

The firkin



FREE

**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Newsletter of CAMRA North Bedfordshire Branch Vol 40 No 3 Autumn 2015

Highspot of the Year



Bedford Beer and Cider Festival 7th-10th October 2015

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

THREE CUPS GARDEN OPENED

BEDFORD BEER AND CIDER FESTIVAL

OTHER AUTUMN FESTIVALS

PUB NEWS

CONTRASTING BREWERIES IN CAMBS

FAREWELL TO PAUL OF THE BEAR

COMMUNITY BUS TRIP

BRANCH DIARY

PUB ETIQUETTE

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

The Search for Great Pubs is Over...



ales
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 beer
 friends
 community
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 drink
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 events
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 St Neots
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 SG18 9NN

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The Kings Arms
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 Bedfordshire
 SG19 1HA

TEL: 01767 680 276

Chairman's Corner



At the North Beds CAMRA AGM at Charles Wells Brewery in July, we were able to welcome Mike MacKechnie as Vice-chair and Jayne

Schofield as a member of the committee. It is good to have a Vice-chair again, and I look forward to Jayne's contributions to our meetings.

In recent months CAMRA has added a new campaign issue, made possible by a change in legislation earlier this year. The possibility of listing pubs as Assets of Community Value (ACVs) has been around a few years. This means that extra restrictions are placed on the process of converting a pub to some other use,

and allows time for greater consideration of ways in which it can be retained as a pub. The changes strengthen these restrictions and mean that CAMRA branches can now nominate a pub for listing.

Given the rate at which pubs continue to close, and the speed with which this can happen, it is crucial that we are able to react quickly when there are rumours of a potential closure. CAMRA HQ now has a new member of staff to help with this, and has set up an efficient process to help branches. Your help is the first and vital link in the chain. If you hear or see anything that suggests a pub may be under threat, then contact me so I can get things moving. I would rather hear from a number of people than none, so don't assume somebody else is doing it.

Roger Stokes

Tele-cabines at the Three Cups

White Park Brewery's Alan Kelly's plans for renovating the garden at the Three Cups in Bedford were realised when over 200 attended the Garden Launch Party.



Proceedings got off to a quiet start at 4 pm, when Mayor Dave Hodgson officially opened the garden.

HM the Queen was invited, but was unable to attend – a very nice letter of apology is now framed and on display in the bar.

This was followed by a beer and cider festival with music from the Bonas Brothers, positioned between the newly installed 'tele-cabines'.



The summer weather was kind and attendees were able to sit out in the new garden to try 16 casks of locally produced ale, as well as Cromwell cider. As the sun went down we were able to experience the underfloor lighting system. Alan said that the event had surpassed all expectations; manager Beverley said she was 'overwhelmed'.

Mike MacKechnie

Highspot of the Year

North Beds CAMRA's annual

Bedford Beer and Cider Festival is the highspot of the year for beer and cider lovers in Bedford – and it's nearly here again, for the 38th time! It's in Bedford Corn Exchange as usual, on 7th-10th October. Get those dates in your diary now, and come along for a great time, with a selection of over 100 cask ales, over 40 real ciders and



perries, many draught and bottled foreign beers, English wines, appetising meals, and entertainment, all available in the Corn Exchange – Bedford's biggest pub for those four days.

The beer bar in the main hall will once again provide cask ales from near and far, including some beers not seen in Bedford before.

local, as well as perries – cider's cousin made from pears. All cider and perry sold at CAMRA festivals is made by pressing real British fruit – no imported fruit juice or concentrate allowed!



October is cider month, and our cider and perry bar will be back in the main hall this year, providing a wide selection of ciders sweet and dry, strong and not-so-strong, local and not-so-



The shop selling CAMRA collectables and books will once again be in the main hall, run as usual by our friends from East Beds CAMRA. This is the place to buy your 2016 Good Beer Guide, which will be hot off the press at the time. Next door, East Beds will also be running the tombola stall, with many interesting bottled beers available among the prizes.

