

# The firkin

Newsletter of CAMRA North Bedfordshire Branch Vol 42 No 2 Summer 2017



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

FREE

## Wells Brewery Sold



## Marstons Take Over

*CHAIRMAN'S CORNER  
WELLS BREWERY SOLD  
CAMRA AWARD PRESENTATIONS  
40th BEDFORD BEER AND CIDER  
FESTIVAL  
THE HIGGS BROTHERS  
SUMMER FESTIVALS  
PUB NEWS  
BRANCH DIARY*

*TEN THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW  
ABOUT BEER  
NEW BLOOD NEEDED  
DORIS NIGHT IN SHEFFORD  
A GREAT VILLAGE PUB  
COUNTY PUB OF THE YEAR  
NEW LEGAL PROTECTION FOR PUBS  
YOUNG MEMBERS WELCOME  
ALTERNATIVE INGREDIENTS FOR  
BEER*

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# 2017

SOMETHING NEW IS COMING



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## Chairman's Corner

**W**elcome to the Summer issue of the Firkin. I would like to say that this is a good time for a refreshing glass of real cider in a pub garden. Unfortunately this year's weather could make that problematic! I welcome Emma Mumby as our new cider rep. She has already been busy contacting producers. Now we need more pubs selling it, so it's good to hear that the Bell at Cotton End is doing just that.

With all the change and uncertainty in the world there's something reassuring about being able to settle in a pub to chew the fat with friends over a pint of your favourite tippie – but will it be there next year? Later in this issue Fytton Rowland has written about new legislation that restricts “permitted development” rights. In the past pubs

have been turned into supermarkets without any need to seek planning permission for a change of use. This doesn't stop such developments, but it does mean there is another important step in the process.

Planning permission now will be needed, which means that a Site Notice will be posted near the pub in question before permission is granted. That gives the opportunity to lodge an official objection, preferably by a group of local people, and for it to be decided by the Planning Committee. If you see such a notice, get together with your friends and act, or you will have only yourselves to blame if the pub closes

Finally – see some momentous ‘stop press’ news below!

**Roger Stokes**

## Brewing Family no Longer Wells Brewery Sold

**A**s the Firkin went to press, we heard the astonishing news that Charles Wells Ltd had agreed to sell the brewery in Havelock Street, Bedford, and their national beer brands, to Marstons plc for £55.5 million.

Charles Wells Ltd will become mostly just a pub company, though they will develop a small brewery locally to supply Wells-branded beers to the on-trade in and around Bedford. The Charles Wells pubco will allow their tenants to choose from other beers within the Marstons stable, such as Brakspears, Jennings and Ringwood, as well as the Wells brands such as Bombardier and Directors.

Quite what this augurs for the Wells pubs in and around Bedford, for the local favourite ale Wells Eagle, and for the tenants of Wells houses, is not yet clear. The brewery employees will transfer to Marstons, which will at a stroke become the largest private enterprise employer in Bedford. But office employees may be less



lucky as Marstons' h.q. may have overlapping functions.

In my opinion, Marstons will retain the brewery, which is modern and efficient, and can provide the quality control needed for producing consistent beers, and use it to make nationally and internationally marketed brands in large quantities. The new small brewery will concentrate on small-batch production, perhaps including Eagle. Only time will tell whether I am right.

**Fytton Rowland**

# The Fox at Carlton

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# CAMRA's Potty about PoTYs

This issue seems to be all about CAMRA presentations of one sort and another. The CAMRA National Pub of the Year (PoTY) for 2016 has been announced (see page 11), while the 2017 competition is getting going.

Over the last few months presentations have been made by North Beds CAMRA to our local 2017 award winners – our PoTY, the Three Cups in Bedford, our Country PoTY, the Fox at Carlton, our Cider PoTY, the Polhill Arms at Renhold, and our Club of the Year, the RAFA Club in Bedford. All of these presentations are shown on this page.



Three Cups manager Bev Burrigde (centre) and licensee Alan Kelly of White Park



RAFA Club Chairman Ray Rowland

We also made a special award this year (a lifetime award, as they say at the Oscars) to the Wellington Arms in Bedford – our beloved Welly – for over twenty years of providing a wide choice of cask ales to CAMRA members and other beer-lovers in Bedford. Not only does the Welly have its fourteen handpumps, it also has a wide choice of bottled Belgian beers always available. So a presentation was made to the



Fox licensee Alison Brown



Polhill Arms licensee Paul Smith (centre)



Wellington Arms manager Lesley Griffin (centre) and B&T directors Mike Duquesnes (left) and Martin Ayres (right).

