

**FREE**

# The Firkin



Campaign  
for  
Real Ale

Magazine of CAMRA North Bedfordshire • Vol 46 No 2 Autumn 2022

## Venue for 44th CAMRA Bedford Beer and Cider Festival

5th-8th October 2022



**CHAIRMAN'S CORNER**  
**AWARD PRESENTATIONS**  
**TO LOCAL PUBS**  
**BEERS TO THE FUTURE -**  
**BEDFORD FESTIVAL 2022**  
**DESIGN AWARD TO**  
**BREWPOINT TAPROOM**

**A NEW PUB IN BEDFORD**  
**PUB NEWS**  
**FORTHCOMING CAMRA**  
**BEER FESTIVALS**  
**NOT MUCH REAL ALE IN**  
**KEMPSTON**

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

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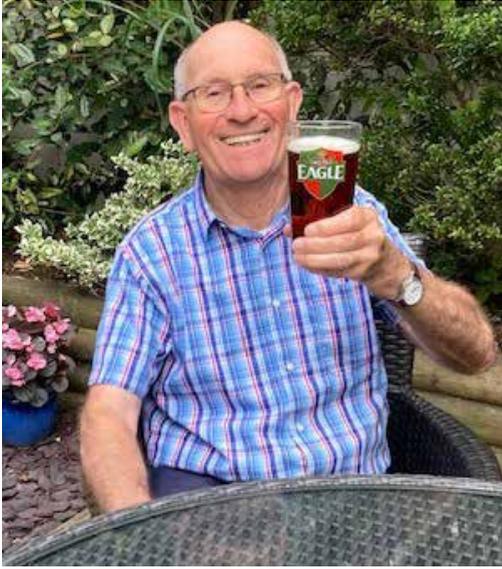


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# Chair's Corner



**H**ello from a new Chairman of the North Bedfordshire branch of the Campaign for Real Ale!

Dan Veal has resigned as Chair, and the branch lacked a vice-chair to take over, so I volunteered to act as Chair until the next AGM. If you are a regular reader of the *Firkin*, you already know me – I'm the Editor. As one of the old (70+) guard on the committee who had never been Chair, I felt I should step forward to fill the gap. So now I'm Interim Chairman until the next AGM.

I've been a real ale drinker since my undergraduate days, which were before the term 'real ale' had been invented by the founders of CAMRA. And my father was a real ale man before me. I never switched my allegiance to lager when all around were doing so in the 1960s and 1970s, and I have always preferred my beer to come from a hand pump rather than a keg font. A natural for CAMRA, then, but somehow I never actually joined the organisation until after I'd retired from my main job in 2008. In retirement, I took a part-time job as a tour guide at Wells brewery in Bedford, and soon after I'd started working there I was

asked to put in an extra shift serving as a barman at an event taking place one evening in the brewery bar – the AGM of North Beds CAMRA! On the spot I decided I'd better join up. I'm probably the only member of the branch who has ever been paid to attend a branch AGM...

I've never been one to be a sleeping member of an organisation – if I join, I become active. And at the start of my career, back in the 1960s, I was trained as an editor. So quite soon after I'd joined CAMRA I volunteered to take on the editorship of the *Firkin*. And here I still am, a dozen or so years later. Then in the spring of 2013, my wife and I had a three-month holiday in Australia following her retirement. My son, also a real ale man and CAMRA member, kindly edited one issue of the *Firkin* for me while I was away. I missed the branch AGM that year too, but I left word that I'd be happy to continue to edit the *Firkin*, and that I'd be willing to be Festival Organiser if no-one else volunteered. Very silly of me – that message ensured, of course, that no-one else volunteered! And so I ran the Bedford Beer and Cider Festival for five years, 2013-2017 inclusive.

I like working at beer festivals even more than I like editing a magazine, so I also work each year at the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia in London. GBBF didn't happen in 2020 or 2021, for the obvious reason, and at the time of writing this Chairman's Corner, the 2022 event was due in a few weeks, and I was planning to be back at Olympia working behind a bar.

