

# The Firkin



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

FREE

Newsletter of CAMRA North Bedfordshire Branch

Vol 38 No 1

Spring 2013

## *Devonshire Arms is Pub of the Year*

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**BOURNE-AGAIN PUBS**  
**WINTER BEERS OF BRITAIN**  
**BRANCH DIARY**  
**HITCHIN FESTIVAL REPRIEVED**

# THE DEVONSHIRE ARMS

*Now Serving  
Real Draught  
Cider*



*Free Wi-Fi  
available*

*Fine Wines*

*Lovely courtyard garden*

## CAMRA North Beds Pub of the Year 2013

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

Serving an increased range of Quality Cask Ales—Eagle IPA, Young's London Gold, Young's Special, Directors and Guest Ales.

Our Sister Pub “The Burnaby Arms”, Stanley Street, Bedford is now open. Tel: 01234 330056.

*CAMRA North Beds Most Improved Pub 2013*

### *The Devonshire Arms Beer and Cider Festival 2013*

*Spring Bank Holiday weekend*

*Starts Friday 24th May (17.00) till Monday 27th May*

*Large selection of Real Ales and Ciders*

*Snacks available.*

[www.devonshirearmsbedford.co.uk](http://www.devonshirearmsbedford.co.uk)

32 Dudley Street, Bedford MK40 3TB      Tel: 01234 359329

# Chairman's Corner

January and February may be quiet months for the pub trade, but they are a busy time for CAMRA branches, with annual statistics to compile, an annual prices survey to complete and selecting our best local pubs for the next Good Beer Guide due out in September. This recognises the publicans who keep the best real ale, because it is the skill and hard graft of those who look after the beer that counts.

One of our best jobs every year is to declare our annual Pub of the Year award. This year we are delighted to make three awards – to the Devonshire Arms and Burnaby Arms in Bedford, and for the second time to the Bedford Arms in Souldrop. Congratulations to the licensees of these splendid pubs.

New small breweries continue to appear. This time we welcome the Copper Kettle Craft Brewery, just across our northern border in Bedford Road, Rushden. We look forward to meeting the brewers and to sampling their ales in local pubs in coming months.

CAMRA's beer festivals are run entirely by volunteers. Northants CAMRA has sadly cancelled its beer festival in May because they cannot find enough volunteers to organise it. However, we look forward to bringing you our 36th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival next October – providing we have enough people to run it!

Peter Argyle, Branch Chairman

## Parliamentary Success?

CAMRA's Mass Parliamentary Lobby day on 12th December was the largest lobbying event CAMRA has ever held in 40 years, with over 1,000 CAMRA members lobbying their MPs, and almost half of all MPs spoken to. We sought the MPs' support in pressuring the Chancellor of the Exchequer to abandon the 'Escalator', which raises the tax on beer by an above-inflation amount every year – which harms the brewing and pub industries and jeopardises employment in them, as well as hurting beer drinkers financially.

Three of us from North Beds CAMRA met Richard Fuller, MP for Bedford, who entertained us to tea in one of the members' tea-rooms. Although not a member of the Fuller brewing family, he is very supportive of the real-ale and pub causes. But he is member on the Government side of the House, so it remains to be seen how he votes on the Escalator! Other CAMRA members attempted to lobby Alistair Burt MP and Nadine Dorries MP. Mr Burt was abroad on Govern-

ment business on 12th December, but he will meet North-East Beds constituents on 2nd March. He is believed to be sympathetic to the CAMRA cause, but as a Minister he will be expected to toe the party line in any division. Mrs Dorries did not meet CAMRA members resident in Mid-Beds constituency, and her letter did not show any sympathy with our cause. The Mass Lobby had an effect – over 100 MPs signed an 'Early Day Motion' calling for an end to the Escalator.

Subsequently, on another CAMRA campaign, there was a success when Business Secretary Vince Cable announced that he is going to legislate to deal with the issue of excessive beer prices charged by pubcos to the tenants of their tied houses, since the brewing industry has not produced a voluntary solution. The House of Commons supported this move unanimously – well done, MPs!

# Pub News

## Three Cups, Newnham St, Bedford

This popular pub has been refurbished and re-opened by Greene King as a new-style Beer House with a comfortable, relaxing one-bar interior. Eight hand-



pumps offer guest ales from local breweries as well as the regular Greene King IPA, Abbot and Old Speckled Hen. We visited in January (see page 11). The pub is managed by Jenny Gunning and Richard Boyden for a private company run by Pasquale and Janet Mancini, licensees at the nearby Ship in St Cuthberts Street. Food is available every lunchtime and evening until 9pm. Call 01234 352153.

