

FREE

The Firkin



Campaign
for
Real Ale

Magazine of CAMRA North Bedfordshire • Vol 45 No 1 Spring 2020

Devy is our Champion Pub



Pub of the Year 2020

*CHAIRMAN'S CORNER
NATIONAL CHAMPION PUB
BRANCH DIARY
PUB NEWS
OUR PUB AWARDS*

*WINTER WALK ALONG THE THAMES
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Chairman's Corner

Greetings!
Welcome to the
Spring Edition of
the Firkin.

I have the pleasure of opening this latest edition of the Firkin which contains the list of our award-winning pubs. I do hope you get to visit them, as they are all excellent.

Thank you to those CAMRA members who regularly score their beers, as that data is the just the beginning of selecting our Pub of the Year and other awards. Each year we sit down for the branch meeting (which all CAMRA Members are entitled to attend) that decides these awards, and with each passing year the decision becomes harder, as in North Bedfordshire we have some brilliant pubs.

I'm delighted to see that The Devonshire Arms is our Pub of the Year, as Ronnie and Rebecca work hard to ensure that your visit to their pub is a great one. The Devvy always feels warm and welcoming as well as having well-kept beer to enjoy. Do keep an eye out on our website and social media for the dates when we present the various awards, and come along if you can.

Aside from our awards we do have our AGM approaching soon, on 20th April. If you enjoy visiting the pub and your tipples are a beer or cider, then why not join us? You will be able to see what happens behind the scenes and help secure the future of pubs and CAMRA.

Dan Veal

National Champion 2019



CAMRA's national Pub of the Year for 2019 is the Bell at Aldworth in rural West Berkshire. This is the Bell's second victory as National PoTY, the first being in 1990. The Bell is a perennial gem recognized by CAMRA as a

historic pub interior of national importance.. The garden and excellent beer attract walkers and drinkers from far and wide. The pub is well known for its hot soups and filled rolls, ploughman's platters and hot puddings. The West Berkshire Brewery brews Old Tyler as the unique house beer, and Arkells 3B and three changing beers are also available. Tutts Clump and Lilley's craft ciders are regulars too.

Many thanks to Michael Slaughter LRPS for the photographs.



The Fox at Carlton



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Branch Diary

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

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

Unless otherwise stated, for all events further details can be obtained from, and bookings made with, Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or e-mail socials@northbeds.camra.org.uk.

MARCH

Thursday 12th – Branch Meeting

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

Friday 13th – Branch Visit to St Neots Beer Festival – travel by X5 bus, details to be announced.

APRIL

Thursday 2nd – Branch Brewery Visit

Meet at the Wellington Arms, Wellington Street, Bedford at 7 p.m. Destination brewery to be announced

Monday 20th – Branch Annual General Meeting

At the Kings Arms, St Mary's Street, Bedford at 7.30 for 8 p.m. CAMRA members only.

MAY

Thursday 14th – Branch Meeting

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

Thursday 21st – Pub Assessment Trip

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

JUNE

Thursday 11th – Summer Day Out

Details to be announced

The
Firkin

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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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Pub News

Five Bells, Cople



Welcome to Mandy and Sam, who took over this historic, timber-framed village pub in the

autumn. Greene King IPA and a changing guest ale are available on the bar. Home-cooked meals will be available in April after work on the kitchen. There is a quiz on Thursday, a live band once a month on Saturday and a large garden for use in fair weather. thefivebellsatcople.co.uk

King William IV, Kempston



Welcome to new landlady Michaela Lyon, who has taken over this attractive, oak-beamed

old pub. A large, modern restaurant is at the rear. Good-value meals offer separate bar and restaurant menus. There is regular live music and will be summer events in the garden. thekingwilliamkempston.co.uk

Swan with two Nicks, Sharnbrook

A warm welcome to Beccy Herbert, who has taken over this friendly village pub. Eagle and Directors are served, plus a changing guest ale. Home-cooked lunches and evening meals include daily specials and home-made pies. Award-winning wines are available by the glass. 01234 781585, fb@swanwithwonicks