Our own Bedford Beer and Cider Festival will take place in Bedford Corn Exchange at its usual early October dates in 2022 (see page 6). Why don't you volunteer to work behind a bar there? You might find it habit-forming, as I did.

**Fytton Rowland**

# The Fox at Carlton



## North Beds CAMRA Pub of the Year 2022

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

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# Presentations to our Winning Pubs

In the last issue of the Firkin, we announced the winners of CAMRA North Bedfordshire branch's pub awards for 2022. The presentations of their certificates took place after that issue had gone to press, and so they are reported here. Two of them took place on the same evening – 5th May – when North Beds CAMRA had a branch meeting at the Ent Shed in the Gordon Arms in Castle Road, Bedford.



The Devonshire Arms in Dudley Street is only a few yards away. So we went to the Devvy first, where we presented Ronnie and Rebecca with their award for Town Pub of the Year 2022. They had laid on a celebration buffet. The Devvy has its beer festival at August Bank Holiday weekend, 26th-29th August.



After a drink there to toast them, we went round to the Gordon Arms and made the presentation for Community Pub of the Year to one of the staff – sadly manager Dan could not be present that evening – on top of an outside table!



The following week, we travelled out to Carlton to make the award to The Fox as our branch Pub of the Year for 2022, and landlady Alison received this, her first full PoTY award after several times being Country Pub of the Year.

As noted in the Spring/Summer issue of the Firkin, we made no other awards this year. However, for the first time since 2019, the full national CAMRA Pub of the Year contest is going ahead. So the Fox at Carlton went into competition with the champions of South Beds and East Beds branches of CAMRA – the Black Lion at Leighton Buzzard, which has won the South Beds award several times, and the March Hare at Dunton for East Beds.

In the event, the representatives of all three



*March Hare, Dunton*

branches who visited all three PoTYs agreed that the March Hare is this year's Bedfordshire

County Pub of the Year. So Alison at the Fox lost out to another lovely village pub! Commiserations to Alison but congratulations to the March Hare. The next stage in the contest will be the East Anglian Regional CAMRA Pub of the Year. Watch this space for that result.

# Beers to the Future



Hello all, I just thought you might like a quick update on what's happening with the 2022

CAMRA Bedford Beer and Cider Festival. We have all been working hard behind the scenes to bring you the beer festival you've all come to love. This year's theme is Beers to the Future, and we are looking at how we can support the brewing industry and our local pubs after the torrid time of the last few years. The hospitality industry in general is still struggling to recover from the effects of the lockdowns, and some people have questioned if we should even consider running a festival if these businesses are struggling so much. My answer is Yes, as by running the festival, not only are we supporting the breweries, by purchasing additional stock, but by bringing new people into Bedford who wouldn't normally be drinking in the town. This provide additional trade for the local pubs. We have some excellent hostelrys in the area and would encourage you to explore them after leaving the festival, before making your way home. We are



hoping to have a list of some of these establishments on our festival webpage.

As in other years, we will have a excellent range of cask beers, predominantly selected by Geoff, our main beer orderer. We expect to have approximately a hundred beers from a variety of breweries, near and far. We are also planning on brewing a festival special in conjunction with Blackened Sun Brewery in Milton Keynes, one of our LocAle breweries. If our plans work out this may be something one of you can get involved with! So keep your eyes peeled on our Facebook page. Gary, the brewer at Blackened Sun, has been working on an exclusive recipe that we are all excited about, and we can't wait to taste it.

This year again will see the return of a craft and KeyKeg bar, which will be situated at





the end of the hall. Jonathan, who is the manager, is exceptionally knowledgeable and the national Chairman of 'Bieres sans Frontieres' (CAMRA's foreign beer section), and he will gladly answer any questions you have. This bar has some exciting news and one total first, as it will be showcasing a beer that has never been sold in England before. So don't forget to pay them a visit early on at the festival - you really don't want to miss out, as we only have 30 litres of it.

