

FREE

The Firkin



**CAMRA
FOR
REAL ALE**

Magazine of CAMRA North Bedfordshire • Vol 43 No 3 Autumn 2018

Festive Time Again!



Bedford Beer and Cider Festival 3-6 October 2018

PUB NEWS

41st BEDFORD BEER FESTIVAL

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

FREE BEER FROM WELLS!

OTHER AUTUMN FESTIVALS

BREWERY-HOPPING IN JUNE

PUBS IN THE NORTH

PUBS NEW AND OLD

PUBS LARGE AND SMALL

CIDER IN BEDFORD

POST-INDUSTRIAL BREWING

BRANCH DIARY

The Campaign for Real Ale is a consumer organisation founded in 1971

THE DEVONSHIRE ARMS

*Serving Real Draught
Cider
Fine Wines*



*Lovely courtyard
garden
Free Wi-Fi available*

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

*Serving a range of Quality Cask Ales
— Eagle IPA, Young's London Gold,
Courage Directors and range of three
guest ales.*

Devvy Beer & Cider Festival 24-27 August

***CAMRA North Beds Pub of the Year 2013,
Cider Pub of the Year 2018***

www.devonshirearmsbedford.co.uk

32 Dudley Street, Bedford MK40 3TB

Tel: 01234 301170

The Fox at Carlton



***North Beds
CAMRA Country
Pub of the Year
2016 & 2017***



Beer Festival 24th – 27th August

18 Real Ales and 6 Ciders

Live music and food Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening

01234 720235



[thefoxatcarlton](https://www.facebook.com/thefoxatcarlton)

www.thefoxatcarlton.pub

Pub News

St John's Arms, Melchbourne

Welcome to Richard "Harry" Worth, who recently took over this former hunting lodge. He has made this an outlet for Ringwood beers, with Razorback and Old Thumper usually joined by a guest ale from a Marston's brewery. Home-cooked food is served Wednesday to Saturday, with a roast lunch on Sunday. Camping facilities are available. stjohnsarms.co.uk

Ye Three Fyshes, Turvey

This old riverside inn is under new management. Traditional pub food is served Wednesday to Sunday. The regular real ales are Adnams Ghost Ship and Sharp's Doom Bar. There is an attractive rear garden overlooking the river. Coffee and cake mornings are held on Wednesday to Saturday, and there is a happy hour on weekdays 6 to 7pm. yethreefyshes.co.uk

New Inn, Wyomington



This traditional village inn near Rushden changed hands in May. New landlord Artur Skzypek serves Bateman's XB and Greene King Abbot. Home-cooked, traditional food is served all week, including Sunday lunch. Call 01933 317618.

Toast, Riverside Square, Bedford

This new bar in the Riverside North development is long and narrow with additional space upstairs. The emphasis is on wine and cocktails, but the bar has a single handpump offering Cotleigh beers



from Somerset. Open daily until midnight, and till 2am Friday and Saturday. toastbedford.co.uk

Beerfly, St Cuthbert's St, Bedford

Although we don't often report off-licences, this new beer shop also offers draught and bottled beers to drink on the premises. There is a good selection of canned and bottled beers, plus six taps serving craft keg beers. So far there have been no real ales. Closed on Mondays. beerfly.co.uk

Woolpack, Wilstead



Welcome to Peter & Janice Benedicta, who recently took over this friendly village local. Greene King IPA, Abbot and

H&H Olde Trip are available, plus a guest ale. Good home-cooked food with a gastro twist is served lunchtime (except Mon) and evenings. woolpack-wilstead.co.uk

Three Cups, Newnham St, Bedford

White Park Brewery has moved to its new home at the Cups, with manager Bev Burridge set to become Bedford's first brewster! Beers from White Park's range are expected to appear very soon. threecupsbedford.co.uk

23rd Henlow Beer Festival

Engineers Arms | High Street, Henlow, Beds | SG16 6AA

Wednesday 17th to Sunday 21st October 2018

WE ARE BACK ON WEDNESDAY! ALL NEW BREWS AND BREWERIES WILL BE AVAILABLE ON OPENING DAY!

Over 85

Traditional Real Ales,
Ciders & Perries

Open **All Day**
Every Day
From 12 Noon

Wednesday Night

Fish & Chips
The Incredible Dr Busker

Thursday Night

Caribbean Food

Friday Night

Hog Roast

Saturday Night

Now Now South African Food

Sunday Big Ale Sale

All Cask Beers
£3 a Pint



For more info visit www.engineersarms.co.uk or call (01462) 812284



AWARD WINNING BEERS BREWED IN HERTFORDSHIRE



Our 12 Monthly Specials for 2018 are themed around the heroic wartime achievements of the Bletchley Park codebreakers and are brewed as part of a fundraising campaign in support of Bletchley Park and The National Museum of Computing.



WEEKLY DELIVERIES IN YOUR AREA



TRING
BREWERY Co.