## New Inn, Wymington

New landlord Martin's plans to start serving food by Christmas were set back when his kitchen suffered a flood. We hope home-cooked meals will soon be available. In the bar are Greene King IPA, Abbot and two changing guest beers on the four hand-pumps. Call 01933 355385.

## White Horse, Wymington

The White Horse just up the road now offers Greene King IPA on handpump after months without real ale. Although Admiral Taverns are officially still trying to sell the pub, we hope normal service to customers will continue.

## George & Dragon, Mill Street, Bedford

Our Autumn Firkin report on this refurbished pub was a bit inaccurate. It is primarily a



drinkers' pub, open from 11 to 11 Sunday to Thursday, with late closing at 1am on Friday and 2am on Saturday. The hand-pumps serve Greene King Old

Golden Hen plus regularly changed guest beers. Food is available from 11 to 9 daily, but the main bar and attractive conservatory are not devoted exclusively to diners. Call 01234 345061.

## Fox & Hounds, Riseley

Although this popular village pub changed hands in the autumn without showing much new, licensees Tony and Diane Goodman may be planning a few changes in coming months. The pub will be closed for a short period in March for the refurbishment. Further news in our next issue. Meanwhile, call 01234 709714 or visit [www.foxandhoundsriseley.co.uk](http://www.foxandhoundsriseley.co.uk)

## Admiral, Clifton

Locals have started a campaign to save this well-loved pub, just across our south-eastern branch border – for the second time. Greene King tried to close the pub before, but a spirited local campaign succeeded, with the popular landlady remaining in place. Now Greene King has again put the pub up for sale, although advertised as licensed premises. Fortunately, its position at a busy road junction may make it difficult to sell the site for development. Local planners might well refuse permission for change of use. Meanwhile, if you fancy owning a popular village pub, check the agent's website at [www.fleurets.com/pubs/pubs-for-sale](http://www.fleurets.com/pubs/pubs-for-sale)



# North Beds CAMRA's Pub of the Year is The Devonshire Arms

**T**he Devonshire Arms in Dudley Street, Bedford, is North Beds CAMRA's Pub of the Year for 2013. When the area was being built in the 1890s, Charles Wells bought a site for four houses, and put up a pub on it. It opened in 1899 and it's been a Wells pub ever since.

Two years ago, Martin Bartlett and Naomi



Stanford became its licensees – out went the jukebox, the fruit machine, the pool table and (except during the Six Nations) the TV. In came six handpumps, an open fire, and four cask ales (Eagle, Young's Gold, Directors and a

guest) always on. Those four have now become six – Young's Special added to the regulars, and a second guest added too. And three Weston's real ciders are now served.

The Devvy has seen a remarkable increase in patronage. It is often full to overflowing, and the buzz of conversation is louder than the jukebox ever was. It is a real ale house, but not all the customers drink cask ale. Many just like the atmosphere of the place. The area provides thousands of potential customers within walking distance, and the Devvy proves that they can still be attracted to a traditional backstreet drinkers' pub. Needless to say, the beer is well-kept – the Devvy was recently named Wells Pubco's Best Cask Beer House, out of their 250 pubs! Given this, Martin and Naomi have

been able to extract the odd concession from Wells Pubco – so Pottton Chestnut was a recent guest ale.

North Beds CAMRA's Most Improved Pub

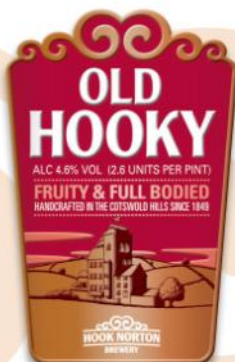
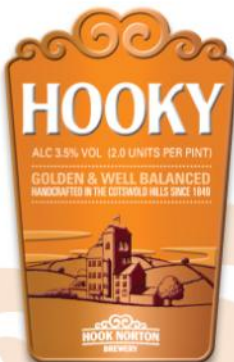


for 2013 is the Burnaby Arms in the Black Tom district of Bedford. And guess what – Martin and Naomi are

also the licensees there too! The same formula has been applied in Black Tom – another Victorian neighbourhood – as in Russell Park. A traditional, warm, comfortable drinkers' local with four real ale always on. And the magic is beginning to work again, with patronage at the Burnaby rising nicely.

The CAMRA branch has nominated the Bedford Arms at Souldrop as our Country Pub of the Year for 2013. It's a lovely old village pub up near the Northants border, a free house that always serves an interesting selection of real ales in good condition, with a friendly landlord who also provides excellent pub meals. Drop in if you're up that way!

Meanwhile, South Beds CAMRA have nominated the Albion at Ampthill as their Pub of the Year for the second year running. Belonging to the B&T Brewery, and offering a combination of several B&T beers plus a range of interesting guests, the Albion went on to be Bedfordshire's overall Pub of the Year last year. Finally, East Beds CAMRA chose their Pub of the Year while this issue was in the press.



