

The firkin



FREE

**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Newsletter of CAMRA North Bedfordshire Branch

Vol 38 No 2

Summer 2013

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THE ALBION



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Hog and Partridge: Most
Improved Town Pub of the
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John Nunn: Pub Cham-
pion of the Year 2013.

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*CAMRA North Beds
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Chairman's Corner

In the last Firkin we were celebrating our new Pub of the Year 2013 and other CAMRA awards to three of our

best pubs. I look forward to recognising more impressive achievements by local publicans next year.

We have more to celebrate in the victory of the campaign to scrap the beer duty escalator, under which beer duty increased every year at 2% above the rate of inflation. The policy may well have contributed to the loss of so many pubs in recent years. The campaign finally paid off when George Osborne announced the end of the escalator in his March Budget.

But for CAMRA members the campaign for good beer served in good pubs goes on. The new spotlight is on pub companies and the punishing terms that many impose on their tenants. The hard-working people who run community pubs are disadvantaged by middle

men between the brewer and the pub taking a large slice of the cake. The Department of Business and Skills is considering new legislation to reform how "pubco's" operate. CAMRA supports changes that will help licensees make a decent living from running a pub and encourage talented entrepreneurs to enter the trade.

If you love your local pub and think it plays an essential part in your community, you can now give it extra protection from property developers by getting it listed as an Asset of Community Value. ACV status effectively stops the clock when a pub is put up for sale, granting the applicants six months to raise funds to buy and save it before permission for development can be considered. CAMRA has set the challenge of getting 300 pubs listed by the end of 2013.

If you are worried about losing a valued community pub to developers, ask your local council to make it an ACV!

Peter Argyle, Branch Chairman

Great British Beer Festival 2013

This year's Great British Beer Festival will take place between 13th – 17th August at London Olympia. With over 800 real ales, ciders, perries and foreign beers to choose from we are sure there will be plenty of choice to suit everybody's taste buds! It is not all about the beer though. There is also plenty of food, live music and pub games to enjoy.

Tickets can be bought by calling 0844 412 4640 or visiting www.gbbf.org.uk/tickets

If you are feeling lucky then visit www.gbbf.org.uk/competitions where there are plenty of great prizes to win.



Great British Beer Festival
London Olympia
13-17th August

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Bedfordshire Pub of the Year: the Albion

For the second year running, the **Albion** in Ampthill is the **Bedfordshire County Pub of the Year**. The Albion narrowly beat two other finalists, the Devonshire Arms in Bedford (Pub of the Year for the North Bedfordshire branch, as announced in our Spring edition) and the March Hare in Dunton (Pub of the Year for the East Bedfordshire branch).

The Albion is run by landlord Russell Fletcher and his loyal team of staff. The mix of clientele in the Albion is one reason why it scores so highly on CAMRA's lists - it's the kind of pub where people of all ages, genders and backgrounds feel welcome. Russell is a keen supporter of various local events giving the Albion a real, local community focus.

The Albion is also a great success story as only four years ago it was just another pub struggling to stay open, with a string of tem-

porary managers suffering under restrictive supply agreements imposed on them by the corporate owners. It was then bought by Leicester brewery Everards and leased to B&T. Everards allow B&T plenty of freedom to run the pub as they please: they spent a lot of money on a proper refurbishment and in April 2010 it was opened with Russell at the helm.

There are 12 hand pumps always serving local ales as well as a wide variety from the many breweries around the country. One-third pint measures are available, allowing visitors to sample more of the range on offer, and beer and cider festivals are held several times a year.

Many congratulations to Russell and his team!

Mike Coombes / John Rowland

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Celebrating Local Winners

After announcing the local branch award-winners last issue, in early April it was time to make the actual presentations. This is always a pleasure and with three branch awards made this year (Pub of the Year, Most Improved Pub, and Country Pub of the Year) there were three visits to make!



The first presentation was Pub of the Year to the **Devonshire Arms**, Dudley Street, Bedford. **Martin Bartlett** and **Naomi Stanford** welcomed us on Thursday April 4th and our chair, Peter Argyle, duly handed over the award (above).

With the new DNA beer still on tap (see elsewhere in this issue), the several CAMRA members who attended turned it into a fine social event in a crowded pub; Wells & Youngs chairman Paul Wells also made an appearance!