B&T Brewery and its manager Lesley to celebrate their twenty glorious years.

See page 21 for a report on the next stage of the 2017 PoTY competition, the choice of our county champion pub for Bedfordshire.

Fytton Rowland

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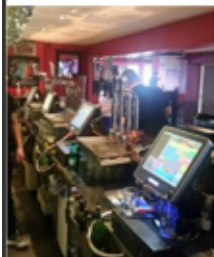
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# The Big Four-Oh

In 1978, CAMRA as a national campaigning organisation was just seven years old, and some of its members in Bedford decided to run a beer festival...

And we've now decided to do it again – for the FORTIETH time!



The 40th Bedford Beer and Cider Festival will take place in Bedford Corn Exchange on 4th-7th October 2017. All but one of the forty festivals have been held there – the odd one out was during the Corn Exchange's closure for

refurbishment. It's become a habit to convert the Corn Exchange to the biggest pub in Bedford for a week in early October.

The objective is still the same – to give the people of Bedford the opportunity to try a variety of beers, ciders and perrys that are not generally to be found in the town's pubs. But there are innovations, and this year we will be adding real mead for the first time. Mead is a traditional British drink made from fermented honey, and one of the few commercial producers of mead will have a bar at the 40th Festival.

We're sticking with some other recent changes, including the chocolate and beer pairing stall, whose proprietors have changed their name to Oddfellows Chocolates.

But when all's said and done these are the sideshows. The main performer is of course the Beer Bar – the long bar that extends the whole length of the Corn Exchange, carrying over 150 different cask ales, some from far away, some from near to home, and ranging from the palest and bitterest of blonde beers to the darkest and maltiest of stouts. There's something for every beer-lover's taste – even occasionally a real lager!



Standing next to the Beer Bar is the second main star of the show – the Cider Bar. With over forty real ciders

(made not from imported apple juice, but from British-grown apples pressed and then naturally fermented) it's always popular. And usually the cider's not fizzy. Plus cider's next of kin, perry, made in a similar way from pears. Usually we have a dozen or so of them on sale.

Upstairs in the Howard Room is our much-admired International Beer Bar, with a number of draught continental beers plus a large variety of bottled beers from around the world, under the genial leadership of our foreign beer guru, Malcolm Roxburgh. Conveniently nearby in the Howard Room you will also find Angelo's St Cuthberts, the caterers who for the third year will be providing a selection of favourite pub meals at lunch and dinner times throughout the festival, and snacks in between.

For your entertainment, CAMRA's own tombola stall will be up and running at the back of the main hall throughout the festival. Next door to that, Colin Lilley will be offering to engrave your personal festival glass for you to keep as a memento of the great 40th Festival! Musical entertainment will take place on Wednesday and Saturday evenings. You can be sure the musicians will be chosen from among the stars of the local music scene. And Bedford Morris Men will be along on Saturday afternoon with their own uniquely English brand of entertainment.

All of the bars, and the tombola and the festival office, will be staffed by CAMRA volunteers, and all the beer will be kept in tiptop condition by our cellar team, including the Higgs brothers, Alan

# The Big Four-Oh continued



and Ian, who've been coming to these festivals for longer than anyone else (see page 9).

All these people are

also volunteers – CAMRA is proud that all its beer festivals, even the very biggest of them, have always been staffed entirely by its own members.

**Which is where you come in.** You'll find a volunteering form on our website [northbeds.camra.org.uk](http://northbeds.camra.org.uk). Please offer your services for those few days in October. In addition to the days the festival is open to the public we also need people from Sunday 1st October to Sunday 8th October. All those bars, stillage and stalls don't put themselves up and take

themselves down again by magic – like everything else, it's all done by members. It's several months away but please volunteer now – knowing that we will have plenty of people to run the festival improves the peace of mind of all of us on the festival organising committee.

**Sponsor a cask.** Get your business's name up on one of our casks! For only £50 it can be on display for the duration of the festival – and you'll get some entry tickets free as well. Contact Peter Argyle (contact info on page 15) for details of the cask sponsorship scheme.

The 40th Bedford Beer and Cider Festival will also be my last as Festival Organiser. It's my fifth, and I'm very proud to have taken charge of one-eighth of all the CAMRA festivals that have been held in Bedford. I'm determined to go out with a bang, so let's all work together to make the Big Four-Oh the best one yet!