Dunsley Farm, London Rd, Tring HP23 6HA

☎ 01442 890721 🌐 www.tringbrewery.co.uk

41st Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

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

Wed 3rd - Sat 6th October 2018

Open Wed 4-11, Thu-Fri 12-11, Sat 11.30-10.30



**160 real ales + 50 ciders and perries
draught and bottled international beers**

Admission

- * Before 4pm: £1
- * After 4pm: Wed £2, Thu £3, Fri £4, Sat £2
- * CAMRA members free
- * No advance tickets – pay at the door
- * Short street pass-outs for smokers etc
- * Wheelchair access to all floors

No under 18s - ID required

Entertainers

- * Wed eve – Ukulele Bedford
- * Sat lunch – Bedford Morris Men
- * Sat eve – PistonZ

Volunteers Needed!

- * Use e-form on website
- * Phone 01234 344388



northbeds.camra.org.uk



@nbcamra

Sponsor a Cask!

- * £50 puts your business on the bar
- * Phone 01234 344388 or email beerfestival@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Other Features

- * Souvenir glasses £3 sale or return
- * Oversize glasses for a full 20 oz pint
- * Pint, half and third pint measures
- * Hot and cold food from Angelo's
- * Chocolate and beer matching
- * Cloakroom by Bedford Lions
- * Free soft drinks
- * Mead bar
- * Engraver
- * Good Beer Guide 2019
- * Tombola + pub game



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

The Big One – Well, Forty-one Actually

In keeping with forty earlier years, the Bedford Beer and Cider Festival returns to the very familiar surroundings of Bedford Corn Exchange from the 3rd to the 6th October 2018. So same venue, new organiser. I was away when the jobs were dished out.



I first volunteered with the festival in 2006 and have done so at every festival since then. More about volunteering later so don't go away.

On offer this year is our normal winning formula of lots of wonderful beers (about 160 of them). I love that we offer a wide range of beers – from very dark to pale – from all over the country with an emphasis on local breweries, which saves on beer miles. So why not come along and try new styles, conveniently served in pints, halves and thirds. Our specially designed logo features on the glasses – many thanks to



our designer Colin Lilley. It's a very striking design, definitely one to add to the glasses collection

If beer is not your tipples we will have an excellent selection of over 50 ciders and perries. Some will have interesting names.

Bored from ales from the UK? Why not try some international beers, both bottled and draught, available from the International Beer Bar. This is in the Howard Room upstairs, along with our excellent caterer Angelo's St Cuthberts providing a great range of meals for lunch and dinner plus snacks at other times.

For those occasions when chocolate is the answer we will have Oddfellows Chocolates. Also returning is Rookery Mead. Mead was a complete revelation to me last year, and the bottles make great Christmas presents (sorry about mentioning the C thing).



This year's entertainment is Ukelele Bedford on Wednesday evening, Bedford Morris Men on Saturday lunchtime, and finishing off with local band PistonZ. CAMRA's Tombola and Shut The Box will be featured throughout the four days.

Admission is free for CAMRA members, so why not join CAMRA at the Festival. You'll get two free pints and no need to pay for entry on your return visits for the rest of the week to sample more beer.



I mentioned volunteers earlier – you thought I'd forgotten. Just a few weeks left and if you fancy being part of the winning team why don't you pop over to the North Beds CAMRA website and fill in the staffing volunteer form. You'll find at northbeds.camra.org.uk Any time you can give us will be hugely appreciated, and you could get that warm glow of satisfaction from a job

well done – although maybe more to do with the generous free beer as a reward for your time. Plus you get a free souvenir glass, and staff rates for meals from Angelo's.

"Ask not what your festival can do for you, ask what you can do for your festival" – sorry – a terrible misquote but you get the idea. We are especially looking for volunteers for Thursday and Friday nights when it gets busy. Not sure and need to know more, contact me at beerfestival@northbeds.camra.org.uk

There are also sponsorship opportunities – sponsor a cask for £50 – and this gets your business's name displayed on a cask for all to see throughout the festival plus free entry tickets. Contact me at beerfestival@northbeds.camra.org.uk for more details of the scheme.

Lynne Ratnett

Free Beer from Wells

I'd spotted a sign at the Embankment Hotel in Bedford offering free beer on 26th June, so naturally I went along...



The Wells tasting event – for that it what it turned out to be – was presented by Ian Jones, the Wandering Brewer himself.

Born and raised in Burton-on Trent, he was clearly meant to be a brewer from birth, and is head brewer at the 'new' Wells. He gave us a description of the new brewery planned for Fairhill, off Clapham Road, one-thirtieth the size of the Havelock Street plant. It will be a 'rapid short-run brewhouse'. Brew length will be 20 barrels, but at full stretch they will be able to do

these runs eight times in 24 hours. They plan to brew two or three core cask ales plus specials and seasonals, and will supply just Wells houses. But as their licensees are free to stock other beers, especially those from the Marstons stable, they will need to mount a charm offensive toward their own licensees! There will also be a 150-litre pilot brewery, to make small batches for sale in the brewery bar only.

