

FREE

The Firkin



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

Magazine of CAMRA North Bedfordshire • Vol 43 No 1 Spring 2018



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LUTON BEER FESTIVAL
PUB AWARDS 2018
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SPRING FESTIVALS

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THE EAGLE BREWERY
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HISTORY OF BEER PART 2

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Chairman's Corner

Welcome to our Spring edition, which might be called the Pub of the Year issue as it contains

details of the various awards we have decided to make this year. I was encouraged at the discussion before we made our decisions because it reminded us of the many places in our area where you can get excellent cask ale. Testament to this is the fact that our choice varies from year to year. Each year it is a matter of judgement between excellent contenders when we make our final pick.

This year there's a new award, our Young Members wanted to single out the Bear on Bedford High Street for its beer and its music. The latter may not be to my taste but it's not too obtrusive and the beer is certainly good. After two failed attempts to reinvent this popular watering hole by appealing to a different clientele, it's good to see it return to being a traditional pub, but with a broader choice of beer than it

had in the past. Like the 'old' Bear, it appeals to customers of all ages.

Speaking of Pubs of the Year, CAMRA's National Pub of the Year is the Cricketers Arms in St Helens, Merseyside, and National Club of the Year is the Flixton Conservative Club in Urmston, Manchester.

Congratulations to both – and to CAMRA's Northwest region for taking both awards.

Everywhere you look around Bedford there seems to be a new housing development, be it in the town centre, the suburbs or surrounding villages. Any outside space is minuscule and the units themselves are often small by world standards. One effect of this is to make people more insular as there is no space to entertain. That is not good for society. We need neutral places to socialise, somewhere to go just to be with others rather than for a specific event. A pub is the obvious answer, but sadly most new developments don't include one. That is regrettable.

Roger Stokes

Wells' New Site Revealed



Charles Wells Ltd have submitted a planning application for their proposed new brewery. It is at Fair Hill, off the A6 roundabout in Clapham Road

at the top of Great Ouse Way, near Sainsbury's and the other new supermarket currently under construction there. The application includes a 30,000 litre (roughly 200-barrel) brewery, a visitors' centre, a pub and a venue for functions, events and music gigs. Watch this space for more details!

Luton Festival says Farewell to Hightown



Luton Beer and Cider Festival, run by South Beds CAMRA, took place in February to general acclaim. But it's the last time it can be

held at Hightown Community Centre – it's being remodelled. We don't know where (if anywhere) the 2019 festival will occur.



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North Beds CAMRA's Pub Awards

The Branch's **Pub of the Year** for 2018 is the **Polhill Arms** at **Renhold**. This family-friendly village local at Salph End offers a warm welcome and has a large



garden, play area and restaurant. Pub and brewery artefacts and R101 airship memorabilia are on show. Live quiz nights and entertainment feature regularly, with darts and hood skittles also popular. Paul Smith offers Hardys & Hansons Bitter and up to five changing real ales in fine condition, not always from owners brewer Greene King. There are always at least two real ciders, up to four in the summer months. The brands change regularly, often from local small producers. The pub was our local Cider Pub of the Year in both 2016 and 2017. Paul and partner Lindsay Kent serve traditional pub food including fish and chips, except on Sunday and Monday evenings. Congratulations to them for winning against stiff competition. For further information, call 01234 771398, visit polhillarms.co.uk or follow the pub on Facebook [@polhillarmsrenhold](https://www.facebook.com/polhillarmsrenhold).

The Polhill Arms now competes against the *Engineers Arms*, *Henlow*, and the *Black Lion*, *Leighton Buzzard*, the Pubs of the Year for CAMRA's East and South Beds branches respectively, for the title of *Bedfordshire Pub of the Year 2018*. The county winner will go on to compete for the East Anglia regional title.