Brewery Tap, Shefford

Welcome to mother and daughter Louise & Aimee Fitzpatrick, who now manage this B&T pub not far from the brewery. Primarily a drinkers' pub, offering three B&T beers

and three guests. The open-plan interior also provides a quiet family room at the rear. Lunchtime rolls are available. There is occasional live music or a quiz. 01462 628448, fb@thebrewerytapshefford

Railway Steamer, Shefford

A lively local pub with a large lounge bar and beer garden. After several years without real ale, the pub recently changed hands and now offers cask Draught Bass and Eagle. Basket meals are served Monday



to Saturday with a roast lunch on Sunday. Cooked breakfast available

at weekends.

railwaysteamer.co.uk

White Horse, Southill

Welcome to the Old Spot Pub Company, which now runs this historic pub near the Whitbread estate. Three changing real ales are available and there is a new food menu. The function room in a converted stable block accommodates up to 80 people and can be hired for private functions.

thewhitehorsesouthill.co.uk

An Apology

In the Winter 2019-20 issue of the Firkin, I said that the Three Cranes at Turvey had a manager in charge and a 'For Sale' sign outside. The manager has asked me to state that he has been there for several years and expects to stay, and that my saying that there was a 'For Sale' sign outside was not true. My notes of the trip were in error, and I apologise to the owners and manager of the Three Cranes for my mistake.

Fytton Rowland

All Hail the Devvy!

Back in 2013 the **Devonshire Arms** in Dudley Street, **Bedford** was North Beds CAMRA's **Pub of the Year** under its popular licensees Martin and Naomi. And now in 2020 it's deservedly won the title again, with its present tenants, Ronnie and Rebecca.



Traditional back-street locals basing their success on the beer, rather than food, are getting rarer, but the Devvy is a perfect example

of how to get it right. With most of its clientele within walking distance, it's very much the community pub of the Castle Quarter. Last year it was our Town Pub of the Year, and this year Ronnie and Rebecca's friendly welcome and six well-kept cask ales have been rewarded with our top award. They will now compete with East Beds and South Beds CAMRA branches' champions for the title of Bedfordshire Pub of the Year.

Our **Country Pub of the Year** is the **Fox at Carlton**. This is the third time Alison has won the title since she bought the pub, a genuine free house in a historic thatched building. She regularly has four cask ales on; London Pride and Eagle are the regulars, plus two



changing beers from nearby smaller breweries, all of them invariably well kept. Good food at remarkably reasonable prices is also served, and Alison and her staff are friendly and always offer a warm welcome. Like the Devvy, the Fox bases its success on the personality of the licensee plus beer that is very well kept.

Club of the Year for our branch is the **Stewartby Club**. Stewartby has never had a



pub, but the club more than fills the gap. A large building with several bars, it has the look and feel of

Australian pubs, but unlike them it serves well-kept cask ale. Many community activities are based there, and the Stewartby Club hosts regular Rock 'n' Roll, Northern Soul and Country Music nights, and also makes function rooms available for private hire. Regular buffet food is supplemented with hot dishes when the music sessions are on.

This year the **Cider Pub of the Year** award has gone to Peter and Conny at the **Sun at Felmersham**. The Sun was our Pub of the



Year during the previous licensees' time, and it's good for this delightful village pub to get

another award from CAMRA. Our cider rep Susan Fossey suggested the Sun because, although Peter only has one real cider on at a time, the cider available constantly changes and is usually from a fairly local producer.

All Hail the Devvy!



Our **Most Improved Pub** this year is the **Bridge at Shefford**. Licensees Tom and Vicki Farmer now run this Wells house, which has itself been refurbished. Cask ale is now offered for the first time in a while, with Eagle and two changing beers on handpumps, and they are well kept. The main bar has a pool table and sports TV, and there is a smaller quiet room. CAMRA always welcomes the return of cask ales to a pub that has lacked them, and hence this award to the Bridge.