The second presentation, Country Pub of the Year, was the very next day at the **Bedford Arms**, Souldrop, to all three of **Fred Rich**, **Caroline Rich** and **Sally Rushworth**. Caroline is the bar / front-of-house manager, Fred holds the lease and runs the cellar, while Sally is the chef and holds the license, so all three are essential to the pub's success.



Again, several members managed to attend and applaud Peter's presentation (above), although I had to leave earlier than most.

Finally, on Wednesday 10th April, we came to the Most Improved Pub at the **Burnaby Arms**, Stanley Street, Bedford. Although Martin Bartlett and Naomi Stanford do hold



this license as well as that of the Devonshire Arms, the day-to-day managers are **Lucie Fuller** and **Stephen Fuller**, who therefore received this well-deserved award (above). (It's worth noting that Lucie is Naomi's daughter). Unfortunately I couldn't make this date at all - I was in Yorkshire - but I did manage to raise a beer to both the managers and the licensees!

John Rowland



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Pub News

Duke, Kempston

Welcome to new landlords Chris and Sharon Garland, who have moved here from the Blacksmiths Arms in Milton Keynes. The pub is open all day for food and drink, with Wells Eagle IPA and Bombardier remaining as the regular real ales. Call 01234 857201

Fox & Hounds, Riseley

Following a few weeks having a thorough facelift, this popular village pub has re-opened with a new interior look. Landlords Tony and Diane Goodman are keen to keep the pub's reputation for good real ale, wine



and food, including steaks cut to the size you want and flame-grilled on the spot. Wells Eagle IPA, Bombardier and a guest ale are usually available. A dining area now called the Riseley Room can be booked for special events. The pub is open throughout the day for food and drinks. Call 01234 709714 or visit www.foxandhoundsriseley.co.uk

Swan with Two Nicks, Sharnbrook



Welcome to David and Alison, who took over this popular village pub earlier this year. Wells Eagle IPA, Young's London Gold and a guest ale are available. Good pub food is served on Thursday to Saturday evenings and Sunday lunchtime.

Skittles and other pub games are played in the public bar. Behind the lounge is a pleasant sun-trap courtyard and garden, safe and secure for families. The courtyard is often used for village events. Call 01234 781585 or visit www.swanwith2nicks.co.uk

Railway Steamer, Shefford

This lively local on Clifton Road reopened in March after refurbishment, with new landlady Michelle and partner Ryan in charge. Two changing real ales are usually available, including Sharp's Cornish Coaster when we visited recently, but Michelle hopes to offer a third cask beer in due course. Planned kitchen improvements will enable the pub to serve day-time meals. Mini beer festivals may also be held, perhaps using the fine garden at the rear. Call 01462 812728

Horse & Groom, Clapham

Welcome to Joedy and James, who took over this former coaching inn at the turn of the year. Greene King IPA, Abbot and a guest ale are usually available. The food style varies, providing business lunches, early evening dinners and Sunday roasts. The covered former coach yard is used as a games room. There are theme evenings with matching food, monthly live bands, discos and karaoke. The patio offers a children's play area and the large garden beyond runs down to the River Great Ouse. Call 01234 217502.

King William IV, Kempston



Welcome to new licensee Karl and Joanne Hill, but manager Donal Hartnett, runs the pub on

Pub News

a day to day basis while Karl and Joanne are busy at their other pub, the Slaters Arms at Box End, a couple of miles north. Wells Eagle IPA, Bombardier and a couple of guest ales are usually available. The food menu has been revised to offer reasonably priced meals using local produce where possible. A carvery is planned for Sundays. Call 01234 409298 or visit www.kingwilliamkempston.co.uk

Slaters Arms, Kempston Box End

Meanwhile, normal service continues at the Slaters Arms, except that the pub is now closed on Monday and Tuesday. Greene King IPA and guest ales are available, with a menu of fine food at lunchtimes and evenings, plus a carvery on Sunday. Call 01234 854433 or visit www.slaters-arms.co.uk

Chimney Corner, Kempston Hardwick

Following several months when we were never sure whether this large pub on the B530 was open or not, it has now been refurbished and re-opened with the owner's son Paul Tait firmly in charge. A choice between two regularly changed real ales is offered. Food is available every day from noon to 9 pm with a roast Sunday lunch and a breakfast club from 9am at weekends. Call 01234 852310.

