401 Elder Gate, Central Milton  
Keynes, MK9 1LR

For more info contact:

Doug Dillow 07738 598128 or email:  
[festival@mkcamra.org.uk](mailto:festival@mkcamra.org.uk)

Website: [www.mkcamra.org.uk](http://www.mkcamra.org.uk)







# Autumn Beer Festivals

## St Ives Booze on the Ouse Beer Festival

Fri 9 to Sat 10 September at St Ivo Recreation Centre, Westwood Road, PE27 6WU. Open Fri 12-10.45, Sat 12-10. Admission Fri £1 before 7pm, then £3, Sat £1 all day, CAMRA members free. Over 55 real ales plus real cider and foreign beers, souvenir glass, tombola and CAMRA shop. Food available all day, free soft drinks for drivers. [www.huntscamra.org.uk](http://www.huntscamra.org.uk)

## 20th Letchworth Garden City Beer & Cider Festival

Thu 22 to Sat 24 September at Plinston Hall, Broadway SG6 3NX (rail stn 450m). Open Thu 5-11, Fri/Sat 12-11. Admission Fri £1 before 5pm, otherwise £2, CAMRA members free. Over 50 real ales including local beers, excellent selection of cider and perry, plus draught and bottled foreign beers. Hot and cold food, souvenir glasses, tombola and CAMRA shop. No music. – a quiet festival. [www.camranorthherts.org.uk](http://www.camranorthherts.org.uk)

## St Albans Beer Festival

Wed 28 September to Sat 1 October, Alban Arena, Civic Centre AL1 3LD (rail stn 5min). Open Wed 12-11, Thu-Sat 11-11, admission prices vary, CAMRA members free. Advance tickets available via website. About 350 real ales, plus cider and perry, bottle-conditioned beers and a wide range of foreign beers. Daily breweriana auctions, tombola, prize quiz Saturday, live music each evening. See display advert in this issue. Easy journey by train from Bedford. [www.stalbansbeerfestival.com](http://www.stalbansbeerfestival.com)

## 34th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

Wed 5 to Sat 8 October, Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square MK40 1SL. Open Wed 4-11, Thu-Sat 11.30-11. Admission free before 5pm and to CAMRA members at all times. For evening admission prices and other details, see full-page display and article in this issue. Further details including full beer and cider lists on website. [www.northbedscamra.org.uk](http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk)

## 18th Concrete Pint (Milton Keynes) Beer Festival

Wed 12 to Sat 15 October at The Buszy, Elder Gate, CMK MK9 1LR (rail stn 200m). Open Wed 5-11, Thu-Sat 12-11, admission £3 at all times, CAMRA members free. Over 60 real ales, cider and perry, hot and cold food, souvenir glass. Live music every evening. Easy journey from Bedford by X5 bus to CMK rail station. [www.mkcamra.org.uk](http://www.mkcamra.org.uk)

## Nottingham Robin Hood Beer & Cider Festival

Thu 13 to Sat 15 October in grounds of Nottingham Castle, NG1 6EB. Open 11-11 all days. Admission package £12.50 includes glass and tokens – see website for details and advance tickets. Huge list of real ales, cider, perry and country wines. Hot and cold food, live music. East Midlands trains from Bedford or Luton. [www.beerfestival.nottinghamcamra.org](http://www.beerfestival.nottinghamcamra.org)

## 5th Cambridge Oktoberfest

Fri 14 to Sat 15 October at University Social Club, Mill Lane (X5 bus stop 10 min). Open Fri 5-10.30, Sat 12-10.30. Admission £2.50, CAMRA members free. About 35 real ales including continental-style specials, mainly from local brewers, plus German beers, including beers from the Munich Oktoberfest. Regular X5 express bus from Bedford. [www.cambridgebeerfestival.com](http://www.cambridgebeerfestival.com)

## 14th Oxford Beer Festival

Thu 27 to Sat 29 October at Oxford Town Hall, St Aldates St. Easy journey by X5 express bus from Bedford. For further details, check website. [www.oxfordcamra.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcamra.org.uk)

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New Inn  
 artwork to follow



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 2 Maxwell Road, Woodston, Peterborough. PE2 7JB

# Pub News



## **White Horse, Wymington**

A warm welcome to new arrivals Sandra and John at this friendly community pub in one of our most northerly

villages. Greene King IPA and Old Speckled Hen are available on the pumps. There is a monthly disco and karaoke, and private parties can be catered for. No food, but you can order and eat a take-away in the pub. Call 01933 350745.