North Beds CAMRA's **Young Members Pub of the Year** is the **Beerfly** in St Cuthberts Street, **Bedford**. A cross between an off-licence and a micropub, Beerfly, run by owner Tim Edwards, has become very popular among the younger generation. A wide range of real ale in a bottle (or can) is available, and the keg taps carry unusual draught beers, many of them in KeyKegs, which CAMRA defines as real ale. The Beerfly closes quite early in the evening. Draught beer is sold in thirds, halves and two-thirds, but not pints.

Fytton Rowland



A Thameside Walk

A walk along the Thames in December – you must be mad! Oh, to the contrary. Over two days we chose six pubs in Hammersmith and Chiswick from the Good Beer Guide, and here's our tale.

Our first stop was the **Black Lion**. A warm welcome not only from the coal fire but also the staff. Two choices, Tribute and London Pride. But the Tribute was off, so London Pride it was, in decent state. There was also a cider – Rosie's Pig. Food was very good, we chose to have a German sausage sharing platter.

A short walk along the Thames to the **Old Ship**, 17th century but rebuilt in 1850. The



pub still has its original 17th century porch at the rear of the building. Nautical theme throughout. Young's London Original Bitter and St Austell Proper Job. We opted for Proper Job and found it in good order.



The **Dove** was the last of day one, and in our opinion the best of the three. Although it's on the Thames path you would be excused if you missed it! A Fuller's pub serving four handles: London Pride, ESB, Fresh

A Thameside Walk in Winter

Tracks and Seafarers. The Dove's claim to fame is that it has the smallest bar mentioned in the Guinness Book of Records. A certificate proudly hangs on the wall in said bar. First recorded as a pub in 1793, but probably established earlier when it was a coffee house. Thomas Arne is said to have composed 'Rule Britannia' here. We had a pint of Seafarers and Fresh Tracks. Both in excellent condition.

So day one comes to a close, looking forward to discovering more inns tomorrow.

Day two, we walked to Chiswick and those of you in the know will guess where we are going. We found this imposing building housing **Fuller's Brewery**. On the corner is the site where two pubs used to be: The **Mawsom Arms** and the **Fox and Hounds**, so the pub now has two names. The Mawsom



Arms takes its name from the family who owned the brewery. London Pride, as you would expect, Santa by the Surf, Dark Star Hophead and ESB were on offer. We chose London Pride and were not disappointed, it was in excellent condition. A good start to the day.

Continuing our journey along the River Thames we watched the many rowers, avoided jogging Santas on their charity run, and found sanctuary in the **Rutland**, offering a choice of three Greene King ales: Rocking Rudolph, GK IPA and Old Speckled



Hen. Rocking Rudolph was picked, as it was a Christmas Ale and it was December!! This we found to be very good.

Onwards towards Hammersmith bridge. The **Blue Anchor** is an independent pub and right next door to the Rutland. Very busy serving food, and four ales to choose from. Reunion Ales' Beardtongue was off, so had a Mad Goose from Purity instead. Other choices were Blue Anchor Ale from Nelson Brewery and Timothy Taylor Landlord.

The last pub on our walk was the **Blue Boat**. Very modern in appearance and lots of outside space – ideal for warmer days but not in winter months. It was very busy though. London Pride and Oliver's Island. We opted for Oliver's Island and it was in good order.

If this trip has whetted your appetite it's an easy place to get to. From Bedford to St Pancras, Underground Piccadilly Line to Hammersmith, then on the District Line to Ravenscourt Park. We stayed at the Premier Inn just around the corner from the Tube.

Walking along the Thames on a dry day in December was wonderfully interesting and refreshing. Our capital has a lot to offer, so go visit and enjoy.

