

FREE

The Firkin



Magazine of CAMRA North Bedfordshire • Vol 43 No 4 Winter 2018-19

Yet Another Successful Festival



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER
NEARBY PUB IN FINAL FOUR
CAMRA'S CHAMPION BEERS OF
BRITAIN 2018
DEAR DIARY, OR CONFESSIONS
OF A FESTIVAL ORGANISER
PUB NEWS
STROLLING ON A HOT EVENING

EQUINOCTIAL GALES
THOSE WERE THE DAYS IN
CLAPHAM
WINTER FESTIVALS
A HEAVY TAKE-HOME PACK
HISTORY OF BEER PART FOUR
BRANCH DIARY

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Chairman's Corner

What's your favourite beer? The one you always choose if it's available? If you look through the list of

beers from a particular brewery you will generally find a few that are widely available year round. That can be followed by a much longer list of seasonal or occasional beers, and sometimes ones that are "not in production". These are ones that were brewed once, but then never again.

Brewers, like many people, will try new recipes to add variety to their work. This Winter I expect to see some brews reappear on the bar (occasionally with a new tweak that may or may not work) while there will also be new beers. As someone who likes to try beers I haven't encountered before I welcome that. Earlier today I did

Nearby Pub in Final Four of Pub of the Year

We were delighted to hear that CAMRA Regional Pub of The Year for 2018 is the Chequers at Little Gransden, Cambs, just the other side of St Neots, and that it has reached the final four of the National PoTY. Regional Director



Andrea Briers visited Little Gransden to present the two certificates to licensees Bob and Wendy Mitchell in

November. The village pub was packed to the gunnels for the presentation. The Mitchell family has run the pub since 1951. The current landlord's father, Sid, originally bought the freehold, and his son Bob then established the Son of Sid Brewery on the premises. On the celebration day, six Son of Sid ales were on.

Fytton Rowland

that, preferring the new one to another I like.

That said, I do have two gripes about many Christmas beers. They tend to be strong and spicy. The strength means that they are not session beers. The particular flavour can then make it harder to really appreciate what you have next. The result of the brewer's craft should be savoured appreciatively and I like to do that. I want a balance of flavours, not something so dominant it metaphorically knocks my socks off.

Try something new. If you like it then you have learnt something and have a broader choice in future. If you don't then simply don't have it again. (Obviously these are my personal views and not an official CAMRA statement.)

Roger Stokes

Siren Call for the Champion Beer of Britain

The winners in CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain 2018 contest have been announced. Overall winner was

Siren Craft Brewery's Broken Dream

Breakfast Stout from Berkshire (6.5% abv) also the champion Stout. In second place:

Green Jack Brewery's Ripper from Suffolk (8.5% abv), also named as champion in the *Barley Wine and Strong Old Ale* category.

And in third place was **Mordue Brewery's Workie Ticket** from Tyne and Wear, also the champion *Best Bitter* at 4.5% abv. The rest of the category winners were:

Mild, Greene King XX Mild (3.0% abv); **Bitter, Orkney Brewery's Red MacGregor** (4.0% abv);

Golden Ale, Salopian Brewery's Oracle (4.0% abv);

Strong Bitter, Fuller's/Dark

Star Revelation (5.7% abv); *Speciality Beer,*

Colchester Brewery's Brazilian Coffee and

Vanilla Porter (4.6% abv); *Porter, Red Cat*

Brewery's Mr M's Porter (4.5% abv) from Hampshire.



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Dear Diary ...

... or Confessions of a Festival Organiser

Day One – set up Sunday, not to be confused with Stir-up Sunday and making of Christmas puddings. Being very keen as organiser I got to the Corn Exchange before the staff and the carpet people. What followed next was a classic example of fantastic team work. The stillage and the cooling system were constructed in record time, helped tremendously by the timely delivery of the scaffolding and the CAMRA warehouse equipment. My ‘deliberate’ error of forgetting to order the big yellow electrical boxes for the cooling system was swiftly noticed despite my efforts to distract everyone by pointing out the missing wooden chocks. However both were delivered from the warehouse the next day by a very helpful young man. Huge thanks go to the Corn Exchange staff for their assistance throughout the week.