Chequers, Yelden

Welcome to new landlord Harvey Mitchell, who took over this popular free house near our northern border earlier this year. Fuller's London Pride, up to four guest ales and Westons Old Rosie cider are served. Good, home-cooked lunch and evening meals is available, with a roast on Sunday. The pub is closed Monday but opens all day at weekends and bank holidays. Call 01933 356383.

Brewers Fayre, Kempston Marsh Leys

This brand new pub/restaurant with companion Premier Inn opened in March off Woburn Road, near the A421/A428 junction at Marsh Leys. The style is classic Brewers



Fayre with a strong emphasis on pub food. Fuller's London Pride and a guest ale are available on handpump. Although it is unlikely to attract many just for a beer, at least you can get a decent pint with your meal. Breakfast is available from 6.30am, (7am at weekends). Call 01234 844046 or visit

www.brewersfayre.co.uk/our-pubs/bedford

Number Thirteen, St Paul's Square, Bedford



Former Saracens Head recently re-opened as a licensed café bar annexe to the Corn Exchange. Wells Bombardier

and a guest ale (to come soon) are available, with meals served lunchtime and evening. A reception desk provides front of house for Corn Exchange events, ticket sales and collection. Open 8am to 6pm on weekdays and until 11pm on Friday, Saturday and on weekday theatre dates. Booking is advisable for evening and pre-theatre meals. Call 01234 718044 or visit www.bedfordcornexchange.co.uk/number13

Sun, Felmersham

Pub News

The last surviving pub in Felmersham closed in March when the tenant left and Charles Wells put it up for sale. While attractive, thatched pubs suitable for conversion to houses can fetch a fat price even in today's depressed property market, we hear as we go to press that an offer to buy and re-open the Sun as a community pub has been accepted. We wish the new owners well and will tell you more in our next issue.

White Horse, Wymington

Here, in contrast, the curse of optimism strikes again. No sooner had we reported a new lease of life for this community pub than the doors were locked and windows boarded up, clearly at the end of its life. Another village pub sadly lost.

Full details of these and all other pubs in Bedfordshire are available in CAMRA's county pub database at www.bedspubs.org.uk

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Opening Times:

**3-10.30pm Monday - Tuesday,
3-midnight Wednesday-Thursday,
3-12.30am Friday,
12noon-12.30am Saturday, 12noon-10.30pm Sunday**

Book the dates 2nd-5th October for the 36th CAMRA Bedford Beer & Cider Festival!

The Bedford Beer & Cider Festival is an important milestone in Bedford's year. This year it will be held at the Corn Exchange in St Paul's Square from Wednesday 2nd to Saturday 5th October 2013.

Over 100 real ales

The festival will feature 110 different real ales, 40 brands of real cider and perry, and



a range of draught and bottled beers from Belgium and other European countries. The growing popularity of real cider or perry has gained "Cider" a place in the festival's title.

The festival will offer a broad selection from around the country, but with as many as possible from local brewers and cider producers. The full beer and cider lists will be printed in a free souvenir programme given to visitors on arrival and posted on the branch website in September.

Help required



The festival is run entirely by volunteers – working behind the bars, the shop or the glasses

counter, admitting visitors at the door or acting as stewards. There are also jobs to do behind the scenes, helping set up and dismantle the bars and stillage – so we particularly need helpers on Sunday 29th September and Sunday 6th October.



Local CAMRA members and their friends are particularly welcome to help – no experience necessary! Although we cannot afford to pay you, helpers get a generous ration of free beer or cider of their choice, and share the pleasure of helping run one of the most popular events in Bedford. To volunteer, please complete the online staffing form at www.northbedscamra.org.uk/bedfordfestival.htm

Sponsor a cask of beer!

Promote your business by sponsoring a cask of real ale at Bedford Beer & Cider Festival. For just £50, your company name and slogan will be posted above the beer stillage throughout the festival.

For further details, use the QR code right or visit www.northbedscamra.org.uk/bedfordfestival.htm.