Oh, and the free beer? We were offered Guest (4.1% abv), the June Wandering Brewer beer, brewed at the Portobello Brewery in London, which turned out to be my favourite of those beers to that date (though the subsequent July beer, Brewmance, brewed at Nethergate, was pretty good too). Also on offer was Rucksack, a keg beer at 4.0% abv, brewed at Fourpure Brewery in Bermondsey. Four Wandering Brewer keg beers, available for three months each, will all be brewed there.

Fytton Rowland

UP TO 350 REAL ALES
CIDERS, PERRIES & FOREIGN BEERS



ST ALBANS
BEER & CIDER
FESTIVAL 2018

WEDS 26TH - SAT 29TH SEPTEMBER

LIVE MUSIC

THURSDAY EVE THE LANDLORDS
SATURDAY LUNCH SWAN VESTA SOCIAL CLUB
SATURDAY EVE THE OVERTURES

ALBAN ARENA ST ALBANS AL1 3LD

OPEN 11AM TO 11PM EVERY DAY
ENTRY: £3 WEDS/£4 THURS/£5 FRI/£6 SAT
CAMRA MEMBERS FREE AT ALL TIMES



@STALBANSBF & ON FACEBOOK
WWW.STALBANSBEEFFESTIVAL.ORG.UK

CASK IS COOL. A BEER TOKENS SYSTEM WILL OPERATE ON THE BARS.
TOKENS FOR SALE AT THE FESTIVAL. TRADERS STANDS WILL ACCEPT CASH.

NO ADVANCE TICKETS FOR ANY SESSION. NO ONE UNDER THE AGE OF 18 ALLOWED IN THE BAR AREAS AT ANY TIME OR ANYWHERE ON THE PREMISES AFTER 5PM. DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE. USE THE TRAIN OR BLIS.



Chairman's Corner

Recently I have surveyed three new town centre pubs for WhatPub. Some argue that these are not pubs, but are

they right? We all have pubs we like and know others where we choose not to go. That is surely a good thing, as life would be boring if we all liked the same style of pub and that was the only type around. Variety is the spice of life!

None of these new venues describes themselves as a pub, perhaps because they want to attract a clientele that does not see themselves as pub patrons. The reality is that increased costs are decimating the pubs that rely on drink sales alone. As a result those that can are reinventing

themselves to attract more people through their doors.

I see no problem with that so long as those who want to socialise over a drink are still welcome. Providing space for that is a valuable social service. In an increasingly insular society opportunities to break down barriers are important.

For our part perhaps we need to try a new pub occasionally to broaden our own concept of what a pub is, and what attracts people unlike us. The same can be said for trying a new beer to broaden our appreciation. Where better to do that than at Bedford Beer and Cider Festival? (See pages 5-7.)

Roger Stokes

Autumn Beer Festivals

St Albans Beer & Cider Festival

26-29 September .See page 8.

stalbansbeerfestival.org.uk

Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

3-6 October. See pages 5-7.

northbeds.camra.org.uk

Nottingham Robin Hood Beer & Cider Festival

17-20 October at Motorpoint Arena, Nottingham NG1 1LA. Open Wed 5-11, Thu-Sat 11-11. Over 1,000 ales and 250 ciders/perries. Advance tickets through website. Train from Bedford.

beerfestival.nottinghamcamra.org

Henlow Beer Festival 17-21 October at Engineers Arms, 68 High St, Henlow SG16 6AA. Open all day from 12 noon. Over 80 traditional real ales, ciders & perries. Bus 71-72 from Bedford. engineersarms.co.uk

St Ives Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival

18-20 October at Burgess Hall, Westwood Rd St Ives PE27 6WU. Open Thu/Fri 12-10.30, Sat 12-10. 70 ales, 15 ciders.

hunts.camra.org.uk/festivals

Bedford Swan Beer Festival

25-28 October at Swan Hotel, Embankment, Bedford MK40 1RW. Range of ales and food in town centre hotel. bedfordswanhotel.co.uk

Oxford Beer & Cider Festival

8-10 November at Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford. Open Thu 5-11, Fri 11-11, Sat 11-7. 130 ales and 50 ciders, hot and cold food. X5 bus from Bedford. oxford.camra.org.uk

Pigs Ear Beer & Cider Festival

4-8 December at Round Chapel, Lower Clapton Road, Hackney, London E5 0LY. Open Tue-Thu 12-10.30, Fri-Sat 12-11. 230 ales, ciders/perries and foreign beers.

pigsear.org.uk/festivals

**Black headings: CAMRA festivals;
blue headings, others**

STOP PRESS: Stephen Leather is the new licensee at the Cricketers, Bedford.

