

FREE

The Firkin



Campaign
for
Real Ale

Magazine of CAMRA North Bedfordshire • Vol 44 No 2 Summer 2019

Engineers is County Champ



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BRANCH DIARY
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2018 NATIONAL CHAMPION PUB

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Chairman's Corner

Welcome to the summer edition of the Firkin. I wish to start by thanking my

predecessor Roger Stokes for his time as chairman. I wish him the best in his new roles on the committee. Hopefully I can continue to guide the CAMRA branch towards the future.

The future is exciting as it brings new and interesting things into the present, and CAMRA is starting to prepare for this. Our branch now has me, a young person, as the chairman, and I hope that we will see other exciting changes occurring.

Around North Bedfordshire we have seen changes which make me excited about the future of beer. On St. Cuthbert's Street in Bedford we have seen the changes at Beerfly. Tim and Wes always have a selection of fantastic beers, and their introduction of a cask handpump has made the venue a place for beer enthusiasts of all kinds. The closure and reopening of the independent wine merchant, Blue Glass, now selling beer brewed by Brewhouse and

Kitchen, is interesting. The long-established wine merchants now have a fully-fledged wine bar selling food and drinks of all kinds. Seeing Richard Cook, the brewer at Brewhouse and Kitchen, win his gold SIBA (Small Independent Brewers Association) award brings joy and hope for the future of brewing in Bedford.

We are also one of the few CAMRA branches to award the title of Young Members' Pub of the Year. This year we chose the Rose for their options of real ale and craft beer as well as being a good venue for young drinkers. We were saddened, though, to hear the news that a fellow beer enthusiast, Sarah, has left the Three Cups. We wish her all the best (and hope for another beer tasting session soon!).

Going into the summer I am hoping to visit more pubs, and their gardens, around the area and to get to know the licensees better in my new role of chairman. I would also like to meet as many CAMRA members and potential new members as possible.

Dan Veal

Extraordinary General Meeting of North Beds CAMRA

North Beds CAMRA has to hold an EGM to receive the branch accounts, which were not ready in time for our AGM earlier in the year.

If you are a member of CAMRA resident in the North Beds area, you are invited to

an Extraordinary General Meeting to be held on Thursday 1st August 2019, at the North End Club, Roff Avenue, Bedford at 7.30 p.m.

After the meeting we will go on a walkabout of Bedford town centre pubs.

It's That Time Again

In the Spring issue of the Firkin, we announced North Beds CAMRA's choices for our branch pub (and club) awards for 2019. Except for one, the Young Members' award, which hadn't been chosen at the press date of the Spring issue. Now we report the presentation of the certificates of those awards to their licensees. Elsewhere in this issue (page 6) we report the next stage of the 2019 contest, when the Bedfordshire county champion pub was selected, and also the last stage of the 2018 competition (page 18), when CAMRA's national Pub of the Year from last year's knockout was revealed.



On 1st April, the presentation of the certificate for Young Members' Pub of the Year for North Bedfordshire was made to the manager of the Rose in Bedford High Street, Adie Iori. Adie used to manage Wetherspoons' Pilgrims Progress, and he has a high reputation for his cellar work. The Rose always has four handpumps in use, and often stocks unusual ales on one of them, as well as several Lilley's ciders. Appropriately, our Young Members' Rep, Dan Veal, had just been elected as Chairman of the branch as well, and made the presentation along with outgoing Chairman Roger Stokes. On the night, the cask ales available were Sharp's Doom Bar, Timothy Taylor's Landlord, Hobgoblin Gold and Slater's 1-Hop (4.0% abv) from Stafford. The Rose offers card-carrying CAMRA

members a 10% discount on cask ale.



Two days later we presented the award for Town Pub of the Year to Ronnie and Rebecca Toms of the Devonshire Arms in Dudley Street, Bedford, in front of a large crowd of CAMRA members and regulars. A buffet of pub grub was served, and the choice on the bar was Eagle, Directors and 61 Deep from Marstons, together with St Austell Tribute and Adnams Ghostship. Four Westons ciders were also available.