## Have you heard the Lion roar?

At Hook Norton we've got an exciting new addition to our range of great tasting beers. Visit our tasting bar, open Monday to Saturday 9.30am – 4.30pm, to try Lion - pride of the Cotswolds. Brewery Tours run twice a day Monday to Saturday at just £11.50 per person including a half hour tutored tasting - definitely not to be missed! For more information visit our website.

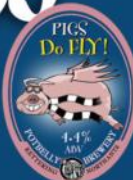
The Brewery, Hook Norton, Oxfordshire, OX15 5NY 01608 730384 e: [vc@hooky.co.uk](mailto:vc@hooky.co.uk)  
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# Spring beer festivals

## 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 and Flitwick .  
[www.camranorthlondon.org.uk](http://www.camranorthlondon.org.uk)

## 37<sup>th</sup> Loughborough Beer Festival

Thu 7 to Sat 9 March at the Polish Club, True Lovers Walk (off William St) LE11 3DB. 70 beers plus cider and perry. Open 12-11, admission £1.50, Fri/Sat after 6pm £3, CAMRA members free. Hot and cold food, live music Fri/Sat eves. Regular trains from Bedford.  
[www.loughboroughcamra.org.uk](http://www.loughboroughcamra.org.uk)

## St Neots Beer & Cider Festival (Booze on the Ouse)

Thu 14 to Sat 16 March at Priory Centre, Priory Lane PE19 2BH. Open Thu 5-11, Fri 12-11, Sat 12-10. Admission £1, after 7pm: Thu £2, Fri £3, CAMRA members free. Over 60 real ales plus cider, perry and foreign beers, tombola and CAMRA shop. Food available all sessions, free soft drinks for drivers. Regular X5 bus from Bedford.  
[www.huntscamra.org.uk](http://www.huntscamra.org.uk)

## Leicester Beer Festival

Wed 20 to Sat 23 March at Charotar Patidar Samaj, off St Margaret's Way, LE1 3AE (rail stn about 15 min). Open Wed 5-11, Thu/Fri 11-11, Sat 11-10. Admission £2.50, Fri after 3pm £3.50, Thu before 3 and Sat after 5 free, CAMRA members free all times. About 220 beers, including festival specials plus over 30 ciders and perries. Local bars feature 80 beers brewed within 25 miles of Leicester. Authentic Indian curries plus English food.  
[www.leicestercamra.org.uk](http://www.leicestercamra.org.uk)

## 22nd East Anglian Beer Festival

Wed 24 to Sat 27 April at Apex, Charter Square, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3FD. Open 12-11 daily, admission £3, CAMRA members free. Over 80 real ales plus ciders. Food available all sessions.  
[www.freewebs.com/westsuffolkcamra](http://www.freewebs.com/westsuffolkcamra)

## Coventry Beer Festival

Fri 26 to Sat 27 April at Coventry RFC, Butts Park Arena, Butts Rd (near city ring road J7, rail stn 15min, buses from city centre). Open 12-4, 6-11. Admission lunch £2, Eves £3, CAMRA members £1, Sat eve free. Food available all sessions. Over 80 real ales including special brews from local breweries plus ciders, perries and country wines.  
[www.covnwcamra.org.uk](http://www.covnwcamra.org.uk)

## 40<sup>th</sup> Cambridge Beer Festival

Mon 20 to Sat 25 May, under canvas on Jesus Green (X5 bus 10 min). Wide range of local and national beers of all styles, plus cider, perry, mead, country wines and foreign beers. Food includes famous CAMRA Cheese Counter, locally produced bread, pork pies, ham, etc. Regular X5 bus from Bedford. Check website nearer time.  
[www.cambridgebeerfestival.com](http://www.cambridgebeerfestival.com)

## 13<sup>th</sup> Banbury Beer Festival

Thu 9 to Sat 11 May at the TA Centre, Oxfoed Road OX16 7AN. About 90 real ales plus cider and entertainment. Check website nearer time.  
[www.northoxfordshirecamra.org.uk](http://www.northoxfordshirecamra.org.uk)

## NO Northamptonshire Beer Festival

The CAMRA festival held normally each May at Delapré Abbey has been cancelled for 2013. After seven years running successful festivals, the branch is sadly unable to find enough volunteers to organise the event. Further details at  
[www.northantscamra.org.uk](http://www.northantscamra.org.uk)



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Bedfordshire  
Pub Of The  
Year 2008

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# North by Northwest

**T**he northwest corner of North Beds CAMRA's area had been a bit neglected, so in November our minibus trip visited Harrold, Carlton and Turvey. First



stop, the **Oakley Arms** in **Harrold**, with a historic AA sign on its wall that suits the atmosphere of the village. A clas-

sic Charles Wells village pub, with a welcoming feel and Eagle on handpump – usually Directors is also available, but it had run out.

