

The Firkin



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

FREE

Newsletter of CAMRA North Bedfordshire Branch Vol 42 No 3 Autumn 2017

A Ruby Festival

40th Bedford Beer and Cider Festival 4th-7th October 2017



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

PUB NEWS

*FORTIETH BEDFORD BEER
FESTIVAL*

*OTHER AUTUMN BEER
FESTIVALS*

*HOOK NORTON AND OTHER
BREWERIES*

BEDFORD ARMS IN JEOPARDY

HART FAMILY BREWERY

CLUBS IN MAY

BRANCH DIARY

PUBS IN JUNE

GREYHOUND REBORN

WARM SUMMER EVENING

WHITE PARK BREWERY

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2017



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Chairman's Corner



The real ale scene is a dynamic one. Enthusiastic brewers set up their kit wherever they can find space, and start brewing.

Not all of them succeed, often because they have difficulty finding outlets for their beer. Another problem is that drinkers often choose familiar ales. Breaking through with ales available in a number of outlets, and so more likely to be tried, can be a tall order. One advantage of a beer festival is that it can and does offer beers from many different brewers for people to try, with tasting notes to guide the choice.

The last edition of the Firkin was almost literally a stop-press one. The material had been gathered and was about to go to press when we heard that Marston's had bought the Charles Wells brewery. Charles Wells Ltd survives though, largely as a pubco, and its name will be appearing on the souvenir glasses at our 40th Beer Festival this autumn, along with the distinctive logo designed for the occasion.

We hear that Charles Wells will brew again in the future, though what and where has not yet been revealed. We may hear more at the Festival, so there's even more reason to come this year.

Roger Stokes

Pub News

New Inn, Wymington

Welcome to new licensee Jody McKinnon at a new free house near our northern border. It is a family concern with Jody's mother and sister Corrie. There are now ten handpumps offering Greene King IPA, Abbot, beers from Batemans and Oakham, and a range of guest ales.



A choice of real ciders and perries is also served direct from the cellar. Home-cooked, traditional pub food is available. There is a charity quiz every month and occasional acoustic music nights. Call 01933 317618 or follow it on Facebook [@newinnwymington](https://www.facebook.com/newinnwymington)

Bear, High St, Bedford

A wider choice of real ales is now available at this former Greene King pub, now back to its original identity as a free house. GK IPA, four changing cask beers and Westons Old Rosie cider are on handpump. Lunches are available Mon-Sat. Call (01234) 630235.

Ship, St Cuthberts St, Bedford

This Greene King pub been substantially refurbished with a new bar layout creating more customer space and direct access to the cabin bar at the front. There is a patio garden to the rear and a decked seating area outside at the front. GK IPA and Abbot plus three guest ales are available. www.theship-bedford.co.uk

Chequers, Yelden

This village inn closed last December for redevelopment. Planning permission is now sought to build new houses in the large garden, but a refurbished pub will reopen in part of the present building. The current premises are modern, having replaced an older building destroyed by fire.

STOP PRESS. As went to press we heard with regret that the Red Brewery at Great Staughton has closed down after six years of operation.

THIS OCTOBER

COCKTOBER FEST 2017

10 Ales * 4 Ciders * 15 Gins

<u>THU 12th</u> Evening LIVE MUSIC Snacks	<u>FRI 13th</u> Evening LIVE MUSIC Snacks	<u>SAT 14th</u> Evening LIVE MUSIC BBQ	<u>SUN 15th</u> Afternoon LIVE MUSIC HOG ROAST
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www.engineersarms.co.uk



BEDFORDSHIRE



Come to our Ruby Festival



The Bedford Beer and Cider Festival this year will be our 40th, so it's a Ruby Festival! CAMRA has held a festival in Bedford annually without a break since 1978, which is really something to celebrate with us on 4th-7th

October 2017. As in other years, the purpose is to let Bedford people sample a wide variety of cask ales and real ciders that are not usually to be found in the town. So don't miss the opportunity, we'll be pulling all out all the stops to give you the maximum of fun at the Ruby Festival.



We will have 160 different cask ales on the main bar, with some from nearby including new breweries, and some from far away. Not all of them will be on at any one time, though, so you may need to come on more than one day to get the full choice!

October is CAMRA's Cider Month, so it's appropriate that we have a well-stocked Cider Bar. It will be alongside the main bar, with at least 40 different real ciders and a dozen or so real perries. Upstairs in the Howard Room you will find the International Beer Bar, with six or seven different draught beers from the Continent and hundreds of different bottled beers to choose from. On the International Beer Bar we will also have one-pint German-style stein glasses to purchase for £3, though these

will definitely not be on sale-or-return!

An innovation this year will be the Mead Bar, selling a traditional British drink made by fermenting honey. If you haven't tasted it before, you have a treat in store. The Mead Bar will be in the main hall, at the opposite side from the cider bar.

Meals during the festival will once again be provided by Angelo St Cuthberts. No need to leave the hall for your lunch, evening meal or afternoon snack – up in the Howard Room, Angelo will be offering a varied selection of pub-style meals at competitive prices. Or for something a little different to nibble on, try Oddfellows Chocolate with their quirky range of chocolate flavours designed to pair with different beer styles. They too will be in the Howard Room.