A week later, the next visit was to our 2019 Pub of the Year, which for the second consecutive year was the Polhill Arms at Renhold. It also received a second award as Cider Pub of the Year for 2019. Tenant Paul Smith was his usual welcoming self, and owners Greene King had helped by allowing him to stock some unusual guest beers – Skinners Betty Stogs from Cornwall, Phipps IPA from Northampton and Side Pocket for

It's That Time Again ... continued

a Toad from Tring Brewery, as well as Greene King's own Yardbird and Hardy and Hansons Bitter. Several ciders other than the usual Westons were also on. Once again the pub was crowded, with some of the village customers eating dinner while the CAMRA crowd and others tucked into a selection of bar snacks laid on for us.



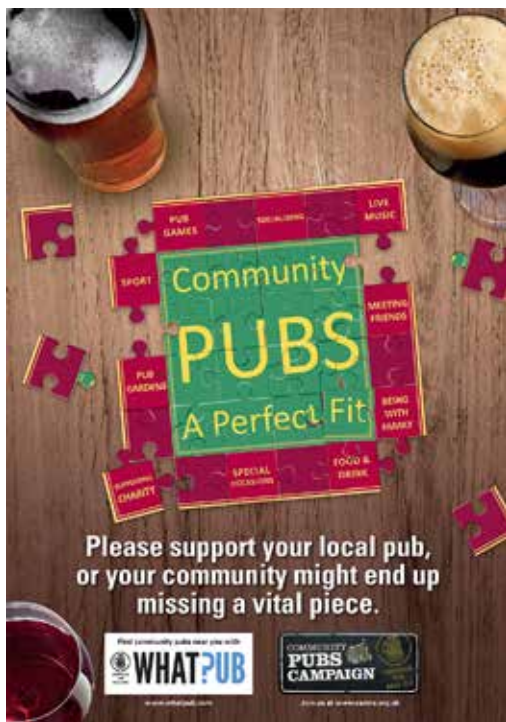
The very next evening saw a rather more select group make the journey out to the Three Compasses at Upper Dean, tucked away in the country lanes in the far north of Bedfordshire, close to both Cambridgeshire and Northants. The pub was receiving its first-ever CAMRA award, as North Bedfordshire's Most Improved Pub of the Year. As it was necessarily a car journey, those of us driving had to restrict our beer intake, but those who could indulge had the choice of St , Austell Tribute, Timothy Taylor's Landlord and Greene King IPA. The pub was very crowded, mostly with diners. It was good to see such a remotely located pub doing well. Licensees Adam and Tina Heast have built up the business owing to the improvement that CAMRA recognised. It's an old thatched pub, now extended. Like the Bedford Arms at Souldrop, it has CCTV on the skittles table so that everyone can see the matches.

The following week, our final presentation. The RAFA Club in Ashburnham Road, Bedford, had been under renovation, so we waited until the work was (nearly) finished to visit for the award of branch Club of the



Year. The club always has a good selection of cask ales on, and they had Draught Bass (rarely seen nowadays), Theakston's Best, Eagle and Airman's Ale – the last-named a Charles Wells special at 4.0% abv – on the handpumps on this occasion. The presentation to Lez Fishman completed this year's round of celebrations for the top licensees in North Bedfordshire.

Fytton Rowland



County Title Back with the Engineers Arms

CAMRA's 2019 Pub of the Year competition has now rolled on to the county stage.

North Beds CAMRA's 2019 champion pub, the Polhill Arms at Renhold, went into the fray against the champion from South Beds branch, the Black Lion at Leighton Buzzard, and East Beds branch's contender, the Engineers Arms at Henlow. When representatives of the three CAMRA branches met to choose Beds champ for 2019, the Engineers shaded it.



Kevin Machin has run the Engineers for thirty years, and his reputation for keeping real ale in perfect condition is high. Kevin believes in beer literally being 'from the wood', and owns a wooden barrel

which he takes around to breweries (often in his native Yorkshire) to be filled with their



cask ale and brought back to the Engineers. Up to ten real ales are available, and the pub is open all day every day attracting real-ale enthusiasts and CAMRA members from miles around. Cider fans aren't neglected either, and a good variety of real ciders are always

available. The pub is popular within Henlow too, and with health spa visitors!