Bedford Beer and Cider Festival

Our ever-popular engraver Colin Lilley will be back this year, ready and willing to personalise your festival glass. Versatile Mr Lilley also designs our festival logo each year – this year's features a well-known Bedford landmark, the Butterfly Bridge, with a cartoon eagle. Also in the main hall is the Glasses Bar, where you buy your festival glass on arrival, and you can cash it in again when you leave, if you don't want to keep it (but not if Colin has engraved it!).



Upstairs in the Howard Room you will find our Foreign Beer Bar, offering several draught continental beers as well as a wide range of bottled ones, from Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Eastern European countries. We hope some will come from Bedford's twin town, Bamberg, one of the world's leading brewing centres.



We'll again be selling English wines, as local as possible to Bedford, by the glass too, and the

Wine Bar upstairs will be bigger, following its successful introduction last year.

The big news in the Howard Room will be the return of the meal service there. A new caterer will be providing the meals this time, and will be offering the pub food favourites that Bedford's festival-goers expect. So no need to leave the Corn Exchange when you feel peckish...



Musical entertainment will be provided on the Wednesday evening by Acoustopaea, a local trio playing their own versions of popular classics, and on the Saturday evening by Hair of the Dog, an Irish/Gaelic band.



Sorry, no music on Thursday and Friday evenings – the hall is too crowded then, musicians wouldn't fit! But we hope that the Bedford Morris Men will be there on Saturday afternoon, providing their special brand of entertainment, and also enjoying a pint or two themselves.

Bedford Beer and Cider Festival



by volunteers. You'd be more than welcome to join the team; you can find the volunteering form at northbeds.camra.org.uk. Lots of bar staff are needed, of course, on all four days we are open. But we also need people on Sunday 4th to Tuesday 6th October to help put everything up, and on Sunday 11th October to take it all down again. You don't have to be a CAMRA member to volunteer, and you'll get free entry, subsidised meals, free beer (but not so much as to make you incapable of working!) – plus fun and good company.

Festival opening hours will be 4-11 pm on the Wednesday and 12 noon-11 pm on the other three days. Admission prices (and also beer prices) will be held at last year's levels: £1 before 4 pm, and after 4 pm. £2 on Wednesday, £3 on Thursday, £4 on Friday and £2 on Saturday. It's free at all times for CAMRA members on presentation of a valid membership card. So why not join up at the Festival Office in the main hall on your first visit, then you can get in free on the other days! If you are unable to climb stairs, please ask security staff at the main entrance to provide lift access from the street; once inside, lift access to all levels is available. Note that there is no admission at any time for anyone under 18, and those who look young will be asked to provide proof of age at the door.

Pass-outs for smokers will be provided at the west door of the Corn Exchange. If you use this facility you must leave your glass inside – Bedford by-laws forbid drinking of alcoholic drinks in the street.

Please come by public transport if you can; if you can't, find a designated driver to bring your party. Soft drinks are free, and can be obtained from the Cider Bar and the Foreign Beer Bar.

Bedford Beer and Cider Festival is run entirely

If your pub, brewery or company would like to get some favourable publicity on the beer stillage for the four days, contact beerfestival@northbeds.camra.org.uk for details of our cask sponsorship scheme.

Fytton Rowland

A Welsh Champion

A two-man brewery in Newport, Gwent, has won the Champion Beer of Britain award for 2015. At the Great British Beer Festival in August, Tiny Rebel Brewery's best bitter, Cwtch (4.6% abv) received the title. In second place was Jaguar (4.5% abv), a golden ale from the Kelburn Brewery in Barrhead, Renfrewshire, and in third place was Dark Drake (4.5% abv), a winter ale from the Dancing Duck Brewery of Derby. Other category winners were: Mild, Williams Black (4.2% abv) from Williams Brothers of Alloa; Bitter, Best Bitter (3.8% abv) from Pheasantry Brewery near Newark, Notts; Strong bitter, Revelation (5.7% abv) from Dark Star Brewery of West Sussex; Speciality beer, Plum Porter (4.9% abv) from Titanic Brewery of Stoke-on-Trent; Real ale in a bottle, Imperial Extra Double Stout (9.0% abv) from Harvey's of Lewes, East Sussex.