The **Three Cups** in **Newnham Street, Bedford**, is our **Town Pub of the Year**. A comfortable town inn dating from the



1770s, and a favourite meeting place for locals of all sorts, the Three Cups is a Greene King Local Hero pub offering

local beers. Seven real ales are always available, including Greene King IPA, Old Speckled Hen and at least two from White Park Brewery, which holds the lease. Manager Bev Burridge, who learned her cellarcraft in other real ale pubs in Bedford, keeps and serves cask ales of excellent



quality. Thirds are available for all beers, with a rack of six tasters available

for a fixed price. Home-cooked lunches are served, with evening meals available Monday to Thursday. Old wood panelling helps retain the pub's original character. It is only five minutes' walk from the town centre. The Three Cups was North Beds CAMRA's Pub of the Year in 2017 and was Town Pub of the Year in 2015. Congratulations to Bev and White Park Brewery for these awards. For more information, visit threecupsbedford.co.uk, call 01234 352153 or follow Facebook [@The-Three-Cups-Bedford](https://www.facebook.com/The-Three-Cups-Bedford).

North Beds CAMRA's Pub Awards (continued)

The **Bear** in **High Street, Bedford**, is our **Young Members Pub of the Year** for 2018.



We are delighted to make our first ever award to this popular High Street pub. The Bear is one of the few traditional pubs in the town centre and was reborn in late 2016 after a few unsuccessful months in other guises. Under pub group Camelot Inns it has rediscovered its old self as a friendly, traditional urban pub! Cherrie and Andy offer four changing real ales, with Old Rosie cider also on handpump. Food is available at lunchtime and through until 5pm. Closing time is late on Friday and Saturday. There is a popular patio garden to the rear offering a haven for smokers or just to sit outside in good weather. For more information, call 01234 630235 or follow the pub on Facebook [@TheBearBedford](https://www.facebook.com/TheBearBedford).

The **Cock** at **Pavenham** is our **Most Improved Pub of the Year**. Since it passed



into private ownership a few years ago, this friendly village pub has become better and better. John and Linda O'Grady are excellent hosts, creating a warm welcome for regulars and occasional visitors alike. London Pride, Greene King IPA and two changing real ales are available, from microbreweries like Grainstore, Tring or White Park. The pub opens in the evenings only on Tuesday to Wednesday, lunchtime and evenings Thursday and Friday and all day from 12 at weekends. Food includes fish and chip suppers on Friday evening, Sunday lunches, roasts in the winter and barbeques in the summer. Themed food days are held on the last Saturday of the month. The back garden is used for summer beer festivals, with extra real ales served from a garden bar. There is access to the Ouse Valley Way footpath. Grant Palmer 25 bus from Bedford stops nearby. Congratulations to John and Linda for winning this award, which we do not make every year. The Cock certainly deserves it to recognise the effort John and Linda have put in to create a fine village pub. For further information call 01234 822834 or follow the pub on Facebook [@PavenhamPub](https://www.facebook.com/PavenhamPub).

The **Devonshire Arms** in **Dudley Street, Bedford**, is our **Cider Pub of the Year**.



Devonshire Arms

Ronnie and Rebecca Toms have two or three real ciders available at all times of the year. The

pub is a back-street local, often crowded with regular customers, and offers six cask ales, mostly from the Wells and Marstons stables, as well as the cider.

See Facebook [@devonshirearmsbedford](https://www.facebook.com/devonshirearmsbedford) or phone 01234 301170.

Pub Awards (continued)



Cranfield Campus Social Club is North Beds CAMRA's **Club of the Year**. We are impressed by this lively club for staff and students at Cranfield University. Pool, snooker, darts, table tennis, bridge and a golf society flourish, while function rooms can be hired for weddings and other private



events. The bar, open daily from 12, offers London Pride, Doom Bar and two changing guest ales. Tapas and salad lunches are served Monday to Friday, with Chinese meals available on Saturday lunchtime and Tuesday to Sunday evenings. Guests are welcome and can be signed in by the manager or any member. For further details, call 01234 751586 or visit cranfieldsocialclub.co.uk.

Peter Argyle

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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Printed by KKN Print, Northampton

Advertising sales by Neil Richards MBE, Matelot Marketing

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Pub and Brewery News

Rocket to Mission Control. Local brewer Red closed a few months ago, not long after its Saint Peter's Ale House micropub in Bedford had also bitten the dust.