When it comes to our range of ciders and perries, Chris is your man and will be happy to advise you. With around forty ciders and perries you will be spoilt for choice. Chris is the cider bar manager for the Great British Beer Festival as well as at Bedford, and really knows his stuff when comes to cider. He goes to great lengths to ensure a good range of quality drinks. Wine by the glass will also be available at the cider and perry bar.

For the last few years we have had our resident mead supplier. Christopher of The Rookery Mead company travels all the way



from Perthshire. And I'm delighted that he will be again joining us this October. Christopher, who brews the mead and runs the bar, is a source of engaging information about mead, its history and recipes. Christopher is also a teacher of the Gaelic language, and has spent a huge amount of time researching the origins honey based drinks.

Colin of the Pewter Scribe will be attending with his popular engraving stand, Colin can personalize your festival glass or one of the pieces that he sells, using his notable skills. He also designs our festival logo for which we are extremely grateful. Colin has been a hand Engraver, working with CAMRA beer festivals all over the UK since 1988.

This year's charity is the Bedford RAFA Club who will be having a table and running the cloakroom, please make use of this and help them raise funds. At the end of the night you can donate any unwanted tokens to them as you leave.



# Beers to the Future continued



If you are looking for information our lovely CAMRA stewarding team in their bright orange shirts, they will be here to assist you and welcome you to the festival. Kit, this year's Chief Steward, will be guiding the team, as he has done at ten previous festivals. Most of the stewards working the festival are not local, but volunteer their time and skills to ensure you have a good time.

If you are visiting the festival and are not a CAMRA member, why not take a few minutes to chat with our membership team, who I'm sure can fill you in on what CAMRA is all about. Among other things we run social get togethers, brewery trips, pub surveys and of course the festival. Don't forget, next year you could be involved in organising your festival, we would welcome you with open arms. While the festival is organised by a core of about a dozen people, the actual running of the festival takes many more. We start on the Sunday before the festival, bringing all the stillage and coolers in; the coolers need to be in position before we receive the beers on the Monday. This is hard, heavy work and is accomplished by a team of willing helpers. Once the beers are on the stillage and cooling, the rest of the festival is built. A team of volunteers prepare the beers for service, whilst another team builds the bars to serve them from. While this is going on more volunteers are sorting out the office

and staff rest areas, and readying the venue, putting up banners, and generally preparing for the Wednesday opening. This year's office and information point is run by Fytton, who is also our branch Chairman and editor of 'The Firkin' newsletter. Fytton has been involved with the Beer Festival for many years and is a former organiser, he also volunteers at the Great British Beer Festival alongside several other members of our branch.

This year we will have a souvenir collector's glass again, with the festival logo on the front. The glasses will be marked in pint, half and third of a pint measure and available for you to buy at the festival. If you don't want one of these, other glasses will be available free of charge

When you find yourself in need of food, we have you covered by local company Angelo's. Angelo and his team will have a tasty range of hot and cold options to tempt your taste buds. You can find them upstairs in the Howard Room.

Our sister branch East Beds CAMRA will once again be running our tombola and games stand. Their popular 'Every one's a winner' Tombola gives you a chance to win some great prizes, including brewery t-shirts, CAMRA books and beer. So if you have a 1 in your number you are sure to win a prize. You could test your mathematical skills with the popular 'Shut the box'. I will be happy to have a chat with anyone, about beers, the festival or CAMRA in general. So please join me in thanking everyone who has put their time into making the festival happen, we are all volunteers, giving up our time, please treat them with courtesy and patience so we can all enjoy the festival together.

**Kath Lilley**  
*Festival Organiser*

# Brewpoint wins design award



**C**ongratulations to owners Wells & Co for winning one of CAMRA's prestigious Pub Design awards, in this case a Best New Build Award for the Brewpoint Taproom pub and bar in the brewery complex just off Clapham Road, Bedford. The secluded garden first opened in August 2020, to be followed by the bar and indoor drinking space after lockdown rules were relaxed in April 2021.