The musical entertainment features Snoop Groggy Dogs, who performed last year, again on the Wednesday evening, and Ukelele Bedford on the Saturday evening. And as usual the Bedford Morris Men will be entertaining the crowds on Saturday afternoon. For your further entertainment CAMRA's popular Shut the Box and Tombola stalls will be here.



Admission is free for CAMRA members at all times, so why not join up beforehand so that you can get in free every day? Or pay to come in the first time, come to the Festival Office in the main hall, sign up on the spot, and receive vouchers for free beer that day. Then you can come in

Come to our Ruby Festival



free on the other days! The Festival Office will also be selling copies of the 2018 Good Beer Guide, published by CAMRA just before the festival. This is an indispensable guide to the best cask ale pubs in the UK, essential reference for any beer lover. Next door to the Festival Office, you will find Colin the Engraver, who will personalise your festival glass for you.

Coming in as a customer isn't the only way to enjoy the festival. For even more fun, try volunteering! We need plenty of people to serve behind the bars, and you'll find a warm welcome and camaraderie from the other volunteers, as well as a modicum of free beer, reduced-price meals, and subsidised shared taxis home at 11 p.m. I've been volunteering for the last ten years and have enjoyed every minute of it – so much so that I've been the Festival Organiser for the last five. And I also put in five days behind a bar each August at the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia in London. So – give it a go. The volunteering form is on northbeds.camra.org.uk/bedford-festival.htm or you can also volunteer by phoning me on 01234 303221.

Do you run a business in the Bedford area – even perhaps a pub? You can get good publicity in front of several thousand beer lovers by sponsoring a cask. For £50, you will get your business name and advert prominently displayed on one of the casks on the stillage throughout the festival.

Contact secretary@northbeds.camra.org.uk or 01234 822698 to sponsor a cask.

Whatever part you play in the festival, you can rest assured that you will enjoy it. And by coming to our Ruby Festival, you can be a part of Bedford's beer history!

Fytton Rowland



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12-5 Sun
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40th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

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

Wed 4th - Sat 7th October 2017

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



@nbcamra



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

Admission

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

No under 18s - ID required

Entertainers

- * Wed eve – Sloop Groggy Dogs
- * Sat lunch – Bedford Morris Men
- * Sat eve – Ukulele Bedford

Volunteers Needed!

- * Use e-form on website
- * Phone 01234 303221

Sponsor a Cask of Ale!

- * £50 puts your business on the bar
- * Call 01234 822698 or email secretary@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Other Features

- * Souvenir glasses £2.50 sale or return
- * Oversize glasses for a full 20 oz pint
- * Pint, half and third pint measures
- * Chocolate and beer matching
- * Cloakroom by Bedford Lions
- * Good Beer Guide 2018
- * Hot and cold food
- * Free soft drinks
- * Tombola and pub game
- * Mead bar
- * Engraver

<https://northbeds.camra.org.uk>





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WHERE WILL YOUR JOURNEY TAKE YOU?

Autumn Beer Festivals

22nd St Albans Beer & Cider Fest

27-30 September at Alban Arena, Civic Centre, AL1 3LD. Open 11-11, Up to 350 real ales, 50 ciders/perries, bottle conditioned and foreign beers. Hot and cold food, live music, breweriana auctions and quiz on Sat. See advert p.8. Trains from Bedford.

stalbansbeerfestival.org

40th Bedford Beer & Cider Fest

4-7 October at Corn Exchange, St Paul's Sq, Bedford MK40 1SL Open Wed 4-11, Thu-Fri 12-11, Sat 11.30-10.30. No under 18s. 160 real ales, 50 ciders/perries, international beers and mead. See article and ad pp.5-7.

northbeds.camra.org.uk

Nottingham Robin Hood Beer & Cider Fest

11-14 October under canvas at Nottingham Castle (short walk from rail and bus). Open Wed 5-11, Thu-Sat 11-11. Over 1,000 real ales and 200 ciders/perries, mainly from smaller producers. Live music, hot and cold food. Advance tickets through website. Trains from Bedford.

beerfestival.nottinghamcamra.org

Cocktoberfest

12-15 October at Cock, High St, Pavenham MK43 7NJ. 10 real ales and 4 real ciders, partly served from a garden bar. Hogroast and barbecue, live music daily. Call 01234 822834 or visit Facebook [PavenhamPub](https://www.facebook.com/PavenhamPub).

24th Milton Keynes Beer Fest (Concrete Pint)

18-21 October at Snozone Ski-slope, Xscape, Marlborough Gate, MK9 3XS. Over 100 beers, cider, Prosecco & free soft drinks. Celebrating 50 years of Milton Keynes. Including 50 beers new to MK to celebrate new city's 50th birthday. Food available. X5 bus from Bedford. See advert page 8.

mkcamra.org.uk

Non-CAMRA events named in italics.