Breweries on a Hot Summer's Day

North Beds CAMRA's Summer Day Out this year took in four breweries with green credentials, recycling warm water to the hot water tank, spent grain as cattle feed and waste hops as manure.

Farr Brew, Wheathampstead, Herts



Farr

Nick Farr was a home-brewer, has a very green ethos, and is into foraging hedgerow fruits. He began brewing for sale, starting

with small batches (basically home brewing) and selling bottles at farmers markets. One day he and his brewing partner, Matt, thought they'd sell around 100 bottles at a market, but sold 1000!

He supplied a porter to St Albans Beer Festival, but couldn't attend. At St Albans market he was congratulated, and finally found out that he'd won Herts Beer of the Year. (St Albans CAMRA put him forward.) Pressure then grew to upscale to meet demand, so they crowdfunded, and the present brewery is 80% owned by him and Matt and 20% by 'angels'. Farr has now been running for two years with a lot of brewing at night and weekends, as Nick still had a day job. They now have a ten-barrel plant and new fields of hops (Cascade and Fuggles). They hope to be self-sufficient in hops. The farmer is also going to start growing Maris Otter and may build a small maltings, so the brewery miles will be very low. They put out used bottles for local home brewers to take away. They sell off pallets to upcyclers. And they have set up a hop collective, where people take away three hop plants to grow at home and bring the crop back. Their latest project is the Reading Room, a micropub in

Wheathampstead.

Beers for us to try were Chief Jester, a 3.8% golden beer with Jester hops and a grapefruit/tropical fruit nose, and Best Bitter by Farr, a dark old-style bitter with pale, crystal and chocolate malts and Sovereign hops. A good start.

Prince of Wales, Green Tye, Bishops Stortford, Herts



Green Tye

We settled down with our pints at this brewpub to a good lunch. The landlord stayed open for us to have another pint, and

showed us the microbrewery at the back of the pub. The brewery was formerly used by Bishops Stortford Brewery and the Ash Valley Brewery, but now only brews for the pub as needed, about once a week.

Saffron Brewery, Saffron Walden, Essex



Saffron

The Saffron Brewery is in a farmyard barn and its mash tun is an old dairy pasteuriser. The rest is in a conventional layout, but with

some heavy-duty chilling equipment to cool the wort and maintain fermentation temperature exactly. The fermenters are closed, due to the farm environment and a fair number of flies! Beers for us to try were: Agnes Waterhouse – a new 5.2% abv Coffee Porter (the equivalent of fifteen espressos go into the conditioning beer); Blonde, a 4.3% abv light golden ale, with a delicate balance of bitterness, malt spice and honey aromas; and IPA, a 3.6% abv light golden

Breweries on a Hot Summer's Day

copper ale, with smooth toffee and malt flavours and a hint of citrus. All most enjoyable, a friendly visit.

Papworth Brewery, Earith, Cambs

Richard Harrison (the Chair of Hunts CAMRA) has a good reputation for fine



Papworth

beers. Papworth Brewery started in Papworth Everard on 100-litre kit, still in use for trial brews today. The brewery then moved to its

present site. It has a ten-barrel brewery, ex-Red Squirrel Brewery. It serves a thirty-mile radius; one brew a week will increase to two next year. Production is 75% cask and 25% bottle-conditioned. They use 15-20 different hop varieties.

We decided to try the Papworth bottled beers, to try most of the range. I particularly liked Red Kite, a 4.7% abv red ale with toffee and biscuit flavours and a peach hop finish, and Big Sur, a West Coast American IPA at 5.0% abv. But Mad Jack bitter (3.8% abv) is a tasty standard British bitter too. I also tried a very green, just-bottled mild which I look forward to trying when it matures and gets a name!

Green Man, Colne, Cambs



We moved on to the Green Man for an excellent dinner and more draught Papworth in the

form of Half Nelson, a 4.1% abv bitter. A great finish to a good day out, as we were driven safely back to Bedford with our bottled trophies of the day gently clinking!

Gary Mudd

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.

Edited by Fytton Rowland, 73 Dudley Street, Bedford MK40 3TA, firkin@northbeds.camra.org.uk
Printed by CKN Print, Northampton
Advertising sales by Neil Richards MBE, Matelot Marketing
Tel 01536 358670 Mob 07710 281381
N.Richards@btinternet.com
© Campaign for Real Ale Ltd 2018

Trading Standards

If you complain to a licensee about short measure, lack of a visible price list, or a misleading product promotion, and do not get a satisfactory response, call Consumer Direct on 08454 040506 or contact an adviser through the website at www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

Contact us

Chairman, Press and Publicity Officer and Clubs Officer:

Roger Stokes –
chairman@northbeds.camra.org.uk
pressofficer@northbeds.camra.org.uk
clubsofficer@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Secretary and