## **New Inn, Wymington**

Another new landlord in the same village is Robert Thompson, who took over this popular pub earlier this year. The pub opens daily until midnight, offering Greene King IPA and Abbot, with two changing guest ales. Home-cooked lunches and evening meals are served, except Sunday evening. There is a separate games room across the car park and a play area with pets' corner. Call 01933 317618.

## **Swan with Two Nicks, Sharnbrook**

Welcome too to landlords Colin and Niki, who took over this community pub recently. It is open all day, with Wells Eagle IPA and one or two guest ales on handpump. Home-cooked food is served except on Sunday evening, but may be limited to a basic bar menu during the afternoon. Senior citizens' lunches are served on Tuesday and there is a weekly pub quiz. Call 01234 781585.

## **Five Bells, Cople**

Welcome to Eamonn & Julie Dowling, who took over this handsome old village inn early in June. Greene King XX Mild and IPA were available on the pumps when we visited. Call 01234 838289.

## **Queen, Preston Road, Bedford**

The sole surviving community pub in Queens Park seems to be doing well, with Young's Bitter and a regularly changing guest ale usually available on the handpumps. Call 01234 305041.



## **Hobgoblin, High Street, Bedford**

The Hobgoblin has reopened with a better choice of real ales, with four handpumps offering Wychwood Hobgoblin and Ginger Beard, with guest ales Jennings Cumberland Ale and Brakspear Double

Drop Bitter when we called in recently. Hot and cold food is also available. Call 01234 356391.

## **Flower Pot, Tavistock Street, Bedford**

Welcome to Debbie and Melissa, who are now running this interesting old town pub. Drop in when it's quiet and check out the old Bedford photographs on the walls. The pumps usually offer Fuller's London Pride and one or two guest beers. Call 01234 505200.



## **Three Cranes, Turvey**

New landlords John and Linda O'Grady are familiar faces, having run the Red Lion in Stevington until it closed late last year.

They offer good quality pub food and bar snacks, with up to three real ales on the pumps – Greene King IPA and St Edmunds Ale were available when we last called. Call 01234 881305.

## **Sheffield - corrections**

In the item on the **White Hart** in our last issue, we stated incorrectly that Sunday lunches were available until 6pm. Sunday lunches are available from 12 noon to 4pm. Since we gathered information for the last issue, the **Bridge Hotel** has changed its regular real ale to Courage Best.