Fytton Rowland

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# The Ever-Presents

In 1978, a young man named Alan Higgs was walking with a friend past Bedford Corn Exchange and noticed that a beer festival was going on. The two of them had been heading towards a pub anyway, so they decided to drop in to the festival instead. It was CAMRA's first in Bedford.



Alan

And Alan and his mate John have been to every single one of CAMRA's annual festivals in Bedford since then! While John remains a customer at each festival, Alan has for many years been the site engineer, working long hours to make sure that all the structures we erect in the Corn Exchange stay up and working. In between times he serves behind the bar as well, sometimes in fancy dress.



Ian

crucial role of Cooling Manager, making sure that the equipment we use keeps the beer at its

But it's not only Alan. His brother Ian Higgs came along to the second festival, and he too has been to every one since then. These days Ian fills the

ideal temperature of 11-13°C. No-one is more important than Ian in guaranteeing that the beer you buy at our festival is in tip-top condition.

The first festival was very different from today's. Casks were cooled by covering them in muslin and spraying water on to them. The result – a soaking wet floor, not covered in polythene sheeting and carpet as it is today. There was a Yard of Ale competition. Busloads of American servicemen came in from Chicksands and went for all the strongest beers. (Today's busloads come from Cranfield University, and are much more moderate drinkers!) The music was different, too – the Woburn Sands Silver band played from the balcony. The festival used only the main hall; there were only fifty different cask ales on, compared with more than three times as many today. But then, how many different cask ales existed in 1978? Food service was in the main hall, using the kitchen at the west side, of the hall. We use that kitchen to make staff tea and coffee today! The glasses were dimple mugs, and at the first festival didn't carry a logo – that came in year 2. There were no foreign beers.

Alan and Ian came as punters for a few years and then both joined CAMRA – their membership numbers are only two apart – and started to work at the festival. In the early days, Ted Probyn ran the stillage – he now lives in Lincoln but still drops in to our festival most years – and Ian and Alan learned their trade from him before taking over from him. They went to Everard's Brewery in Leicester for proper cellar training in 2008, along with Geoff Foll and Paul Weston. Geoff – who was at school with Ian Higgs – chooses and looks after all our beers at our festivals to this day.

And what is the verdict of the ever-present Higgs brothers about it all? They'll continue to work at Bedford Beer and Cider Festival each year until they have to be taken out in their coffins – because "It's been a lot of fun!"

Fytton Rowland

# Summer Beer Festivals

## Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival

8-10 June at Rugby Football Club, Old Hale Way SG5 1XL. 150 real ales, ciders and international beers, food at all sessions. Use 71/72 buses from Bedford.

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

## Derby City Charter Summer Beer Festival

5-9 July on the Market Place, Derby. Over 200 real ales plus ciders, international beers and mead. Trains from Bedford.

[www.derbycamra.org.uk](http://www.derbycamra.org.uk)

## Sir William Peel Cider Festival

6-9 July at Sir William Peel, High St, Sandy SG19 1AG. Many real ciders and perries. 73 bus from Bedford. [sirwilliampeel.webs.com](http://sirwilliampeel.webs.com)

## Biggleswade Beer Festival

21-22 July at Stratton House Hotel, London Road, Biggleswade SG18 8ED. 73/74 buses from Bedford. [www.strattonhouse-hotel.com](http://www.strattonhouse-hotel.com)

## Great British Beer Festival

8-12 August at Olympia, London W14 8UX. Over 500 cask ales plus foreign beers, cider and perry. See advert on this page.

## Peterborough Beer Festival

22-26 August on the Embankment, Bishops Rd PE1 1EF (city centre 10 min). Over 400 real ales including festival specials, a huge range of ciders and perries, bottled beers and wines and food catering for all tastes.

[www.peterborough-camra.org.uk](http://www.peterborough-camra.org.uk)

## Fox Summer Beer Festival

25-27 August at the Fox, High St, Carlton MK43 7LA. 18 real ales and 6 real ciders served from a temporary bar in the garden. Variety of live music and food. [www.thefoxatcarlton.pub](http://www.thefoxatcarlton.pub)

## RHTS Sausage & Cider Festival

27-28 August at Rushden Station NN10 0AW. Locally made, flavoured sausages with a choice of ciders and perries. Trains will run, but use 50 bus from Bedford. [rhts.co.uk](http://rhts.co.uk)

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# Pub News

## **White Horse, Newnham Ave Bedford**

This large suburban pub on the eastern outskirts of Bedford is now under Lucie & Stephen Fuller, who have moved from the Burnaby Arms. They come with a high reputation for keeping real ales. Eagle IPA and other Wells beers are served. Call (01234) 409306.