Just across the road is a quite different pub – once the Globe, now the **Muntjac**, another attractive old building which nowadays doubles as an Indian restaurant. The pub and restaurant businesses are quite separate, though, and the pub part is a fine free house with five handpumps – Abbot, Adnams the Bitter and Thwaites Best Bitter were available at our visit. The Thwaites was a classic amber session bitter and well kept. Both Harrold pubs had reasonable prices for their beer (£2.90-£3.00 a pint).



Next to a one-pub village a short distance away – **Carlton**, with its free house, the **Fox**, tucked away in a cul-de-sac, a lovely old thatched pub. Busy even on a November Thursday, the

Fox has a restaurant as well as a proper drinkers' bar. Doom Bar, Tribute and

Buntingford Hurricane were on. (I'd last met Hurricane at the RAFA Club during Battle of Britain week when they also had, of course, Spitfire available.) Hurricane is a clean-tasting hoppy bitter of 4.3% abv, and was in good condition. An impressive pub, the best of the evening.



Then to another two-pub village, **Turvey**, where good things come in threes – the Three Cranes and the Three Fyshes, to be precise. The **Three Cranes** is a Greene King house which formerly had a reputation for good food but had closed its restaurant. It's a Victorian building with letting bedrooms too. They had IPA and St Edmunds on from the GK stable, plus Brains Merlin Oak (4.3% abv) as guest. Wolf Brewery's Poppy Ale was due on as next guest for the Remembrance Day weekend – a hoppy blond bitter which I enjoyed in other places – but for now I had the Brains. Not many people apart from our party were in, though there was no lack of warmth in the welcome. Sadly, we have heard that since our visit the Three Cranes has closed – let's hope only temporarily.

Finally the **Three Fyshes**, which has survived many vicissitudes and is now both a free-house pub and a restaurant in its attractive old building by the river bridge (and thus just in our territory). By this time I had indulged sufficiently that I didn't note the brews on, nor can I remember what I drank – so clearly it was an excellent evening overall!

*Fytton Rowland*

# Gastro but Welcoming

**N**orth Beds CAMRA's first minibus trip of 2013, on a chilly 10<sup>th</sup> January, visited the south-eastern corner of our area, where almost all the pubs are food-oriented. The licensees have little choice to go the gastropub route in this rural area, with only small populations within walking distance. Would they welcome a group of fifteen drinkers?



First stop, the **Greyhound at Haynes**, with GK IPA and Abbot on handpump along with Yorkshire Terrier as guest. We spread ourselves

across the beers and I tried the Abbot – not a favourite of mine, but it was in decent condition. Young staff were running the pub, and were mostly dealing with the quite full restaurant side. Service was a bit slow for us – the only customers on the bar side – but there was no lack of welcome. The Greyhound is a fine old pub, with low ceilings, exposed beams and an open log fire burning.

On to the **Black Horse at Ireland**, an up-market eatery where dinner reservations are sometimes hard to come by. A free house, the Black Horse offered St Austell Tribute, Sharp's Doom Bar and Adnams Southwold on handpump. The Southwold quickly ran out, but the licensee put a new cask on. My choice was Tribute, which was up to standard. Another old village pub, this one has been substantially extended, and a comfortable sitting area for drinkers is provided. The staff were helpful, and not thrown by a large group arriving unannounced.

From the Black to the White – the **White Horse at Southill** came next. GK IPA and

Doom Bar were on the handpumps. I tried Doom Bar this time and found it very acceptable. This pub was less busy with diners than the first two, the licensee was effusive in his welcome, and his staff were friendly and helpful – one of our number even managed to have a full meal during our brief visit. Extensions have reduced the comfortable, village-pub feel of the building somewhat.



Our fourth stop, with a long-established food reputation, was the **Hare and Hounds at Old Warden**. The licensee made us welcome. The only Wells pub of the

evening, had Eagle and Directors on handpump. The Directors was good but expensive. An attractive interior with an open fire once again, although again the extensions had reduced its historic character.

And finally to our only pub of the evening



without an animal name – the **Crown at Northill**. Another Greene King house, and again the regular brews were IPA and Abbot, accompanied as guest by Green Jack Trawlerboys, a Champion Beer of Britain contender in 2012. Understandably

we mostly tried the guest, and found it good. Food doesn't dominate here, and a real pub atmosphere survives. The bar top is hammered copper and an antique beer engine is on display. We were warmly welcomed despite arriving only fifteen minutes before their closing time.