St Ives Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Fest

19-21 October at Burgess Hall, One Leisure Centre, Westwood Rd PE27 6WU. Open Thu/Fri 12-10.30, Sat 12-10. 70 cask beers, 20 real ciders, hot and cold food, free soft drinks for drivers.

hunts.camra.org.uk/festival

20th Oxford Beer & Cider Fest

26-28 October at Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford. Open Thu 5-11, Fri 11-11, Sat 11-9. 140 real ales and 60 real ciders, hot and cold food. X5 bus from Bedford.

oxford.camra.org.uk

22nd Henlow Beer Fest

26-29 October at Engineers Arms, 68 High St, Henlow SG16 6AA. Open all day from 12 noon. Over 80 traditional real ales, ciders & perries. Live music, snacks and theme food each day. engineersarms.co.uk

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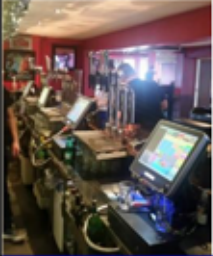
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CAMRA North Beds Pub of the Year 2013

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Hook Norton – and Other Breweries

For this year's day trip we headed west to three strongly contrasting breweries. First, XT Brewery. It's in an industrial unit on the land of Notley Abbey, an event venue once the home of Omar Sharif near Long Crendon. The front part is a bar open six days a week until 6 p.m., while the brewery is behind. It was established in 2011 by Gareth Xafaris and Russ Taylor (hence 'XT'), and the present brewer is Vinny, a chemical engineer from New Zealand.



XT

The main cask ales are the numbered beers, XT3, XT4 and so on, which have featured at Bedford Beer and Cider Festivals. These now include their mild, XTπ, with a strength of 3.14159% abv of course – deemed 'distinctive' by our members, much hoppier in taste than normal milds. XT4, an amber beer at 3.8% abv, is the overall best seller, but XT3, an American-style IPA at 4.2% abv, is popular in London. Available for us to sample were XT2, a golden ale at 4.2% abv, XT4, XTπ and XT17, a single-hop beer using Simcoe hops, at 4.5% abv. There is also a range of Animal beers, one-off specials. Ninety percent of production is cask ale, but they have conditioning tanks for use when a customer wants keg. The keg beer is unfiltered and unpasteurised – in effect bright beer. They brew four times a week in their 18-barrel plant, using flower hops for the most part, pellets only for dry-hopping.

They keep production below the limit for the lower rate of duty, and so don't sell to major pub chains or supermarkets. One of their regular outlets is the Eight Bells in Long Crendon, where we had lunch. They had XT4 – rechristened 'Bells' here – and Animal Fantail, a 4.8% abv New Zealand-hopped amber bitter, on handpumps. Also available were beers from Ringwood and Chiltern. I tried the Animal and found it very palatable. The Eight Bells is a lovely old village pub, which featured in *Midsomer Murders*. Their pizza was good too!



Next stop was at the Church Hanbrewery, now in New Yatt. The smallest brewery in Oxfordshire, its mash tun is only 200 litres. Their beers are unfiltered and cloudy, and are fermented for six weeks! The beers are quirky – there is no intention of producing typical English beers, still less 'commodity beers'. Mostly they are sold bottle-conditioned, though cask ale (in borrowed casks!) went to last year's Oxford Beer Festival. They don't try to sell to pubs, but sell their bottles through markets, craft fairs and garden centres. The Rose and Crown in Charlbury, however, stocks their beers. Their bottle labels are simply wrapped around, not attached, and they try to reuse bottles. The proprietors are from Brazil, not a common origin for British brewers! To sample they offered us four bottled beers: Witty Bea, a wheat beer with an almost gaeuze flavour; Rank, a subtly smoked ale; Bluenette, a honey and oatmeal porter; and Red Beetter, a red ale also containing beetroot. One cask ale was on offer, Ale X, an IPA at 4.5% abv, which I enjoyed. Several other intriguingly named bottles were available for purchase.

Hook Norton – and Other Breweries



Hook Norton Brewery

Moving on from this small but eccentric brewery, we arrived next at a much larger, much older, and highly traditional brewery – Hook Norton. I'd never visited it before, and I wasn't

disappointed. The existing tower brewery dates from the 1890s and was steam-powered. The steam engine is still functional and is used occasionally, but an electric motor is one of the few concessions to modernity to be seen. It drives the 'Jacob's ladder' that takes the malt up the tower, and the pump that takes water from the brewery's own well up to the rooftop liquor tanks too. Harvey's brewery in Lewes was designed by the same architect and is very similar.

The brewery was started by John Harris, and his daughter, an only child, married Adam Clark. The Clark family still owns the brewery today. The recipes for every beer they've ever made are all on file. In addition to the main 100-barrel plant, they now have a five-barrel microbrewery to make specials and one-offs. Everything is done in imperial measures and Fahrenheit, the fermenters are top-fermenting open vessels, and the only surviving Walder and Walder grist mill left in the world still operates five days a week on the fifth floor, making the building shake as it does. Also on the top floor is a



Cooling Tray

copper cooling tray installed in 1950, no longer used because of air pollution.