*The White Horse refurbished*

## **Burnaby Arms, Stanley St, Bedford**

The Fullers' successor at the Burnaby is Will Seear, better known locally in the club sector. The pub is certain to continue serving Wells Eagle IPA and other beers from the Charles Wells brewery. Call (01234) 330056.

## **Bluebell, Putnoe Lane, Bedford**

This busy community pub in Putnoe reopened in March after extensive refurbishment. Licensees Karen and Richard offer Fuller's London Pride and Greene King IPA, with lunches available daily except Monday. TV sports are very popular. [bluebellbedford.co.uk](http://bluebellbedford.co.uk)

## **Fordham Arms, Sharnbrook**

This pub on Templars Way has been reopened by Bobby Gill as a free house, bar and bistro. Fuller's London Pride, Sharp's Doom Bar and Wells Eagle IPA are available. Smart pub food is served for lunch, with a broader evening menu, mainly English dishes with a Mediterranean or New World twist. Large and small private parties can be accommodated.

[www.thefordhamarms.pub](http://www.thefordhamarms.pub)

## **Bedford Arms, Oakley**

Welcome to Ben and Emma to this large village inn. The single lounge and a conservatory offer dining throughout. Small groups can meet in private nooks and side areas, while space for large parties can be booked. The two gardens include a children's play area. Wells Eagle IPA and two ales from the Charles Wells guest list are available. The food menu is locally sourced if possible, with roasts on Sunday. Book online to reserve a table at busy times. Ben and Emma also run the Hare & Hounds at Old Warden.



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

## **Brewhouse and Kitchen, Bedford**

Ben Pearson, head brewer at this High Street brewpub since its opening a year ago, left at the end of May to open the B&K chain's new Nottingham pub in mid-June. He has been replaced in Bedford by Davide Callegari, a native of Milan, who took his master's degree in brewing at Nottingham University after working in the bar trade in Italy. The range of cask ales remains unchanged, though Davide will be allowed to 'tweak' the recipes as Ben was.

## **Greyhound, Haynes**

This popular pub at Northwood End was recently refurbished. It is run by Corri Ann Burke and her team, which also operates the New Inn in Biggleswade and the Chequers in Old Stevenage. Greene King IPA and Abbot are served, plus a guest ale, often from the Biggleswade microbrewery. There are separate lounge and public bars, plus a conservatory restaurant. [www.thegreyhoundpub.co.uk](http://www.thegreyhoundpub.co.uk)

# 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](http://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](mailto:socials@northbeds.camra.org.uk)

## JUNE

### Thursday 8th – Summer Day Out

Visit to XT, Church Hanbrewery and Hook Norton Breweries. Meet at the Wellington Arms, Bedford at 10 a.m.

### Thursday 22nd – Pubs Visit

Meet at the Bluebell, Putnoe Lane, Bedford, at 7

p.m. (Note the unusual venue, which can be reached by nos. 7 and 10 buses from Bedford Town Centre.)

## JULY

### Thursday 13th – Branch Meeting

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

### Thursday 20th – Pubs Visit

Details to be announced.

## AUGUST

### Thursday 3rd – Pubs Visit

Walking tour of Bedford Town Centre pubs. Meet at the Wellington Arms, Bedford, at 7 p.m.

## SEPTEMBER

### Thursday 14th – Branch Meeting

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

## Ten things You May not Know about Beer

1. The water has an impact on the final taste of the beer. The success of beers from Burton upon Trent was due to the water (which comes from the Dove, not the Trent!). Burtonisation is adding gypsum to the water to make it similar to Burton water.

2. There are only two drinks consumed more than beer worldwide. These are water and tea.

3. The oldest known beer recipe is about 3900 years old! It was created by the Sumerians in southern Mesopotamia (now known as Iraq). The recipe was part of a poem honouring Ninkasi, the goddess of brewing. However, there is evidence of alcoholic drinks similar to beer as far back as 7000BC in China.

4. Zythology is the study of beer and brewing.

5. In Norse mythology it was believed that in Valhalla there would be a goat called Heiðrún waiting for people that would provide an endless supply of mead.

6. In ancient Babylon if a brewer made bad beer there was severe punishment – to be drowned in it.

7. Think beer is a man's drink? Think again! Across the ancient world, brewing beer was linked to bread making so the first brewers were women. In ancient Peru only women of noble birth were allowed to brew beer.

8. In 19th Century Germany, it was believed that nursing mothers had to drink up to seven pints of beer a day to healthily breast-feed children.