All of these pubs were good drinking holes despite their food emphasis!

# In the Bleak Midwinter

... on 24<sup>th</sup> January to be precise, a large North Beds CAMRA contingent gathered at the **Pilgrim's Progress** in Bedford for a walking tour of some of the town pubs. The pub is in the historic former premises of The



Bedford Pan-technicon, a furniture shop, which has been successfully converted with the usual Wether-

spoon's features – including, of course, cask ales at very reasonable prices. Along with the regulars, Ruddles Best and Abbot, a range of guest ales was available on handpump: White Park's White Gold (3.8% abv) and Cranfield Bitter (4.4% abv); Oakham's Preacher (4.3 % abv) and Bishop's Farewell (4.6% abv); and Naylor's Northern Gold (5% abv). Between us we found all of them well kept.

Moving on to smaller and more intimate



pubs, we visited the **Castle** in Newnham Street, which was warm and welcoming, as usual in this old-established back-street Wells pub.

Eagle, Directors and (a pleasant surprise) Young's Winter Warmer were on the handpumps – I grabbed the opportunity of trying the Winter Warmer once more. It was up to standard.

A few yards along the street lies the **Three Cups**, an old haunt of North Beds CAMRA. Until its recent refurbishment we had held our branch meetings at the Cups, but sadly there is no longer a private room there. In all

other respects, though, the changes are admirable. Greene King have designated the Cups a 'Beer House' and seven hand-pumps are now in regular use. (The new licensees also run the nearby Ship, also a GK house but more food-oriented.) GK IPA, Abbot, Old Speckled Hen and (from GK's Scottish department) Belhaven Robert Burns (4.2% abv) were on, while the guests were White Park's White Gold (again) and GB (5% abv), Potton's Moonraker (5.2%), and Hopping Mad Patriot (5%). I tried the Patriot and Robert Burns and found them very acceptable. If the availability of local brews is a policy, the Cups needs to enter the LocAle scheme! One downside of the refurb is that the prices are now rather high.

Next a short walk to the **Gordon Arms** in Castle Road, a Wells pub that does meals and also runs the Ent Shed event venue. As usual, they had Eagle, Bombardier, Directors and Young's Bitter on, together with Wells' then current standard guest ale, Jennings Cackle Warmer. I had Young's Bitter and found it acceptable.

Final stop – our 2012 Pub of the Year, the **Cricketers Arms** in Goldington Road, a free house which usually has an interesting range of beers. Paul and Steph tend to go for lower-gravity beers, and on this particular evening they offered Brains IPA, Adnams Southwold and also their Old Ale (4.1%), Woodforde's Wherry, and Buckingham Golden (3.8%). I'm not sure I've ever had an old ale before, so the Adnams was interesting, though very hoppy Buckingham offering was more to my taste.

It may be a mistake to end a pubcrawl at a favourite pub – we didn't get home very early!

*Fytton Rowland*





**WHATEVER YOU DO,  
TAKE PRIDE.**

# Oh No, Not Another Minibus Tour

An unusual starting point, though, for this one – not the Wellie, but the **Burnaby Arms in Black Tom**, as we wanted to look at this pub under its new management. The dartboard and pool table have gone and it now a purely drinkers' pub with four handpumps in regular use. The usual beers are Wells Eagle, Young's London Gold and Courage Directors, and these are joined by Wells' guest ale of the week – Black Sheep at our visit. I had the Gold and found it very satisfactory. The pub has a friendly atmosphere, though not many people other than our party were in at 7 p.m. on a Thursday.

A short walk to our bus, and twenty of us headed for the **Falcon at Bletsoe**, where new licensees had recently taken over. This is a big Wells establishment on the A6, built around the old pub, with a coal-fired stove warming it up. Most of the space was taken up by diners, but eventually we found, rather tucked away, a pleasant room for drinkers. On the handpumps were Eagle, Bombardier, Directors and Black Sheep – I had the guest, which was acceptable.

Next stop, a favourite of ours – the **Bedford Arms at Souldrop**, only half a mile from the Northants border. This lovely old village pub is a free house and has a friendly landlord, helpful staff, an open fire and five handpumps – what more could anyone ask for? Phipps NBC Red (3.8% abv, brewed nowadays by Grainstore), GK IPA, Fuller's London Pride, Black Sheep (yet again), and Hopping Mad Brainstorm were on. The Brainstorm soon ran out. To our delight, Oakham JHB replaced it, and this proved to be in excellent condition.

Retracing our steps, we visited the **Fordham Arms in Sharnbrook**. No foodie pub this, it offered Greene King's Abbot and Old



Golden Hen together with Ringwood Best Bitter and, as a guest ale, just for a change Black Sheep ...