Now the Engineers will go forward to the East Anglian Regional Pub of the Year stage of the competition, where it will go up against the county champions of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex and Hertfordshire. Fingers crossed for the Engineers – perhaps this could be the year when Kevin clinches the national title? (See page 18 for details of the 2018 national champ.)

All Change at North Beds CAMRA

The AGM of North Beds CAMRA resulted in some changes in responsibilities within the Branch. John Keays, who had served as treasurer for the past year, stood down. Lynne Ratnett didn't wish to continue as Festival Organiser. So the redoubtable Roger Stokes stepped into both these roles – though in the week of the CAMRA Bedford Beer and Cider Festival he will need assistance, as even he can't be in two places at once! His two predecessors in the Festival Organiser role, Lynne Ratnett and Fytton Rowland, will help him with the festival work. Roger is still Clubs Officer and Press & Public Affairs Officer as well. So he stood down as Chair, and a new face appears on page 3 of this issue.

Roger's successor as Chair is Dan Veal, Young Members Contact and Social Media

Co-ordinator. We are much in Dan's debt for taking on all these tasks for CAMRA, alongside his fulltime job. The other officers are largely unchanged – Peter Argyle is still Secretary as well as contact person with the higher echelons of CAMRA, and Pub Campaigns Officer. Neil Ratnett remains Membership Secretary, Gary Mudd stays as our much appreciated Social Secretary responsible for organising all our trips and social events, and Sue Fossey is still Cider Representative. And last but not least, Fytton Rowland (that's me, folks) continues to edit the *Firkin*, as well as being Pubs Protection Officer. Six other committee members – Mike Benyon, Dave Dupont, Geoff Foll, Alan Higgs, Helen Mudd and Lynne Ratnett – all of whom are heavily involved in the annual beer festival in October – were re-elected.

Fytton Rowland



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Per Ardua ad Lunem



Last year's festival

I surprised myself a few months ago when I said that I would take the lead in organising this year's CAMRA Bedford Beer and Cider Festival. A beer festival is very much a team effort and I count myself very fortunate in the experience of the various team members – most of them have been in their respective roles for many years, so I know I can rely on them.

One of our first tasks for the committee is to decide the logo for the festival. Last year we marked the centenary of the RAF and this year we're flying higher, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the first manned moon landing. We're also able to recall the famous message 'The Eagle has landed', since the Eagle Brewery will be sponsoring the festival glasses.

We aim to keep Bedford's largest (and only CAMRA) Beer Festival fresh to attract new customers. While it is encouraging to see more pubs running their own beer festivals, we can offer a wider choice as well as other attractions. This year it is also the only CAMRA festival in the county.

We are introducing two new developments

in response to the changing world in which we live. The first recognises that many more use plastic cards to pay. The use of contactless is growing rapidly, so we are moving to using tokens at the bars. These can be bought with cash or by using a contactless machine. We are working on the details, but we hope that this will result in speedier service at the bar. Unused tokens can be donated to charity or redeemed before you leave.

This year we will be serving our draught international beers in the main hall. They will be joined at a single bar with the other new development which is rapidly gaining ground – craft beer in key-kegs. This will be a small-scale innovation to test demand, and again the details are being worked out. The vast majority of our beers, over 100, will still be in traditional casks with gravity dispense. I am concerned about the ecological impact of key-kegs and wish that in this country we had a system for reusing or recycling them, but we don't yet. However, we must remain relevant to the world we live in.



The glasses men

Per Ardua ad Lunem continued

Bottled foreign beers will still be in the Howard Room bar upstairs, as will the popular Echt Schenkerla Rauchbier from Bedford's twin town, Bamberg. And wine will be back, served now from the cider bar along with the usual large choice of real ciders and perries.

Douglas Adams suggested that 42 is the ultimate answer to life, the universe and everything. My hope is that these new developments will broaden the appeal of our 42nd CAMRA Bedford Beer and Cider Festival, and help others develop their appreciation of what we offer.