Day Two – Monday – The beer starts arriving, continues all day and it starts to look like a proper beer festival. The glasses arrive and the logo looks awesome on the glass. This year the sponsorship of the glasses wasn't by a local brewery but instead ClearBrew – the beer line cleaning professionals – very kindly agree to support the festival, and huge thanks go to them. I also thank all the businesses that helped by sponsoring another successful festival.

Day Three – Tuesday – Everything is still going to plan, what have I forgotten? The counters arrived and were put up, again in record time. There seemed to be more people helping this year so we had a team on each side of the stillage with a little competition going on to see who could finish first. By day's end the hall was looking outrageously tidy, again what had I missed?

Day Four – Wednesday – Opening day and we are ready well ahead of 4pm. I still spend time running around the hall and the Howard Room checking that all is ready. In the

Howard Room the International Beer bar is set to go and a nice aroma coming from the kitchen where Angelo's St Cuthberts is preparing meals for the hungry hordes. Just prior to opening I have fun with the PA system, practising my “you've all done very well” voice with a countdown to 4pm. Thankfully there was a queue outside of people wanting to taste beer, cider and perry. On that subject I was incredibly pleased and impressed with the cider and perry box labels. They had a mass of information for the customers, thanks to the dedicated tasting regime of Chris and Malcolm!

I become a ‘media star’ later that day when I am interviewed by Bedford Independent, although apparently I looked like a scared rabbit in the headlights. But my mum thought it was great. The evening's



entertainment is Bedford Ukelele making a welcome return. A great sound, and popular with festival goers,

and they played songs I knew the words to including Delilah. My heart and soul went into singing along to that.

Days Five and Six – Thursday and Friday – we open at the earlier time of midday and there is a constant stream of people coming in to sample the wide range of beers. Comments were made that the choice was great with beers from breweries both local and from further afield, and that the festival offers third, half and pint measures Thanks to the expertise of the cellar team the beers are in great condition and served at the appropriate temperature. Ice cold beer is OK if you don't want to taste the beer but that's not how we work.

Thursday saw the welcome arrival of OddFellows Chocolates with a great range

Dear Diary ... continued

of chocolates to try with the beers. I discover chocolate covered pretzels – yummy and resistance is futile. I also try out lots of samples from Rookery Mead and end up buying bottles as possible Christmas presents except the midwinter one – that's mine.

Day Seven – Saturday – We open 30 minutes earlier but not sure everyone got the memo. The first customers through the doors were nearly asked to serve themselves. My sister, very recently arrived in the UK after 43 years' absence, was very swiftly co-opted into serving behind the glasses bar with the training consisting of "it's £3.00 a glass, take their money and ask if they want a free programme". She was also told to have fun and that she was manager next year. Bossy older sister – surely not me.

Couple more highlights - once again a 'media star' - my mum is now in meltdown, this time it is just talking to Bedford Radio. It is once again commented that I wasn't the typical demographic for a beer festival. Just glad that I still looked vaguely human after several very late nights. Sleep is for wimps.



Lastly the band – Pistonz – providing entertainment in the evening were great, I even end up dancing – not a pretty sight. I

even noticed some foot tapping going on by people who had not been in favour of having rock music played.

Day Eight – Sunday – thanks to the massive amount of hard work by the take-down team the Corn Exchange was fully cleared and handed back by 4pm. Had a great sense of satisfaction that there had been no disasters and slightly sad that it was over for another year.

Memories of being organiser

So much work needs doing prior to the festival week. My inbox is groaning still under the weight of emails. Weeks are now needed to sort it out – oh joy. Walking what seemed like a million miles, I had no difficulty reaching the recommended 10,000 steps a day for a healthy lifestyle.



As our logo featured poppies and a First World War plane we asked the RAFA Club to set up a little stall so people could get

items such as wristbands and bath ducks. I am pleased to say that our customers were incredibly generous and donated lots of money towards the Wings Appeal. Being ex-RAF I consider this a really good cause. I didn't sample that many beers, how did that happen, although the first pints of JHB was mine. I was forcibly removed from cuddling the cask, no-one listening to my protestations of "my festival, my beer".