9. Cenosillicaphobia is the fear of an empty glass.

10. India Pale Ales (IPAs) were invented to survive the long sail between Great Britain and India. It was found that the pale ale would go bad during the voyage, so brewers began brewing it with a higher alcohol content and added more hops to preserve the beer. Thus a new style of beer was born and was named IPA. Why not go to the bar now and try an IPA?

Dan Veal

# New Blood Needed!

**N**orth Beds CAMRA held its Annual General meeting on 30th March. We've changed our financial year, so the AGM will be in late March instead of early July from now on.

Most of our officers and committee were re-elected, but Mike MacKechnie gave up one of his hats – Social Media Co-ordinator – while remaining Vice-Chairman and Pubs Protection Officer. Dan Veal, already Young Members Contact, took on the Social Media role as well. Our thanks to Dan for accepting this extra responsibility. The two jobs fit together well – after all, we all know who the heaviest users of social media are, don't we? Emma Mumby took over as Cider Rep from John Cowell, whose work commitments make it difficult for him to attend meetings.

More important are the changes that will happen next year. Old age creeps up on all of us, and three important posts will fall vacant next year. Peter Argyle said that he will be standing down as secretary and Mike Benyon, our treasurer for more years than anyone can remember, will finally be hanging up his moneybags next year too. Fytton Rowland (that's me, folks) had already announced that the 40th Bedford Beer and Cider Festival in October 2017 will be his last as Festival Organiser, although I'm happy to continue as Editor of the Firkin. A certain amount can be achieved by shuffling existing activists around between jobs, but we do need some new blood on the committee. If any CAMRA out there would like to become more active in the organisation, it would be perfectly possible for us to co-opt you on to the committee so that you can learn the ropes for a year before donning a hat. If you are interested, please contact Peter Argyle, whose contact details are opposite on this page.

**Fytton Rowland**

# 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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# It was a Dark and Stormy Night...

Indeed it was, the Storm Doris night of 23rd February, when North Beds CAMRA set out to check on the six pubs of our area's south-eastern outpost, Shefford. We started at the Wellington Arms in Bedford, finding no B&T beers on any of its handpumps for once.

After our minibus had taken us to B&T's home town, we stopped first at the Railway Steamer, out of the town centre. But very briefly – no cask ales available.



Next stop, the Woolpack, a free house which was closed for a while after the sad death of its landlady. Now reopened with

new licensees, we found it very much to our liking – a tiny, proper old-fashioned boozery, with two small rooms, bare boards and a wood-burning stove. And interesting beers on handpump: Tring Puma (4.1% abv) and three beers from 3 Brewers of St Albans: Special (4.8% abv), Ruby (4.5% abv) and Golden (3.8% abv). I found the Special very nice, but the Puma was 'end of barrel' and was taken off. It was replaced by the Ruby and the Golden. Our judgement was that the new licensees had all the right intentions. They explained to me later that after a visit from 3 Brewers' rep, Mark, with samples, the regular cask-ale drinkers in the pub had voted for these three of 3 Brewers' beers. Usually they have beers from Tring on. Receiving their first-ever visit from CAMRA just as the Tring Puma ran out, they had rushed on two more cask ales a little early, to give us some choice. We wish the Woolpack well!

Our driver dropped us at the Bridge, a Wells house situated where the railway bridge used to cross the High Street, from where we walked to the other town centre pubs. But the Bridge was a second 'no cask ale' establishment.



Next was the Cornerstone, formerly the Black Swan, a large pub right on the central road junction. It belongs to Punch Taverns

as a managed house, and was busy on this Thursday evening. Not a cask-ale specialist, though – only Doom Bar on a handpump, plus Weston's Old Rosie cider on another. The Doom Bar was in good nick, though. The pub has been opened out into one large L-shaped bar, and offered football on several screens, a fruit machine and a dartboard.

A half-minute walk across the street took us to the White Hart Hotel, a handsome Georgian building which is still a residential hotel. It claims to be a free house, but it isn't, it's a Greene King house. It offered GK IPA, Abbot, and GK's Six Nations special, Grubber (4.2% abv). Most of our party tried Grubber, but not being a rugger man myself, I stuck with the familiar and had Abbot. It was acceptable.

We'd left the best till last, Banks & Taylor's Brewery Tap. Which really did have B&T's beers on: Shefford Dark Mild, Shefford Bitter and Dragon Slayer. The guests were Grain Brewery's Oak and J.W. Lees' Atomic, both of them 3.8% session bitters. Having spare time after the previous disappointments, we stayed long enough to try halves of most of the cask ales on, and found them well-kept as expected.