Golden Sheep! I tried the Golden Sheep, and found it accept-

able. The interior isn't full of character but the staff were cheerful and welcoming.

Next we revisited the **Fox at Carlton** (see p. 9). The landlady made our group very welcome, and this time she had St Austell Tribute, Wells Eagle (disguised by an old-style 'IPA' pumpclip), and Hopping Mad's Fruitcase and Black Jack available. The Fruitcase, which I tried, was in excellent condition.

Last stop on a very full evening was the



**Royal George at Stevington**, a tardis pub in the middle of the village. Like the Fox, it is a free house and has low ceilings and exposed beams. Not much food trade here. A hardworking and friendly barmaid was helping out the landlord. Hobgoblin (4.5% abv),

Thwaites Original (3.8% abv), and once again Eagle were on offer. I had the Thwaites, an unremarkable beer, I thought, but certainly well kept.

A tired group returned to the Bedford Arms in Bedford at 11.40 p.m., and a few had the staying power to step inside. Me, I went home to bed replete. Six pubs and not a bad one among them!

*Fytton Rowland*

The nation's beers are  
dropping into London



# Great British Beer Festival

## London Olympia

### 13-17th August

A fantastic fun packed festival atmosphere with over 800 quality beers & ciders, variety of food, live music, entertainment, games and activities to enjoy.

[www.gbbf.org.uk](http://www.gbbf.org.uk)





# A Voyage of Beer!

**T**he USA has a reputation for beer so cold it numbs your taste-buds. This was certainly not true of the craft beers I tried last Autumn. Almost without exception they were served at a temperature that meant you could taste their distinct character.

## The **Heartland Brewery**

([www.heartlandbrewery.com](http://www.heartlandbrewery.com)) offers six regular beers, plus one or two seasonals, in



its seven bars in **New York City**. They offer the option of 5 oz samples of each of their regular brews,

with or without a seasonal one, in what they call their Voyage of Beer. The platter on which it comes declares “REAL BEER”, but it comes from a keg. It is not over-gassed, though, and the Times Square Chop House provided a pleasant ambience.



**Washington, DC**, offered the real surprise of the trip with the **Elephant and Castle** chain ([www.elephantcastle.com](http://www.elephantcastle.com)) with bars in various cities. Not only did it look and feel like a British pub, but they also have hand-pumps offering a choice of three beers. In Washington the choice was London Pride, London Porter or Newcastle Brown – yes, Newky Brown on draught. All were in good

condition and served with an appropriate modest head. The measure was the 20 oz Imperial pint rather than the 16 oz American one. President Obama doesn't know what he's missing just down Pennsylvania Avenue!

Having experienced their beer in Washington I sought out one of their bars in **Chicago** later in the trip. Fullers ESB replaced Newcastle Brown among the beers on offer. Again the beer was in good condition. The selection may not be wide, and from observation not all of the staff were experienced at using the hand-pull, but the beer was good and satisfying.

A big disappointment was The **Old Toad** in **Rochester, NY**, which was featured in *Beer* about a year ago. It claims it is nothing short of a traditional British local, so I was hopeful of good beer. But they were having a staff meeting and we were ushered through from the traditional bar to the nondescript dining area. I sent my first glass of beer back because of the sediment in it. The barmaid then brought a different brew, again with lots of sediment – she claimed it was because it was cask ale. I politely but firmly told her that proper cask ale is clear and bright. Obviously it was not being looked after properly.

We may lament the fact that almost all the beer available in the USA is keg, but the plethora of craft breweries does mean a wide selection for the traveller. Obviously those who are driving need to be careful, but bars generally serve food so you can enjoy the varied styles of establishment, and the passenger can taste the beer. I am looking forward to more beers on a trip this year. I might even find some craft-brewed cider!

*Roger Stokes*

# The Victoria Arms



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# Make a Dent in Your Thirst

**O**n a weekend break in the northwest in November, we visited the George & Dragon in Dent in Cumbria, a Dickensian village high in the fells with a cobbled main street, remote from any main road. The George and Dragon is the brewery tap, and one and only tied pub, of the Dent Brewery just up the road. The old pub in Dent's tiny market place has been extended into an adjoining house to provide an extensive restaurant, although we ate in the bar in front of a roaring fire.



On handpumps was the full range of Dent's beers – from Golden Fleece and Dent Porter (both 3.8% abv), through Aviator at 4%, the cask lager Rambrau and the midbrown bitter Ramsbottom, both at 4.5%, Kamikaze at 5%, and on up to the formidable T'Owd Tup at 6% abv. Alas, I was driving a borrowed car over the 'single track roads with passing places' that one has to use to reach Dent unless walking from its railway station four miles away. So I sampled only halves of the two 3.8% beers. (One of our companions who shall be nameless, but was driving his own car, had a pint of Kamikaze.) Squeezed in between the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District, Dent could easily be overlooked – but do make the acquaintance of the village and its pub and brewery if you can!