38th BEDFORD BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

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

Wed 7th - Sat 10th October 2015

Open Wed 4-11, Thu-Sat 12-11



100 real ales + 40 ciders and perries
Draught + bottled foreign beers • English wines

Admission

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

No one under age 18 admitted
ID may be required

Entertainers

- * Wed eve - Acoustopaea
- * Sat lunch - Bedford Morris
- * Sat eve - Hair of the Dog

Other Features

- * Souvenir glasses £2.50 sale or return
- * Oversize glasses for a full 20 oz pint
- * Pint, half + third pint measures
- * Hot and cold food
- * Free soft drinks
- * Engraver
- * Clothing, books and gifts
- * New Good Beer Guide 2016
- * Tombola and pub game
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northbeds.camra.org.uk



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2015



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Saturday: John Otway (lunch) and One Step Behind (Madness Tribute, evening)

+ Watch England vs Australia Rugby World Cup live on Saturday on our big screen



Don't drink and drive. Use the train or bus. NO ONE UNDER THE AGE OF 18 CAN BE ADMITTED

stalbansbeerfestival.org.uk / realales@yahoo.com

Autumn Beer Festivals

St Albans Beer & Cider Festival

Wed 30 September to Sat 3 October at Alban Arena, Civic Centre, St Albans AL1 3LD (rail stn 10 min).. Advance tickets available via website.

Up to 350 real ales plus cider, perry, bottle-conditioned and foreign beers. Breweriana auctions daily, quiz Sat. Live music Thu eve and Sat lunch/eve. Frequent trains from Bedford and Flitwick. **See advert on page 8.**

www.stalbanbeerfestival.com

38th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

Wed 7 to Sat 10 October at Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square Bedford MK40 1SL. **See feature article on pages 4-7.**

Nottingham Robin Hood Beer & Cider Festival

Wed 7 to Sat 10 October at Nottingham Castle NG1 6DH (rail stn short walk). Open Wed 6-11, Thu-Sat 11-11. Admission price varies, purchase advance ticket through website. Over 1,000 real ales, 200 real ciders, perries and country wines. Hot and cold food, live music.

Regular trains from Bedford

www.beerfestival.nottinghamcamra.org

St Ives Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival

Thu 8 to Sat 10 October at Burgess Hall, Westwood Road, St Ives PE27 6WU. Open Thu 5-11, Fri 12-11, Sat 12-10. Admission Thu £2, Fri £1 before 5pm then £3, Sat £2 before 5pm then £1, CAMRA members free. Families welcome until 8pm. Over 70 real ales plus real cider, perry and bottled British and foreign beers. Tombola and CAMRA shop, food available all day, free soft drinks for drivers.

www.hunts.camra.org.uk/festival

22nd Milton Keynes Concrete Pint Beer Festival

Wed 14 to Sat 17 October at The Buszy, Elder Gate, CMK MK9 1LR (rail stn 200m, buses 100m). Open Wed 5-11, Thu-Sat 12-11.

Admission £3 Thu/Fri after 5pm, at other times and CAMRA members free. 90 real ales, 25

ciders and perries, hot and cold food at all sessions. Live music Sat eve. Regular X5/40/ C1/C10/ C11 buses from Bedford. **See advert on this page.** www.mkcamra.org.uk