But all was not lost. Rocket Ales, a new start up operating from King's Cliffe Brewery in Northants for the past year, has taken over Red's old premises in Great Staughton. Owners Mike Blakesley and David Smith saw the potential and took over the lease and brewing plant in November.

Mike's background was in aviation and IT, while David was an award-winning home brewer for over 18 years, with an interest in dark beers. Mike had been CAMRA's liaison officer with King's Cliffe. After helping King's Cliffe owner Jez O'Neil create what became an award-winning porter, they decided to launch Rocket Ales with David as head brewer and Mike handling sales. Rocket has a portfolio of four 'Core Ales'. All are named after rockets or rocket-powered vehicles:

Atlas IPA (5.8% abv). A traditional, full-bodied India Pale Ale made with Maris Otter malt and plenty of Admiral hops, brewed in the US style.

Vostok Stout (4.6% abv). A Russian-style stout made from Maris Otter malt with five different roast malts and a generous quantity of oats to produce a dark, creamy texture. Vostok won Gold at the Northampton Beer Festival last June.

Bloodhound Bitter (4.2% abv). A traditional amber bitter with a fruity, sweet malt nose and a hoppy edge on the palate and in the aftertaste.

Komet Bier (3.8% abv). A German Kölsch style Session IPA, made with pale malt and five German noble hops for bitterness.

Treats to come in 2018 will be *Black*

Arrow smoked porter, *Maverick* golden ale for the royal wedding and *Sidewinder*, a hoppy pale ale. www.rocket-ales.com

Brewing at the Crown. The Crown is the only pub in Little Staughton. For some years landlords Kevin and Maria Foskett have offered a range of real ales from different brewers as well as Westons cider. But now they have launched their own brewery in a building behind the pub. There are two regular beers: *Pale* (3.7% abv) and *The Beer With No Name* (3.8% abv). The ales are currently brewed exclusively for sale at the Crown. Production depends on demand but is currently two to three brews a month – the plant can brew 300 litres.

The Crown is also popular for food, with fish dishes a speciality. Hog roasts, paella nights and other themed events are held regularly. www.thecrownstaughton.com

New Face at the B&K. A new brewer, Peter Hannington, has joined the Brewhouse and Kitchen brewpub in Bedford High Street. He maintains the existing range of five regular cask ales. In addition, another regular beer, *Castle Lane* (a 4.8% abv American-style pale ale) is in fact unpasteurised and unfiltered, and is dispensed from key-kegs, which do not artificially carbonate the beer. *Castle Lane* and *Night Fever* (a 5.0% abv porter), also unfiltered, are suitable for vegans. Draught beer is offered in thirds, halves, two-thirds, pints and two-pint measures (!!), the quarts being German-style stein glasses. A choice between straight glasses, mugs and wine-glass style is also offered. In addition to their Brewing Experience Days and Beer Masterclasses, B&K holds occasional beer-food pairing events in collaboration with other breweries.

Spring Beer Festivals

Leicester Beer Festival

7-10 March at Haymarket Theatre, Leicester, LE1 3AF. "Live on stage" with 250 real ales, over 30+ ciders and perries, gin bar, hot and cold food. Direct trains from Bedford. leicester.camra.org.uk

34th London Drinker Beer & Cider Festival

14-16 Mar at Camden Centre, Bidborough St, WC1H 9AU (near St Pancras stn). 150 real ales from London breweries + imported beers, ciders, perries, English wines and mead. No music. **Closes Friday evening – not open on Saturday.** Last ever festival at this venue.

northlondon.camra.org.uk

St Neots "Booze on the Ouse" Beer & Cider Festival

15-17 March at Priory Centre, PE19 6BH. Over 70 real ales and ciders. Free soft drinks for drivers, hot and cold food at all sessions. X5 bus from Bedford, Market Square, 5 min.

hunts.camra.org.uk

27th East Anglian Beer & Cider Festival

18-21 April, Apex, Charter Square, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3FD. Over 100 real ales and ciders, including many regional brewers. westsuffolk.camra.org.uk