Susan Fossey

Spring Beer Festivals

Rugby Beer & Cider Festival

5-7 March at Arnold House, Elsee Road CV21 3BA (behind Merchant's Inn). Over 35 real ales, ciders and perries, plus foreign beers and food all sessions. Live music Sat eve. rugby.camra.org.uk

Loughborough Beer Festival

5-7 March at Polish Club, True Lovers Walk (off William St) LE11 3DB. Over 60 beers plus cider, perry, gin and food at all sessions. Regular train connections from Bedford and Luton. loughboroughcamra.co.uk

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

12-14 March at Priory Centre PE19 2BH. See advert this page hunts.camra.org.uk

Sir William Peel Beer Festival

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

Coventry Beer Festival

1-2 May at Coventry RFC, Butts Park Arena CV1 3GE. Over 75 real ales, ciders, perries and country wines. Food available at all sessions. Rail stn 15-20 min. coventry.camra.org.uk

East Anglian Beer & Cider Festival

22-25 April at The Arc, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3FD. 200 real and KeyKeg ales, 30 ciders, including many regional brewers. Food and full entertainment programme. Easy walk from rail and bus stns. westsuffolk.camra.org.uk

Devvy Beer & Cider Festival

1-4 May at Devonshire Arms, Dudley St, Bedford. Extra real ales and ciders on gravity plus the regular range. North Beds CAMRA Pub of the Year 2020. devonshirearmsbedford.co.uk

Cambridge Beer Festival

18-23 May under canvas on Jesus Green.

Over 200 real ales from 80 breweries plus international beers, cider, perry, mead and apple juice. Food at all sessions. X5 bus Victoria Ave 5 min.

cambridgebeerfestival.com

Fox Spring Beer Festival

Fox, High St, Carlton MK43 7LA. 22-25 May. 18 real ales and 6 ciders. Four live bands, pizza, curry and hog roast. North Beds CAMRA Country Pub of the year 2020. thefoxatcarlton.pub

Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival

4-6 June at Rugby Football Club, Old Hale Way SG5 1XL. About 150 real ales, ciders and international beers, food at all sessions. 9A/B buses from Bedford. hitchinbeerfestival.org.uk

Blue headers, non-CAMRA events.



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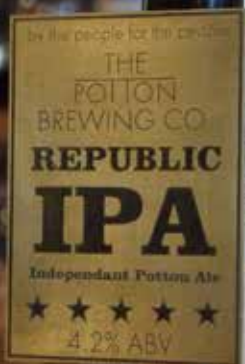
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A Winter's Tale of Many Pubs

On 16th January I arrived early enough at the **Wellington Arms** to sample a half of B&T Eastcote Ale, a session golden ale at 3.5% abv from the Shefford brewery, which I'd not tried before and found I rather liked, and its condition was good.

Our minibus then took us first to the **Cock**



Cock

at **Pavenham**. New licensee Sue Blackman has redecorated the Cock in Art Deco style, with a new sign matching the door's window glass. People like it – the pub was comfortably full at 7.30

p.m. Work on the kitchen is not quite complete, so food was then limited to Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday lunchtimes. Pedigree, Directors, Wainwright, and Brakspear's Gravity, were on the handpumps. I had the Gravity (3.4% abv) a pale session bitter, and it was in good shape.

A short drive brought us to the **Sun** at **Felmersham** with only a tiny sign outside. Many customers were still eating at 8 p.m. An old-fashioned pub with a dartboard in use, the Sun had Eagle and Parkway Brewery's Cracker (4.5% abv) available. The Cracker was pretty nice, and well kept.

Another brief ride took us to the **Bell** at **Odell**, an attractive old village pub with a food trade. The Bell was welcoming, with an open fire blazing. All its cask ales were from

owners Greene King's list – IPA, Abbot, Olde Trip, Ruddles County and Ruddles Best. I went for the Abbot and found it very much up to standard

Arriving next at **Carlton**, we found that the **Royal Oak** was closed for the whole of January, so we continued to the **Fox**. Licensee Alison had the usual Eagle and London Pride on, and her guest ales were Leighton Buzzard Brewery's Santa and Exe Valley's Fryer's Thirst. Her policy for Christmas beers is always to put them on after Christmas! The Fryer's was end-of-barrel, so she replaced it with Tring's Hair of the Dog, a blonde beer at 4.0% abv, in good condition and much to my liking. She replaced everyone's Fryer's without being individually asked.