Pub Campaigns Co-ordinator:
Peter Argyle – 01234 822698
secretary@northbeds.camra.org.uk
pubcampaigns@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Newsletter Editor and Pubs Protection Officer:
Fytton Rowland – 01234 303221
firkin@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Festival Organiser: Lynne Ratnett – 01234 344388
beerfestival@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Socials: Gary Mudd – 01234 741871
socials@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Finance: John Keays –
treasurer@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Membership: Neil Ratnett – 01234 344388
membership@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Website: Alan Hawkins –
webmaster@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Cider Rep: Sue Fossey –
cider-representative@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Young Members' Rep, Social Networking and Vice-Chairman:

Dan Veal – youngmembers@northbeds.camra.org.uk
vice-chairman@northbeds.camra.org.uk
socmedia@northbeds.camra.org.uk



ST. JOHN'S ARMS

A Traditional English Country Pub in Melchbourne, Bedford

Serving such ales as Ringwood Brewery's Old Thumper, Razor Back and Bombardier Burning Gold, along with a wide selection of lagers, ciders, bottled beers, wines and spirits. We also carry a range of Gins to suit all palates, and stock Fever Tree mixers to complement these perfectly.



Tel: 01234 708238

For more information about menus and upcoming events visit
www.stjohnsarms.co.uk

Our address:

St. John's Arms
 Knotting Road
 Melchbourne
 Bedfordshire
 MK44 1BG

Opening times:

Monday-Friday: 4pm - 11pm
 Saturday: 12 noon - 11pm
 Sunday 12 noon - 10.30pm

Food serving times:

Wed - Fri: 6pm - 9pm
 Saturday: 12 noon till 3pm; 6pm to 9pm
 Sundays - 12 noon - 3pm

Monday - Darts night
Tuesday - Charity quiz night
Wednesday - Steak night
 (special deal on steaks)
Friday - Friday Fizz
 (half price Prosecco)



Bedfordshire's
 Premier Home
 Brew and
 Wine Making
 Specialists

- Comprehensive range of bitters
- Large choice of wines
- Wide selection of lagers
- Excellent prices
- Free advice

HOME BREW HELPLINE
01234 353856

contactus@thehappybrewer.com
www.thehappybrewer.com

Open Tuesday to Saturday 9.30am to 5pm
 Sunday 10.30am to 4.30pm
 Closed Monday except Bank Holidays

Roxton Garden Centre

@ The Black Cat Roundabout
 Bedford Road, Roxton, MK44 3DY

POLHILL ARMS



New Garden & Play Area

sky sports

BT Sport



Follow us on
Facebook

Cask Ale is our Speciality

Greene King fine Ales & Changing
 Guest Beers on Five Handpumps

Great British Pub Food Served
 Large Family Play Garden & Car
 Park



T: 01234 771398 W: www.polhillarms.co.uk
 Wilden Road, Renhold, Bedford, MK41 0JP

Heading North

North Beds CAMRA's May trip took us first to the **Crown in Little Staughton**.



Crown

In addition to Black Sheep, there were two beers from the pub's own microbrewery. The Beer with No Name (3.8% abv) was now joined by a Pale Ale (3.7 abv%). No Name was at the end of the barrel when we arrived, but the new one was soon on though hop-lovers would have preferred it to have more hops in it.

The **Fox and Hounds at Riseley** was the next stop. Eagle, Bombardier and Tribute



Fox and Hounds

were on offer, but we were confused as the pump clips did not always correspond to the beer they produced! My Tribute came from behind an Eagle clip and could perhaps have benefitted from more conditioning, though it was certainly well kept.



Three Compasses

From a quiet Fox and Hounds we moved on to a much busier **Three Compasses at Upper Dean**, where a skittles

match was in full flow. Despite the pub being full, service was prompt from a choice of Timothy Taylor's Landlord, Tribute and Greene King IPA. I was able to enjoy a fine pint of Landlord while chatting to the landlord, and avoiding the flying cheeses.



St John's Arms

The **St John's Arms in Melchbourne** was once a Greene King house but the choice in this free house has moved away from that brewer to the Marston's stable. Bombardier Burning Gold joined two Ringwood beers on the bar – 3.8% abv Razorback and 5.1% abv Old Thumper. The quality of the latter made me glad I had not spotted its strength before ordering, as I normally drink lower-gravity beer! It seemed a strange choice for a pub outside the village, so I trust those who drink it have a designated driver. Recent refurbishment has made it a more attractive pub than I recall from previous visits.

Our next stop was at the very edge of our branch area but we got no further than the car park at the **New Inn, Wympington**, as the pub was shut. (We discovered later this was because it had just changed hands.) A warm welcome awaited us at the **Bedford Arms, Souldrop** where we had the choice of Adnam's Ghostship, Black Sheep and Greene King IPA – all of which seemed to be in decent condition – to fortify us for our return to Bedford.