10th Sir William Peel Beer Festival

19-22 April at Sir William Peel, High Street, Sandy SG19 1AG. 40 real ales and ciders available, barbecue and live music. 73 bus from Bedford, 2 min.

sirwilliampeel.webs.com

Devvy Beer & Cider Festival

4-7 May at Devonshire Arms, Dudley St, Bedford. Extra real ales and ciders on gravity plus the regular range. CAMRA Cider Pub of the Year 2018.

devonshirearmsbedford.co.uk

45th Cambridge Beer Festival

21-26 May under canvas on Jesus Green. Wide selection of local and national beers, plus cider, perry, mead, wines and foreign beers. Food includes local bread, pies, ham and cheese. X5 bus from Bedford, Victoria Ave, 5 min.

cambridgebeerfestival.com

Fox Spring Beer Festival

25-28 May at Fox, High St, Carlton MK43 7LA. About 18 real ales + 6 ciders served from a temporary bar in the garden. Four live bands, pizza, curry and hog roast. CAMRA Country Pub of the year 2016-17. Bus 25 from Bedford 2 min.

thefoxatcarlton.pub

Northampton County Beer Festival

1-3 June at Becket's Park, Northampton NN1 5BB. Wide range of real ales, craft beers, lager, cider, wines and spirits, food and local bands. Run by CAMRA with Phipps NBC Brewery. Bus 41 from Bedford. northants.camra.org.uk

Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival

7-9 June at Rugby Football Club, Old Hale Way SG5 1XL. About 150 real ales, ciders and international beers, food at all sessions. 71/72 buses from Bedford.

hitchinbeerfestival.org.uk

ADVANCE NOTICE – PLEASE PUT THE DATES INTO YOUR DIARY!

Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

3-6 October at Bedford Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SL. Over 150 cask ales, over 40 real ciders and perries, international beers, food at all sessions. Music on Wednesday and Saturday evenings.

Why not volunteer to work at your local beer festival?

northbeds.camra.org.uk

Black headings, CAMRA festivals, blue headings, others

Doing our Duty on Cold Nights

An important part of a CAMRA branch's work is to evaluate the beer quality of the cask ales offered in our local pubs. If a pub is good on a cold wet Thursday evening in January, it's probably going to be good anytime, so traditionally we mount three of our trips in January each year.

Our minibus trips usually start from the **Wellington Arms** in **Bedford** and on 11th January we set off from there and headed first to the **Five Bells** at **Cople**.



Five Bells

A Greene King house, it now serves more varied ales, and the guest beer on offer was one from Bedford's Eagle Brewery (see page 15) – Young's Bitter. A first, this, as GK and Wells used to be rivals all over Beds – a sign of the new order in Havelock Street, perhaps. GK IPA was also available. The Five Bells is an old-fashioned village pub with several small rooms – one with a piano in it – and a wood fire burning in the grate. It was busy even before our 15 customers were added. The Young's was good, and the welcome from the Spanish licensees was warm.

Next, the **Guinea** at **Moggerhanger**, an extended village pub now emphasising food. It was busy with diners, but there

were people drinking in the bar area too, several of them in the armchairs around the log fire. A Wells pub, it rarely has guest ales, and on this evening it had Eagle, Young's Bitter, Directors and Young's Winter Warmer on. The Winter Warmer was in decent nick.

Third stop, the **Anchor** at **Great Barford**, another Wells house. It offered Young's Bitter (third pub in a row!), Courage Best and – another sign of the new order – Marstons Saddle Tank (3.8%), formerly Burton Bitter. Attracted by the train-related name, I tried the Saddle Tank and found it ordinary, but in good condition. The Anchor, a largish pub alongside the river, seemed unchanged from previous visits.

The **Royal Oak** at **Roxton** was our next



stop. A former Wells house, now privately owned, it still offers Eagle as that's the regulars' preference, and had Cotleigh Seahawk on as well. Most of our party went for the Cotleigh, with the result that it had run out before I could get any! The Eagle was in very acceptable shape. The Royal Oak is another delightful village pub and the licensees were friendly.