A Key Volunteer

And importantly – we need your help. The festival is run entirely by volunteers. We move into an empty Corn Exchange on the first Sunday morning, and by Wednesday lunchtime it has been transformed into Bedford's biggest pub. It then opens until Saturday evening, and then on the second Sunday we demolish it all again and give the council an empty hall back again on the second Monday morning.

For all this work we need you – volunteers to do the erecting, the running of the pub, and then the demolition. Please go to our website www.northbeds.camra.org.uk and fill in a volunteering form now!

Roger Stokes

The Firkin

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Pub News

Prince of Wales, Bromham

A warm welcome to new landlord Eamonn McAvoy, who also runs Bar 19 at The Bedford Golf Club in Great Denham. Charles Wells and Marston's Eagle beers are available. The pub closed for refurbishment as we went to press. Further news in our next issue. 01234 822447.

Sun, Felmersham



Welcome to Peter and Connie, new landlords at this popular, thatched village pub. Eagle IPA, two guest

beers and a guest real cider are available on the bar. The new owners have refurbished the rear bar and function room as an attractive 30-seat restaurant, with a chicken rotisserie just outside. An interesting evening food menu is served from Tuesday to Saturday, with lunch also available from Friday to Sunday.

thesunfelmersham.com

Three Tuns, Biddenham



Welcome to Peter and Kati, who took over this popular village pub in April. Greene

King IPA, Abbot and Timothy Taylor Landlord are served, with a Three Tuns Bitter house ale likely to arrive shortly. Freshly home-cooked lunches and evening meals are available, with a plan to offer tapas snacks all day in the bar. Roast lunches are served on Sunday. Facebook [@ThreeTunsBiddenham](https://www.facebook.com/ThreeTunsBiddenham) or 01234 354847.

Three Cups, Newnham St, Bedford

Following manager Sarah's recent departure, this popular old pub remains leased to White Park Brewery, which has

not yet, however, brewed any beer there. Brewery owner Alan Kelly and his team are now running the pub, offering Greene King IPA, Old Speckled Hen, five guest ales, usually from microbreweries, and a changing real cider. 01234 352153.

Duke and Mulberry Bush, Kempston

Both pubs are now leased by Charles Wells to Hop Inns, a regional operator based near Harrow. The same chain also runs the Ship in Bromham Road, Bedford, and the Sportsman in Goldington.



The **Mulberry Bush**, a modern community pub within the

Southfields retail centre in Orchard St, now offers one changing real ale, usually from Marston's Eagle Brewery or the current Wells Wandering Brewer ale. 01234 409299.

The **Duke**, a large community pub in Woburn Road, usually serves Eagle IPA. 01234 857201.

Bull and Fox & Hounds, Bedford

These former Greene King pubs were recently sold to a private operator, but we have seen little change in their day-to-day operations so far. We'll let you know if there are any important changes.

Foresters Arms, Union St, Bedford

This Charles Wells pub reopened last autumn after considerable internal alterations and refurbishment. Eagle IPA and three changing guest ales are served, now available to CAMRA members at 10% discount. forestersarmsbedford.co.uk

Toast, Riverside, Bedford

This fairly new arrival in the Riverside retail and hotel complex has sadly closed again. We do not know whether another pub operator may decide to re-open in the same premises.

Life Hacks with Beer

Slug and Snail Trap

The Hack – Place a bowl of beer overnight to trap snails and slugs.

Result – Placed close to my lettuce that was being destroyed, I awoke to find a few swimming around the bowls and no signs of them near lettuce. **SUCCESS.**

Cleaning Solution

The Hack – Clean jewellery by inserting it into a glass of beer, rinsing with water and drying with a soft cloth.

Result – The bracelet I used was gold and the beer certainly did get rid of the dirt and grime. However, I feel cola works better.

SUCCESS.

Furniture Polish

The Hack - Wipe down wooden surfaces with beer and it will boost the shine and make it look less dingy.

Result – Other than my living room smelling like a pub there was no noticeable

difference. I'll be sticking to furniture polish in the future. **FAIL.**

Fruit Fly Trap

The Hack – Put a small amount of beer in a container, cover with cling film and poke a small hole. Fruit flies can get in but won't get out.

Result – After a barbecue I found multiple flies in my house; they were trapped and I was able to release them outside.

SUCCESS.