## 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 shown at the foot of this page.

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# Copper Kettle Marches In

**A** new micro-brewery has appeared on our branch doorstep. Launched late in 2012, the Copper Kettle Craft Brewery is based in Bedford Road, Rushden.



The new brewery was founded by three former soldiers. United by a common love for making and drinking

real ale, Pete Brady, Vince Stimpson and Ian Bosworth have set up a 3.5-barrel brewing plant at Bencroft Grange, a historic farm and former ale house site, only a few hundred yards from Souldrop in Bedfordshire..

## Be the Boss

The enterprise was established with funding and business advice from the Royal British Legion's "Be the Boss" scheme. Pete and Vince are former regulars, while Ian a Territorial. The trio are proud to be supported by this worthy enterprise.

As Pete put it, "It's really good to know there is help out there for people like us. Without their help there's no way we could have done it, so we are really grateful. It's fantastic that a charity like that can use the money they raise to help people like us."

All three had been keen home brewers for several years. Ian also runs Copper Kettle Home Brewing, a brewing supply business based in Burton Latimer.

## Six beers already!

Surprisingly for such a new brewery, Copper Kettle has already created four regular real ales and two seasonal specials, with more planned. The regular ales are **UXB** (3.6%

abv), a chestnut- coloured, full-bodied beer,



(4.2%), a pale golden session ale generously late-hopped with Goldings. The two seasonals are **Ned Kelly Oatlaw Stout** (4.5%) and **Summit Special** (4.7%). Naturally these beers cannot all be available at the same time.

Copper Kettle beers have begun appearing as guest ales in local pubs and clubs, including the Three Cups in Bedford, the Chequers in Yelden, and the Rushden Historic Transport Society's lively bar. Look out for them elsewhere soon.

For further information, visit the brewery website at [ckcb.webs.com](http://ckcb.webs.com), email [copperkettlecraftbrewery@gmail.com](mailto:copperkettlecraftbrewery@gmail.com), or phone 0788 383 3687 between 7 and 9 a.m. or 3 and 9 p.m.. You can also follow what's happening on Facebook and Twitter.

**Cornucopia** (4%), a dark golden session ale with First Gold and Chinook hops, **Bencroft Best Bitter** (4.1%), a mid-amber best bitter with a citrus and spicy hop character, and **VIP**



## A Fine CAMRA Member Lost

We have heard some sad news from a neighbouring branch. Chris Scoggins was a very highly thought of member of CAMRA, and was a stalwart in the Milton Keynes CAMRA Branch, where he held the positions of Chairman, Festival Organiser and committee member during the past 15 years. Chris had been suffering from deep depression, and was found dead at his home in early February.



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# Bourne-Again Pubs

**M**y parents-in-law live in Bourne, a pleasant town in Lincolnshire recently expanded by several large new housing estates. These extra residents seem to have been good for the real-ale trade, since not one but three new real-ale houses have opened relatively recently in the main street in premises that weren't previously pubs – and none of them a Wetherspoon's. At the main cross-roads in the heart of town there were already three pubs – the **Angel**, an old coaching inn, the **Burleigh Arms**, where Queen Elizabeth I's confidant Lord Burleigh was born, and the **Nag's Head** – so there was no shortage of pubs to start with.



My father-in-law sent me a photo of the Firkin Ale, the name of which attracted me for obvious reasons. It turns out that this is the least interesting of the three new pubs, however, being housed in a fairly nondescript former shop. On a recent visit I was able to sample ales there and at the two other conversions. The **Firkin Ale** advertises Bateman's on its frontage, but on my visit one handpump – perhaps the Bateman's one – was out of use. Marston's EPA (3.6% abv) and Brakspear Bitter (3.4% abv) were on offer. The Brakspear seemed o.k. but not spectacularly good.

The oddly-named **Jubilee Garage** is just that – a former car-maintenance place (complete with its 'AA Appointed' sign), and



Pride and Castle Rock Harvest Pale on handpump. I tried the Harvest Pale (the 2011 CAMRA Champion Beer of Britain) and found it in excellent condition.



before that a forge. The interior is car-themed, with a petrol pump welcoming you in just inside the door. They had Oakham Scarlet Macaw, Fuller's London

Then it was on to lunch at **Smith's**, the star of the show with six hand-pumps. A historic grocer's shop with its original frontage intact, Smith's is now a large pub with many separate rooms on three floors, serving decent pub meals,

and justly popular among Bourne residents. It offered Adnams Southwold, GK Abbot, Oakham Bishops Farewell, Young's Bitter, Harvest Pale (again) and Abbeydale's Dr Morton's Ships' Biscuit (4.1% abv). As all the others were familiar, I tried the last-named, defying the rule that beers with silly names aren't usually very good. It had no obvious connection to ships or biscuits, but it was good, a very pale hoppy bitter – and thoroughly well kept, as one would expect at a Good Beer Guide pub.