Summer beer festivals



Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival

Thu 6 to Sat 8 June at Hitchin Rugby Club,

Old Hale Way SG5 1XL. Open 5-11, Fri-Sat 12-11, admission £2.50, CAMRA members + pensioners free. Over 70 real ales plus cider, perry and foreign beers. Food available throughout. Regular 71/72 buses from Bedford. www.camranorthherts.org.uk

30th Rugby Beer & Cider Festival

Fri 14 to Sat 15 June at Thornfield Bowling Club, Bruce William Way CV22 5LL. Open Fri 2-11, Sat 11-11, admission £2, CAMRA members £1. Over 50 real ales, cider, perry and foreign beers. Daily hog roast, tombola, pub games and live music Sat eve. Use X5 bus to MK station, then train to Rugby. www.rugbybeerfestival.com

11th Welland Valley Beer Festival

Fri 7 to Sun 9 June, hosted by 10 pubs near the Leics/Northants border. Over 250 real ales and ciders, including many local breweries, traditional pub food including a barbecue and live music. Supported by, but not organised by CAMRA. Programme with beer list available online. Heritage buses from Market Harborough on Saturday meet East Midlands trains from Bedford. www.wellandvalleybeerfestival.co.uk

6th Gibberd Garden Beer Festival

Sat 15 to Sun 16 June at Gibberd Garden, Marsh Lane, Harlow CM17 0NA (Harlow Mill stn 20 min walk). Open 12-8, last admission 7pm, admission £4, concessions incl CAMRA members £3. Over 35 real ales and ciders, plus full access to the gardens. Free children's entertainment. www.heb-camra.org.uk/gg

36th Derby City Charter Summer Beer Festival

Wed 10 to Sun 14 July at Assembly Rooms, Market Place DE1 3AH (rail stn 10 min). Open Wed 6.30-11, Thu-Sat 11-11, Sun 12-2. Admission charges vary, CAMRA members free. Over 150 real ales including LocalAle breweries – full beer list and admission details online. Live music eves. Trains from Bedford and Luton. www.derbycamra.org.uk

5th Bishops Stortford Beer Festival

Thu 25 to Sat 27 July at British Legion Club, Windhill CM23 2NG. Open Thu 5-11, Fri/Sat 11-11, admission free. Large selection of real ales and cider, BBQ food, rolls and sandwiches, with a hog roast Fri eve plus live music Sat eve. Further details with beer and cider list online nearer to date. www.heb-camra.org.uk/bsbf



Great British Beer Festival

Tue 13 to Sat 17 August, London Olympia Exhibition Centre, Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UX. Open Tue 5-10.30, Wed-Fri 12-10.30, Sat

11-7 – see poster for admission prices. Over 800 real ales, ciders, perries and foreign beers. Traditional pub games, live music, hot and cold food from around the world, tutored beer tastings. For advance tickets call 0844 412 4640 or visit www.gbbf.org.uk/tickets. General information also available at www.gbbf.org.uk

36th Peterborough Beer Festival

Tue 20 to Sat 24 August, under canvas on the Embankment, Bishops Road PE1 1EF (city centre 10 min). Open Tue 5.30-11, Wed-Thu 12-2.30, 5.30-11, Fri-Sat 11-11. Admission £1 before 3pm, then Wed £4, Thu-Sat £5, CAMRA members £2 every day after 3pm. Further details online. www.real-ale.org.uk

A visit to St Neots Beer Festival

It was Thursday 14th March so what better to do than visit the Booze on the Ouse Beer Festival at St Neots? We caught the X5 bus to St Neots. A change to have a comfortable bus service which also runs late at night!

The St Neots Festival is held in the Priory Centre, just a short walk from the bus stop. The hall was set out with plenty of tables to sit at to chat and eat.

The festival had a well manned bar with a good choice of 60 or so ales though not all were available at one time, but that is what a festi-



val is about, a range of ales in good condition with something new to be sampled over a few days. I sampled in halves and Helen in thirds, allowing both of us to keep our intake sensible whilst trying as many ales as feasible.