Stain Removal

The Hack – Pour beer (preferably carbonated) over the stain, let it soak in then wipe away the stain. Then use soapy water to remove the beer.

Result – I had a stain on the carpet, poured beer and it seemed to do nothing until I applied soapy water. The soap did more to the stain than the beer. **FAIL.**

Dan Veal

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Around the Vale

Our February minibus trip saw us at our usual starting point, the **Wellington Arms**, with its usual wide selection of ales to sample.



The Green Man

Once in the bus we headed west for our first stop, the **Green Man, Lidlington**. A first glance suggested there was only one beer on – Marston's 61 Deep. After most of us had ordered, we found out that the Six Nations-themed Dirty Tackle from Marston's Wychwood Brewery was available without a pump clip. A sample of a third ale was also offered for us to try to identify, but without success, from a freshly tapped barrel.



Back to the bus for the short trip to **Marston Moretaine** and the **Bell**. The two beers available here were both labelled – Spitfire and Doom Bar. Both were in reasonable condition, even if a conventional choice. But licensees have to cater for the tastes of their regular customers.

Another quick hop brought us to the **Exhibition at Upper Shelton**, where Tring Side Pocket for a Toad was on offer. This community pub was relatively quiet, and the rocking chair had been commandeered by the resident cat until someone decided to give it a gentle rock, which was not well received.

The final village on our tour was **Wootton**, which is growing significantly with extensive house-building. It remains to be seen if this will be accompanied by more pubs, but the more established areas be offer a number of them. First up was the **Cock**, where Bombardier was the only cask ale available at the bar, guarded by a dog.



No need for the bus to get to the next stop, across the road at the **Fox and Duck**. Adnams Lighthouse was the choice here, and it was refreshing and in decent nick. It was good to be able to get through the door at this friendly pub, closed last time we visited.

The bus was needed to get to the **Chequers** in **Wootton Hall End**. Given the time of year it is perhaps not surprising that the beer choice was limited to the regular Eagle, in as good condition as usual in this popular pub.

Time had now run out on us, so Wootton's remaining pub, the Legstraps at Keeley Corner, had to wait for another time.

Roger Stokes

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hitchinbeerfestival.org.uk

12th Gibberd Garden Beer Festival

15-16 June under canvas at Gibberd Gardens, Marsh Lane, Old Harlow CM17 0NA. 50 real ales, ciders and perries. Entry includes access to the famous Gibberd Gardens. Parking limited – use bus 59 from Harlow or Harlow Mill rail station (20 min walk). heb-camra.org.uk/gg

Buzzrail Ale Trail

13-14 July on Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway. Travel on a vintage train with large selection of real ales and ciders, with food at both ends of the line. Festival entry £2, free with train ticket or to CAMRA members. Starts at Page's Park Station, Billington Road LU7 4TG. buzzrail.co.uk

7th Epping Ongar Railway Beer Festival

19-21 July at North Weald Station, Epping, Essex. 80 beers + 20 ciders in station marquee and on heritage trains running all day. Hot and cold food. Vintage bus from Epping Underground, Harlow and Shenfield rail stns. eorailway.co.uk

Great British Beer Festival

6-10 August at London Olympia Exhibition Centre, W14 8UX. CAMRA's flagship festival. See advert on this page. gbbf.org.uk

Peterborough Beer Festival

20-24 August under canvas on the Embankment, Bishops Rd PE1 1EF (city centre 10 min). Over 400 real ales including festival specials, a huge range of ciders and perries, bottled beers and wines, and food catering for all tastes. Live music eves in separate

marquee. beer-fest.org.uk

Fox Summer Beer Festival

23-25 August at Fox, High St, Carlton MK43 7LA. 18 real ales + 6 ciders served from a temporary bar in the garden. Variety of live music and food. Bus 25 from Bedford stops outside. thefoxatcarlton.pub

RHTS Sausage & Cider Festival

24-26 August at Rushden Station NN10 0AW. Locally made, flavoured sausages with a choice of ciders and perries. Trains will run on RHTS line. Use bus 50 from Bedford. rhts.co.uk

Bedford Beer and Cider Festival

2-5 October at Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square, Bedford. See pages 8-9.