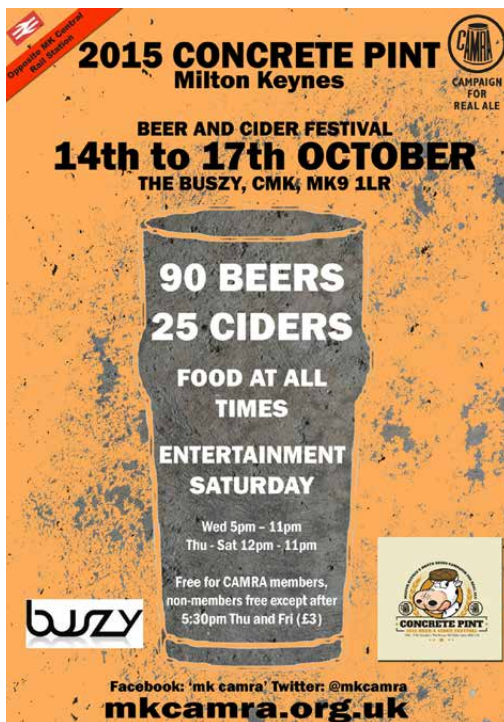
18th Oxford Beer & Cider Festival

Thu 15 to Sat 17 October at Oxford Town Hall, St Aldates OX1 1BX. Open Thu 5-11, Fri 11-11, Sat 11-8. Admission £10 including glass + £6 tokens, CAMRA members £2 off. 140 real ales, 60 real ciders, hot and cold food. Regular X5 bus from Bedford. www.oxfordcamra.org.uk

9th Cambridge Oktoberfest

Fri 16 to Sat 17 October at University Social Club, Mill Lane CB2 1RX (X5 stop 10 min). Open Fri 5-10.30, Sat 12-10.30. Admission £3, CAMRA members free. About 40 real ales including continental style specials plus draught German beers. Regular X5 bus from Bedford.

www.cambridgebeerfestival.com



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Milton Keynes

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14th to 17th OCTOBER
THE BUSZY, CMK, MK9 1LR

90 BEERS
25 CIDERS

FOOD AT ALL TIMES

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Thu - Sat 12pm - 11pm

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Pub News

Ship, St Cuthberts St, Bedford

Welcome to Isobel Pearson and Laura Fennell, new managers at this popular inn. Greene King IPA, Abbot and a changing guest beer are available. Pub food is served until 9pm. The cabin bar can be hired for private functions. 01234 267126.



White Horse, Newnham Ave, Bedford

Welcome to Rod and Angela Otter, new licensees at this award-winning pub. Wells Eagle, Bombardier and a guest ale are available, with a range of lunches and evening meals. There are an open mic night on Monday, karaoke on two Fridays every month and quizzes on Tuesdays and Sundays.

www.whitehorsebedford.co.uk

Maypole Farm, Fletcher Rd, Kempston

This newly built pub-diner near the A421 at Marsh Leys opened in July. The emphasis is on food, with breakfast from 8am, luxury ice cream and takeaway cakes. Greene King IPA and Abbot, H&H Olde Trip and a Maypole Farm Brew house beer from White Park are available. Call 01234 857218.

Cornerstone, Shefford

This busy pub reopened in July after refurbishment. Stuart Judd, supported by managers Lee and Natalie, wants to turn the pub into a family-friendly local with regular live music and other social events. Real ales and home-cooked traditional pub food are available. Call 01462 811072.



Railway Steamer, Shefford

Welcome to new landlady Victoria Sluman, who now runs this local at the south-east end of town. Sharp's Doom Bar and Otter Bitter were on when our scout called. Call 01462 819551.

Woolpack, Shefford

As we went to press we heard that this pub, closed since the sad death of its previous owner and licensee, has reopened under new landlady Michelle Smith. Full details in our next issue. Call 01462 235032.

Bedford Arms, Souldrop

Welcome to Paul and Vicky Ingram, who recently took over this award-winning free house. Black Sheep Best Bitter, Greene King IPA and three guest ales are available, together with real local ciders from Evershed's and Saxby's. Excellent food is served, including Sunday roasts until 4pm. Paul and Vicky may start opening on Mondays. Call 01234 781384.

Royal George, Stagsden

Managers Dave and Jane now use one handpump for White Gold from White Park, and the other for real Franklins cider from Dunton. www.royalgeorgestagsden.co.uk

New micropub for Bedford

The Red Brewery in Great Staughton hopes to open a new micropub in St Peter's Street, Bedford, later this year. Micropubs sell beer and cider but no hot food. Beds already has two of them – the Old Transporter Ale House at Henlow Camp and the Bald Buzzard in Leighton Buzzard.