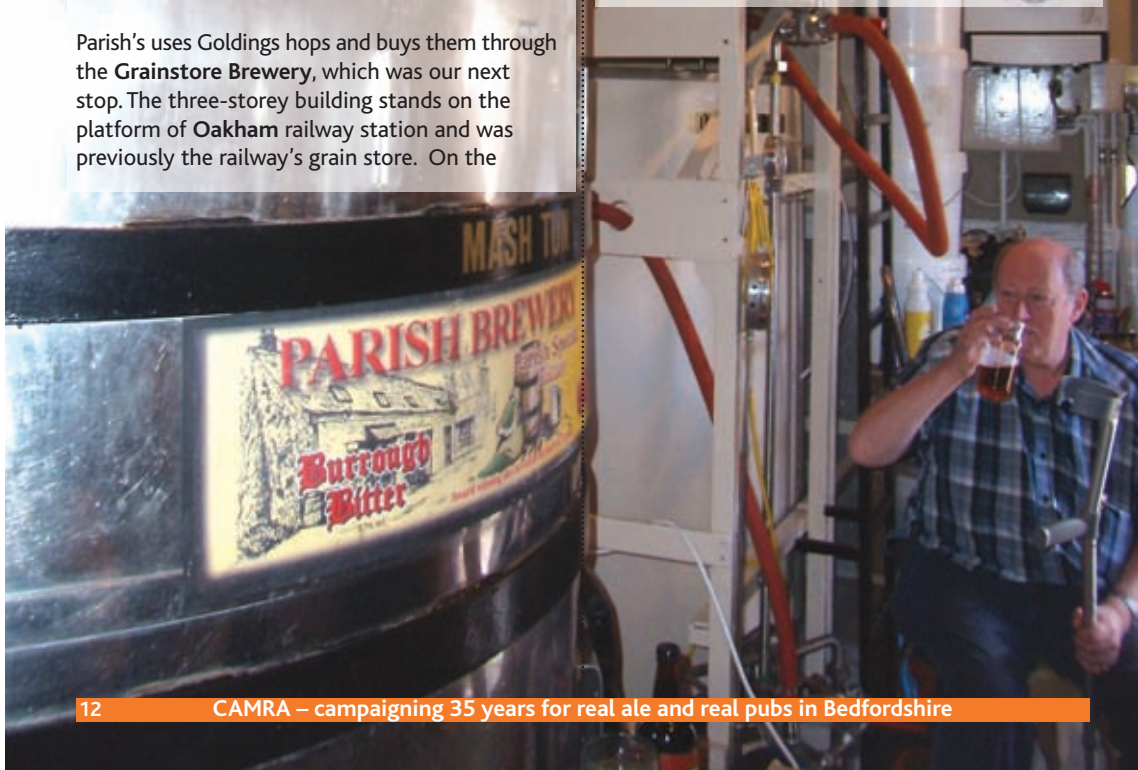
# Summer Brewpub Trip 2011

**N**orth Beds CAMRA's annual all-day trip left the Wellington Arms in Bedford, headed for Rutland and Leicestershire. We arrived exactly at noon at **Grant's Free House** in the tiny Leicestershire village of **Burrough-on-the Hill**, the home of **Parish's Brewery**, for lunch. Both the pub and the outbuilding housing the brewery are over 400 years old, and a central bar with hop-vines overhead serves several small bare-floored rooms. Proprietor Barrie (Baz) Parish was born Barrie Grant, so the pub's name commemorates his father; the original name was the Stag and Hounds. Baz is famous for *Baz's Bonce Blower*, a 12% abv bitter. A pin of it sat on the bar, but mostly we bought bottles to take home! The 3.9% *Parish's Special Bitter* (PSB) sufficed – a traditional amber bitter with a nice hoppy kick. Baz was away, but his partner Tracy showed us the brewery, with modern equipment and a 20-barrel capacity in the ancient building. The brews are supplied to a number of other nearby pubs. Back in the bar some of us tried *Tracy's Tipple*, a bitter flavoured with elderflowers, or *Farm Gold*, a pale bitter with even more hops than the PSB.

Parish's uses Goldings hops and buys them through the **Grainstore Brewery**, which was our next stop. The three-storey building stands on the platform of **Oakham** railway station and was previously the railway's grain store. On the

ground floor is its "Visitors' Centre", in effect a pub open 11-11 daily, and the upper floors house a traditional gravity-fed brewery. The company's odd name, Davis'es, stems from the fact that the two partners are called Davis and Davies.

Tony Davis was the head brewer at Ruddles in Langham, and has tried to recapture the flavours of Ruddles beers in his Grainstore products, though the range also includes former Phipps (NBC) brews. He showed us round the brewery, emphasising his view that beer should be treated gently throughout production, achieved by the gravity system. The Visitors' Centre has cast-iron columns reminiscent of St Pancras station, bare brick walls and a wooden floor, and sells all the regular Grainstore products. I started with *Cooking*, a 3.6% session bitter of traditional character. After the brewery tour we were served samples of several, including the justly renowned *1050*, the reincarnation of Ruddles County. The weather was inclement, so a planned afternoon walk along the shore of Rutland Water was replaced by an extended stay at Grainstore, to everyone's dismay!





### *Parish pumps!*

The third stop was **Barrowden** in Rutland, a picture-postcard village on the bank of the River Welland. Dinner was booked in another ancient village pub, the **Exeter Arms**, with an outlook to the village green and duck pond. Both the pub and the adjacent barn date from 1672. The barn houses the **Barrowden Brewery**, with a capacity of just two barrels, its beers available only at the Exeter Arms. Martin, the proprietor, even grows his own hops and uses them exclusively in the appropriately named **Owngear**, a 4% abv bitter.