Black, CAMRA-run; [Blue](#), [Other](#)



Northwards on a Spring Evening

North Beds CAMRA's May minibus trip headed north up the A6 to **Sharnbrook**, where our starting point was the **Swan with Two Nicks**, a Wells pub in the middle of the village.



The Adnams Ghost Ship was very lively, but ours didn't disappoint once we'd got them. Eagle and the latest Wells Wandering Brewer beer, Echo Beach Red Ale, were on too.

Moving on, we quickly reached the **Sun at Felmersham**, a popular free house recently reopened under new licensees – in fact the 'Grand Opening' wasn't due for another couple of weeks. The historic thatched building hadn't changed much, and nor had the cask offer – Eagle is the regular beer, and Leighton Buzzard Cuckoo and Animal (that is, XT) Manta Ray and Saxby's Rum Cider were on the guest handpumps. The Cuckoo suited me and was in good nick.

Next to a two-pub village, **Harrold**. The **Oakley Arms**, a Wells pub in another lovely old thatched building, offered only Eagle but it was in a very acceptable condition. Across the road, the **Muntjac** cohabits with an Indian restaurant, as the owner rents the bar and the restaurant to different businesses. The Muntjac therefore doesn't do food, and the Indian restaurant gets drinks for its customers from the pub. The cask ales were London Pride, Tim Taylor's Landlord and Ruddles

Best, the Doom Bar having run out. Most of us chose Landlord and found it in good shape. The Muntjac was busier than the Oakley Arms in mid-evening.

Across the bridge to another two-pub



village, **Carlton**, though we visited only one of them, the **Royal Oak**.

Closed for quite a while, this small, friendly village pub is a free house which is now flourishing, offering reasonably priced cask ales and an interesting menu of bar food. On the handpumps they had two Northants beers, Gun Dog Jack Spaniel's and Phipps IPA, as well as a cider that had sold out. We divided 50:50 between the two ales, and I enjoyed my Jack Spaniel's.

Last village – **Bromham**, and again we visited one of its two pubs. The **Swan** is, part of Greene King's Old English Inn chain of eating pubs. We were too late for a meal, but had a choice of GK IPA and Abbot or Phipps Diamond. Tring Drop Bar (4.0% abv) had been available but had sold out, so we mostly tried the Phipps and found it very acceptable. And that was it for another pub assessment trip, except for the hardy souls who continued their evening at the **Pilgrims Progress** when we arrived back in Bedford.

Fytton Rowland

Assessment (Pub Crawl)

Looking through the *Firkin* Spring 2019 edition. I came across Dan Veal's piece called Ten Things You May Not Know About Beer. One thing that stood out to me was the word zythology, which is the study of beer and brewing. Whenever you think about beer, you think it as a 'man's drink' but as Dan says, in ancient times across the world brewing beer was linked to bread making, so the first brewers were women. Also at that ancient time, in Peru women of noble birth were allowed to brew beer.

January 2019 was the month of the North Beds CAMRA pub assessment visits. They try various beers and assess the quality, also the surroundings of the pub and warmth of welcome. Nowadays there's a varied selection of beers and cask beers – not like years ago when pubs were tied to Charles Wells, Wells and Winch, Greene King or Adnams.

After the final night, it was time to go home after 'a month's hard work of pub-assessing'. Then they could say 'cenosillicaphobia', which according to Dan Veal means fear of an empty glass.

A lot of the pubs are evolving into child-friendly places, so that families can go out together and enjoy a drink. The smoking ban doesn't seem to have much effect, as most now have very good smoking areas, where the smokers can feel they are still in the pub, and can join in the camaraderie with their friends. It is also noticeable that some of the pubs that were once closed (Clapham has lost two pubs and two clubs over the years) are now re-opening and making a comeback after a refurbishment, which is a good thing. Pubs are the social hub of most of the towns and villages, and long may they be so.

John F. Pickering

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

JUNE

Thursday 6th – Summer Day Out

Visit to breweries in Milton Keynes.