The handwritten sign about price increases showed the right priorities! We left only when time was called. Then it was back to the Bedford

Arms in Bedford as usual.

Fytton Rowland

# Village Pub Par Excellence

The Fox at Carlton has been North Beds CAMRA's Country Pub of the Year for two years running, 2016 and 2017. And it's not surprising. A lovely old thatched house that has been a pub at least since 1791, in a pretty village, is always going to be a delight. But the CPoTY title requires more. There must be well-kept cask ales, a friendly welcome and probably good pub food.



So the key figure is the licensee. The Fox is a freehold free house which belonged to Charles Wells until 2012, when the previous licensees bought it. Then, two and a half years ago, Alison Brown bought it. It was good before, but since Alison came it has got even better. She has a real interest in cask ale and listens to her customers to find out which ales they would like her to get in. Normally she only buys one firkin of each, so "When it's gone, it's gone", and since she arrived she's had 371 different beers on her four handpumps. One of the four always carries Wells Eagle, but some popular beers running out in two days or less. She rarely chooses beers over 4.5% abv, even at the annual festival. Many of her customers like dark beers, which are sometimes hard to source – a firkin of mild sold out in 14 hours recently. Vale Brewery's Black Swan and Potbelly Beijing Black are both very well liked when they appear. The Fox belongs to LocAle, and most of her beers come from nearby small breweries. Some of them run 'swap shops' with more distant micros, which enables Alison to obtain less familiar brews from further afield sometimes.

Amazingly, though, Alison had never run a pub before she bought the Fox, and doesn't usually drink cask ale herself, except to taste it. Like many people she worked behind a bar for a short while when she was about 20, but until 2014 she was a finance director in retail. Then she woke up one morning and decided to give up her top job and buy a pub – and she'd put in an offer on the Fox within days. She didn't realise till later how lucky a choice it was, since it had an established base of regular local customers. Although she does food (see photo), it's pub food, not gastro, and 80% of her revenue comes from drinks.

Appearances count, and a lot of work has been done on the building, including rearranging the interior so that the restaurant is no longer totally separate from the bar. If only a few people are eating, they don't want to feel isolated. Food sales have increased as a result. Her chefs are very young, but the quality of their cooking has led to plenty of word-of-mouth



recommendations. The food service also brings in business in the form of weddings, birthday parties, wakes (sadly), coffee mornings and walkers' lunches. Evening trade, though, is relatively skewed early. The days when you went down the pub to meet your mates of an evening have been replaced by social media – more's the pity, Alison thinks.

The Fox (the-fox-at-carlton@btinternet.com) is in Carlton High Street, though there is another entrance to the car park in The Causeway, the road from the village centre towards Turvey. Grant Palmer's no. 25 bus stops outside, but only on Monday-Saturday daytimes. If you haven't been there, pay a visit – you won't regret it. Why not go at the August Bank Holiday weekend, when the Fox Beer Festival is on?

Fytton Rowland

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# It's Three in a Row for the Black Lion

CAMRA's Bedfordshire County Pub of the Year for 2017 is the **Black Lion** in **Leighton Buzzard** for the third year in a row. The Black Lion was South Beds CAMRA's Pub of the Year, and the other contenders were the New Inn Ale House in Biggleswade (East Beds CAMRA) and the Three Cups in Bedford (North Beds CAMRA).



*Photo by Graeme Halls.*

The County Cider Pub of the Year is once again the **Engineers Arms** in **Henlow**, East Beds CAMRA's nominee, beating North Beds CAMRA's choice, the Polhill Arms at Renhold. North Beds has many fine pubs, but somehow they can't quite beat the other two Bedfordshire branches' choices in these competitions!

The Black Lion and the Engineers will now go forward to the regional round of the Pub of the Year competition, going against the county Pubs of the Year from Essex, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk for the East Anglian titles. Again, Beds finds it hard to crack these competitions – this region of the country is very rich in good pubs, both in country villages and in historic cities like Cambridge and Norwich.

## A Good Result from the General Election

**W**e go to press before the general election, so as I write I don't know what the result will turn out to be. But from CAMRA's point of view there has already been a good result even before the election takes place.

A few weeks ago, the Neighbourhood Planning Bill was under consideration in Parliament, and the House of Lords inserted an amendment proposed by Lord Kennedy so that the conversion of a pub into a small supermarket was no longer a 'permitted development'. The same amendment had been proposed in the Commons by Greg Mulholland, a well-known friend of real ale and pubs, MP for Leeds Northwest in the last Parliament.