Other brews are named after dogs he has owned; one of them, *Pilot*, is a 2.6% beer for those driving to his remote location. Most of us tried Pilot, a surprisingly full-tasting amber bitter with a hoppy finish, and also sampled *Beech*, similar at normal session bitter strength of 3.8% abv. The food, home-cooked by Martin's wife Sharon, was excellent and fortified us for the long drive home. We reached Bedford about 11.30 p.m. and agreed that this had been another successful brewpub trip; a pity that several last-minute cancellations meant that only fifteen members travelled this time.



*Exeter Arms*

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Bedfordshire  
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### **The Brewery Tap**

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# Out with the Old, In with the New at the Devvy



**W**hen Val Walter let us know that she was going to retire as licensee of the Devonshire Arms in Dudley Street, Bedford, we were apprehensive. The Charles Wells Pub Co was advertising many tenancies and getting few applicants for them, so would our pub survive? It is a classic back-street drinkers' local, Cask Marque and Good Beer Guide accredited, but with no car park and no scope for cooking. And three other popular Wells houses, all serving meals, are nearby: The Embankment, The Gordon Arms and the White Horse



We needn't have worried. Martin Bartlett and Naomi Stanford took over the tenancy and have found a formula for success. The pub is comfortably filled

most evenings. I asked them what had led them to take on the Devvy, and why they are doing so well there.

They were semi-retired and had been thinking of a pub for some time, and had kept an eye on the Wells website. Neither had held a licence before, but Martin had always been a real-ale drinker, and had worked in both the White Horse and the RAFA Club. He knew how to keep beer – hygiene is crucial in the cellar and lines – though Naomi admits she had never pulled a pint before their opening night at the Devvy. Both had roots in the Castle Road neighbourhood and liked the pub, so when it appeared on Wells's 'to-let' list they applied for it without hesitation.

They were determined to make changes. Out went the TV (except during the Six Nations!), the

jukebox, the fruit machine and the pool table.

In came more handpumps – there are six now – an open fire in winter, and music played at low volume. The sound heard now is the buzz of conversation, and that is the way they want it.

They get great pleasure from seeing everybody sitting and chatting. The front bar was redecorated, and the garden paved to make it usable in most weathers. Martin's contacts in the Bedford Rugby Club bring in pre- and post-match custom on home match days, when they carry an extra real ale.

Eagle IPA, Young's Gold and Directors are always on, plus the current guest ale from Wells's list. As trade builds, Wells and Young's seasonal ales are added to make five cask ales on offer. Demographic changes have taken place in the Castle Road neighbourhood in recent years, and they believe a serious real ale pub will succeed here. They expected an oldish clientele, but they have been pleasantly surprised by the number of twenty- and thirty-somethings drinking real ale, and by the number of women too. Their strong wine list helps, and they have been happy to see pairs of businesswomen sharing a bottle of wine in the pub.

Two big events have propelled their career at the Devvy. The first was the Royal Wedding on 29 April, when they sponsored the street party in Dudley Street, which established them in the local community. Naomi feels that it is as much a community centre as a pub now! The second was their beer festival at the Bank Holiday weekend at the end of May, which led to house and garden being packed out for much of the weekend. They haven't looked back since, and they are enjoying the publicans' life – Naomi says she'd recommend it to anybody.

*Fytton Rowland*



# Bedford CAMRA Three Branches London Trip 23rd July 2011

**T**wenty-three CAMRA members from the three Bedfordshire Branches met up on a fine Saturday in July for a joint Social in London, as has happened annually for the past three years. The party consisted of four from North Beds, seven from East Beds and twelve from South Beds Branch (who had arrived early and had breakfast, and fitted in CAMRA's National Pub of the Year, the **Harp** in **Chandos Place**, before joining us).