Roger Stokes

Pubs New and Old

North Beds CAMRA's June pub trip covered expanding places west of Kempston. We uncovered one or two pleasant surprises. We first headed for Marsh Leys, where there are two modern pubs next door to each other. The Brewer's Fayre is essentially a chain restaurant, not geared up for drinkers, but stocks cask London Pride and Doom Bar – though not necessarily both at the same time! The Maypole Farm, though an eatery, has more of a pub atmosphere. It had Greene King IPA, Un-Beer-Lievable (GK's World Cup special, at 4.1% abv), and Great Oakley's Welland Valley Mild on handpumps. I found the mild very acceptable. Both the pubs were well filled by diners around 7.30 p.m.

On to **Wootton**, where two small old-established pubs serve extensive new areas as well as the old village. The **Fox and Duck**



used to be a Greene King pub but is now free of tie. Along with London Pride, two unusual beers were on handpumps – Lacon's Charter (3.6% abv) and Roaring Meg (5.5% abv) from the Springhead Brewery in Notts. The Roaring Meg was rather good! The Fox and Duck is a pleasant village pub, modernised but retaining its character, and was quite busy.

Just along the road is the **Cock**, another village pub, a Wells house, still with two separate bars – a very small saloon, where



Young's Bitter and the then-current Wells Wandering Brewer beer, Guest (4.1% abv). The Guest tasted a bit 'end-of-barrel'.



we sat, and a larger public bar with a TV. Not many were in except for us, and we were offered

On to the delightful thatched pub in **Lidlington**, the **Green Man**, another ex-GK house. Only one

staff member on, but she served us quickly with Marston's 61 Deep, a nice hoppy pale ale at 3.8% abv, which is now becoming common in Wells houses too.

Final stop – **Marston Mortaine**, an expanding village with but a single pub, the **Bell**. A different licensee since our last visit has made it into a cask-ale destination, with beers from several small breweries. This seems to have worked as a tactic – there were plenty of people in, mostly drinkers. The pub looks inviting, with hanging baskets outside, and had on its handpumps Kelchner's Lekker (3.9% abv) from Ampthill, Narrow Gauge (3.9% abv) from the Leighton Buzzard Brewery, and Rutland Osprey (4.0% abv) from Grainstore Brewery in Oakham. Spoiled for choice, I omitted the Kelchner's, but found both the others excellent. So now we have another decent real-ale pub for North Beds.

Fytton Rowland

Pubs Large and Small

North Beds CAMRA's pub trip in July started in **Clapham**, where we surveyed the **Star**, a very nice little village pub. Its list of licensees starts from 1876, when Charles Wells started his



business – it must have been one of his first pubs. A CW-monogrammed plaque outside is dated 1896, when the newer part of the building went up. It still has separate public and saloon bars, and we filled the small public bar. Eagle and Directors were on the handpumps, and the Eagle was in good shape. Darts is clearly big at the Star, and it also has Sky Sports on the screen, but not much in the way of food. A proper pub!

Next, another proper pub, the **Royal George** at **Stevington**. It's very old, and fronts the village street directly. It's a free house and offered Eagle, Doom Bar and Adnams Ghost Ship. We mostly drank the Ghost Ship and liked it. While in Stevington we looked at the Red Lion, closed for some time. Houses are going up in its garden but the pub itself is being renovated, and the rumour is that it will reopen.

Then on to a village that still has two pubs open, **Turvey**. Both have had slightly chequered careers lately. **Ye Three Fyshes** by the river bridge is the older of the two, dating back to the eighteenth century at least. Though a free house, it offered Green King IPA, Abbot and Old Speckled Hen –

the Hen had run out. Odd, since it never was a GK house. The beer was in decent nick, though, and drinking it in the garden by the river was very pleasant.



Three Cranes

Then on to the **Three Cranes**, which was a GK house. This Victorian pub emphasises food but has a proper bar, which offered

GK and Abbot (again!) plus Adnams Southwold, Doom Bar and Blackpit Brewery's Cloud Nine, a very pale beer at 3.9% abv, refreshing but not hoppy. We mostly tried this unusual guest.

Our next stop was the **Prince of Wales** in **Bromham**, a Wells house recently taken



over by Roly and Kay Keech, who also run the Castle in Bedford. It's a big suburban-style pub

built in the 1960s. Eagle, Directors and Young's Special were on. I tried the Special, and it was in decent condition.

Finally, to adjacent **Biddenham**, where the sole pub, the **Three Tuns** (a name that surely belongs in Turvey!) is now a dining pub in GK's Old English Inns chain. No-one was eating at 10.45 p.m. though. GK IPA and Yardbird were on the pumps, and many of us chose Yardbird, one of GK's hoppiest brews. Both food and drink are a little pricey at the Three Tuns, fitting, perhaps, the affluence of the village! And that was it for another warm summer evening trip.

