

The Firkin



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

FREE

Newsletter of CAMRA North Bedfordshire Branch

Vol 37 No 4

Winter 2012 / 13



New Brewery is all Hart

Compliments of the Season to all our Readers

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

CAMRA LOBBY OF MPs

BEER FESTIVAL RETROSPECTIVE

WINTER BEER FESTIVALS

PUB NEWS

BREWING IN WELLINGBOROUGH

VISITING TOWN & COUNTRY
PUBS

ALE IN HAMPSTEAD

POLISH PEARL PILS

SALLY TAYLOR

BRANCH DIARY

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12 – 10.30 Sunday

Chairman's Corner

The 35th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival has come and gone. Although we are still counting the takings and paying the bills, the festival seems to have continued the regular success it has become in the years since North Beds CAMRA launched it in 1978. Many thanks to all of you who supported the event. Mark the 36th festival in your new diary: 2nd to 5th October 2013.

With the festival now behind us, our current priority is the campaign against the Government's policy to hike beer duty by above inflation – the so-called escalator. CAMRA and its industry partners were successful in attracting 100,000 signatures for their e-petition to force a parliamentary debate. This was scheduled for 1st November, just as this issue of Firkin goes to press. Thanks if you helped by signing the e-petition. CAMRA has also organised a mass parliamentary lobby on 12th

Wednesday 12th December 2012 ...

.... Is the date of CAMRA's Mass Lobby of Parliament, in support of our campaign against the beer tax escalator. Over 40 CAMRA branches have already expressed interest in supporting the event, which is fantastic. But to make a real impact, we need everybody's help. Giving the Campaign one day could have a vital impact on the future of Britain's pubs and ensure that our burgeoning brewery industry continues.

The day will involve arrival in London (for Eastern Region members) between 11am and 12 noon. Arrival in London will be followed by a visit to the Emmanuel Centre, Tufton Street, London SW1, for registration and full briefing before proceeding to the Houses of Parliament.

After being registered you will then join the

December, to persuade MPs that regular hikes in beer taxation are contributing to the constant closure of community pubs.

Our priorities in the New Year will stay with local pubs, as we embark on the annual selection of our best real ale outlets for the next Good Beer Guide. However, the GBG includes only about one in ten pubs from this area. Details of every pub and hotel bar and some private clubs are available to you in our Bedfordshire Online Pub Guide at www.bedspubs.org.uk CAMRA publishes this free guide to help you to find pubs and the pubs to find customers.

We hope to see fewer pubs closing for good in 2013 and more locally produced beer and cider on sale. I wish all our readers, brewers, cider producers and pub licensees and staff a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Peter Argyle, Branch Chairman

queue to enter Parliament to lobby your MP (at 12.30 to 1.30 p.m. for us Easterners). Once inside Parliament you will be directed to Central Lobby where you will be asked to complete a 'green card' summoning your MP to come and meet you. Alternatively, you may be able to prearrange a meeting with your MP. You don't need to be an expert on beer tax to make an impact. You just need to be able to ask your MP questions and point out a few key facts.

Following, your meeting with your MP, we will be organising a mini reception where you can feedback on your MP meeting, network with fellow CAMRA members and of course enjoy a beer.

NOTE NEW VENUE: The North Beds CAMRA branch meetings in January and February 2013 will take place at the Bedford Rowing Club, Duckmill Lane, Bedford

Festival Organiser – Part Deux



Oh yes, I'm back, Festival Organiser for the second year, and no bribery involved on either side!

Plan A, over the months, turned into B, C and finally D plans had to be remade. Major late issues were in the delivery of the equipment from St Albans and the swapping of entrances at the Corn Exchange because of building work. The schedule for set-up Sunday was a masterpiece of planning thanks to John Martin, Facilities Manager. Everything arrived but not necessarily in the right order.

My planned early start on Sunday 30 September turned out not to be. On my arrival, the carpet was almost down, and people were demanding pints of tea, coffee, or beer (Sheffield Bitter). I then slipped effortlessly into my secondary role of tea girl. Shrink-wrapped pallets with equipment from CAMRA HQ arrived later than expected. My next role was to rush around photographing them before they were unpacked to ensure they were re-packed in the same order. This proved to be very useful come pack-up Sunday. The scaffolding – delivered earlier than planned – went up with no hitches and no left over parts. There was a brief moment of panic, however. A hoist, used to put coolers on to

the stillage, didn't go high enough. I then asked if the other, slightly bigger hoist, would be more useful. Apparently it was!