And plenty of excellent ale was on offer from Brown Cow Captain Oats Mild to Fyne Ales

Jarl , Purple Moose Dark Side of the Moose and Son of Sid's interesting Chequered Past, flavoured with Chequer Berries. (The Chequer Tree was the origin of many pub names, and also the Prime Minister's country retreat, 'Chequers' .)

If ale was not your thing then there were 15 or so ciders, many of them local (a pleasing growth area) and a foreign bottled beer bar.

The food bar was right next to the beer so you didn't have to venture far to eat with pork pies, cheeses, olives and ploughman's lunches available - since we'd eaten earlier, Helen and I shared a Ploughman's to keep hunger at bay.

Thursday evening was pleasantly quiet with time to chat to the excellent bar staff and to visitors around you at the tables. If you like it busier and noisier then, as at Bedford, go later in the week.

We timed our last ale so that we didn't have long to wait at the bus stop and travelled back to Bedford and a taxi home after a most enjoyable evening.

Thank you St Neots.

Gary Mudd

Luton Beer Festival

On a bitter February evening, with a little sleet falling, what could pass the time better than a beer festival? While several of our members met at Bedford train station and travelled south together, I left the office job in London and hurried north, meeting up at the festival. It's a short walk (10 minutes or so) from the station to the venue in Luton High Town - the lit-up festival building was a welcome

sight.

After a quick prowl around the Theatre Bar, where LocAle was being served and where a folk band were playing, I found the rest of the Bedfordshire North group in the Main Bar. As it was a Thursday night, it wasn't too crowded: the Theatre Bar with live music was naturally a little more crowded, but the overflow room



Luton Beer Festival ... continued

(seats and tables but no bars) was nearly empty, and there were no real problems finding a chair in the main bar either.

Food was provided by the venue's regular



cafe: reasonable prices, a daily special and freshly prepared, although not terribly ambitious.

The festival

ordered over 100 beers, the majority of which were still on - only the most popular had sold out, and not many were still not ready. Bedfordshire South's LocAle scheme naturally has some overlap with our own, so although I did try the Wolf Brewery's Woild

Moid from Norfolk I spent most of my time in the main bar: Blue Monkey Guerilla from Nottinghamshire and Purple Moose Dark Side of the Moose from Wales were both excellent, and I briefly considered trying to drink a rainbow of brewery names. Sanity prevailed...

After a wide-ranging and free-flowing conversation (beer, e-cigarettes, beer again, Facebook and other publicity tools for CAMRA, and back to beer), we made use one of the most convenient features of the Luton festival: regular and late-night train services to Bedford! We had to wait no more than a minute or so, and didn't get too chilled on the platform.

John Rowland



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Based near Bicester

Hopping Mad about flavour

Back in April 2011 North Beds CAMRA was one of the first local branches to visit a new brewery in Olney, not very long after it had got under



From 2011...

way. There were two beers – Brainstorm and Fruitcase – and lots of empty space in the building for

future expansion. Our hosts were confident that they would soon fill it.

In April 2013, almost exactly two years later, we visited the Hopping Mad brewery again to see how much has changed, and of course to sample its excellent cask beers.

Well – MD David Wright and his fellow founders were right to be cocky. The former



... to 2013

empty space inside the brewery is now almost entirely full of brewing equipment, casks awaiting filling and full

casks ready for delivery. Brewing turnover has greatly increased and the range of cask beers has also expanded. Hopnotch, a light amber ale at 3.4% abv, Hoppiness, a hoppy 3.7% bitter, Balmy Days, a crisp dry pale ale at 3.9% and Amazing Grace, a rich hoppy ale at 4.4%, have joined Brainstorm, a full-bodied, crisp best bitter at 4.3% and Fruitcase, a fruity 4.5% golden ale. Seasonal beers are also brewed occasionally.

You will be familiar with most of these as common guest ales in local pubs. But the brewery has also created a take-home business by selling its complete range of regular beers in both bottled form and in 10-litre

aluminium casks. Those of us old enough can forget horrid memories of fizzy Watneys



Party Seven – these casks hold real ale just as good as that in firkins.

Although gas is used to help push beer

through the tap, it is separated by a diaphragm and never comes in contact with the beer. This is real ale.