Doing our Duty on Cold Nights (continued)

Next stop was the **Crown** at **Eacon Socon** – a former coaching inn on the old A1 and situated, by a matter of feet, inside Wyboston parish, in North Beds CAMRA's territory and not that of Hunts CAMRA. Largely serving the A1 passing trade, especially people overnighting at the hotel next door, it keeps its cask ale pretty well. It's a Greene King house and offered GK IPA, Abbot, and Old Speckled Hen, accompanied by Sharp's Doom Bar. Hen was in good condition.

Last call for the evening was the **Polhill Arms** at **Renhold**, a bit of a favourite kept by Paul Smith, a true cask ale enthusiast. Another Greene King pub, it had the expected GK IPA and Abbot on, together with two beers badged as Hardys & Hansons but now brewed at Bury St Edmunds – H&H Bitter and Olde Trip. The real guest ale was Black Sheep Best, which as expected was in excellent shape. The Polhill is a Victorian pub in Salph End, close to the edge of Bedford, and gets a lot of dining trade coming out from town. The fact that the no. 5 town bus, with an evening service, stops only about ten minutes' walk away, helps! The Polhill Arms has now been voted our Pub of the Year for 2018 (see page 5).

The next Thursday, we went on a walking tour of **Bedford** pubs. This time we started at the **Bear** in the **High Street**. After various vicissitudes this much-loved pub is back to something like its proper state as a real ale house. No longer tied to Greene King, it offered Young's Bitter, Bombardier, and two beers from Tring Brewery – Hound (3.3% abv) and Code Breaker (4.0 % abv). I hadn't thought of Bletchley Park being on Tring's patch, but the Code

Breaker was very nice and properly kept. Hound was flavourful for such a low-gravity beer, too. For the first time, the Bear has won one of our branch pub awards (see page 6).

Next, the **Rose** further down the **High Street**, which offers CAMRA members a discount on cask ale. On this January evening the choices were London Pride, Doom Bar and GK IPA, but sometimes the Rose offers beers other than 'the usual suspects'. The Doom Bar was acceptable. Like the Bear, the Rose wasn't very full this early and, as it's quite a big open-plan pub, the lack of custom was more noticeable.

Over the town bridge to the **Kings Arms** in St Mary's Street, kept by Sean



Kings Arms

O'Donnell for quite a few years now. It's still a Greene King house, and on this quiet night no non-GK guests were on. But the choices were GK IPA, Abbot, Fireside and Hardys & Hansons Rock on Rudolph. The last-named, clearly a Christmas ale, ran out quickly, but the Fireside, a mature, dark malty ale at 4.5% abv, was a very nice pint which most of us tried – well kept, too.

Doing our Duty on Cold Nights (continued)

Back across the bridge to the fertile territory of Bedford's near east, with its large selection of real ale pubs. The first



of these we visited was the **Ship in St Cuthbert's Street**, another Greene King house. As well as the usual GK IPA and Abbot, it offered GK's Holy Ship (3.9% abv, a brew made specifically for this pub) and London Glory (4.1% abv), whose resemblance to a similarly named beer from another brewer is no doubt coincidental! Doom Bar was the guest choice. I found the London Glory very acceptable. The Ship is a big pub on two levels, and was very crowded as this was quiz night.

Round the corner into **Newnham Street**, with its two excellent pubs. The **Castle**, a Wells house, had the then-current Wells Wandering Brewer Project ale, Drink (3.7% abv), available and, from the Marstons stable, Eagle, Directors, and Young's Bitter and Special were on the handpumps – but not Young's Gold. The guest ale was Robinson's Trooper (4.8% abv), a very nice beer. The Castle was busy but the welcome was friendly.

Just along the road, the **Three Cups** was also busy and also welcoming. Our 2017 Pub of the Year, it is a Greene King Local Hero pub leased by White Park

Brewery to act as – in effect – their brewery tap. From GK it offered GK IPA, Old Speckled Hen and (from the Scottish outpost) Belhaven Smoke Stack Stout. From White Park, the choices were White Gold (3.8% abv) and the then-seasonal offering, Oast House (4.8%). I found the Oast House a pleasant strong bitter. The Three Cups is our Town Pub of the Year for 2018 (see page 5).