On Monday my pathetic attempt to get out of organising by falling and straining my hamstring was immediately thwarted on the realisation that I didn't have a deputy. So Keep Calm and Keep Organising was the order of the day.

Things went well over the next couple of days apart from the sabotage of the main banner affixed to the Corn Exchange front railings. Who keeps wire cutters in their pocket on the off-chance that they come across a banner that offends them and need cutting down? Answers on a postcard please.



Wednesday – the main hall looked fit for a festival. It was great to see many new and not previously seen local brewers featured. We nearly opened with free beer for customers – a good way to scare the treasurer. Fixing cask price labels was considerably delayed by the provision of 'wrong sex' Velcro dots which meant labels did not stick on to the casks.

Much excitement on Thursday as the festival gets almost blanket coverage in local papers. I exaggerate slightly, but

thanks for the publicity folks, and one customer actually recognises me from my picture.



Things seem rather quiet on Wednesday and Thursday. Lots of willing volunteers but perhaps fewer willing customers than in previous years. Friday and Saturday seemed busier despite the rain on Friday.

All too soon, the festival comes to a close with the appearance of Faeries Wear Boots on Saturday evening – great music, guys!

After a burst of activity to dismantle counters we tuck into the midnight feast. A 2a.m. falling into bed is quickly followed by 8a.m. crawling out of bed to return to the Corn Exchange for the big clear-up. Finally by 5p.m., having handed the Corn Exchange back, I staggered home not even having the energy to think – Never again!

Once again I pay a massively huge tribute to all the volunteers who helped before, during and after the event. It would not happen without all the time and effort that is put in, with very little reward, apart from beer and the warm glow of being involved with one of Bedford's exciting annual soirées. As for next year, don't be shy about volunteering – your Festival Needs You. As for the organiser role, in the words of Arnie, Ale be back?

Lynne Ratnett

The Firkin

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

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Winter beer festivals

Pig's Ear Beer & Cider Festival

Tue 4 to Sat 8 December at Round Chapel, Powerscroft Road, Hackney, London E5 0PU (served by 8 bus routes and 2 rail lines). Open Tue-Thu 12-10.30, Fri-Sat 12-11, admission £4, CAMRA members £2. Over 200 real ales including festival specials, cider, bottled and foreign beers.

www.pigsear.org.uk

17th Cambridge Winter Ale Festival

Thu 17 to Sat 19 January at University Social Club, Mill Lane CB2 1RX (X5 bus 15 min). Open Thu 5-10.30, Fri 12-3, 5-10.30, Sat 12-10.30, admission £2.50, free Fri lunch and to CAMRA members all times. About 100 real ales including winter beers from local and national breweries, plus ciders and foreign beers. Regular X5 bus from Bedford.

www.cambridgebeerfestival.com

National Winter Ales Festival

Wed 23 to Sat 26 January at Sheridan Suite, Oldham Road, Manchester M40 8EA. Open Wed 5-10.30, Thu-Sat 12-10.30, admission Wed/Thu £2, Fri £3 before 4.30, Fri eve/Sat £5. CAMRA members free Wed/Thu, £1 off Fri/Sat. Over 300 British and foreign draught beers, bottled beers, cider and perry. No advance tickets – pay at the door. Food all day to 9pm, special deal on buses to venue. www.nwaf.org.uk

Derby Winter Beer Festival

Wed 20 to Sat 23 February at the Roundhouse, Pride Park (next to rail stn). Great selection of real ales, cider, perry, foreign beers and maybe meads. Good food all sessions and live bands evenings. Check website for full info nearer date. Regular trains from Bedford and Luton.

www.derbycamra.org.uk

30th Luton Beer & Cider Festival

Thu 21 to Sat 23 February at Hightown Sports & Arts Centre, Concorde St, LU2 0JD (rail stn 10 min). Admission Thu 5-11 £2.50, Fri-Sat 12-6 £2.50, after 6 Fri £3.50, Sat £1.50. CAMRA members free except after 6pm Fri £1.50. About 110 real ales, plus cider, perry and foreign beers. Hot and cold food all sessions, no under-18s admitted. Live entertainment from 8.30. Frequent trains from Bedford and Flitwick. Check website for beer and cider lists nearer date.

www.lutonbeerfestival.com

London Drinker Beer & Cider Festival

Wed 6 to Fri 8 March at Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, WC1H 9AU (St. Pancras Stn 5 min). Open Wed-Thu 12-3, 5-10.30, Fri 12-10.30. Admission Wed-Thu lunch free, otherwise £3.50, CAMRA members £2.50. Over 150 real ales, cider, perry and foreign beers, food all sessions. Frequent trains from Bedford, Flitwick and Luton.