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and Sunday 3pm – 6pm,
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rear garden
with seating for over 200



Most improved
Huntingdonshire
pub of 2015



A Contrast in Breweries

One brewery founded by a printer with help of EU funding; one that's 220 years old, run by five generations of the same family; and one run by a brewing graduate who creates quirky beers and delivers casks by bicycle. These three made a fascinating day out for us in June!



Mile Tree Brewery, down a narrow lane near **Wisbech**, is on a caravan site, in a former stable.

Richard (the printer) and Karen Matthews established it in 2012. It's a five-barrel plant and they brew once or twice a week. They provided Larksong, a

very nice amber bitter at 4.5% abv, for us to enjoy, along with some sausage rolls. Their bottled beers are available from the campsite shop – that way the campers provide a convenient captive market! They were: Adventurer, their first product, a golden bitter (4.0% abv), Wellstream, a dark ruby strong beer at 4.9% abv, and a session bitter, Meadow Gold (a very pale ale at 3.8% abv).



Next the **Red Lion** in **Wisbech's** Georgian waterfront street, North Brink, for lunch. A nice snug old pub with a sunny garden, in the Good Beer Guide, it had Elgood's Cambridge Bitter (3.8% abv), Cambridge IPA (4.7%) and Black Dog (a mild at 3.6%) on its handpumps, all in good shape. So was the ample ploughman's lunch!



Ah, **Elgood's!** One of the finest buildings on North Brink, the brewery dating from 1795 still



Nigel Elgood, is Chairman. They are proud of their old copper vessels, especially two huge cooling trays now used to produce lambic beer.



Elgood's

plant shop – is a tourist attraction.

brews the traditional way. The family has produced good leaders in each generation – the current MD is Belinda Sutton (née Elgood) and her father,

They landscaped the grounds into a garden some years ago, and the whole – gardens, brewery tour, bar, café and

A long ride then took us to **Harston** near Cambridge, where the **Black Bar Brewery** is in a small unit in an industrial estate. No tourists here, but plenty of interest for real-ale fans. Joe Kennedy (MSc Heriot-Watt) runs it as a one-



man band, including delivering three full firkins

at a time to Cambridge pubs on his Dutch-built delivery bike. As well as the casks, he sells bottled beers into cafés and delis, and five-litre minicasks from the brewery door on Saturdays. Word-of-mouth marketing,

Continued on page 18



Beer Festival

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& beer guide



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A Contrast in Breweries

He provided three minicasks for us: Black Bar Bitter is a session ale at 3.6% abv, and Black Economy is 'a black golden ale', darkened by roast malt to the colour of a stout. His varying beers are all called 'Theory'. We tried Theory 214, containing oats as well as barley malt. His bottled



beers have no labels on them. As he does all the bottling by hand, he attaches an old-fashioned luggage label around the neck of each bottle. Dovestep is a 'hop and herb' ale, flavoured with rosemary. It tasted like ginger beer although there is no ginger in it. We liked it a lot. Other bottles were Old Museum Porteur (5.1% abv), a brown porter, and Major Blacklight, a blonde beer at 5.2% abv.

Then for dinner to the newly-built **Queen Edith**



pub in the suburbs of **Cambridge**. Eight handpumps provide five Milton beers and three guests. The Milton brews were

Justinian (3.9% abv), a hoppy pale session bitter), Pegasus (a standard bitter, 4.1% abv), Medusa (4.6% abv), a porter, and two strong pale bitters, Minerva, 4.6% abv, and Cyclops, 5.3% abv. The guests were Shortt's Farm Skiffle from Suffolk, a pleasant amber strong bitter at 4.5% abv, Colchester Brewery's No. 88, and Classic Dark Mild (4.0% abv) from the Milestone Brewery. The food was plentiful and nicely cooked.

An excellent summer's day out all round, visiting three breweries that couldn't have been more different.