On the fourth floor, the new heat exchanger sits alongside the grist tank and a yeast propagator.

Next floor down, John Harris's original grist mill is still there, as are the two mash tuns. Mashing is at 155°F, and the wort then drains down to the copper and hopback on the second floor, which also houses the hop store. Most of the hops used are dried British flowers from Worcestershire, vacuum-packed for up to four years' life, though a few New Zealand pellets are used in special ales. After the boil, the wort is pumped back up to the heat exchanger and then into the fermenters. Down on the ground floor, the beer is finally drained off and proceeds to the barrelling plant, from where the full casks go down to the cellar by conveyor. The beer for bottling is then tankered to Marstons, who bottle it. Also on the ground floor, the yeast is collected; some is retained, chilled, for future brews, and the rest is mixed with the spent grain and straw to make cattle feed.

The regular beers are Hooky Mild (2.8% abv), Hooky (3.5 % abv), Hooky Gold (4.1 % abv, a very pleasant hoppy gold ale) and Old Hooky (4.6% abv), while the specials available to us to sample were 172 (7.2% abv, very nice, and tasted every bit of 7.2!), Heather's Hooky (3.7% abv) and Mane Tail (3.7%). They also produce keg beers, and Red Rye (4.7% abv), Merula Stout (4.2% abv) and Cotswold Pale (4.4% abv) were on hand.



Cherington Arms

The final stop of the trip was the Cherington Arms, a Hook Norton house just into Warwickshire. This lovely old pub had been chosen because

its guest ale is from Turpin's, another brewery we had hoped to visit on the trip. Turpin's Golden Citrus was on, and very nice it was too. As was the food. The other cask ales available were Hooky and Mane Tail from Hook Norton. And so ended a great day out.

Fytton Rowland

Bedford Arms to Make Way for Flats

Back in March, The Bedford Arms Future Group (of which I am secretary) filed an application with Bedford Borough Council to have The Bedford Arms in Bromham Road listed as an Asset of Community Value, under The Localism Act of 2011. On Friday 7th July, notice was received from the council that the application had failed.



As part of Charles Wells Ltd's response to the application, their solicitors, Freeths, announced that the property was not only on the market already, but that an offer had been received from a developer, and that 'Essentially the Owner [Charles Wells Ltd] has agreed to sell the property in its entirety. The proposed purchaser intends to develop the property for residential use.' This bombshell came on page 14 of an 18-page letter from Freeths.

We are disappointed by the decision, and devastated by the revelation that a deal has been done to kill a great pub. I accept that the application we made was lacking in some ways but, in fairness, I think we were misled by the simplicity of the form we had to submit, and the total lack of information from the council as to what supporting information was required. Added to that, there was a question of the Group's legal validity. With hindsight, we would have adopted a more rigorous legalistic approach.

The pub is probably best known as home to Bedford's Monday Night Jazz Club, which has seen world-standard musicians play in the unassuming venue. It also hosts a monthly Vibe Night where local up-and-coming singers, songwriters and musicians can hone their skills in front of an appreciative audience. A traditional folk session, Vinyl Revival nights, a book group, and a Beer Tasting Club also make up the diverse range of regular community activities. In addition there are appearances by all three of the Morris sides in Bedford, two seasonal chilli competitions, and carol singing accompanied by the pub's own piano.

The pubco was founded as a brewery by Charles Wells, an ancestor of the current owners of the company. They have made much of the adventurous and entrepreneurial spirit of their forebear. I doubt he would be overly proud of the way his descendants have conducted themselves.

David Allen

[Editor's Note: The Bedford Arms was made into a specialist cask ale house some years ago by Wells and usually has at least five real ales in good condition. It has been a regular in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide for a number of years, which makes this decision all the more disappointing. And it stays open till midnight, so it has been the regular terminus of our evening minibus trips.]



These Beers are Champion

As usual, CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain (CBoB) for the year was announced on the first day of the Great British Beer Festival (GBBF), and for 2017 it is Goat's Milk, a 3.8% abv session bitter from the Church End Brewery near Nuneaton. The brewery was founded in 1994 in a former coffin maker's workshop, and later moved to larger premises in a former social club. Goat's Milk has always been their most popular beer but so far hasn't been available beyond a fairly local area around the brewery. Now it is CBoB 2017, the firm hopes that it will be able to get into pubs much more widely – though they will stay loyal to the local pubs that have been loyal to them, and make sure those pubs never go short! Goat's Milk was originally brewed specially for a pub called the Goat, and has been around since 1999.

The full CBoB results were: Gold, Church End Goat's Milk (also champion Bitter); Silver, Bishop Nick Ridley's Rite (also second in the Bitter category); Bronze, Tiny Rebel Brewery's Cwlch (also champion Best Bitter – and overall CBoB in 2015)

The other category winners were as follows.

Mild, winner, Rudgate Mild; second place, West Berkshire Brewery's Maggs' Magnificent Mild; third place, Winter Brewery's Mild.