A huge thank you goes to the wonderful volunteers for their sheer enthusiasm and colossal amount of work put in. Without them the festival could not take place. We had newbies join the team this year and they remarked just how much they enjoyed themselves and didn't know why they hadn't done it before.

In 2019 is Festival number 42 – with 42, thanks to Douglas Adams, being the answer to the meaning of life the universe and everything. Luckily for you the question for you will merely be "which days can I volunteer and have a huge amount of fun with like-minded people". So if you weren't part of the team in 2018, why not come and join us in 2019? And for everyone else, come and drink us dry in Bedford's biggest pop-up pub on 2nd-5th October 2019?

Cheers, Lynne Ratnett

Pub News

Anchor, Cardington Rd, Bedford

The Anchor Choma Zone Sports Bar now offers real ale again, with Sharp's Doom Bar usually now available on handpump.

[facebook/AnchorChomaZone](#)

Bear, High St, Bedford

The Bear re-opened in September after refurbishment under new licensee Daniel Fisher and manager Hannah Deverick. Four changing real ales and Westons Old Rosie cider are available. Local CAMRA Young Members Pub of the Year 2018. 01234

630235 or [facebook/TheBearBedford](#)

Cricketers, Goldington Rd, Bedford

After short periods under Rob Bartlett and then Stephen Leather, the Cricketers closed in November. Just as we went to press, it reopened in early December. More details in our next issue.

Foresters Arms, Union St, Bedford



This refurbished Charles Wells pub re-opened at the beginning of October under new tenant Suzy

Spilling. There is now a single, split-level bar and conservatory, with an attractive, enclosed garden. Eagle IPA and three changing real ales are available, including the current Wandering Brewer beer. Five keg taps include one reserved for a seasonal Wandering Brewer craft beer.

[forestersarmsbedford.co.uk](#)

Slug & Lettuce, High St, Bedford

After thorough refurbishment, the former Yates's re-opened in September with a new name and a new style. Food and drink are available all day, but sadly no real ale or cider. [slugandlettuce.co.uk/bedford](#)

Three Cups, Newnham St, Bedford

The transfer of White Park Brewery from

Cranfield to its new home at the Cups has been completed, although brewing has not yet re-started. Meanwhile, Greene King IPA, Old Speckled Hen and five changing real ales are available, most from independent microbreweries. Local CAMRA Pub of the Year 2017. [threecupsbedford.co.uk](#)

Horse & Groom, Clapham

Welcome to Karl & Sarah Weaver, new managers at this popular Greene King pub-restaurant. Classic pub food, including a traditional Sunday roast, is now joined by Barrel and Stone quality stone baked-pizzas. Greene King IPA, Abbot and a changing guest ale are available.

[horseandgroomatclapham.co.uk](#)

Bridge, Shefford

New landlady Connie has brought back real ale, currently with one changing beer from the Wells list, but she will increase this to two if there is customer support. 01462 351395 or [facebook/The-Bridge-Shefford](#)

Cornerstone, Shefford



Welcome to new licensee Corri-Ann Burke, whose family business also runs the

Greyhound at Haynes. Four changing real ales are available, with a real cider served direct from the cellar.

01462 811118 or

[facebook/The-Cornerstone-Shefford](#)

Red Lion, Stevington

Five years after it last sold a pint, this prominent pub by the historic village cross has finally re-opened as a smart but friendly pub-restaurant with a new conservatory dining area and three letting bedrooms. Up to two changing real ales are served, with an innovative food menu prepared with local ingredients. Bar and kitchen open Wednesday to Sunday.

[redlionstevington.co.uk](#)

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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**.



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Strolling on a Hot Evening

This appears in December, and the 2018 heatwave is a distant memory. But it wasn't a dream, and on a hot 2nd August a select band of CAMRA members gathered at the unlikely venue of the **Orchard**, the Harvester pub at the corner of **Goldington Road** and Riverfield Drive in Bedford. We didn't stay long. The only cask ale on was Doom Bar, it was clearly barrel-bottom, and they didn't have another cask to put on.