This loophole had allowed many pubs to be lost, often against the wishes of their tenants, by the pubco selling them to a supermarket chain without needing planning permission for the conversion. This approach prevented local people from having any input to the decision. A recent case in our area was the loss of the

Queens Tavern in Bedford for conversion into a Co-op.

When an election is called, all legislation on its way through Parliament either is dropped or is rushed through. The Neighbourhood Planning Bill went through, and there wasn't time for the Commons to fight the Lords' amendment. So the bill has passed into law with the amendment in place.

This means that in future any supermarket chain wanting to convert a pub into a supermarket, and any pubco trying to sell a pub for this purpose, will have to apply to the local authority for full planning permission for the change of use. Of course, the local authority might still grant permission, but it does provide an opportunity which wasn't there before for beer lovers, pub regulars, pub tenants and CAMRA to lobby councillors on the local planning committee. A small gain for local democracy and for beleaguered licensees.

**Fytton Rowland**

# A Young Members' Social

**N**orth Beds CAMRA's first Young Members' evening in February was enjoyable and we had a lot of responses from young members, and were joined by our Social Secretary Gary and his wife Helen. We visited a good mix of pubs during the course of the evening, including a final visit to Red Brewery's Saint Peter's Alehouse before its sad closure.



The social began in The Pilgrims Progress where we discussed how the evening would pan out and how the scorecards would work. As usual they had a range of beers including the local beer SOD (Shefford Old Dark) from B&T brewery.

After a couple of drinks at the Pilgrims we advanced to The Rose. They had Inferno from Oakham Ales, Old Golden Hen from Greene King and Sharps Doom Bar on handpumps. It was clear by looking around that The Rose is well attended by young people on a Saturday evening (sadly most were not drinking ales), as well as a few people hanging around after the rugby.

After the Rose came The Ship on St. Cuthbert's Street; they had British Bulldog by Westerham on, as well as a selection of Greene King beers including one named "your name" that implied that you could name it. I received an email and a text from some more young members who wished to join us, so we met them at the next pub.

The next pub was Saint Peter's Alehouse on their closing evening. We joined our fellow

young members who were running late and got to know one another. We decided to take a small break here to enjoy the micropub one final time. We explained the use of WhatPub and how for any CAMRA member can submit scores from any pub they are in from their phone. I have heard from CAMRA HQ in St. Albans that an app is currently in production. At Saint Peter's they had Red's own One Brown Mouse and a selection of beers from the Milton Brewery on tap. There were a few regulars and familiar faces there to give Joseph a good sending off. We all wish him and the brewery all the best in the future.

After a couple of drinks at Saint Peter's we said farewell and went to the Brewhouse and Kitchen. They had the usual house-brewed beers on tap, including a tittle that I had helped to make on a brewery experience day. Whilst here I explained to a couple of the young members about how beer is made and which vessel is which. Again we found that the bar was a hit with young people – some were drinking ale, which was encouraging to see. I also saw a couple reading the Firkin.

We then crossed the road to visit the Bear; they had two different beers by Tring Brewery on tap but the rest were finished. It was nice to see that it was fairly busy in there. I haven't seen it this busy since it was last the Bear. As we left the Bear we parted ways – the latecomers decided to backtrack to visit the pubs they had missed, and others had buses to catch.

Those that were left went on to The Bedford Arms. They had two guest beers which were Kronos from ABC (Aylesbury Brewery Company) and Fitzroy from Vale Brewery, as well as the usual selection of Wells beers. We discussed the success of the evening as well as some upcoming regional Young Members events. It has been decided that another Young Members event will be arranged in the future, and we look forward to seeing you there!

**Dan Veal**

# Alternative Ingredients for Beer

In my previous article about Gluten-Free Beer (Firkin Vol 42 No 1 Spring 2017) I mentioned the use of rice in beer, so I wondered 'Are there any other ingredients people make beer with?' after some research the answer was yes!

So here are some alternative and in some cases strange ingredients used across the world. I shall start with telling you what I am considering as the 'regular' beer ingredients: these are malted cereals, water, hops and yeast.

## Rice



Mainly used in Japanese beers, traditionally to replace the cereal and hops in beer (as they were not available in Japan). In

recent years brewers have been experimenting with rice alongside barley and/or hops to produce different flavours. Some American brewers have started using rice in their beer to create higher alcohol content and lighter beers.