Some of our wanderers left at this point, but for me our scheduled last stop was near home, so I continued with the remaining companions to the **Devonshire Arms in Dudley Street**. Since Ronnie and Rebecca Toms replaced the famed Martin and Naomi as licensees, its character has changed just a little, but it's still a very popular local, serving mainly the neighbourhood within walking distance. A Wells house throughout its 120-year life, its usual offerings are Eagle, Young's Gold and Directors, though Young's Special is no longer a regular. On this winter evening, the other beers on offer were Wells Jolly Mr Fezziwig – a winter ale brewed at Wells' old home in Havelock Street by Marstons under contract – and from another Marstons subsidiary, Ringwood Boon Doggle. My standby option at the Devvy is Directors, which turned out to be in excellent condition. Even towards 11 pm the pub was comfortably filled. The Devvy is our Cider Pub of the Year for 2018 (see page 7) and had two real ciders from Weston's available.

And so to our third January trip, on Burns Night. This was billed as a minibus trip, but – just as happened the previous year – no volunteer driver was

Doing our Duty on Cold Nights (continued)

available for the bus, so we made do with three carloads. Three of us were therefore unable to do much beer scoring. The destination rural pubs were rather far-flung, so we visited only four. The first stop was the **Plough at Bolnhurst**, easily missed as you drive up the B660 as it has only one very discreet sign. Mainly an eatery, and a very good one at that, the Plough keeps a comfortable area around the log fire for those who just want a drink. The beer choices were Black Sheep Best Bitter (3.8%), Adnams Southwold (3.7%) and Nene Valley New Age, and those able to sample them found all were very well kept, as we had expected.

The second stop was at North Beds



CAMRA's northernmost pub, the **Three Compasses at Upper Dean**, not easy to find on a dark night. Worth the search, though – it's a lovely old thatched country pub, and was gratifyingly busy with customers mostly there for the beer. Warm and welcoming, with the second log fire of the evening, it offered Timothy Taylor's Landlord, St Austell Tribute and Adnams Southwold. I risked a half of the weakest of these, the Adnams, and it was in an acceptable state.

Another longish drive through the



country lanes brought us to the **Bell at Odell**, in good hands these days. It's another attractive thatched village pub, and still has several separate rooms. A Greene King house, it had on hand pumps GK IPA, Abbot (which had run out), Ruddles Best (3.7% abv) and appropriately Belhaven Robert Burns Brown Ale, plus an unusual guest ale from the Black Country, Sadler's Peaky Blinder, a 4.4% abv 'Black IPA'. Those able to drink mostly tried the Sadler's and found it in fine shape.

Last stop, our Country Pub of the Year in 2016 and 2017, the **Fox at Carlton**. Alison the landlady was on the bar as usual, and on this occasion offered Cotleigh Barn Owl (4.5% abv) and Church End Willie Brew'd (4.2%) in addition to her regular beers, Eagle and London Pride. Encouragingly, a fair number of customers were in at 10 pm. On strength grounds, I could only sample the Eagle, which was certainly well kept.

Thus ended our January Odyssey! Having dropped off my passengers, I headed straight home.

Fytton Rowland

New Broom in Havelock Street



On 19th January Marstons held a VIP Launch for the renovated brewery in Havelock Street, Bedford. The old Charles Wells brewery

is now the Eagle Brewery, with a redesigned Eagle logo to match. The logo will also be rolled out in a new pump-clip design for Eagle IPA.

The Eagle Centre bar area has been remodelled to provide a bar and a shop. Brewery tours restarted in February, and now take place on Saturdays with tours at 1pm and 3 pm. Book online at eaglebrewery.co.uk, by e-mail at eagle.centre@marstons.co.uk or by phone

on 01234 272766. Tours cost £10 per person for a 45-minute tour of the brewery, samples of the beer range, one free bottle of beer and a glass, with the opportunity to buy other beers at £1.50 a 500 ml bottle. Polypins of cask ales are also available. The shop sells Eagle-branded merchandise as well. Rooms upstairs will be available for local organisations to hold meetings.