So moving swiftly on, the **Toby Carvery** on **Goldington Green** also managed only Doom Bar, but this time it was in a good state and a bargain at £3/pint. Both of these are of course eateries, and the Harvester was the busier of the two with diners.

Next door to the Toby is the **Anchor** on **Goldington Green**, a Greene King Hungry Horse pub. Four handpumps in use here – the owners'



GK IPA and Abbot plus two admirable guests, Timothy Taylor's Landlord and Hog's Back T.E.A. The last-named was very much my cup of T.E.A., and furthermore a CAMRA members' discount of 10% is offered, so this was the pick of the three chain pubs at Goldington.

A longish tramp followed to the **White Horse** in Newnham Avenue, a big interwar Wells house, where the offering was Eagle, Directors, Young's Gold and, as guests, Adnams Broadside and (from the Marstons collection) Hobgoblin. I chose Hobgoblin. As expected at the White Horse, the standard of the beer was very acceptable.

Continuing our stroll along Castle Road towards the **Cricketers**, we met Martin Bartlett (ex-licensee of the Devonshire Arms and the Cricketers) walking his dog, and he told us that the Cricketers had no cask ale on. But see page 7 for the latest news on the Cricketers. So we visited the **Devonshire Arms** instead, and found Eagle and Directors on, along with three other Marstons products – Marstons 61 Deep, Ringwood Razorback and Wainwright. Of these, 61 Deep is now a regular at the Devvy (my own local) and I'm becoming very fond of it. It was of course in good nick.

Last stop – the **Three Cups**, at the time of writing still in a transitional state. The White Park brewing equipment is there but not yet in use. On that hot August evening only four handpumps had beer on them – fewer than usual, but hot weather encourages drinking of cold lager, and cask ale sales dropped during the heatwave. Greene King's IPA, Old Speckled Hen and Yardbird were accompanied by Frog Island Pond Hop, a 5.0% abv American Pale Ale. I settled for GK's hoppy summer blonde beer, Yardbird, and it was in good condition of course. And then I strolled home.

Fytton Rowland

The Equinoctial Gales

...were in full spate when North Beds CAMRA set out from the **Wellington Arms** in Bedford on our September minibus pub trip.

We set out up the Kimbolton Road to our first two stops, both interwar Wells pubs. The Park is distinguished from the large



hotel by the Town Bridge by calling it **Park Pub and Kitchen**. An eating pub, it was quite busy at 7.30 on a Thursday

evening, but we were welcomed into the bar. Eagle and Bombardier were on handpumps together with the September Wandering Brewer beer, 'Ello 'Ello, brewed at Exmoor Brewery. I stuck with Bombardier, which was o.k.



A short hop up Kimbolton Road brought us to the **Pheasant**, much more of a drinkers' pub. Eagle and Bombardier were joined by

Directors this time. I tried their Directors and found it acceptable.



Heading out into the country, we next visited the **Anchor at Great Barford**. This attractive riverside pub had been

heaving during the heatwave, but it was quiet on a dark and windy autumn evening. Yet another Wells pub, it offered Eagle and

Lancaster Bomber from the Marstons' collection, with Wadworths 6X and Adnams Ghost Ship as guests. The 6X was the best-kept beer yet for me.



Moving along, our next destination was the **Royal Oak at Roxton**, a nice old village pub now renovated and

extended to provide the village shop and Post Office at the back – a genuine community pub. Its owners offer unusual beers, so they had Old Pie Factory's Humble Pie (4.2% abv) from Warwickshire, Cotleigh Tawny Owl (3.8% abv) from Somerset, and 3D Brewery's Fallout (4.0% abv) from Staffordshire on handpumps. The Fallout was very acceptable!

Next, to **Bolnhurst** and the **Plough**. A *Good Beer Guide* regular, it is mainly a restaurant, but always welcomes drinkers. After 10 p.m., many diners were still in, while we had the choice of Adnams Lighthouse (3.4% abv) or Box Steam Brewery's Golden Bolt (3.8% abv) on handpumps. Most of us chose the Golden Bolt, which as advertised was very fruity – but not very hoppy – and was well kept. Finally we were happy to visit our local Pub of the Year again. At the **Polhill Arms at Renhold**, Paul and Lindsay were their usual welcoming selves, and as always enthusiastic about their beers. From owners Greene King they offered Hardy and Hansons Bitter and GK London Glory, but the guest selection caught our eye – Brains Rev James, Skinners Golden Knocker (4.5% abv) and Kelchner's Lekker (3.9% abv) from Ampthill. I hadn't tried Lekker before, but I ordered a pint to end my evening, and didn't regret it – a very refreshing session bitter, and, of course, well kept.