Royal George

Heading back towards Bedford, we stopped at the **Royal George** in **Stevington**, its frontage right on the pavement, but with a

car park at the back. At 10 p.m. dining was over but there were still a fair few customers in. It offered Eagle, Abbot and Black Sheep Best. Sadly the Black Sheep had run out by the time I was served, so I had my second Abbot of the evening; it was in decent condition.



Swan

The last stop was at the **Swan** at **Bromham**, another Greene King pub, a managed house. Manager

A Winter's Tale of Many Pubs continued

Mark has been there a while, and though it is mainly an eating pub he offers interesting guest ales. With GK IPA and Abbot, he had Bath Ales Gem, Woodforde's Wherry and, from Amptill, Kelchner IPA. I had the Kelchner. It was in good shape and I enjoyed it. Bromham and Biddenham residents were dropped at the Swan and the bus then continued to The Pilgrim's Progress in Bedford, from which I walked home.

A week later, for a change our second minibus trip started at the **White Horse** in Newnham Avenue, **Bedford**, a large suburban Wells pub run by popular licensees Lucie and Steve Fuller. Four cask ales were on: Eagle, Directors, Marstons 61 Deep, and Charlie Wells Ramblers Special (4.3% abv). The Ramblers, a ruby beer, was very much end-of-barrel, but Lucie changed it. I tried the 61 Deep for a low-gravity start to the evening, and found it in excellent condition. The White Horse was quite full with diners at 7 p.m. Unfortunately, some of our riders had gone to the Wellington Arms instead, so they shared a taxi to our next stop and the bus started rather underloaded.



Anchor

before us. This time Eagle, Directors and Ramblers were joined by Adnams Ghost Ship. Here the Ramblers was in acceptable condition. I thought it tasted like Eagle, despite its higher strength. The Anchor is a great pub to visit in the summer, but on a cold winter's evening it's not at its best.

So on we went to our next stop, a longish ride through the country lanes to the **Crown**

at **Little Staughton**. Kevin had only his own brews on the handpumps: Pale (3.7% abv)



Crown

of brewing on the spot is that prices are very moderate! Another eating pub, with sport on TV and RAF-themed decor, with a pleasant atmosphere. It's surprisingly modern-looking for a village pub.

On to another village pub, this time thatched, the northernmost pub in Bedfordshire – the **Three Compasses** at **Upper Dean**. A small village, but plenty of



and Beer with No Name (3.8% abv). The latter turned out to be a traditional-style amber session bitter, rather to my liking and in decent condition. The merit

people obviously feel the pub is worth travelling to, as it's usually busy with diners. Timothy Taylor's Landlord, St Austell Tribute and Greene

King IPA were on. The licensee was behind the bar with a friendly welcome, and an

A Winter's Tale of Many Pubs continued

open fire burned. My Landlord was in good shape.

Another favourite dining spot, with a high reputation for real ale as well, was our next stop – the **Plough** at **Bolnhurst**. Dining was over, but the place was still busy, and the bar area for drinkers was comfortable, with a log fire in the grate. The choice was Adnams Southwold or Nene Valley's Manhattan Project, the latter being a citric bitter hopped with Citra and Mandarin hops, at 4.0% abv. Most of us had the Manhattan and found it excellent in flavour and condition.