CAMRA's annual Pub Design Awards, held in conjunction with Historic England, recognise the highest standards of architecture in the refurbishment and conservation of existing pubs as well as in the construction of new ones. They are judged by a panel of experts in design and conservation.

Awards are made in several categories: Best Refurbishment, Best Conversion to Pub Use, Best Community Local Award, the Historic England Award for Conservation, and the Best New Build Award for newly built pubs, which is the category won by Brewpoint Taproom. It is a joint award, shared with the Crown Wharf in Stone, Staffs.

If you know the Brewpoint Taproom, you may understand why it has won the award. Even if you are not a great admirer of modern architecture, you must be

impressed by the lofty scale of the building, as well as the detailed layout that makes it an attractive place to visit and socialise with friends. If you haven't yet paid a visit, do give it a try and see whether you too consider it worthy of a prestigious award.

The Taproom serves a range of cask and other beers brewed just yards away in the brewery behind. Cask DNA Amber Ale, Origin Golden Ale and Legacy Pale Ale are available on the bar, together with any current special brews and a wide range of brewery conditioned keg, bottled and canned beers. Breakfast is available from 8am, bar nibbles from 12 noon to 10pm. A pizza garden menu is available on Thursday evening and Friday to Sunday. The main bar is also the brewery shop and off-sales counter.



Buses to Clapham, Oakley and further north stop outside Sainsbury's nearby. There is generous free parking on site and charging points for electric cars.

For more information, call 01234 244444, find Brewpoint Taproom on CAMRA's WhatPub.com website, or visit the Brewpoint website at [brewpoint.co.uk/taproom-and-restaurant](http://brewpoint.co.uk/taproom-and-restaurant).



# 10 great reasons to join CAMRA

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**4** **GET INVOLVED**  
and make new friends

**5** Save  
**YOUR LOCAL**

**6** Find the  
**BEST PUBS  
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Enjoy great  
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**10** **HAVE YOUR SAY**

## What's yours?

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[www.camra.org.uk/10reasons](http://www.camra.org.uk/10reasons)



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# Bedford has a New Pub



The Barns Hotel in Cardington Road closed after a flood in December 2020, which was of course immediately followed by the second Covid lockdown. The Barns said it had a riverside pub, for which I was the CAMRA pub contact person, but on my visits it was rarely open, and my impression was that it was in fact a hotel bar, which opened only when some hotel guests wanted a pre-dinner drink.

Following the closure, there was evidence of extensive building work, and the Barns Hotel had clearly changed hands. This year, signs went up proclaiming it to be the Kingfisher pub, opening shortly.

Everything has now been reversed. The Barns was a hotel with a bar that opened sometimes. Under its new owners, Sir Peter



Michael and his family, the Kingfisher is a 'riverside pub with rooms'. The bar entrance is now the main entrance, and the former hotel entrance is signed just as 'to the Rooms'. There are 49 rooms, rather more than most 'pubs with rooms'!

The mediaeval barn that gave the hotel its former name is now an events venue, under the title of The Tithe Barn.

The Kingfisher will be selling cask ales, serving a variety of them from around Bedfordshire and nearby counties, as well as wine from Bedfordshire's only vineyard, Warden Abbey. We have to wait a little longer to find out what their choice of cask ales will be – let's hope it will be varied and distinctive, and not just 'the usual suspects'.



The Kingfisher will be very much a dining pub too, serving local produce as far as possible, with meat coming from Woburn Country Foods and fruit and veg from AB Fruits. The cuisine will be upmarket pub food including burgers, pizza, sharing platters, fish dishes and vegetarian options. If it lives up to its publicity the Kingfisher will be a big improvement on the Barns from a real ale fan's point of view.