Marstons staff spoke about their plans for their newly acquired brewery. They will use its capacity by marketing the beers they inherited from Wells more effectively nationwide, most especially Eagle IPA. They were at pains to express their continuing friendly relations with Charles Wells Ltd – Paul Wells, the Chairman of Charles Wells Ltd, was there, seen chatting amicably with CAMRA's own beer guru Roger Protz!...

Fytton Rowland

Branch Diary

CAMRA North Beds Branch business meetings are normally held on the second Thursday of alternate months. Social events are held on the third Thursday of each month.

Guests are welcome at social events, but members have priority on brewery visits. For latest information visit the branch website at northbeds.camra.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@northbeds.camra.org.uk

MARCH

Thursday 8th – Branch Meeting

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

Thursday 15th-Friday 16th – Informal Socials

At the St Neots Beer and Cider Festival (see page 10)

Monday 26th – Branch Annual General Meeting

At Bedford Rowing Club, Duckmill Lane, Bedford, at 7.30 for 8 p.m. CAMRA members only

APRIL

Thursday 19th – Local brewery visit

To Rocket Brewery, Great Staughton. Further details to be announced

MAY

Monday 7th – Branch May Day Breakfast

Details to be announced

Thursday 10th – Branch Meeting

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

Thursday 17th – Pubs visit

Details to be announced

JUNE

Thursday 7th – Summer Day Out

Details to be announced

Thursday 21st – Pubs visit

Details to be announced



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February trip



Another minibus pub trip was held on 22nd February. Our first stop was at the **Bull in London Road, Bedford** a Greene King 'Meet and Eat' house. The landlady continues her efforts to make the Bull into a real

ale pub, and had GK IPA and Abbot on, together with the Sadler's Peaky Blinder as guest ale, with GK's Six Nations special, Scrum Down (4.1% abv) 'coming soon'. The Peaky Blinder and Abbot both ran out, though, so she put the Scrum Down on for us. I found it unremarkable.



Next to the **Bell at Cotton End**, a small traditional village pub in contrast to the large interwar suburban

Bull. Lorraine the landlady made us very welcome even though the pub was quite busy. Her usual beers, Tribute and Spitfire, were on. I tried Tribute and as expected it was well kept. A warm atmosphere was helped by a log fire!

Then to another log fire at the **Greyhound at Haynes**, which has been extended and modernised into a dining pub. It was busy with drinkers, and in this Greene King house GK IPA and Old Speckled Hen were joined by (oh joy!) two Oakham beers, Citra (4.2% abv) and Green Devil (6% abv!) Some members had Green Devil but I stuck with the devil I know, Citra, and found it in good.

The **Hare and Hounds at Old Warden** next – even more of a dining destination. But here too there was no shortage of drinking

customers. A Wells house, it offered Eagle and Young's Special. I sampled Special and found it good. The landlord himself was one of those working hard behind the bar – always a good sign, as was the real fire.

We finished up with A Tale of Two Crowns.

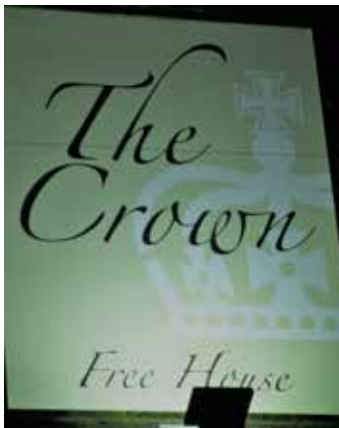


Northill

The **Crown at Northill** is yet another Greene King pub mainly known for food, with again a fair number of drinkers in. And yet another log fire! GK IPA and Abbot

were joined this time by Cameron's Strongarm, a rare visiting species this far south. We all tried the Cameron's and found it in acceptable shape, if pricey.