Fytton Rowland

**Please support your local pub,
or your community might end up
missing a vital piece.**

Find community pubs near you with
WHAT?PUB

COMMUNITY
PUBS
CAMPAIGN

www.whatpub.com

**17th century thatched
and boarded traditional
village pub with
character and charm**

**Welcome to
The Three
Compasses**

Experience a relaxing
welcoming
environment

Enjoy fine beers and
wines, quality food and
friendly service

**Wellingborough Row
Upper Dean
PE28 0NE**

(01234) 708346

**Open: 4-11 Mon-Fri
12-11 Sat & Sun**

Cask Beers:
Greene King IPA,
St Austell
Tribute, Timothy
Taylor Landlord

thethreecompasses.co.uk
info@thethreecompasses.co.uk
TheThreeCompassesUpperDean

**A quintessential village
pub**

**Real ales - Greene King
IPA & Abbot regular,
plus up to three guest ales**

**Relaxed charm of a
village local with a
varied menu of quality
home cooked food**

*No gimmicks - just a great
British pub!*

Bell, Odell
Horsefair Lane
MK43 7AU
01234 910850

f TheBellInOdell

Opening times:
Mon-Thu 11.30-2.30,
5-11; Fri-Sat 11.30-
11.30; Sun 12-10.30

WHAT?PUB

whatpub.com
Featuring over 35,000 real ale pubs

Over 96% of Britain's
real ale pubs featured

Information updated by
thousands of CAMRA
volunteers

Created by
CAMRA who
produce the
UK's best beer
& pub guide

Thousands of pubs at your fingertips!

Cider with Susie

I have a new hat! Sadly I am not going to a wedding or Royal Ascot, but to Bedford as the new North Beds CAMRA Cider rep. Off I go in search of apples and pears as part of my 'five a day'.



Rose

was Crazy Goat from Lilleys, a 6.0% abv mix of apples and pears. Much needed refreshment on a hot summer day. Very delicious taste. Ice was offered in a separate glass, which I felt was a thoughtful touch as most pubs automatically add it to your glass. A good start to my quest.



Brewhouse and Kitchen

building housing a brewery and offers food all day. On offer was Somerset's Orchard Pig. At a modest 4.0% abv its flavours were ginger and chilli. I was pleasantly surprised by how tasty it was. Tim, the manager, was present and so too was the brewer Pete, who was busy getting the next brew ready.

First stop, the **Rose** on the High Street. This grade 2 listed building has been refurbished. Spoilt for choice here, as there were six ciders inside and four in the garden bar. My choice

Further up the High Street are two very different pubs. The **Brewhouse and Kitchen** is a large

Moving across the road to the **Bear**, voted North Beds CAMRA's Young Members Pub of the Year. On this day I was unable to sample any cider, but normally they provide Weston's Old Rosie.

Stretched the legs a bit now and took off to Newnham Street to drop in at the **Three Cups** and the **Castle**. Firstly the Three Cups. Had a bite to eat to accompany the drinks. Couldn't help but notice the additional furniture in the shape of brewing equipment, part of White Park brewery, being installed in the pub. Not brewing yet so it's a case of watch this space! All exciting stuff. I had a choice of two ciders. Not having seen Potton Press Cider nor tasted it in any of the other pubs visited today, I opted for that one. A higher percentage than previous ciders, but it was very moreish!!



Castle

The **Castle** also had two ciders to tempt my taste buds. Both from Westons and both at 4.0%. Rosies Pig Flat Tyre, a cloudy cider with

Rhubarb, and Raspberry Roller, a raspberry and cucumber combination. I tried the rhubarb cider and once again the cider was very tasty and pleasant to drink. The Castle has had a new stone floor laid in the bar area and has been redecorated throughout.

I hope this little trek around has inspired you to try the ciders that I found along the way. Cider may not be as popular as real ale due to the short pressing season, but we should all support our real cider makers!

Susan Fossey

Post-Industrial Chic Brewing

Each year the three Bedfordshire branches of CAMRA hold a joint London trip, and generally these have visited typical Victorian London pubs. Not this year. Most of the places we visited were old factories or railway arches. Because this was Hackney, trendy territory for yuppies and their craft beers!

We started, though, at Westfield **Stratford City Shopping Centre** where the **Tap East** brewpub occupies a unit. The building had all the character you would expect from such a location (!) but it offered three beers of its own – Tap East Session IPA (4.0% abv), JWB (4.1% abv) and Smokestack Porter (6.0% abv). At 12 noon no-one went for the 6%! The so-called IPA was a pale, hoppy beer that I went for and liked; the JWB – named from the brewer's initials – was a more traditional bitter. Also on offer were Saltaire Blonde (4.0% abv), Brew York's Down with the Citrus (4.7% abv) made with three American hops, and Ilkley Brewery's Radle Me This (3.6% abv), a grapefruit radler. I'm not sure whether radlers are actually beer...