Bitter, Church End Goat's Milk; second, Bishop Nick Ridley's Rite third (jointly), Triple fff Brewery's Alton's Pride and Sambrook' Brewery's Wandle Ale.

Best Bitter, winner, Tiny Rebel Brewery's Cwlch; second, Blackledge Pike; third (jointly) Surrey Hills Brewery's Shere Drop and West Berkshire's Good Old Boy.

Strong Bitter, winner, Greytrees Brewery's Afghan Pale Ale, second, Barn gates Brewery's Red Bull Terrier; third, Salopian Brewery's Automaton.

Golden Ale: winner, Blue Monkey Brewery's Infinit; second, Fyne Ales Yarl; third (jointly) Oakham Brewery's Citra and Ludlow Brewery's Gold.

Speciality Beers: winner, Saltaire Brewery's Triple Chocaholic; second, Blackledge Brewery's Black Port Porter; third, Cromarty Brewery's Red Rocker.

If you see any of these beers on handpumps in a pub, try them – they're guaranteed to be the best of their kind. Two of them were on the bar I worked at GBBF – Greytrees Afghan Pale and Triple fff Alton's Pride – and both of them sold like hot cakes!

We are hoping to get some Goat's Milk for the Bedford Beer and Cider Festival on October 4th-7th, so come along and you can try the 2017 Champion Beer of Britain for yourself.

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At the Hart of Wellingborough

Wellingborough is a short hop from Bedford, and when our minibus trip in April was oversubscribed, a couple of members took the train. Another bussed in from Rushden, so we became a group of nineteen for our second-ever visit to the Hart Family Brewery. But first (as Clive James used to say) we called at the station, a Midland Railway original. On the northbound platform there is a little cabin once used as an ammunition store. (I'm not sure why the Midland Railway needed ammunition.)



The station is a little way from the town centre, where there is a micropub called the Little Ale House. When its owner, Martin, decided to take over the ammo

store and create a second micropub, he called it the Little R' Ale House. Our nineteen people filled it. Martin has now sold the town centre micropub to two of its regulars, and he concentrates on the station one. On the evening of our visit he offered Digfield Brewery's Shacklebush (4.5% abv), Piddle Brewery's Bent Copper (4.8%), Partners Brewery's Black Lion (4.0% abv) and Nene Valley Brewery's Blonde Session (3.8% abv). I tried the copper and the blonde, and found them both in good condition. Martin told us that the majority of his customers don't come off trains, but travel to the Little R' Ale House specially.



After this pleasant starter, it was on to the main course! Rob Hart welcomed us to the brewery – a short drive from

the station – and remembered that we'd been his first CAMRA visitors when the brewery

opened, even before the local branch. That was a while ago, but the brewery is still in the same place, the former gasworks. The original numbered series of ales is still with us, and No. 9 (a pale beer at 4.3% abv) was one of those on offer. The other was their seasonal ale Siris (4.0% abv). Siris was hopped fifteen minutes from the end of the boil to maximise aroma, and then orange peel was added at the end to give it a sweet citrus tang. Fining was omitted to conserve aroma, and low-colour pale malt gave it a very blonde colour. An interesting and enjoyable beer, served from the cask.



The No. 9, on the other hand, was served from a keykeg. Rob supports the use of this controversial form of dispense. The live beer is inside a plastic bag inside a keg, and the gas pressure is applied outside the bag to force out the

beer without adding any artificial carbonation. The gas doesn't have to be CO₂, as demonstrated by Rob dispensing the beer without a gas cylinder. He used a hand pump that applied air to the outside of the bag. I found the No. 9 to be in good nick after this treatment.



We finished with cheese and biscuits and the chance to take home some Hart's bottled beers. Rob

reminded us that they hold regular 'Pop-up Pub' Saturdays when the brewery is open to the public – do go along, they are great fun!

Fytton Rowland

Clubbing, CAMRA Style

The itinerary for North Beds CAMRA's May trip included two clubs we hadn't visited before. So a novel experience for most of us. But at the **Red Lion at Salford**, nothing much had changed since our last visit. Only Wells Eagle was on handpump. So after one swift half we moved quickly on to the **Swan in Salford**, a dining pub. On handpump they had Greene King IPA and Hook Norton's Hooky Bitter (3.5% abv), which was in good condition.



Cranfield University Social Club

Our next stop was the **Cranfield University Social Club**, which is in private hands, though its building is in university ownership. Despite its alternative name, the College Arms, it is a members' club. It was busy when we arrived. On handpumps it had the usual London Pride and Doom Bar, plus two beers from the Tring brewery – Side Pocket for a Toad and Pale Four. Many of us chose the Pale Four and found it in particularly good condition. The club consists of one long room with a snooker table at one end, a TV at the other and the bar in the middle, and unsurprisingly there are aeronautical pictures on the walls, together with an Avro propeller. It's a 'bar and restaurant', but the only meals available were Chinese.

Moving on into **Cranfield** itself, we made a stop at the **Cross Keys**. A plaque over the door declares 'Rebuilt 1923', and its style is that of a large interwar suburban pub. The landlady had the usual Doom Bar and London Pride on handpumps, together with three beers from the

Burton Bridge Brewery – Burton Bitter, Stairway to Heaven and OK, though the Stairway ran out before all of our group could try it.