Thursday 27th – Pubs Visit

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

JULY

Thursday 11th – Branch Meeting

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

Thursday 18th – Pubs Visit

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

AUGUST

Thursday 1st – Extraordinary General Meeting

At the North End Club, Roff Avenue, Bedford at 7.30 p.m. CAMRA members only. Meeting followed by a walking tour of town centre pubs.

SEPTEMBER

Thursday 12th – Branch Meeting

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

Thursday 19th – Pubs Visit

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

OCTOBER

Wednesday 2nd – Saturday 5th

CAMRA Bedford Beer and Cider Festival, Corn Exchange, St Pauls Square, Bedford (see pages 8-9)

There's Beer Brewing Again in Potton

When the Potton Brewery which had operated for a number of years closed, East Beds was left without locally brewed beer. All that changed in 2018 when the Potton Brewing Company was founded by Richard Haigh, who had lived there for ten years. He had commuted to London and was fed up with it, and as he was a home brewer he decided to go professional. Sensibly, though, he trained first with David Porter before looking for premises. The previous Potton Brewery in had been on an industrial estate, but Richard found a unit right in the town centre, just off the Market Square, well sited for a future pop-up pub. But it was nearly derelict premises, empty except for piles of rubbish. He had a lot of work to do very quickly, including building a mezzanine and adding a WC, as well as installing the brewing equipment. Most important of all, brewing requires a water supply and reliable electricity, both of which were lacking.



Despite this daunting amount of work, Richard opened his brewery in April 2018 and held his first beer festival on a month later. He supplied three beers to the CAMRA Bedford Beer and Cider Festival in October 2018 and very likely will again this year. In April 2019 North Beds CAMRA visited the brewery to be shown round by Richard and be given samples of his beers in bottle.

The regular beers are: South of the Border, an English session ale at 3.6% abv; West of

the Sun, a golden session ale at 3.6% abv; the well-named Nice Pint of Beer, a traditional-style best bitter at 4.6% abv; Republic IPA, a "mid-Atlantic IPA" at 4.2% abv; Holly Pup, a dark mild at 3.8% abv; Squirrels Nest, an American red ale with some rye content, 5.0% abv; and Mort's Hard Times, an American brown ale at 4.3% abv. All are brewed in small batches according to demand.

The bottles are sold at local garden centres and craft fairs, and can be bought from the brewery door when it is open. The Rising Sun in Potton usually stocks the cask ales, and Richard also runs external bars at events such as fairs and weddings. From the end of June, a bar in the yard opens once a week in a marquee – but Richard hopes later to put up a building.

There is no intention to grow into a massive business; Richard wants Potton Brewing to be seen as a community business, ethically run. Their electricity is all from renewable sources, they keep water and chemicals usage to a minimum, their beer is vegan because they do not use isinglass finings, and a penny on every pint or bottle sold goes to local charities.



Dinner at the Rising Sun; Richard Haigh second left in checked shirt

Afterwards we proceeded, accompanied by Richard, to the Rising Sun for an excellent meal washed down by some Potton Brewing cask ales, to round off a most enjoyable and informative evening.

Fytton Rowland

Best Little Pub in Hampshire Wins National Crown

CAMRA's national Pub of the Year competition runs all the year round. On page 4 you'll find a report on the presentation of the certificate to North Beds CAMRA's Pub of the Year 2019, the Polhill Arms at Renhold. And on the front cover, you'll find a photo of the Bedfordshire County Pub of the Year 2019, the Engineers Arms at Henlow, selected in April. The next stage is the East Anglian Pub of the Year 2019, which will be selected in the Summer. Eventually the final four best pubs nationwide will be chosen from among the regional champions in the Autumn. With the result that the single National Pub of the Year – CAMRA's choice for Britain's best pub – isn't announced until the start of the next year!



The culmination of the 2018 selection process occurred recently. And the national winner is ... the best little pub in Hampshire. It is the Wonston

Arms at Wonston, near Sutton Scotney, north of Winchester. The landlord – really a landlord, because he owns the pub – is Matt Todd, who runs it with his wife Lisa. In 2015, the Wonston Arms was empty and derelict, and seemed unlikely ever to reopen. The community had the first right to buy it, but the small village came up £75,000 short. Then Matt decided to leave his job in marketing and buy the pub and he managed to raise the money in time.