*Three Crowns, Babmaes St*

We all met up at **Ye Grapes** in **Shepherd Market**, a free house with six hand pumps, with a fine selection of five ales in perfect condition. Next stop was the **Chequers** in **Duke Street**, a fine old pub with Deuchars IPA, Caledonian 80/- and Adnams Bitter on offer. On next to the **Three Crowns** in **Babmaes St**, a nice old pub serving up Doom Bar and Adnams Bitter. We took the opportunity to have our lunch there, which was enjoyed by all.



*Cask and Glass, Palace St*

The **Red Lion** in **Duke of York Street**, a Fuller's pub with lots of lovely glass, was next to have our company. On offer there was most of the Fuller's range of beers. Onwards to the **Golden Lion** in **King Street**, a small old well kept pub with an unusual beer available, **Dark Star Hyllder Blonde**. This tasted of elderflowers, and you either hated or loved it. The alternative was once again



*Golden Lion, King St*

**Adnams Bitter**. Next to be graced with our presence was The **Red Lion**, also in **King Street**, a busy pub down an alley, once again serving **Adnams Bitter**.

Now we headed across **St James's Park** to the **Buckingham Arms** in **Petty France**, offering **Young's Bitter**, **Special** and **Gold**, and one guest ale, which had just run out. Last but by no means least, **The Cask and Glass** in **Palace Street** offered a good selection of **Shepherd Neame's** beers: **Kent's Best**, **Whitstable Bay**, and **Spitfire Bitter**.

A good day was had by all, and we said our good-byes and went our separate ways, some to visit more ale houses and some for home. All felt that the three branches had had a good day out. We look forward to the next day out, which everyone hoped would be soon.

*Don Allan*

## STOP PRESS! Young's Sell their Share of the Brewery

On 9th August, it was announced that **Young and Co** are to sell their 40% share of the **Wells & Young's** brewery in **Havelock Street**, **Bedford**, back to **Charles Wells & Co** for **£15 million**. The **Young's** beers will still be brewed there under the 2006 Agreement between **Wells** and **Young's**.



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# Going POTY in East Anglia

*Don Allan, Bill Roffe and I found ourselves on a trek one Monday in July, to judge on N Beds CAMRA's behalf the six county Pubs of the Year in the Eastern Region and vote for the regional Champion.*

**W**e made the trip to **Castle Hedingham** in **Essex**, and the **Bell**, a wonderful old building full of nooks and crannies. We were greeted by a friendly barman, who could offer us three beers on gravity – two from local **Mighty Oak** (Maldon IPA and Maldon Gold), and **Adnams Bitter**. All were in excellent condition. For lunch we partook of some flavoursome paninis. The pub has a good community feel and, as well as a barbecue area, has an outside brick pizza oven.

We drove on to **Suffolk** and the **Fox & Hounds** at **Thurston**, a big Victorian roadside house with an open bar and dining area. A very busy family eating pub, again quite community orientated. **Adnams Southwold**, **Woodforde's Wherry**, **Green Jack Gone Fishing ESB** and **Greene King IPA** and **London Glory** were on handpump. The **London Glory**, which we hadn't met before, had a sweet, malty, standard **Greene King** flavour. We also had a fair pint of **Wherry**. The plethora of pumpclips round the walls testifies to commitment to ale!



*Dabbling Duck, Great Massingham*

We pushed on into **Norfolk** and the **Dabbling Duck** at **Great Massingham**, a sprawling country pub overlooking a green. It incorporates the old **Rose and Crown** plus some cottages. We settled into some big leather sofas by the large fireplace. The pub is quite a walking centre and you can purchase a map of circular walks from the bar (£1, returnable if you wish). It also boasts lots of board games and reading matter including all the

classics. The bar had **Greene King IPA**, **Adnams Broadside**, **Wherry** again, and a **LocAle**, **Beeston Worth** the **Wait**, which proved a pleasant summer ale.



*Cambridge Blue, Cambridge*

On into **Cambridgeshire** and the **Cambridge Blue**, a town alehouse. Surprisingly spacious, with a nice garden at the back. Definitely a drinking pub, with loads of memorabilia round the walls and a big range of beers from **Oakham**, **Tring**, **St Peter's**, **Isle of Purbeck** and **Nethergate**. We tried **Oakham Lady Gwydir**, **Purbeck Studland Bay Wrecked** and **Nethergate Dew Drop**. All very good.