**Fytton Rowland**

# Pub news

## Burnaby Arms, Bedford

This traditional street-corner community pub in the Black Tom area is now under new management after a temporary closure for



building work. There is a single bar at the front and a step down to a larger drinking area. A variety of

board games and a book swap are available. Brewpoint DNA ale and Origin Pale Ale are served. [burnabyarmsbedford.co.uk](http://burnabyarmsbedford.co.uk)

## Foresters Arms, Bedford

This thoroughly refurbished corner pub reopened recently under new manager Keshell Pamphille. It has a single through bar with



three separate seating areas, two up a few steps. There is also an attractive enclosed garden with two sheltered areas. Eagle IPA and Brewpoint beers are available. Closed Monday. 01234 630959.

## Pheasant, Bedford



This modern pub north of the town reopened in April after extensive refurbishment. Karen Prior and the team now run it. There is a comfortable, open

drinking area with TV, with a large patio. A separate eating area offers home-cooked lunches and evening meals, although booking is advisable at weekends. On a recent visit, the three Wells cask ales Origin, Legacy and DNA were on. Both they and the meals were in good order.

[pheasantbedford.co.uk](http://pheasantbedford.co.uk)

## Pilgrim's Progress, Bedford

Farewell Mark and Dawn Judge and welcome to new manager Michael Rogers at this large Wetherspoon's pub and hotel in the town centre. Little change is expected. Four regular and six changing beers are available at attractive prices, plus good value meals. A small mezzanine gives access to a compact garden. 01234 363751.

## White Horse, Bedford



Welcome to Tom and Vicki Farmer, who moved from the Bridge in Shefford to take over this popular suburban pub in Newnham Avenue; manager Luke Haynes is in everyday charge. The regular Brewpoint Origin is joined by two changing guest beers from a range of breweries. There is regular live music and popular quizzes on Sunday and Tuesday. Food is freshly cooked to order, and afternoon tea can be arranged for groups. Local CAMRA Community Pub of the Year 2021. Closed Monday.

[www.thewhitehorsebedford.co.uk](http://www.thewhitehorsebedford.co.uk)

## Three Tuns, Biddenham



Welcome to manager Warren and his new team at this attractive, partly thatched village inn and restaurant, which reopened in July after thorough refurbishment. There is a large through bar, and an extensive garden with fenced children's play area. The pub is now run by the Black Diamond Pub Company, with a strong emphasis on food. Greene King Abbot, IPA and guest beers are available. Steak night is Wednesday, with a burger-and-a-pint special offer on Thursday. Closed Monday.

[www.threetunsbiddenham.com](http://www.threetunsbiddenham.com)

## Muntjac, Harrold



This smartly refurbished free house reopened in March under new managers Isla and Alistair, working with James and Sally Bolton from the nearby Bell in Odell. A Muntjac IPA house beer from Greene King is joined on the bar by two changing real ales and Saxby's real cider.

@themuntjacinharrold.

## St John's Arms, Melchbourne



Welcome to Jan Wiles at this former hunting lodge on the old Melchbourne estate. Beers are mainly from Marston's and local microbreweries, including Digfield Ales from Barnwell, Northants. Lunches are served at weekends, and evening meals from Wednesday to Saturday. Occasional live music. Closed Monday.

[stjohnsarms.co.uk](http://stjohnsarms.co.uk).

## Queen's Head Hotel, Milton Ernest



Welcome to new manager Jane, who now runs this country inn with wartime links to Glenn Miller. She operates with technical support from James Bolton of the Bell in Odell. Two separate bars, a restaurant and conference room are all open to non-residents. Greene King IPA, Morland Old Speckled Hen and a guest beer are usually available. Booking for meals is advisable.

[theqh.co.uk](http://theqh.co.uk).

# Upcoming CAMRA Beer Festivals

## Peterborough Beer Festival,

23-27 August 2022.

River Embankment, Embankment Road, Peterborough, PE1 1EF.

[pboroberfest.camra.org.uk](http://pboroberfest.camra.org.uk)

## St Albans Beer & Cider Festival,

28 September - 1 October 2022.

Alban Arena, St Peters Street, St Albans, AL1 3LD.