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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Trading Standards

If you complain to a licensee about short measure, lack of a visible price list, or a misleading product promotion, and do not get a satisfactory response, call Consumer Direct on 08454 040506 or contact an adviser through the website at www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

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CAMPAIGN
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TRING



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Farewell, after Thirty Years



North Beds CAMRA's pub trip in May started at the **Bear** in **Bedford** High Street, for a very good reason. Paul and Maggie, its licensees for nearly thirty years, the longest-serving in Bedford, were about to retire. We came to say goodbye and wish them well. They were off to a holiday in the USA. The Bear remained closed as we went to press, but the plan was to do some minor remodelling and reopen. We hope very much that this historic pub will reopen. Its has always been popular with both younger and older people. Formerly Greene King property, it now belongs to Hawthorne Leisure, and the regular beers were GK IPA and Sharp's Doom Bar.

We then boarded a bus to **Kempston**, where we visited three pubs that we hadn't been to for a while. The **Royal Oak** is another Hawthorn Leisure pub, ex-GK, and serves the same beers



Paul

pool table in the public bar.

A short walk along Woburn Road brought us to the **Duke**, a large Wells pub, of more recent date, in sham-tudor style. It and had only Eagle on handpump that night, though Bombardier is often on. A slightly longer walk brought us to the **Mulberry Bush**, a modern pub in a shopping centre. A Wells house with only Eagle on, this is

a drinkers' local. It has one long bar with fruit machines, a juke box and a pool table.

Then it was on to bus back to **Bedford**, to the **Kings Arms** just south of the town bridge.



Sean

Licensee Sean has run this pub for thirteen years, and recently it has shifted in a markedly more real-ale direction. GK IPA, the GK seasonal, Magna Carta, and Belhaven Golden Bay from their Scottish subsidiary were on, together with a guest, Hop Back Brewery's World Hop Medley. There is also a variety of bottled craft beers. It's a big pub with music and a pool table, and an upper level serving meals.

Rather a lot of Eagle and GK IPA for one evening, we thought, but that's Bedford and Kempston for you...

Fytton Rowland

Correction – The Horseshoes, Blunham

In the Summer 2015 issue of the Firkin, in a pub trip report, I said that I found the Young's Bitter at the Horseshoes at Blunham to be unduly expensive. The licensee has contacted me to say that the price I reported was not the correct price for Young's at the pub. Although I was actually charged that price, this was due to an error by an inexperienced member of staff. I apologise for not checking up on the price further before going into print, and I wish to reassure readers that cask ales at the Horseshoes are available at prices which are perfectly usual for the Bedford area.

Fytton Rowland



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A Community Ride

For North Beds CAMRA's June minibus trip, we tried out a community minibus.

Though we missed our regular driver Dave, we felt that if the lower cost lets us to visit more of our far-flung rural pubs it must be a good thing.

From the Wellington Arms we headed north up the A6 to two main-road pubs, both historic but extended, and with a food emphasis.



The **Queens Head at Milton Ernest** is an Old English Inn serving Greene King beers.

Though called 'Hotel and Restaurant', it caters in a friendly way to drinkers, and had GK IPA and Olde Trip on handpump. I tried Olde Trip and thought it in decent shape.

Then up the road we called at the rather similar



Falcon at Bletsoe.

There's little local drinkers' business at this 'Riverside Pub and Dining'. Though once a coaching inn, it no longer lets out bedrooms. It's a Wells house and had Eagle, Bombardier and Directors on handpump, and they seemed to be in respectable condition.

Leaving the main road for the back lanes, our



next stop was the **Fox and Hounds at Riseley.**

Another village Wells pub much extended for dining, it has long specialised in steaks. It carried the same three cask ales as the Falcon, and again they were in passable state, though a bit pricey at £3.90/pint.

Even more remote is **Little Staughton**, where the village pub is the **Crown**, dating from the



1950s – the predecessor had burned down. It has a L-shaped bar and serves a high-quality food menu centred on

fish. The licensee is serious about real ale; as a free house it has Fuller's London Pride, Sharp's Doom Bar, GK IPA and B&T Shefford Bitter on handpumps. These were in good order.