Lastly we visited our own **Engineers Arms** in **Henlow**, **Bedfordshire's** county POTY, well-known to all Beds beer-lovers. We homed in on some beers from **Salamander Brewery** in **Bradford**. The stout was particularly good.

On the Wednesday evening, we visited the **Woodman**, **Wild Hill**, **Hatfield**, **Hertfordshire**. Unchanged and unspoilt, it looks much the same as in the 50's and 60's. It is in a pleasant setting, and a good community pub. Apart from **Greene King IPA** and **Abbot** up at one end of the bar, there were beers from **Buntingford** (**July** and **Royston Red**), **Red Squirrel Summer Gold** and **Castle Rock Harvest Gold**.

We've totted up our scores but, no matter who wins, you are assured of a warm welcome, fine beer and service in comfortable surroundings at all these pubs. Do search them out.

*Gary Mudd*





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# Champion Beer of Britain (CBoB) 2011

CAMRA's Champion Beers in each category, and the overall winner, were announced at the beginning of the Great British Beer Festival at Earls Court in August.

They were:

## Overall Champion, and Winning Mild:

Oscar Wilde Mild from Mighty Oak Brewery, Essex.

## Winning Bitter:

Shropshire Gold from Salopian Brewery, Shropshire.

## Winning Best Bitter:

Peter's Well from Houston Brewery, Houston, Renfrewshire.

## Winning Golden Ale:

Loweswater Gold from Cumbrian Legendary Ales, Hawkshead, Cumbria.

## Winning Strong Bitter:

Mole Catcher from Moles Brewery, Melksham, Wiltshire.

## Winning Speciality Beer:

I Can't Believe It's Not Bitter from Oakleaf Brewery, Hampshire.

## Winning Bottled Beer:

Proper Job from St Austell Brewery, St Austell, Cornwall

The four top Winter Beers, announced in January, were also entered for the CBoB contest

## NO CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Page 3 in the Firkin has usually featured Chairman's Corner by Don Allan. But at North Beds CAMRA's AGM, held at the Wells & Young's brewery in July, Don retired as Chairman, and sadly no-one volunteered to replace him. We are carrying on with a Chairman pro tem at each branch meeting, but we need a proper Chairman to act as public face of our branch. Any member willing to consider the job should contact the Secretary...

## AND SPEAKING OF THE SECRETARY...

Ian Higgs also retired as Branch Secretary at the AGM due to pressure of work in his day job. It's tough being a lawyer. In this case there was a volunteer to replace him, none other than your Editor, Fytton Rowland. I'm sure I look good wearing two hats.

## 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.

Edited by Fytton Rowland

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# Bedford's Beer Festival – Before (and After)

I've been involved in the Bedford Beer and Cider Festival for about five years, and the committee, being desperate for an organiser, asked me to do it. When it is all over I will overcome the inevitable trauma and write about the experience for the Winter issue of the *Firkin*. This started me thinking about my experiences that led to this. I was asked a few years ago to be office manager on the basis that no-one else wanted to do it. I detect a theme here – there's no-one else, so ask Lynne! Here are some of my memories.

The annual fight to put up the membership stand without the use of swear words. It appears to have been designed by someone who didn't know people have only one pair of hands.

The year that a previous organiser wasn't available to assist with the setting up of the computer. How difficult could it be to turn the computer on and look at files? The reality was somewhat different. The computer broke, and I had to hunt through the loft for various spare parts. Finally the computer fairy waved a magic wand, I got it working and I could access the mysterious files. I was halfway through some vital task, when a nameless person unplugged it. My screams could be heard on the other side of Bedford. The computer has never been the same since and sulks regularly.

There is no typical day at the Festival and the office procedures are well established. One important task is that of making the staff badges. I wasn't allowed to have the full knowledge, but had reached the stage where I was allowed to cut the labels and put them into the plastic holders. A key skill is to be able to arrange them into alphabetic order.

The Festival is a great opportunity to sign up new members. Last year I tried a new tack, which involved walking away from the office, at which

point people turned up in their droves to join. This meant the other office staff had the delights of filling in the membership forms. Ah – the art of delegation!