Check website for more details nearer date.

www.camranorthlondon.org.uk

St Neots Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival

Fri 14 to Sat 16 March at Priory Centre, Priory Lane, PE19 6HB. Check website for details nearer date. Regular X5 bus from Bedford. www.hunts.camra.org.uk/festival

ADVANCE NOTICE: NOTE THE DATES!

The Great British Beer Festival 2013

GBBF will be held at Olympia, London, on Tue 13 to Sat 17 August 2013 – this is a week later than usual.

36th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

Our local festival will be held in the Corn Exchange, Bedford, on Wed 2 to Sat 5 October 2013.

30th Luton Beer & Cider Festival



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

Thurs 21st - Sat 23rd February 2013

About 110 real ales plus real ciders and perries
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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-6pm	Free	£2.50
Saturday	6pm-11pm	Free	£1.50

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Proof of age may be required. We reserve the right to refuse admission. Last admission 10.30pm. Accompanied children allowed in the third (non-bar) hall between midday and 6 p.m. on Saturday only. All details correct at time of publishing and may be subject to change.



Visit: www.lutonbeerfestival.com for latest details

6th - 8th March 2013

Camden Centre, Bidborough St, WC1H 9AU
(Nearest tube King's Cross St. Pancras)

Wednesday	6th March	12 - 3	5 - 10.30pm
Thursday	7th March	12 - 3	5 - 10.30pm
Friday	8th March	12 -	10.30pm

Admission free Wednesday & Thursday lunchtimes, £3.50 at other times, £2.50 for CAMRA members. Last admission 10pm

For more details see www.camranorthlondon.org.uk

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Pub News

Three Cups, Newnham St, Bedford



A fond farewell to Tony Kennedy, who left this popular pub early in November. Tony has been a good friend to CAMRA, allowing us to hold branch meetings in the public bar. Many thanks, and our very best wishes for the future. The Cups closed in November to be refurbished before the next tenant takes over. We hope the pub will continue to serve quality real ales.

Fox & Hounds, Goldington Rd, Bedford

A warm welcome to Sean and Joanne, who took over



in the summer. Sean previously ran the Rose & Crown in Rushden, while Joanne had the New Inn in St Neots. They are keen to build cask ale sales and

hope to offer a range of Greene King and guest beers in due course. They continue to serve pub meals too. Call 01234 353993.

New Inn, Wymington

Welcome to Martin, new landlord of this popular village pub. The regulars are Greene King IPA and Abbot, with two changing guest beers. When we visited, Martin was unable to serve food, but he expected to offer home-cooked pub meals soon. There is a large garden with play area, while pub games are played in a converted barn across the car park. Call 01933 355385.

White Horse, Wymington

Meanwhile, the White Horse just up the road has defied imminent closure with temporary landlord Ray Lees behind the bar. Still



officially for sale, but when we last called Ray looked forward to the arrival of one or two handpumps.

RAFA Club, Ashburnham Rd, Bedford

As we might expect, the RAFA Club celebrated Battle of Britain week in September. The Club holds occasional beer festivals and is a great place to enjoy a well-kept pint. CAMRA members and other visitors may be admitted when the club is not busy with its own events. Call 01234 350107.

Horseshoes, Blunham

A belated welcome to Roy and Elizabeth Brown, who took over at the end of May. They serve Wells Eagle IPA and a guest beer, which was Young's Bitter when we last called. Call 01767 640526.

Cannon, Newport Pagnell

Sadly, the recent death of Sally Taylor at the Woolpack has not been our only loss in the licensed trade. Adam Hepburn, the much admired, long-standing landlord of the Cannon in Newport Pagnell, died in October. Adam knew everything about real ale and made the Cannon into a centre of excellence for beer, earning the pub 16 consecutive entries in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide. A cellar master not easily forgotten.