Fytton Rowland

It's a Farr Farr Better Thing We Do...

North Beds CAMRA had visited the Farr Brewery in Wheathampstead, Herts briefly as part of the 2018 Summer Day Out. So it was decided that another visit was needed, and we went there again in October as the 'reward trip' for our volunteers from the Bedford Beer and Cider festival earlier in the month.

Two minibus-loads set out from Bedford, but Samuels Farm in Wheathampstead proved harder to find for one driver than for the other, so by the time we'd all gathered in the rather chilly barn that houses the brewery, we were behind schedule. Nick Farr therefore had to cut short his talk, as the fish and chip supper arrived at its scheduled time.



We were offered Wildside Pale Ale (4.1% abv), a golden ale, and Farr Bitter (4.2% abv), a traditional amber bitter,

from casks, while Farr's various bottled beers were available to purchase: Chief Jester, a 3.6% abv session ale; Black Listed, an IBA at 4.5% abv; and St Albans Pale Ale (4.2% abv) which is brewed for sale at the new St Albans Art Gallery and Museum that opened its doors in July 2018. Farr's donate the profit from this beer to the museum.



Nick is from Herefordshire originally, and his farmer parents 'made alcoholic drinks from anything of vegetable

origin'. After fifteen years in office employment, Nick decided to switch to brewing, and founded the brewery three



years ago, with a ten-barrel plant, currently brewing two or three times a week. Much of the production is sold in bottles, but in June 2018 they opened a micropub, the **Reading Rooms**, in a former florists shop in

Wheathampstead High Street, which gives them an outlet for draught beers. They also open up at the brewery on Saturdays, but as it is half a mile up a farm track from the road, it is the determined supporters who come on Saturdays!



They use 'Best Malt Blend' from Crisps Maltings, as pure Maris Otter is expensive and gives low yields. They

mash for one hour at 66-67°C before boiling for one hour with bittering hops, adding aroma hops at the end. They are trying to grow their own hops in a field they rent, though 2018's hot dry weather didn't lead to good yields. They've also recruited a hop-growers' collective in the area, who grow hops for their green-hop ale, Prima Donna (4.2% abv), and get a supply of the beer in return for their hop donation! Farr's beehives yield honey not only for them to sell, but also for them to put into their porter as an ingredient. Sadly the porter wasn't available in October, but we suspected that there might have been some Christmas plans...

Fytton Rowland

Those Were the Days

Some time ago I was clearing out some papers when I came across a *Firkin* magazine, which was called a newsletter in those days. It was dated Winter 2004/05. It was printed on pink matt paper, and not like the glossy CAMRA magazine of today. I said to myself, why on earth have I kept it all this time?

On the front, it had two pictures, with the heading *Scenes from the Great Festival*. Inside it tells us that it was North Beds CAMRA's 27th Bedford Beer and Cider Festival, held at the Corn Exchange, and was the most successful yet, since the annual event was launched in 1978. It went on to say that the Festival that year sold more than 16,000 pints of real ale, cider, perry and foreign beers between Wednesday and Saturday. The Festival also hosted for the fourth annual CAMRA Champion Beer of East Anglia contest. The champion beer is chosen from regular real ales brewed in the six counties of Beds, Cambs, Essex, Herts, Norfolk and Suffolk. The Festival of 2004 was so successful that on the Saturday many visitors were complaining about the reduced choice of beer. This was because sales on the Thursday and Friday had exceeded expectations. As it said, when you plan a four-day Festival it requires a lot of guesswork of how much you should order. So there it was, one of the most successful Festivals, so successful it nearly ran out of beer!