So – Bourne is a little real-ale haven just north of Peterborough. Do drop in if you're passing nearby!

*Fytton Rowland*



# Elland has Winter Champion a Second Time!

**E**lland Brewery's 1872 Porter, at 6.5 % abv, was crowned the Supreme Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2013 by a panel of judges at the National Winter Ales Festival in Manchester. The West Yorkshire brewery first scooped the country's top winter beer award in 2010.

The winning beer is described as 'a creamy, full flavoured porter, with rich liquorice flavours and more than hint of hint of chocolate'. A CAMRA spokesman said: "Porters should not be regarded as endangered beers, they are beers for today's discerning drinkers. And on a cold day, 1872 Porter is a perfect winter warming beer. It is a fine example of a modern day interpretation of one of this country's classic beer styles. It's gorgeous, drinkable, likeable and is highly recommended".

Overall Silver went to Bartrams Brewery's Comrade Bill Bartram's EAISS (Egalitarian Anti-Imperialist Soviet Stout), while the Bronze went to Kelburn Brewing's Dark Moor.

## Full results:

### Old Ales and Strong Milds

Gold – Kelburn Brewing (East Renfrewshire), Dark Moor  
Silver – Jennings (Cumbria), Sneck Lifter  
Bronze – Purple Moose (Gwynedd), Dark Side of the Moose

### Porters

Gold – Elland Brewery (West Yorkshire), 1872 Porter  
Silver – Blythe Brewery (Staffordshire), John-son's  
Bronze – Derby Brewery (Derbyshire), Penny's Porter

### Stouts

Gold – Bartrams Brewery (Suffolk), Comrade Bill Bartram's EAISS (Egalitarian Anti-Imperialist Soviet Stout)  
Silver – Marble Beers (Greater Manchester), Stouter Stout  
Bronze – Hop Back Brewery (Wiltshire), Entire Stout

### Barley Wines

Gold – Hogs Back Brewery (Surrey), A Over T (Aromas Over Tongham)  
Silver – Heart of Wales Brewing (Powys), High as a Kite  
Bronze – Kinver Brewery (Staffordshire), Over The Edge

## 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)

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](mailto:socials@northbedscamra.org.uk)

### MARCH

#### Thursday 14 – St Neots Beer Festival

Meet at Bedford Bus Station for the X5 bus – contact Gary Mudd for meeting time

#### Thursday 21 – Branch Meeting

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

members only.

### APRIL

#### Thursday 18 – Hopping Mad Brewery Trip

£10 deposit to Gary asap, Total cost £25 inc meal. Coach leaves the Wellington Arms 7 pm.

### MAY

#### Monday 6 – Breakfast at the White Horse

(Newnham Avenue): £7.50 meal / £12.50 meal + two pints. Pay on day but please confirm early.

#### Thursday 16 – Branch Meeting

Venue to be advised – contact Gary Mudd for info. CAMRA members only.

### JUNE

Thursday 6 – Day trip to Essex breweries  
Details to be announced

### JULY

#### Thursday 4 – Annual General Meeting

Venue to be advised. CAMRA members only.

#### Thursday 18 – Branch Meeting

Venue to be advised – contact Gary Mudd for info. CAMRA members only.

## Hitchin Beer Festival Reprieved

CAMRA North Herts members thought they would have to stop running Hitchin Beer Festival because the Town Hall, where it was based, has closed for redevelopment. But, along with Hitchin Round Table, it has now joined forces with Hitchin Rugby Club to run the event. It is hoped much of the new-look festival, which will be spread across a marquee and Rugby Club facilities in Old Hale Way, will be held outside. The festival will be held on Thursday 6th-Saturday 8th June, between 5pm and 11pm on the first day, and midday and 11pm on the other two days.

CAMRA North Herts chairman, Brian Mason, said: "It will be a little later in the year than usual, so people will be able to sit outside. It will boast a selection around 80 Real Ales from near and far and we will ensure that quite a few of the ales fall into LocAle category; that is they are from within 30 miles of the venue, therefore reducing our carbon footprint. Along with the real ales, there will be many examples of cider, perry and foreign beers, to ensure that this festival is as successful as all the previous ones."

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*the local?*



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