CAMRA's judges called it a “fantastic village local with great atmosphere”. Matt says he wanted to recreate the kind of pub he used to go into with his dad when he was young – a traditional front-room local. Although the pub doesn't serve food, a fish and chip van visits on Tuesday evenings, while Friday

is Curry Night with food delivered. Hampshire-produced Jake's Pork Pies are also available. There is live music on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month, and a pop-up café on the third Monday morning of the month. A photography club meets in the pub, and regular quizzes are also held.

Four handpumps dispense changing cask ales, often from local small breweries such as Bowman, Flowerpots and Red Cat – the judges praised the wide range. And over 200 gins are stocked! Mike and Lisa say that the limit of their ambition was to get into the Good Beer Guide; they have no wish to grow into a big business, they just want to run a community local. So if you're driving south down the A34, turn off a few miles before Winchester, and visit the Best Little Pub in ... Britain.

And the Best Club too



CAMRA has a parallel national competition to find the champion club of Britain. The

2018 knockout in this case led to the recent announcement that the Club of the Year is Appleton Thorn Village Hall near Warrington. The hub of the community, the Village Hall is the former village school. It has been CAMRA national Club of the Year before – in 2010 – and having recently been refurbished, gained the honour for the second time recently. It has a comfortable lounge and a larger bar/function room served from a central bar. The function room hosts quizzes, live music and the annual beer festival in October. On the bar are up to seven cask beers from regional and micro breweries, plus up to five ciders or perries. Light lunches are served on Sunday from 1 to 3p.m. Non-members pay a minimal fee for admission.



Exhibition Upper Shelton

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Kevin, Sharon and all the Staff would like to thank all our customers and CAMRA Members
for voting for us, and for your continued loyal support.

We are very proud to announce

The Engineers Arms won the Bedfordshire CAMRA Pub of the Year 2019
2019 is also a great year to celebrate Kevin being the Landlord for 30 years.

Please see below a list of activities/events.

We look forward to seeing you at the Engineers Arms, Henlow

THURSDAY 20 JUNE
THURSDAY 11 JULY
SATURDAY 10 AUGUST
SUNDAY 18 AUGUST
FRI 23 AUGUST – MON 26 AUGUST
SATURDAY 24 AUGUST
THURSDAY 5 SEPTEMBER
SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER
THUR 17 OCTOBER – SUN 20 OCTOBER
FRI 1 NOVEMBER – WED 6 NOVEMBER
THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER
FRIDAY 20 DECEMBER

BLACK COUNTRY MUSEUM
FREE BUFFET AND A PINT
OUSE VALLEY SINGLES CLUB
"LITTLE ENGINEERS PARTY"
GIN FESTIVAL
DIRECT FROM THE USA
CHARITY CURRY NIGHT
SHADES OF SWING BIG BAND
24TH HENLOW BEER FESTIVAL
"WAR OF THE ROSES" BEER FESTIVAL
BEDFORDSHIRE DAY
ANNUAL PORK PIE RUN

Day trip to the fantastic Living Museum, a few hostellers and a curry at the Vine
Produce your CAMRA Membership Card – Celebrating 30 years of CAMRA friendship
One of the funniest and original bands around – a great night in store
Children's party – Entertainer, Magician & face painting – party bags
Over 100 gins from around the World
Jam Dade
In aid of Prostate Cancer UK – fancy making one? Or just eating one! – tickets £10
Will bring the garden alive – 1-3pm – Book early to avoid disappointment
"Gin & Beer it" – 75 Beers, 25 Ciders & 40 Gins
30 Beers from Yorkshire and Lancashire bottle it out
12 Beers from the County plus Clongers and Bangers
Trip to Stamford to visit fine shops and real ale pubs. Optional lunch at the George



Engineers Arms
68 High St
Henlow, Beds. SG16 6AA
Tel: 01462 812284
www.engineersarms.co.uk



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, carefully selected ingredients.

From our core range to seasonal specials and experimental one-offs, all beers are available in 9gal cask, 4.5gal pin and 500ml bottle to both the pub trade and public.



One penny in every pint goes to charity.
1p

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