As I looked further in to the newsletter, I could see why I had kept it all these years. Inside was the heading *Off to Clapham Junction*. It was the time of a CAMRA tour of Clapham pubs. They

started at The Angler's Rest. The pub was well used in those days, but sadly it is no longer a pub. It was the same when they arrived in Clapham proper, for the first pub, the Swan was unfortunately pulled down in 2013 to make way for houses. As for the Horse and Groom, well that is mainly an all-day restaurant nowadays (*though still officially a pub. Ed.*). So Clapham has just got The Star and The Fox and Hounds. I don't want to dwell on them too much, as they were mentioned in the Winter 2004/05 edition and again in Summer 2018.

On the back of the 2004/05 Winter *Firkin* was a short article on the Government's proposed ban on smoking in public places, which included pubs. This was creating a lot of debate as it could be divisive in community pubs. CAMRA thought it could split the pub trade. The small community pubs relied on beer sales rather than serving food.

As we all now know, the resilience of the pub trade enabled pubs to fight back, and many have provided outside covered areas for smokers with tables and chairs, so that the smoking customers could not only enjoy a good pint, but keep the camaraderie with their friends and enjoy a smoke as well. This also meant that there was no need to have separate rooms to have a meal – you could have a meal in the bar area.

The article ended by saying that the pub industry had taken giant strides to provide clean air in pubs. The Winter newsletter of 2004/05 was interesting, reminding us of the changes since that time.

Another CAMRA glossy magazine that I read is the *Casket*, the magazine of East Bedfordshire CAMRA. The latest issue included a lot of interesting features, like Local Pub News, about the various pubs in that area. It announced that a new micropub had opened, also that two previously closed pubs had re-opened, which is good news. On the Editor's page, how in Autumn 2017, the cider bar run by East Beds CAMRA at the Potton Apple festival had had the best ever takings.

Another CAMRA glossy magazine I read recently was *Over the Barrel*, the

magazine of the Northamptonshire branch. It's little larger than others but then Northampton is a large town. (*It also serves the entire county of Northants, whereas there are three CAMRA magazines in Beds. Ed.*) One feature told how two pubs had re-opened after being closed for some time.

So, reading through the magazines it is becoming clear that what is happening is that pubs are on the rise again. Is that because of no smoking in pubs nowadays?

John F. Pickering

Winter Beer Festivals

10th Elysian Winter Beer Festival

24-26 Jan at The Maltings, Ship Lane, Ely CB7 4BB. Over 80 real ales and about 20 ciders and perries.

elycamrabeerfest.com

12th Colchester Winter Beer Festival

30 Jan to 2 Feb at Colchester Arts Centre, Church Street CO1 1NF. Over 150 real ales from East Anglia plus real cider and perry, draught and bottled Belgian Beers and English wines from Mersea Island Vineyard.

colchestercamra.org.uk

15th Derby CAMRA Winter Festival

20-23 Feb at Roundhouse, Derby, close to rail stn. Over 300 real ales, cider and perry, mead and world beers.

derbycamra.org.uk

Great British Beer Festival Winter 2019

20-23 Feb at St Andrews and Blackfriars Halls, Norwich NR3 1AU. Huge range of winter ales, strong milds,

strong old ales, stouts and porters, world beers, cider and perry.

winter.gbbf.org.uk

Chelmsford Winter Beer & Cider Festival

20-23 Feb at King Edward VI Grammar School, Broomfield Road CM1 3SX.

About 170 real ales and 50 ciders and perries.

chelmsfordbeerandciderfestivals.camra.org.uk

Chappel Winter Beer Festival

1-2 Mar at East Anglian Railway Museum, Chappel & Wakes Colne Station, Essex CO6 2DS.

chappelbeerfestival.org.uk

St Neots Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival

14-16 Mar at Priory Centre, Priory Lane PE19 6HB. X5 bus from Bedford 5 min.

hunts.camra.org.uk

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Enjoy The Engineers Beer festival, what a great pub!

A Heavy Take-Home Pack



In the past, many pubs provided a carry-out service whereby customers used a separate entrance – labelled ‘Jug and Bottle’ or the like – to purchase bottled beers or have their own containers filled with draught beer. One such container from Whitbread, shown above, dates from around 1905. I spotted it early one morning in 2007 as I passed the antiques open market in Greenwich, on my way to the National Maritime Museum where I was doing some research. There, on an open stall next to the pavement, stood this stone jar, the like of which I had never seen.