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New Brewery is all Hart

On 25th October the people who had slaved away for long hours at the 35th Bedford Beer and Cider Festival got their just reward – a trip to our newest Lo-cAle brewery, Hart Family Brewery in Wellingborough. It turned out to be housed in historic premises – part of the town's Georgian gas-works. Rob Hart welcomed us, and explained that he and his wife Sarah had been enthusiastic home brewers while working in the wine trade in their day jobs, became disenchanted with the wine business, and de-



cided to reintroduce brewing to Wellingborough. The brewing equipment was installed and ready to go within three months of their signing the lease on the building, and their flagship beer, a tawny ale at 4.1% abv, was launched in May 2012. Its name? No. 1! A strong ruby mild followed (4.7% abv), which naturally was No. 3. And No. 8, a dark beer of 5.0% abv, is now sometimes available

too. All of their brews are sold not only in casks but also as bottle-conditioned beers. No. 6, of which just a few bottles were left for us lucky visitors to buy, had been a green hop ale. Just one brew of 200 bottles had been made – and it can't be repeated until next year's hop harvest. A pale beer with lots of hops was planned for Christmastime too – no number yet!

Why the numbers? Rob and Sarah don't like the silly names many brewers apply to their brews, so they decided just to number them and give a brief description of each on the pumpclips and bottle labels. And the first three were 1, 3 and 8 because of their building's date, 1833. Firkins of No. 1 and No. 3 were available and we sampled them copiously, as is our wont on brewery visits. Response to both beers was favourable, as it also had been among customers at our Festival. Rob didn't seem to mind the amount we drank, as we were the first CAMRA



branch to visit, beating even their own branch, Northants. However, they open the brewery every Saturday, so if any Firkin reader wants to visit, just hop on a train one stop northwards from Bedford – the brewery is conveniently near the station. And on 11th November they planned a pop-up pub in a marquee outside. New brewers are pretty enterprising in their approach these days.

Afterwards, we visited the Coach & Horses, Wellingborough's premier real ale pub with twelve handpumps. Hart beers were on some of them, including the elusive No. 8, which also met with our approval. And the pubs small kitchen produced an excellent dinner too, though your editor's opinion may have been influenced by the fact that his meal was he first one delivered, while our luckless Social Secretary, Gary Mudd, was served last!

Fytton Rowland

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Bedford Town Walk and North Beds Minibus

Helen and I started a Bedford town walk at the newly refurbished **Burnaby Arms**. This has been taken on by Martin and Naomi of the Devonshire Arms and is managed by Naomi's daughter. The decor is understated and tasteful, with a pleasant atmosphere for convivial drinks and conversation. There are four handpumps and the beers are from Wells & Young's with one guest. We had a good pint of Eagle whilst we waited for other members. Eventually Alan Higgs arrived, and we had another pint and watched a steady stream of customers, mostly young and probably just back from work. This looks hopeful for the future of this pub as a community hub. Since three seemed the sum total of our group, our intrepid trio set off.

Our second stop was the **Bear**, a gem with its long narrow bar and stained glass windows. Greene King IPA and a guest are stocked. We had a pint of Bateman's Summer Swallow, which was in fine condition.

We moved on to the next refurbished pub of the evening, Greene King's **George & Dragon**. The initial impression was good – the place was well decorated and hand-pumps on the bar beckoned, dispensing IPA, Abbot and London Glory. We tried the London Glory. Roger Stokes joined us here and had a pint of Abbot. Sadly neither beer was in good nick.

Disappointed by this, we moved on to the **Castle** to finish our evening. Eagle and Bombardier were both good in this reliable favourite, and we enjoyed a pleasant end to our walk.

A month later, thirteen of us met at the **Wellington Arms**, eager to visit the wilds of the North by minibus. Our first stop was the **St John Arms** in **Melchbourne**, a basic and unchanging pub, beloved of bikers, with

darts and cheese skittles, straightforward food and Greene King IPA and Abbot, both in good condition.

Next, the **Three Compasses** in **Upper Dean**, our CAMRA branch's most northerly pub – a fine old thatched building, well decorated and with a thriving restaurant. It was fairly busy and service was friendly. It served Eagle, Courage Directors and a guest, all excellent.

Tearing ourselves away, we visited the **New Inn** at **Wymington** next. A North Beds limestone building, this pub is bigger than it looks. It boasts a large, open bar and separate restaurant. Again we had friendly service, the seats were comfortable and the beers in good condition.

However, we had a job to do, and we moved on to **The Swan with Two Nicks** in **Sharnbrook**, now in the hands of a holding company. Its managers seem to be doing a good job. The interior boasts two bars, modernised but quite cosy, and the Wells and Young's beers were also good.