The **Exhibition at Upper Shelton**, not seen by us for a long while, is a small, old-fashioned

village pub, kept by licensees who are the freeholders and were welcoming, though few customers were in. Railway memorabilia are on the walls. The two handpumps served Doom Bar and Side Pocket for a Toad, though the latter ran out as we arrived.



The **Stewartby Club** is the only licensed premises in the erstwhile London Brick Company settlement. A vast barn of a

place with several large rooms, it reminded me of an Australian pub. Late in the evening all the customers were in one room. Despite Charles Wells signage outside, two of the three beers on offer were Broadside and Ghost Ship from Adnams, together with Wells Eagle. I tried Ghost Ship – one of my favourite beers – and found it in good condition. The proprietors were most welcoming, as this was the first CAMRA visit they had received. In addition to the usual meals, the club also does all-you-can-eat Sunday breakfasts.

In future years both the Cranfield Social Club and the Stewartby Club may come into the reckoning when we consider Club of the Year nominations.

Fytton Rowland

Branch Diary

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

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

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

SEPTEMBER

Thursday 14th – Branch Meeting

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

Thursday 21st – Pubs Visit

Details to be announced

OCTOBER

Wednesday 4th-Saturday 7th – Bedford Beer and Cider Festival

At Bedford Corn Exchange. See pp. 5-7 for details.

Thursday 19th – Post-Festival Brewery Visit

Preference given to those who have volunteered at the Festival.

Saturday 28th – All-Beds CAMRA London Pubs Trip

Details to be announced

NOVEMBER

Thursday 9th – Branch meeting

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

Thursday 16th – Pubs Visit

Details to be announced.

DECEMBER

Thursday 14th – Christmas Social

Details to be announced.

The Firkin

Published every three months by the North Bedfordshire Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. The Firkin is produced and distributed by volunteers to most pubs and clubs in Bedfordshire north of a line joining the M1, Clophill, Shefford and Tempsford. We welcome correspondence and any relevant features for publication. Views expressed here may not be those of the Editor, the Campaign for Real Ale, or its North Bedfordshire Branch.

Items for publication in the next issue should reach the Editor by the date shown at the foot of this page.

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June Pubs Trip

June's pub trip had its starting point at the refurbished *Bluebell* in Putnoe, which offered London Pride and Greene King IPA. Most chose the Pride and the main opinion was disappointment that it isn't what it was.



Once in the minibus the first stop was the *Golden Cross* in Great Barford. This is a Chinese restaurant but it still has a public bar. The choice here was Eagle, London Gold or Doom Bar, so no surprises apart from the number of beers on offer.

A drive down Barford High Street brought us to the *Anchor* at the other end of the village and a choice of Wells Eagle, Firsty 15 and Sticky Wicket. Many of us took advantage of the warm evening and sat outside, making sure we had a good mouthful of beer before setting our glasses down as the forecourt is not flat. I decided to go for Sticky Wicket which certainly didn't stick in my throat but went down very well. At 4.7% perhaps it went down a little too well!



Continuing our drive we next came to Roxton and the *Royal Oak*, bought privately from Charles Wells. The new owner wants it to be in its rightful place – at the heart of the village. Naturally I passed on the Black Sheep because it was keg, something I have not seen before, and opted for Woodforde's Wherry rather than Cotleigh's Golden Seahawk. It was the last pint out of the cask, which was promptly changed so others partook of the new barrel. Both were in excellent condition.

Continuing our drive we next came to Roxton and the *Royal Oak*, bought privately

Our next stop was right on the branch's boundary – the *Crown* at Eaton Socon (it is just in Wyboston parish and therefore Bedfordshire). Down its own service road just off the A1, there is no local community there but, along with the food it still offered a choice of four real ales – Belhaven Golden, Abbot, Greene King IPA and Doom Bar. I went for Belhaven, which was in decent condition, and I heard no complaints about what others tried. It's encouraging that a food pub offers real ales in good condition.



Little Staughton

The route back towards Bedford brought us next to another *Crown* – the one at *Little Staughton*, which now also has a micro-brewery. The owner is still experimenting and working on his technique before deciding what will be the house beer, and what it will be called. Being CAMRA members unsurprisingly we went for his 3.7% beer with no name, the other choices being B&T's Shefford Bitter and Doom Bar. The general agreement was that the beer is a work in progress but there were no complaints about the price – £2.50 a pint.

We had planned to call at the *Victoria* in Wilden but there was no answer to a call to check if they were open. [We've since heard that it has closed. Ed.]

So we decided to try our luck on the *Polhill Arms* at Renhold still being open. We arrived there at 10.59, and it was. We got our normal warm welcome from Paul. A pint of Truman's Runner went down very well before the last leg to the final drop-off at the Bedford Arms in Bromham Road, Bedford.