Beer is drawn from the container through

a simple on/off tap comprising a cork-sleeved metal spigot. The principle is the same as that of the conventional brass tap used in traditional casks

Empty, the stone jar weighs a mighty 4.5 kg. It holds a gallon of beer, bringing the total weight to 9 kg. It is difficult to imagine how people coped in an age when few had cars. The only other examples I have seen are at the Museum in the Park in Stroud, which also holds an interesting collection of old ceramic beer mugs and jugs.

At most beer festivals cartons or plastic jugs are available, allowing typically two or four pints of a selected cask beer to be taken home. The problem is that by the time the beer is in the glass it will lost most of its condition (carbon dioxide content).

A solution comes under the label ‘draught beer in a can’. Use of nitrogen allows packaging of low-CO₂ beers. At opening a ‘widget’ in the can initiates foam formation, resulting in a fine creamy head when poured – a much better result than can be obtained with cartons or plastic jugs. Bottled ‘draught Guinness’ has been supplied in this way for some years.

David Maule

Editor's Note:

At Bedford Beer and Cider Festival, the containers used for take-out sales are two-pint plastic bottles. Some breweries sell five-litre minikegs of their cask ales.

Bedford's Brewhouse and Kitchen will supply the beers brewed onsite in these. And the International Beer Bar at the recent 41st Bedford Beer and Cider Festival obtained its supply of Bamberg's Aecht Schenkerla Rauchbier in them as well, which enabled us to obtain more of the draught version, so popular in Bedford, than we had available in earlier years.

N Nobby's

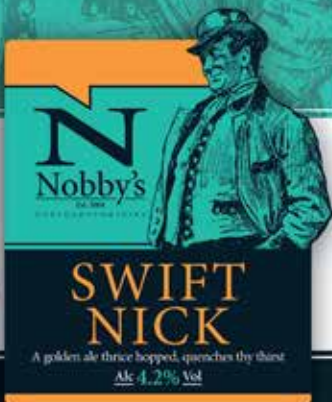
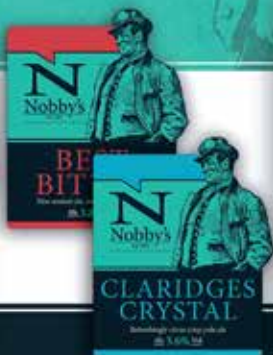
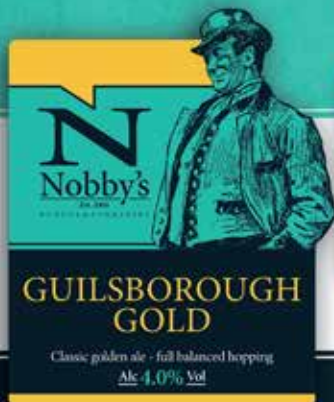
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HAND CRAFTED BREWING FOR THE DISCERNING DRINKER

History of Beer Part 4

In parts 1-3 (see Firkin issues 42:4 to 43:2) I bought you the history of beer from around 7000BCE up to the end of the 19th Century. We saw beer and brewing rise in the Middle East and arrive in Europe. Then we saw brewing methods improving with English beer and ale rising in popularity, and we saw beer and brewing reach America. Then came the industrial revolution and brewing becoming bigger in scale with various inventions that are still used today. In this part we will see the birth of CAMRA and I shall bring you to the present day.



WWI and WWII caused limits to be put on to the strengths of beers. This harmed darker beers as they had lower limits

applied, and led to English breweries creating low-strength stouts that were unpopular. Irish stouts, however, were not limited. Guinness now became popular across Britain due to its higher strength.



1936 - Artificial carbonation was introduced to the UK in Watney's draught beer, although this

method of serving beer did not take on until the late 1960s.



1964 - Metal casks were introduced.

1970 - Lager became increasingly popular, and canned beer was introduced.

1971 - The Campaign for Real Ale



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

(CAMRA) was founded! The term 'real ale' is used to differentiate between beer served from the cask and beer served under pressure, and to differentiate both from lager. 'Ale' now officially means top-fermented beer (rather than an unhoped beer).