Our last visit of the evening was to the **Prince of Wales** in **Bromham**. This pub has had a full refit by Wells and is now an open dining pub with a modern interior. Happy to visit this pub at last, we experienced good service with beers in good condition. We all felt that this trip had shown us some excellent hostelry to the northern extremes of Bedfordshire.

We were dropped off at the **Bedford Arms** in Bedford. Whilst we kept warm waiting for our taxi home, we tried Marston's Single Hop Nelson Sauvin, one of those powerful New Zealand hops with a really clean aroma and taste. An excellent finish to the evening.

Gary Mudd

TRING

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Here at Tring Brewery we select the finest ingredients and craft them into a variety of sumptuous, award winning ales.

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For 2012, each of our monthly specials will be brewed using only specially selected UK hop varieties. Look out for these and our other beers in your local pub, or head to our brewery shop located on the outskirts of Tring, Hertfordshire.

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WILL CONTINUE
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Ale in Hampstead

In October, the annual Beds CAMRA trip to London visited Hampstead. East Beds CAMRA gathered at the Parcel Yard, a new Fuller's pub in Kings Cross station, but the North and South Beds parties went straight to Hampstead and the **Duke of Hamilton**, a free house, with Adnams Topaz Gold, Fuller's London Pride, Mauldon's Suffolk Pride, Wentworth Best, GK Abbot and Dark Star Hophead on. Hophead, 3.8% abv, seemed the right starting point, and indeed it was very good.

The **Holly Bush** was another lovely old pub



in a narrow back street. A Fuller's house, it had four beers of theirs plus Harvey's Sussex Bitter. Many chose

London Porter, but I had Wild River, a pale bitter, well kept and enjoyable.

The scheduled third stop, the Horseshoe, turned out to be a restaurant, so we skipped



it and headed for the **Flask**, justly Hampstead's most famous pub. North Beds lunched there, and I had a

delicious venison stew. Four Young's beers included Sundown, a seasonal we hadn't met before, plus Bombardier and Adnams Ghost Ship. Sundown seemed nondescript.

There followed a short walk from the village centre to South End Green, Hampstead's other focus. The **Freemasons Arms**, mostly a restaurant, had drinkers' seating outside in the sunshine, so we stopped there. Adnams

Southwold, Sharp's Doom Bar and Fuller's London Pride were on, of which unoriginal selection I had the Pride.

Next, the **Magdala** had Doom Bar again plus GK IPA and Wyre Piddle's Piddle Through the Seasons (4.5% abv) – not surprisingly we all chose the last-named, which proved very acceptable.

Fifty yards to the **Garden Gate**, with an interesting selection: Bateman's Autumn Gold (a multigrain beer), Wadworth's Horizon, Brentwood Spooky Moon, Doom Bar again, and Downton's Chocolate Orange Delight, a 5.8% abv stout. Chickening out of the chocolate orange, I had the Horizon, a pale bitter, and liked it.

We skipped two pubs in favour of the **Southampton Arms** in Gospel Oak, socially a million miles from Hampstead. A small, basic boozer not serving food, which has



been CAMRA's London Pub of the Year, it had eleven beers on handpump, most of

them from small London breweries, plus two real ciders. I couldn't resist Dark Star American Pale Ale, third placed in CAMRA's Champion Beers of Britain contest this year. Two beers from Brodie's of Leyton were on: I couldn't manage Hoxton at 6.6% abv, so for my last of the day I chose Kiwi, a pale beer with a most distinctive flavour derived from New Zealand hops. I've been trying to go on one of these trips for years, and when I finally made it, it certainly didn't disappoint.

Fytton Rowland

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

Unless otherwise stated, for all events further details can be obtained from, and bookings made with, Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or e-mail socials@northbedscamra.org.uk

DECEMBER

Thursday 13 – Christmas Social

At the Devonshire Arms, Dudley Street, Bedford, 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m.

JANUARY

Thursday 10 – Rural Pub Tour 1

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

Thursday 17 – Branch Meeting

Business meeting at Bedford Rowing Club, Duckmill Lane, Bedford, at 8 p.m. CAMRA members only.

Thursday 24 – Walking tour of Bedford town pubs

Meet at the Wellington Arms, Wellington Street, Bedford, at 7 p.m.