[stalbandsbf.org.uk](http://stalbandsbf.org.uk)

## Bedford Beer & Cider Festival,

5-8 October 2022 (see pages 6-8). Corn Exchange, Saint Paul's Square, Bedford, MK40 1SL.

[northbeds.camra.org.uk/bedfordfestival/](http://northbeds.camra.org.uk/bedfordfestival/)

## Norwich Beer Festival,

24-29 October 2022. St. Andrew's & Blackfriars' Halls, St Andrews Plain, Norwich, NR3 1AU.

[norwich.camra.org.uk/festival/](http://norwich.camra.org.uk/festival/)

## Cambridge Beer Festival Winter,

16-19 November 2022. Guildhall, Market Hill, Cambridge, CB2 3QJ.

[cambridgebeerfestival.com](http://cambridgebeerfestival.com)

## Colchester Winter Beer Festival,

25-28 January 2023. Arts Centre, Church Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1NF.

[colchesterbeerfestivals.co.uk](http://colchesterbeerfestivals.co.uk)



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# Kempston – A Real Ale Desert!

**N**orth Beds CAMRA usually runs two types of pub assessment tours – all right then, pub crawls, but we genuinely do assess the quality of the beers in each pub! The two kinds are walkabouts and minibus trips. We need minibuses to visit rural pubs, as there is in most cases no evening public transport.

Walkabouts are for town pubs. But really, only Bedford has a sufficient concentration of pubs for a walkabout to work. Unfortunately, since the end of the Covid lockdowns it has proved difficult to arrange the affordable minibus hire that we generally use. Our social secretary Gary Mudd continues to do his best, but in the meanwhile we decided to do a walkabout in Kempston town centre, which has several pubs.

However, we didn't plan to visit the Mulberry Bush because we knew it did not previously stock cask ale, or the Griffin, which is now a Nepalese restaurant, the Diya Royal, though it still has a pub licence. Two modern pubs down near the A421 Marsh Farm interchange were also omitted as they are beyond walking distance from the town centre. These are the Brewer's Fayre (Whitbread) and the Maypole Farm (Greene King). They are each believed to stock one cask ale.

We travelled from Bedford by bus, and our first stop was Daley's Bar in Bedford Road, formerly the Kempston Social



Club but now fully licensed as a pub. Then came the nearby **Smith's Arms**, a particularly

attractive pub, originally Wells, that had been closed for a while and reopened just before the lockdowns. After that we walked to the other end of the town centre to visit the King William IV in the High Street – the other Wells pub nearby, the Half Moon, was one of the casualties of the pandemic and didn't



*Only keg beer at the Duke!*

reopen in 2021. Another walk took us to the **Duke**, yet another Wells house, and finally the Royal Oak down Woburn Road.

And a very frustrating evening it was. Before Covid and the consequent lockdowns, all the pubs we visited had sold real ale, as had the deceased Half Moon, even if only one. Kempston has never been a real ale destination, but the King William IV, a Wells house, and the Royal Oak, a free house, had been passable for cask ale.



But now ... the only cask ale we found all evening was at our last stop, the **Royal Oak**, which as before sold a respectable pint of St Austell Tribute.

All is not lost for Kempstonian fans of real ale, though. There are three clubs – the Constitutional Club, Kempston Rovers Football Club, and Kempston Hammers Sports and Social Club – that are believed still to sell cask ale. They are members' clubs so you have to pay to belong to them – but the beer is cheaper than in pubs!

**Fytton Rowland**

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# 27TH HENLOW BEER FESTIVAL

## AND THE LAST!

ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END!

OVER 100 TRADITIONAL REAL ALES  
CIDERS & PERRIES

OPEN ALL DAY EVERYDAY FROM 12NOON  
19<sup>TH</sup> - 24<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2022

HELP US GO OUT WITH A BANG!

SNACKS AVAILABLE