Roger Stokes

The Greyhound at Haynes

The Greyhound is located to the west off the A600. Here licensees Corri and Rodney, who also operate the New Inn, Biggleswade, and the Chequers, Stevenage, embarked on a very large project. I had visited them at the Greyhound last autumn and learned of their plans for a significant refurbishment of this lovely old 17th century inn. As spring was emerging I returned to see the fruits of their labour.



The Greyhound re-opened on Good Friday after a three-month closure and it was enthusiastically supported by the village community over the Easter weekend activities. From the outside, little has changed at the front of the building, but at the rear, the conservatory has been replaced by a much larger extension which houses a restaurant area, and a new entrance.

As you enter from the front door the pub is now



open plan with the bar facing the door. The right-hand section still retains the atmosphere of the old public bar with high stools, comfortable bench seats and tables, and a wood burning stove, plus a dartboard. The left hand section is a bit more modern with a large open fireplace and seating, and leads seamlessly through into the new extension.

At the bar, there were six handpumps offering Greene King IPA, Abbot Ale and XX Mild, plus a house beer (Wicked Lady) from the Biggleswade Brewhouse. The other two pumps had ciders from Westons, and there was a great range of European bottled beers and wines. There is an extensive menu offering light meals, burger and grill options, plus classic main meals such as the Luxury Fish Pie and slow-cooked Lamb Shank.

During the Easter weekend, the pub laid on events. The children were well catered for, with an Easter egg hunt and Bouncy Castle play equipment in the garden. On Easter Sunday, the extension played host to a rock band, Temper Diablo, who were excellent. See Facebook [@TheGreyhoundHaynes](https://www.facebook.com/TheGreyhoundHaynes) for more events or check the pub's website www.thegreyhoundpub.co.uk

John Goodlet

John Goodlet is Chairman of East Bedfordshire CAMRA and editor of its newsletter, the Casket.



A Mixed Bag on a Summer Evening

In July, we started at the Burnaby Arms in Bedford, where Will Seear had recently taken over. The quality of the beer and of the welcome was definitely up to scratch, and the atmosphere was unchanged. Both Directors and Wells Firsty 15 were well kept. Also available were Eagle and Young's Gold.



We then set forth for the Bedford Arms at Oakley, also under new licensees. It's another Wells house, so Eagle and Firsty 15 were no surprise, but the guest ale, Bateman's Valiant, was. Sadly it had been put on too soon and wasn't ready. The Firsty 15 by contrast was 'end-of-barrel'. It's

predominantly an eating pub, and was busy with diners. The nucleus of the pub is a historic stone building, much extended with a big conservatory. The tenants also run the Hare and Hounds at Old Warden.

The next stop was the Fordham Arms at Sharnbrook, now privately owned, which had



been closed for a while. It has been refurbished and redecorated into a light décor, and it was busy with diners. It's originally Victorian but is now extended, and has a large and pleasant garden. On the pumps were Eagle, Adnams Broadside, Doom Bar and Silverstone Pitstop. I opted for Pitstop, and found it in very acceptable condition. It's citrusy, which suits me well.



Cock, Pavenham

Next stop, perhaps the pub of the night for me – the Cock at Pavenham. Taken over recently by John O'Grady, the Cock is a former

Greene King house. It offered GK IPA, Fuller's London Pride, Grainstore Red Kite and Flying Monk Brewery's Elmers. I enjoyed the Red Kite and others approved of the Elmers. The Cock is a distinctive, welcoming and characterful pub, even to its name on the wall reading 'HE OC'! John is knowledgeable about real ale and chatted to us for quite a while.

The Three Fyshes at Turvey, the older of the village's two pubs, is right by the bridge over the Ouse, and it has an old-fashioned village pub atmosphere. A quiz night was in progress and the place was packed. On the pumps were Doom Bar, Elgood's Apocalypse Cow and Rooster Brewery's Blind Jack. We mostly chose the non-usual suspects, and I found the Elgood's good, though hardly apocalyptic! The Three Fyshes was closed for a while and has had a few vicissitudes, so it was good to see it well-used.

Then to Bromham and the Prince of Wales. A suburban-style pub, it's recently been taken over by Chris Sweeting, a well-known licensee around Bedford. He wasn't on duty, but the lady running the bar was friendly and welcoming. No guest ales here – Eagle, Directors and Young's Special were the choices. I had no complaints about the Special. It wasn't busy at 10.45 p.m.

And lastly to the Bedford Arms in Bromham Road, Bedford. Tony specially put on a cask from ABC (Aylesbury Brewery Company), to give us a sneak preview of it, and to demonstrate what we might be about to lose (see page 13).

Fytton Rowland

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White Park Prosper

White Park brewery was founded ten years ago by Alan Kelly. He has another full time job, so leaves the day-to-day management to Chris Garner, Bev Burridge and Alan's brother Peter, who is the head brewer. Bev runs the Three Cups in Bedford, and takes care of the accounts and invoicing. The White Park name is from the breed of cattle that Alan kept here on the farm, though they are no longer there.



The brewery uses a five-barrel plant, and the beer is conditioned in the casks stored in a chilled room. Spent grain and hops mostly go to a local farmer, but some is used at the nearby Cranfield University in their experiments! Peter generally brews once or twice per week depending on current demand. The beers brewed are clear and crisp with a good range of well-defined styles and flavours.