Thursday 31 – Rural Pub Tour 2

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

FEBRUARY

Thursday 7 – Branch Meeting

Business meeting at Bedford Rowing Club, Duckmill Lane, Bedford, at 8 p.m. CAMRA members only.

Friday 22 – Branch visit to Luton Beer and Cider Festival

See page 6 for details of the festival, and website for details of the N Beds CAMRA branch visit

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What I Drank on My Holidays

In August I spent five days in Lublin, in the east of Poland. It's a lovely city and I enjoyed the trip, but I'm a member of the Campaign For Real Ale not the Campaign For Better Holidays, so what was the beer like? Well, a regional brewery, Browary



Lubelskie S.A., dominated the local bars. It currently brews on two sites: one of these (pictured) is in Lublin city centre and has its own well. Their most prominent brand was **Perła** ('Pearl'). This turns out to be a brand covering several beers: the core beer is **Perła Chmielowa** ('Hoppy'). The bottled version of this sits at 6% abv and is a good example of a non-Czech pils: not as much body or malt as a British beer drinker might like, but it has a clean aroma, is crisp and refreshing, and has well-balanced hops giving bitterness rather than tartness on the aftertaste. **Perła Export** is very similar, but a little less strong at 5.2%.

Perła Niepasteryzowana 'Unpasteurised': as the temperature was 30°C and I was in an outdoor venue with no cellar, it came straight from a fridge and any additional complexity was not really evident. It's very similar to the brewery's pasteurised pils, not too surprisingly, and it's nice to see that it's both available and actively marketed in the local area.

Finally, the brewery had two flavoured bottled beers widely available in Lublin while I was there: **Perła Summer** and **Perła Miodowa** ('Honey'). Perła Summer is an apple beer: from the ingredients list, something I'd like to see on British bottled beers, about 20% pasteurised apple juice is added to 80% pasteurised beer, resulting in a 5% abv mixture. Further additives include stevia, a non-sugar sweetener, and as a result the beer is remarkably sweet while still having most of the hops and bitterness of the pils. It was so sweet that about half a bottle was enough for me: on the other hand it really did taste of apples. Perła Miodowa was rather nice: less sweet than the Summer beer – that made all the difference to its drinkability – more complex than the basic pils, and the favourite of most people I asked. It's 6% abv. There's a noticeably sweet but not sickly front to it, a honeyed but not particularly sweet middle, and a hoppy edge on the aftertaste.



Overall the trip was an encouraging reminder that even less well-known regions of Europe can still have their distinctive beer traditions, and it's always worth trying the local brew!

John Rowland



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Sally Taylor

Sally Taylor, landlady of the Woolpack Inn, Shefford, died suddenly on 28th September 2012



Before the Woolpack, Sally ran the Three Horseshoes in Renhold with her late husband, Len. On Shefford Fair Night in October 1985, Sally opened the doors of the Woolpack. She ran the Woolpack in her own way, and a radical external paint-job and signage announced that the Woolpack was “Just a Pub”.

Originally a Whitbread tenant, Sally bought the Woolpack in 1992, under the Beer Orders. She encouraged her customers in lively conversation and in love of music. She supported darts, dominoes and cribbage teams within the local leagues, and provided a home for displaced teams from pubs with less-enlightened licensees. Sally supported the Shefford Town Cricket Club, providing teas for their home fixtures at the adjacent Digswell Park.

Parties included the parrot-themed and Halloween conkers parties; on New Year's Eve, dancing on the tables was not unknown! Open fires at each end of the room provided a warm welcome. Sally's 'Open All Hours' Arkwright's till, and Angela, the shop dummy whose clothing would change as regularly

as her seating position within the pub always entertained.

Visitors were bemused by the bric-a-brac and paintings on display throughout the pub, even in the lavatories each of which had a price tag; it seemed that everything was available to buy! Loving art, curios and trinkets, she would spot bargains and re-offer them to customers. Not for profit – Sally donated the proceeds to a range of charities.

Sally carried a range of ever-changing beers from the free trade, including those from Sarah Hughes, Green Jack, Timothy Taylor's, Holden's, Adnams and Mauldon's breweries. Beers to suit all tastes were as important to Sally as to her appreciative regulars.

Sally Taylor ran the Woolpack in her own inimitable way for almost 27 years. She will be sorely missed, and Shefford is a poorer place for her passing.

Alan Brewster

Great British Beer Festival
Olympia, London,
Tue 13th-Sat 17th August 2013

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