1977 - Michael Jackson (no, not the American with one glove) published The World Guide to Beer, making British



people more interested in drinking imported beer. Continental brands such as Beck's, Grolsch, Hoegaarden, Peroni and Budweiser became more commonplace.

1979 - Tim Martin opened the first Wetherspoons, in Muswell Hill, London.



Wetherspoons become very influential on the English beer scene, with real ale being cheaper than imported lagers.



David Bruce established the first 'Firkin' brewpub - this chain offered cask ale brewed on the premises. The franchise

boosted brewpubs in England and made

History of Beer Part 4 ... continued

them appear fashionable. It was sold off in 1988, and changed hands a few times until 1999, when the owners of the time sold many of the pubs. Then in 2001 came the complete end. Its sold-off brewing kits enabled many new small breweries to obtain equipment cheaply.

1989 – The Beer Orders were introduced, partly due to CAMRA campaigns. These orders restricted the number of pubs a large brewery could own, and required licensees of these pubs to offer a guest ale. (These were revoked in 2003, due to changes in the industry.)

2002 – Gordon Brown as Chancellor introduced Progressive Beer Duty, after campaigning from the Small Independent Brewers Association



(SIBA). It gave a reduction in beer duty that was based on how much beer a brewery made, with the aim of helping smaller breweries.

2004 – ‘Real ale’ had now been expanded to include bottle-conditioned beer, and ‘cask ale’ was by now the accepted term to mean draught beer not served under pressure.

Eastern European lager was being imported, and brands such as Tyskie were becoming popular.

2005 – The Licensing Act 2003 came into force. This removed the restrictions on opening hours, allowing pubs and other licensed premises to choose their own hours with agreement from the local licensing authorities.

2007 – A law was introduced in England,

forbidding smoking in all enclosed public places. Pubs improved beer gardens and outdoor spaces, including shelters.



2010 – The Good Beer Guide reported that there were more than 700 real ale breweries in the UK, four times more than when CAMRA began in 1971.

2011 – ‘Craft beer’ began to rise in popularity in the UK. This beer was often from a small brewery and was typically served in bottles or keykeg. (A lot of these breweries have since been taken over by larger brewing companies.) A debate still continues on whether ‘craft beer’ is real ale or not.



2013 – Whatpub.com was launched by CAMRA. This website can be used to find a real ale pub in any area, and can be used by CAMRA members to score their beers.

2016 – CAMRA launched the Revitalisation Project. This is still ongoing and is looking at ways to develop CAMRA further.

Today – You are currently reading this issue of the Firkin, hopefully enjoying a glass of real ale as you read it.

Thank you for reading the history of beer and accompanying me on this journey through time. I hope you have learned something you didn't know. Let us end by raising a glass of real ale to the past, present and future of beer.

Dan Veal

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

DECEMBER

Thursday 6th – Branch Christmas Social
7.30 for 8 p.m., Devonshire Arms, Dudley Street, Bedford MK40 3TB

JANUARY

Thursday 10th – Branch Meeting
Business meeting at Bedford Rowing Club, Duckmill Lane, Bedford, at 8 p.m. CAMRA members only.

Thursday 17th – Pubs Assessment Minibus Visit Meet at the Wellington Arms, Wellington Street, Bedford, at 7 p.m.

Thursday 24th – Pubs Assessment Town Walkabout Visit Meeting point to be announced.

Thursday 31st – Pubs Assessment Minibus Visit Meet at the Wellington Arms, Wellington Street, Bedford, at 7 p.m.

FEBRUARY

Thursday 7th – Branch Meeting
Business meeting at Bedford Rowing Club, Duckmill Lane, Bedford, at 8 p.m. CAMRA members only.

MARCH

Thursday 14th – Branch Meeting
Business meeting at Bedford Rowing Club, Duckmill Lane, Bedford, at 8 p.m. CAMRA members only.

Friday 15th – Branch Visit to St Neots Booze on the Ouse Beer Festival
At Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St Neots PE19 6HB. Take X5 bus from Bedford.

The Firkin

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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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