## Sorghum



Sorghum is a grain that is commonly found in Africa and Asia and has been used in both China and southern parts of Africa

to produce beer. The traditional African recipe calls for just sorghum, yeast and water for beer, but brewers have started to add small amounts of barley to enhance the flavour. Some American brewers have started to produce gluten-free beers with sorghum and rice.

## Bananas



Banana beer originates from eastern parts of Africa and made from two different types of banana. They start with ripe bananas and crush them into a pulp; the liquid is then extracted and diluted with water. Ground

sorghum is added to the juice and it is left to ferment. The photo shows one of the exotic Mongozo beers made by Huyghe of Belgium, but locally Charles Wells use fairtrade bananas in their Banana Bread Beer.

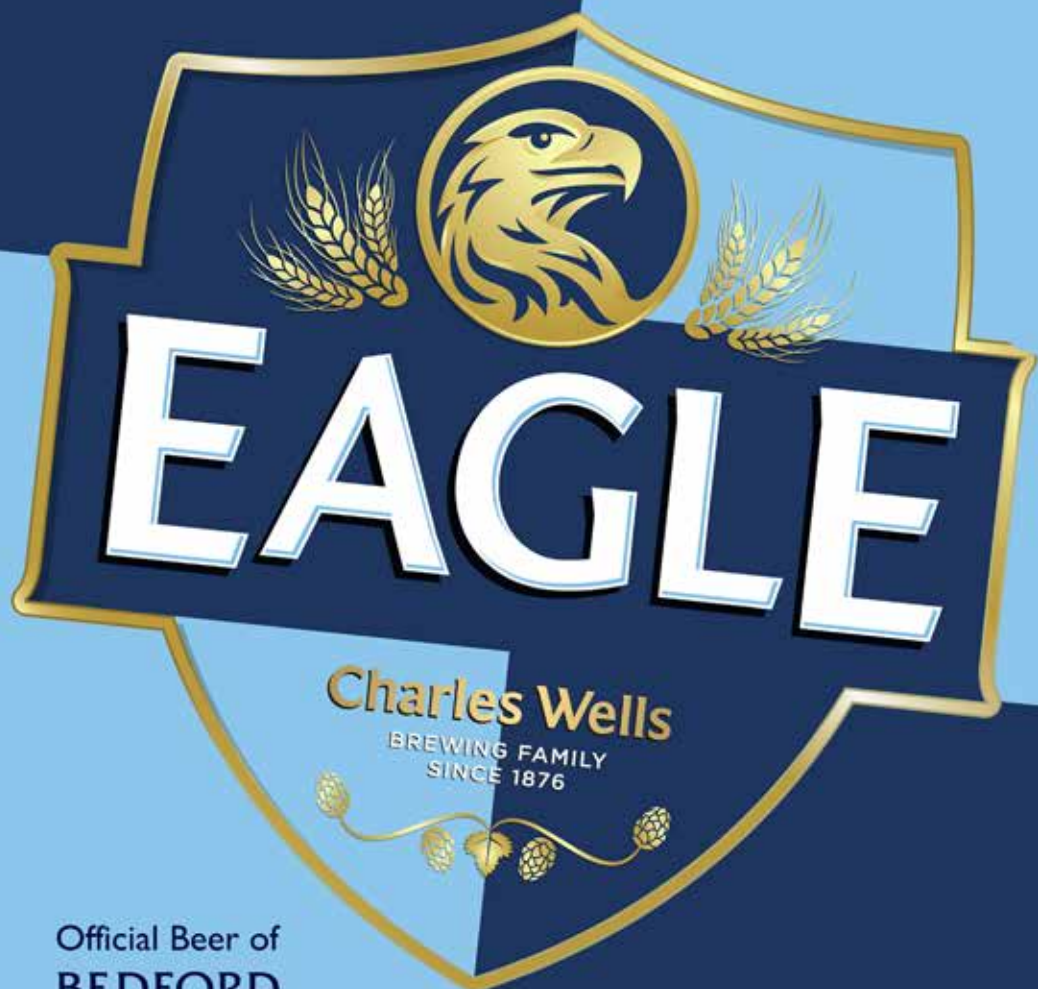
## Toast/Bread



Hambleton Ales in Yorkshire are currently producing a beer named 'Toast' – this is because that is one of the main ingredients in the beer. They take waste bread from bakeries, shops, etc., to use in the beer. It is dried and crushed into croutons and goes into the mash tun alongside barley. The rest of the process is the same as for regular ale.

If you know of any other alternative ingredients used to make beer or different ingredients added to beer, email me on [danveal.nbcamra@gmail.com](mailto:danveal.nbcamra@gmail.com)

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