David Wright gave us an impassioned talk on his approach to brewing. As his website puts it:

“We are Mad Passionate about local people enjoying a really good pint made from natural raw materials in the traditional way. We take the best malted grains and develop recipes with both traditional as well as modern hops to give the ale lover well balanced ales with bags of flavour.

“At Hopping Mad we pride ourselves on great tasting beers, it really is that simple – it’s all about the flavour.”

Indeed it is. Many thanks to David and Hopping Mad for hosting a thirsty busload of CAMRA members once again. We wish the brewery every success in the future.

If you would like to visit Hopping Mad or buy the beers in 9-gallon firkins or 10-litre casks, call 01234 919200, e-mail info@hoppingmad.com or check the website at www.hoppingmad.com, which gives a list of pubs and shops that regularly offer the beers. You can also buy direct from the brewery.

Peter Argyle

Good Beer in Australia – An Oxymoron?

Not quite. The bad news is that two groups – Fosters (of course) and Lyon Nathan – have over 95% of all beer sales in Australia, and both are now associated with international companies. All the mainstream Australian beers belong to one of the two, though both groups also own craft breweries that are well thought of. The third biggest brewer is Cooper's, still controlled by its founding family (the Wells of Australia?), which makes some excellent bottle-conditioned beers.

There is good news, though. There are lots of microbreweries, most of them pretty new, many of them producing varied and interesting beers. Few of the beers are 'real' in our sense, though bottle-conditioned beers are widely produced, and some keg beers are not pasteurised. At one pub, I found beers dispensed direct from the keg, without CO2 assistance!

Mountain Goat Brewery in Melbourne, founded about 15 years ago and still growing, brews 600,000 litres per year. It is open to the public two evenings a week, very popular with Melbur-



nians. They charge for the beer and also sell pizza, but provide a free tour. The staple products, widely available, are Steam Ale (a 'pale ale', which as often in Australia means a cloudy Kölsch-type beer containing Pilsener and wheat malts) and Hightail Ale (a darker, 'malt-driven' brew). On my visit the specials included two English-style beers: Fancy Pants, a hoppy amber ale of 5.2% abv, and The Craig, an ESB of 5.8% abv delivered under nitrogen pressure to give it

a creamy texture.

True South is a brewpub in Black Rock, a seaside suburb of Melbourne. Like most Australian pubs it does good food as well as



beer; oddly, the cuisine is Argentinian, which hardly fits in with European-style beers. The brewery is

clearly visible from the bar, its products are excellent, and their malt comes from Bedford's twin town Bamberg!

We visited some breweries in the Yarra Valley on our Easter Saturday tour, ostensibly of wineries. **White Rabbit**, a bigish craft brewery, has a swish modern building with a



view of the works from its bar/restaurant. Its regular brews are White Ale (a wheat beer) and Dark Ale,

both widely available on draught in Melbourne and in bottle further afield. But, available at the brewery only, they had on hand-pump (a rarity itself) their XXXX Simcoe, a strong dark amber cask-conditioned ale, delivered from a wooden cask! At the other end of the spectrum in the same town was the Yarra Valley Brewing Co., aka Buckley's. No restaurant, just beer; a free brewery tour thrown in; and a \$5 tasting plank of four bottle-conditioned beers: Original Ale (UK style, my favourite), Pilz (sic), Pale Ale (USA style) and Dark Ale, plus their cider.

Finally, we went to the **Coldstream Brewery**. Outwardly a smallish pub, it brews on

Good Beer in Australia – An Oxymoron?



the premises, and again we had a tasting plank: Real Original Ale, Czech Pilsener, Crisp Pale Ale, Porter and Cider. Surprisingly I

preferred the USA-style Pale to their Original Ale.

In Tasmania, where most of Australia's hops are grown, we tried but failed to visit the **Cascade Brewery** in Hobart. It's Australia's Shepherd Neame, the oldest brewery still producing beer in its original building (much extended), a handsome edifice from 1824. We did visit its tasting room and tried all their current brews – Pure (nondescript lager), Pale Ale (very nice), Draught (another Australian nothing-much), Premium Light (not bad), First Harvest (very malty, and made with the first of the hop crop) and Stout (excellent). Also in Tasmania is another old-established brewery, James Boag of Launceston. We didn't visit, but we tried their wares; Wizard Smith's Ale was my favourite, but they sell it only in Tasmania.