Our leader then walked us in a through the Olympic Park to **Hackney Wick**, where we made three stops within a few paces. First, **Crate Brewery** (and Pizzeria!) in The White Building. They make a pale, a lager, an IPA and a cider, but only Golden Pale (3.8% abv) was on handpump that day. It was undistinguished.



But then we moved next door to **Howling Hop Brewery's Tank Bar** and found a more interesting range. All the beers are

dispensed direct from the conditioning tanks, and eight were on offer, including a Göse, a Kölsch, a Hefeweizen, a chocolate stout (Pudding Ale), a dry-hopped red (Dinner Ale), an APA, an IPA, and finally Tropical Deluxe Pale (3.8% abv), which I

tried. It was very pale, cloudy, and likeable with an unusual hop kick. En route to the loos one got a good view of the brewery itself. For me, Howling Hop was the high



spot of the day. Round the corner to **Beer Merchants Tap**, another industrial setting but not a brewery. Lots of

beers on offer, many of them from the Welsh brewery Tiny Rebel, all but one of them in kegs. The one cask ale, Tiny Rebel Fugg Life (4.2% abv), a seasonal, was very drinkable.



On to the Overground for two stops to **Hackney Central**, for a short stroll to our only traditional pub of the day, the **Pembury Tavern** – now opened out into one big bar with bare boards.



It's **Five Points Brewery** (100 yards away) brewery tap, and it offered their Railway Porter (4.8% abv), Pale (4.4% abv) and XPA (4.0% abv) on handpumps. Keg

offerings were their Pils (4.8% abv) and Swinging the Axe, an Imperial Stout at – wait for it – 11.3% abv! A couple of Redemption beers, one from Brew York and a cider were also on handpumps. The Five Points Pale, their main product, was very acceptable. From the pub we proceeded to the brewery, in a narrow alley but surprisingly big. It was founded only five years ago but already has a 20-barrel plant brewing nine times a week. An entertaining guide showed us around – she was the brewery's packaging manager and a self-confessed beer packaging nerd. A couple of her controversial opinions – cask ale

should be dearer than keg because it is so much more laborious to package, and cans are better than bottles for keeping beer fresh. (Discuss.)

Then we walked round to the railway arches under the Overground line, to the **St John at Hackney Brewery**. They don't do cask, but offered two beers 'tank fresh' –direct from the conditioning tanks. One of these



was Session Pale, (3.8% abv), with a pleasant hoppy taste but very cloudy, almost 'thick' like soup. Twelve ales were on tap in total, most in keykegs. Two arches down we found the **Experiment**, to be

shared by two firms – **Pressure Drop Brewery**, currently in Tottenham, and **Verdant Brewing**. New brewing kit was in the course of being installed. Verdant is a Cornish brewery. Both are presumably looking for a slice of the Hackney craft ale

market. Pressure Drop had five beers on offer, and I tried the Pale Ale, a very nice example of the breed at 4.8% abv. Also on were Ida (3.8% abv) with raspberries; Hazy Coalition (6.8% abv); Transparent Things (5.8% abv), which smelled of pickled onions; and Alligator Tugboat (7.2% abv). Verdant offered Light Bulb (4.5%), Bloom (6.5%) and Planets Don't Twinkle (7.2% abv). Then under the railway to another arch housing **Deviant and Dandy Brewery**, whose bar was housed in a caravan staffed by two young American women who struggled to dispense the two keg beers. One was Steve, a lager at 4.2% abv, and the other was Strange Brew (5.4% abv), described as a Lawnmower Ale(!), which I tried. It was my most expensive beer of the day at £6 a pint, and very unremarkable. A bit of an anticlimax to finish with, as I then decided to head for my train home. Others intended to go on to more establishments in the Old Street area. Perhaps they're still there...

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

SEPTEMBER

Thursday 13th – Branch Meeting

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

Thursday 20th – Pubs Visit

Meet at the Wellington Arms, Wellington

Street, Bedford, at 7 p.m.

OCTOBER

Wednesday 3rd – Saturday 6th

41st Bedford Beer and Cider Festival

Corn Exchange, St Pauls Square, Bedford (see pages 5-7).

Thursday 25th – Brewery trip

Reward trip for Festival volunteers. Venue to be confirmed.

NOVEMBER

Thursday 15th – Branch meeting

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

Thursday 22nd – Pubs visit

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

DECEMBER

Thursday 6th – Branch Christmas Social

Venue to be confirmed

by the people for the people

THE POTTON BREWING CO.

The Potton Brewing Company crafts a variety of small batch beers using only the finest ingredients, unfined and vegan friendly. From our core range to seasonal specials and experimental one-offs, all beers are available in cask and minikeg to both pub trade and public. Selected beers also come bottled.



07789 680049

rich@pottonbrewingcompany.com

www.pottonbrewingcompany.com coming soon!

Potton Brewing Company
Unit 3, 8 Market Square
Potton
BEDS

SG19 2NP