We then visited a favourite, North Beds CAMRA's 2018 and 2019 Pub of the Year, the **Polhill Arms** at **Renhold**. It was 10.30 p.m. when we arrived, so only a few drinkers remained in the pub, but the atmosphere was still welcoming. From owners Greene King, the cask beers on offer were Yardbird



Polhill Arms

and H&H Bitter, and three guests were also available: St Austell Tribute, Oakham JHB and Otter Amber, though the Otter had just run out. JHB is a no-brainer for me, and I found it excellently kept. Resisting the temptation offered by Paul's last pork pie, I ended my evening's consumption at that point and asked minibus driver Tom to set me down in Goldington Road.

The third of our January trips required no minibus, as it covered pubs in central Bedford. Our starting point was the **Bear** in the **High Street**, back to its old self under manager Hannah after many vicissitudes.



Bear

Barmaid Ciera whose shift ended at 7 p.m. then joined us on our walk! On offer were Directors (though that barrel had just run out), Marstons EPA (3.5% abv) and Big Cat Ale, of unknown provenance and strength, all of them at reasonable prices. The Big Cat was a nice hoppy bitter in good condition, and Ciera told us it was in fact Jennings Atomic Theory (3.8% abv). The Bear has a very attractive front lounge, sadly little used.

The shortest walk of the night took us the width of the **High Street** to the **Brewhouse and Kitchen**, where brewer Richard Cook was on hand to welcome us. He told us that his apprentice Caitlin was about to move to B&K's new pub in Chester, having completed her training. Their usual four cask ales were available – Bankers Draught, Intrepid, Braxator and Invarsity – and I riskily chose the strongest, Invarsity, which was in decent condition, being brewed just feet from the handpumps! Little had changed at the B&K since our last visit, certainly not the beer prices, which remain on the high side.

Strolling a little further down the **High Street**, we called at the **Rose**, an old-established pub now definitely CAMRA-friendly. The beers on offer were Doom Bar, Hobgoblin Gold and Timothy Taylor's Landlord, though a fourth handpump offered "Extra Chilled Doom Bar", which

A Winter's Tale of Many Pubs continued

certainly doesn't accord with CAMRA's recommended temperature for cask ales! Many of us tried the Landlord and its condition was acceptable. The Rose was busy, and unusually for Bedford the rugby on the TV was of the League variety.

Having braved the cold wind across the Town Bridge, we reached the **Kings Arms** in **St Mary's Street**. Long-serving licensee Sean was on duty to welcome us, and his handpumps offered Greene King IPA from the pub's owners plus two guests: Wadworth's 6X and Five Points XPA (4.0% abv), from a brewery in Hackney that some of us had visited a couple of years ago. The XPA was a pleasant pale bitter and decently kept.

The group then split; some visited the **George and Dragon** in **Mill Street**, but I wasn't one of them.



My next stop was the **Ship** in **St Cuthberts Street**, another Greene King pub, which offered GK's Firebird, a dark beer at 4.5% abv, which I rather liked, as a change from my usual hoppy pale choices. And it was in a very acceptable condition. The Ship is a pleasant pub with a substantial food trade. It also offered Holy Ship Beer (3.8% abv), presumably made by Greene King, but which of their beers is it?

Ship, St Cuthberts Street

Again the party divided, with some calling at the **Three Cups** in **Newnham Street**. A choice of beers from Greene King, Oakham, Kelchner's of Ampthill and XP Brewery had been available. (I visited the following evening and had Kelchner IPA, in good nick.)

I went straight to **Newnham Street's** other pub, the **Castle**. Our only Wells house of



the evening, and there were Eagle and Directors, Young's Bitter and Special, and guests Wadworths 6X and Adnams Ghost Ship on handpumps. I took the opportunity to try "ordinary", now marketed as Young's Original London Bitter. It was in good condition. The pub was busy till late, despite its highish beer prices, and it was welcoming, with live music on.

And so ended my personal January round of pub trips.

Fytton Rowland

A Veteran of the Bedford Licensed Trade

Recently I received a phone call from someone who said said "I was the licensee of the *White Horse* fifty years ago".