Another contrast, the **Crown at Willington**



Willington

is a Victorian building and mostly a drinking pub. It's been refurbished recently under its new landlord Vince. Now a free house, it stocks Eagle and Directors, and another rugby beer,

Wychwood Dirty Tackle, was on the bar but turned out to be 'end of barrel'. The other choice was Doom Bar, so I settled for Directors, and found it good.

Fytton Rowland

History of Beer Part 2

In part 1 (see Firkin Volume 42 Issue 4), I brought you the history of beer from around 7000BCE up to roughly the year 1000. We saw beer and brewing rise in the Middle East and slowly arrive in Europe (thanks to the Romans!). In this part, I shall bring you the beginnings of modern brewing, the rise of English ale (and beer), and English settlers in a 'New World'.

822 – Abbot Adalhard of the Benedictine monastery of Corbie in France wrote down a set of rules of how the abbey was to be run. This included a rule of using wild hops for making beer.



1000 – Other countries begin to discover the use of hops in beer and begin experimenting.

1200 – Beer-making is established as a commercial enterprise in Austria, England and Germany. This leads to monks selling their beer to pubs, as well as some pubs and households beginning to brew their own to sell. Men are now taking over from women as brewers. The English enjoy mild temperature beers, so store their beer in cellars. The Germans, however, prefer cold temperature beer so store their beer in Alpine caves.

1292 – An organised group of brewers in London is founded.

1400 – Hopped beer is imported to England from the Netherlands.

1406 – The group of brewers in London are now called the Mistery (*trade*) of Free Brewers and has been granted the right to

appoint Masters and Wardens.

1420 – German brewers discover how to brew lagers. Around the same time Brauerei Beck becomes Germany's first brewing guild.

1428 – Hops are now being grown in England, intended for use in beer.



1438 – Henry VI grants the Mistery of Free Brewers their first royal charter. They later go on to become the Worshipful Company of Brewers (a Livery Company that

protected the rights of brewers and brewing in London).

It is around this time when the Worshipful Company of Brewers declared that ale must only be made of 'liquor (water), malt and yeast'. In England beer created with hops is called 'beer' and beer without hops is called 'ale'.

1492 – Christopher Columbus sails to America and finds native Americans



making beer from corn and black birch sap.

Here come the English

1516 – The Reinheitsgebot ‘Beer Purity Law’ is introduced in Germany and other states of the Holy Roman Empire. This states that water, barley and hops were the only ingredients to be used in beer. (It was illegal to use anything else.) This is the oldest food regulation that was still in use into the 20th century.

1534 – Henry VIII breaks away from the Catholic Church and closes most of the monasteries across England. This leads to the end of the brewing monks in England, and innkeepers and families now become the main brewers.



1553 – Brauerei Beck becomes Beck's Brewery and still brews to this day.

Late 1500s – It is documented that Queen Elizabeth I drank a strong ale for breakfast.



1573 – Shepherd Neame Brewery is opened (although it wasn't officially founded until 1698). It is the oldest brewer in Great Britain and family owned since 1864. *Evidence has been found to suggest that brewing has happened on the site of the current brewery (opened in 1698) since this date.*



1587 – Sir Walter Raleigh is the first to brew beer (as we know it) in the New World, but the colonies reject his beer and demand ale from England.

1602 – Alexander Nowell discovers that ale can be stored longer in glass bottles sealed with corks.

1612 – The first American commercial brewery (Adrian Block & Hans Christiansen Brewery) opens in New Amsterdam, now known as New York City).

1620 – Plymouth Rock becomes the disembarking site of the Mayflower Pilgrims, as their beer supplies ran low.

1700 – Porters are now being created around London. These new dark beers prove to be very popular.

We end part 2 with the Mayflower landing in the New World after running out of beer, and the beginnings of dark beer. We have seen the rise and fall of the brewing monks in Britain, we now have official breweries and an organisation defending brewers. The English have settled in America and have started to make beer. Next time we shall visit the Industrial Revolution and a discovery that would change brewing forever!

Dan Veal

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