The most common question the office gets asked is "Where do I get a glass?" The answer is on the lines of "From the counter with the huge sign saying Glasses."

By the time Saturday evening comes, it is difficult to remember what life is like outside the Festival, having spent so much time there. When the last customer has been ushered out, the staff take time to reflect on the highs and lows and wonder why we come back every year to volunteer. It can't just be for the free beer – or could it?

So how will my stint as organiser turn out? The organising year starts normally about March, when the committee get together and we start thinking about the logo. For the next few months committee members get busy ordering equipment, beer, checking things like the Health and Safety Plan, considering publicity and getting people to volunteer. We are helped by having a Schedule of Actions complete with dates, so we can see exactly what has been done and what still needs to be done. There are the occasional moments of crisis when it seems as though things are going completely wrong, but we always resolve the issues. Hopefully we take on board the problems and revise things for the following year

What is making it easier for me as organiser is that the other committee members know exactly what they are doing, and my title is somewhat of a misnomer. I am pleased that we decided to try offering one-third pint measures at the 34th Festival. I hope this will be appreciated by people who want to try a bigger range of the wonderful beers that we will be offering.



I would like to say that being involved has been really good fun, and I am sure that I will still think this by 9th October 2011 – when it is all over for another year. We are always on the lookout for volunteers so if you want to help, don't be shy. I am confident that the 34th Festival will be as successful as previous years. I hope you enjoy it.

Lynne Ratnett,  
Festival Organiser

## DESERT ISLAND BEERS

North Beds CAMRA's stalwart Membership Officer, Neil Ratnett, has suggested we do a survey of local real ale drinkers on the subject of 'Which beers would you take if you were to be marooned on a desert island?' Coincidentally I also saw the same suggestion in another CAMRA branch's newsletter. So come on, folks – contact the Editor with the names of the three real ales that you'd want to take to console yourself in your lonely plight..... Let's not worry too much about how you'd keep them in the absence of a cool cellar.

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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](http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk)

## SEPTEMBER

### Thursday 15 – Branch Visit to Cambridge

Details to be announced; see North Beds CAMRA website <http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk> or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [socials@northbedscamra.org.uk](mailto:socials@northbedscamra.org.uk)

### Thursday 22 – 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. Details elsewhere in this issue. Many volunteers are needed! To volunteer, e-mail staffing manager Maureen Goodge at [festivalstaff@northbedscamra.org.uk](mailto:festivalstaff@northbedscamra.org.uk) or complete the online staffing form at [www.northbedscamra.org.uk](http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk)

### Thursday 27 – Visit to Silverstone Brewery, Northants

Preference given to those who have worked as volunteers at the Bedford Beer and Cider Festival. Details from Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [socials@northbedscamra.org.uk](mailto:socials@northbedscamra.org.uk)

## NOVEMBER

### Thursday 10 – Branch Social

Details to be announced; see North Beds CAMRA website <http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk> or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [socials@northbedscamra.org.uk](mailto:socials@northbedscamra.org.uk)

### Thursday 17 – Branch meeting

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

## DECEMBER

### Thursday 15 – Branch Christmas Social

Details to be announced; see North Beds CAMRA website <http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk> or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [socials@northbedscamra.org.uk](mailto:socials@northbedscamra.org.uk)

## JANUARY

### Thursday 12 – Branch Minibus Tour to Rural North Beds Pubs

Details to be announced; see North Beds CAMRA website <http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk> or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [socials@northbedscamra.org.uk](mailto:socials@northbedscamra.org.uk)

### Thursday 19 – Branch meeting

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

## FEBRUARY

### Thursday 2 – Branch Minibus Tour to Rural North Beds Pubs

Details to be announced; see North Beds CAMRA website <http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk> or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [socials@northbedscamra.org.uk](mailto:socials@northbedscamra.org.uk)

### Thursday 9 – Branch meeting

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

### Friday 24 – Branch Visit to Luton Beer Festival

Details to be announced; see North Beds CAMRA website <http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk> or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or [socials@northbedscamra.org.uk](mailto:socials@northbedscamra.org.uk)



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IN A GLASS WITH  
A HANDLE...

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