Terry Darlow

He is Terry Darlow, 88, and at the time of his birth in 1931, his parents ran an off-licence in Queen Street, facing towards the *Balloon*. So he has been connected with the licensed trade since birth. His grandparents lived at 28 Dudley Street, two doors away from the *Devonshire Arms*. In his early teens, he went with relatives hop-picking (by hand) in Strood in Kent.

He became an apprentice compositor and worked in the printing trade. Then his father died and his mother took over the off-licence alone. Shortly after that he was conscripted into National Service; he served in the Royal Engineers and remains a proud and active RE veteran. On returning from the army he worked at the Sidney Press in Bedford, married and lived with his wife in a cottage at Aspley Guise,

commuting to work by the Bletchley-Bedford railway. But when his mother retired from the off-licence, he swapped homes with her. He and his wife moved to Queen Street and ran the off-licence. After a while Wells moved them to another off-licence called the *Elephant and Castle* even though it wasn't a pub. While there, he worked for Wells running outside bars at functions, and also worked sporadically at the Clapham Golf Club.

They decided they'd like to run a pub, and wanted the *White Horse*. But Wells instead



The former South End Hotel

offered them the *South End Hotel* in Amptill Road - now an Indian restaurant. When Terry ran it, it was a busy pub.

The clientele was mainly Indian and Italian people who worked in the brickworks, and the two groups got on together pretty well in the pub. There were also other customers, including one local headmaster who played for Bedford Rugby Club. After Terry had run the South End successfully for a few years, Wells offered him a pub under construction in Northampton. But he's a Bedford man and he said no. Then he was offered the job of steward at the Clapham Golf Club, but before he could decide on that, Wells realised he was right for the *White Horse*.

So he and his wife finally moved into the *White Horse* as managers. In those days it was always packed with students from the Polhill campus, which didn't have its own bar. In fact he advised the college on setting up their bar. He was in charge at the *White Horse* when the building was



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A Veteran of the Bedford Licensed Trade



The White Horse today

Despite the building work going on, the pub closed for only one day. An above-ground cellar was added as well, equipped with two large vats each of eight-barrel – 288 gallons – capacity. They were filled by beer being pumped from a similar-sized tank on the dray. The same cellar is still in use today, but the vats are gone and beer comes in casks.

After a couple of years his wife began to hanker after her old job as a nurse, so they left the licensed trade and he became a prison officer, initially on the East Coast but then back at Bedford prison with a promotion.

Terry retains an encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of the licensed trade in Bedford. Originally the *Balloon* in Foster Hill Road was his local.



Balloon

He lent me the picture of a horse drinking in the bar there. It belonged to a coalman, who sits to the right of the horse in the picture. There used to be another pub, the *Wolseley Arms*, on the opposite corner to the *Balloon*. The *White Horse* was run for

extended to its present size – the area along Rosamund Road was added then, as the public bar.

many years before Terry's time there by the Kennedys, and then became a Wells managed house. Terry's grandfather, father and uncle were all founder members of the *Russell Park Club* in Goldington Road, and all worked on the conversion of the building. He remembers the Price sisters running the *Bear* in the High Street, and George Wakefield running the *Cross Keys* for many years. When the circus was in town, the animals were stabled at the back of the *Rose* and were led down the cobbled lane at the side. There was once a pub where the Sikh temple off Ashburnham Road is, and another, the *Rink*, in Duck Mill Lane opposite the rear of the Bedford Rowing Club. This was kept by an ex-RAF man Percy Hawkins, and though a very small pub managed to accommodate a lot of large rugby players. A pub stood in the Broadway, demolished when the bus station was built.

Terry is the local President of the Royal



Engineers Association, and a member of Clapham British Legion, which meets at the *North End Club*. On Remembrance Day, he leads the Royal Engineers contingent in the procession to the Bedford war memorial on the Embankment, riding his "Harley-

Davidson" mobility scooter!

I am very grateful to Terry Darlow for giving up his time to record the history of the town and its pubs.

Fytton Rowland



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