Casks go to local pubs, and Chris has also built up a good relationship with lots of like-minded breweries such as B&T, Burton Bridge and Springhead. This enables them to deal in



Chris Garner

You can find bottled White Park beers in many local off-licences, farm shops and, increasingly, restaurants.

'swaps' so that there is always an guest or two at the pub and White Park beers get out to pubs all over the country.

The core range in recent years has been:

Cranfield Best: 4.2% abv traditional best bitter with a complex biscuity flavour

White Gold: 3.8% abv golden session ale

GB: 5.0% abv strong British bitter

Moonshine: 5.2% abv citrusy, strong pale ale brewed in the Trappist style (my favourite)

Park Light: 3.6% abv nutty English pale ale

Oast House: 4.8% abv light yellow, zesty pale ale

Malt Store: 5.0% abv malty strong ale

Seasonal offering are: -

Kelly's Stout: 4.2% abv dark red/brown porter style

Kellyhopter: 4.8% abv golden ale

There will very shortly be two new beers:

Solstice is a 4.2% abv gold/amber beer brewed with added honey from the farm's very own hives - now that's what I call local. It was in the fermenter during my visit.

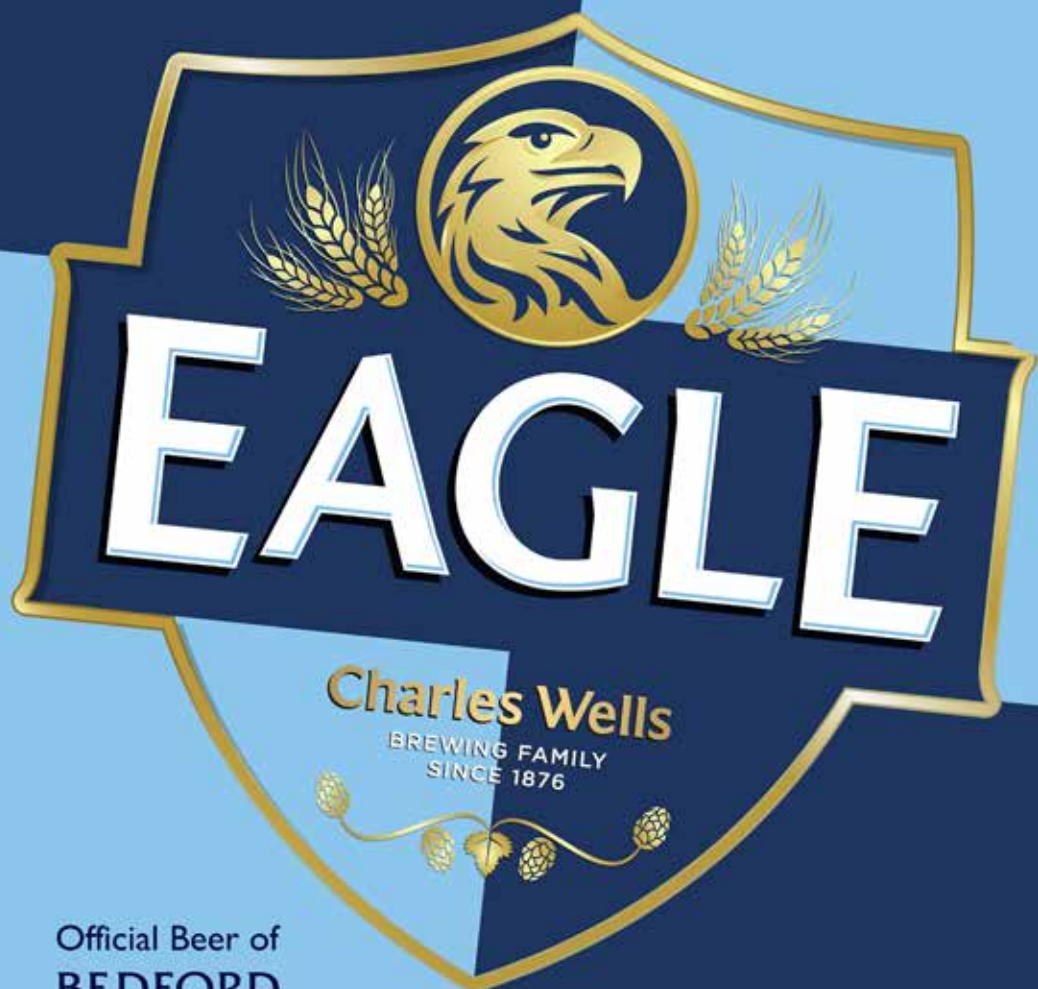
The second new beer is **Dr Dray**, a pun on the similar sounding name of a famous rap artist. The pump clip design features various references to the world of music. At 4.3% abv this one is a fruity, refreshing golden ale with the addition of dry hops.

Mike Coombes

Mike Coombes is secretary of South Bedfordshire CAMRA and CAMRA's County Organiser for Bedfordshire.



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