And what about proper pubs? Most pubs in Australia are great barn-like places with little character, dependent on income from gambling machines ('pokies') and food. It must be said, though, that they usually have at least one decent beer on draught. In Central Melbourne, **Young and Jackson's**, across the street from Flinders Street Railway Station, is a splendid exception – a high Victorian pub which wouldn't look out of place in London. It is deservedly popular, and serves a wide selection of craft ales including its own Young and Jackson's Naked Ale. A short distance away is a modern pub, Mrs Parma's. 'Parma' is chicken parmigiana, a local delicacy, and the place indeed special-

ises in it, but is also a craft beer pub selling only beers from small breweries in Victoria. Even newer is Beer de Luxe, one of many cafés, bars and restaurants in Federation Square, a very striking development dating from 2002. This bar too specialises in a wide range of craft beers. In Williamstown, a suburb older than Melbourne itself, we saw a lovely pub called the Steam Packet with vintage painted ads on the wall – shame they were for Fosters and VB!

Finally, a mention of Swords, a specialist beer retailer with stalls in both South Melbourne and Prahran market halls. They stock a huge range of microbrewery beers, and the people there are very knowledgeable about them too. They'd even heard of CAMRA!

Fytton Rowland

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About the Editor

You may have noticed a change in this issue - Fytton will be back in the autumn (he has to, he's the BBCF organizer!), but I've taken charge for a single issue while he's away.

And who am I? Fytton's son, working in London, a mathematician by training and a beer drinker by choice! I have a preference for darker beers and ales, with my favourite from the last 12 months perhaps being Elgood's Black Eagle stout. I've been a CAMRA member since December 2009, so not all that long compared with many of you, but have always drunk and enjoyed real ales over keg or bottled. Hopefully you enjoy this issue and if not, well... it'll be autumn soon!

I'd also like to thank all the committee members for their help, and most especially our unfailingly helpful and resourceful chairman, Peter Argyle. *John Rowland*

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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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 noted, details can be obtained from, and bookings made with, Gary

Mudd on 01234 741871 or e-mail socials@northbedscamra.org.uk

MAY

Thursday 16 – Branch Meeting

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

JUNE

Thursday 6 – All-day trip to Essex: Red Fox and Nethergate breweries.

Further destinations to be announced. Cost estimated at £60; deposit needed.

JULY

Thursday 11 – Annual General Meeting

Eagle Centre, Eagle Brewery, Bedford. Please note change of date since the last Diary. CAMRA members only.

Thursday 18 – Branch Meeting

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

When Dogfish Head came to Bedford!

When I've been in the US, I've had many fine bottles of beer from Dogfish Head. Their 90-Minute IPA and 120-Minute IPAs are memorable, and their experimental approach to brewing has been rewarded by success - which doesn't always happen! So when Wells & Youngs announced a collaborative new beer to launch in Spring 2013, I was intrigued; many of our other members were also interested, and it was a substantial group that met at the Devonshire Arms on 2 April.

The chair of Wells & Youngs, Paul Wells, the founder of Dogfish Head, Sam Calagione, and the head brewer of Wells & Youngs, Jim Robertson, all spoke briefly on how the two companies came



to collaborate and why the new beer exists, before the beer itself, "DNA", was pulled and sam-

pled; there were also samples from the Dogfish Head bottled beer range available.

"DNA" is an IPA, with the full name "Dogfish Head DNA New World IPA". An "essence" - a reduction of Dogfish Head's 60 Minute IPA - has been shipped across the Atlantic and added to the beer as it brews in Bedford: I can't help thinking a sea transit is a rather nice nod to the history of the style!

And is it any good? Well, I think so: the hoppiness is more on the pine-needle side than the grapefruit and citrus side, but definitely suits the IPA name, and there were sweet, almost honeyed flavours in the aftertaste - I wonder if the "essence" is showing itself? As a cask beer it will be a spring seasonal, but the bottled version (and, if you're forced to slum it, keg) are intended to be year-round.

More to come from this interesting project, apparently, with Dogfish Head also to release a beer in the USA. Good luck to both of these independent brewers!

John Rowland

(Photo courtesy of Wells & Youngs)

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