On the return run we stopped at the **Polhill**



Arms in Renhold.

Another landlord serious about cask ale, Paul Smith runs a Greene King

house but with interesting guest ales available. On this occasion he had a GK seasonal, Ale Fresco, a golden bitter at 4.3% abv, GK's other



seasonal Magna Carta, and Hardy Hanson Kimberley Bitter. The guests were Timothy Taylor

Landlord and Cameron's Strongarm. I had the Ale Fresco, which turned out to be less hoppy than I'd hoped, and the Strongarm, a rich dark malty bitter which I enjoyed.

Then it was back to Bedford, where we gave our thanks to our volunteer driver for making our first community bus trip a success.

Fytton Rowland

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Great Oakley Brewery OTB Page 40

Branch Diary

CAMRA North Beds Branch business meetings are normally held on the second Thursday of alternate months, e.g. January and March. Social and campaigning events are usually held on the third Thursday of each month.

Guests are welcome at social events, but members have priority on brewery visits. For latest information check *What's Brewing* or visit the branch website at www.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 10 – Branch Meeting

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

Thursday 17 – Pubs visit

Details to be announced.

OCTOBER

Wednesday 7 to Saturday 10 – Bedford Beer and Cider Festival

At Bedford Corn Exchange – see article on pages 4-7 of this issue.

Thursday 29 – Brewery visit

Priority given to those who have volunteered at the Bedford Beer and Cider Festival. Meet at the Wellington Arms, Wellington Street, Bedford, at 7 p.m. Further details to be announced.

Saturday 31 – All-Beds London Pubs Visit

Visiting pubs in Bayswater – contact Gary Mudd for time and place to meet up.

NOVEMBER

Thursday 12 – Branch Meeting

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

Thursday 19 – Pubs visit

Details to be announced.

DECEMBER

Thursday 10 – Christmas Social

Details to be announced.

Other events may be added – see branch website for up-to-date information.

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- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

Wellingborough Beer Festival OTB Page 43

Rules of Etiquette for Crowded Pubs

We've all been there. It's a Friday night, and you've decided to try a different pub. You're in uncharted territory, but there are a few rules.

The objective is to get served quickly and with the minimum of fuss. When you first enter, look at what everyone has in their hands. If you see someone with a beer that could match your requirements, ask them what it is. You might get some sound advice. Or there again you might not, but it's worth the try.

Failing that, there are pump clips telling you which beers are on, and all the bottled stuff should be visible. Only ask at the bar as a last resort. However, if there are dayglo signs sellotaped to the bar advertising "double tequila shots for a fiver", "happy hour 5 – 6pm", "Wednesday is Ladies' Night", etc., stick to the Doom Bar. You know it's safe.

If you're in a round, make sure you know what everyone wants before approaching the bar. There's nothing worse for bar staff than ditherers. And for goodness sake don't leave the Guinness until last!

You're in the queue. Be patient. If Jack gets served before you, don't make a fuss. Jack's in every night, and the bar staff know that a good proportion of their wages are coming directly from Jack's wallet.

Don't try to attract attention by waving tenners. The bar staff have seen you and made a mental note of where you are in the queue. The bar staff are in control. You dance to their tune. Oh, by the way, ladies get served first – welcome to Western civilisation. Live with it.

Under no circumstances should you use your mobile phone whilst queueing. Nobody else wants to hear you, and do your tweeting somewhere else, fella.

The barman's only there because he needs the money. He's got a student loan that's bigger than the trading deficit of most Third World countries, and his 20-year-old car has started making that rattling noise again. Also – he's young. He doesn't have your 30 years of pub-going experience. He will make mistakes, he'll put ice and lemon in your drink unless you specifically tell him not to, he won't remember which pump is dispensing what, and if he leaves half an inch of head on your beer, just politely ask for a top-up before you give him your cash.

Once you've got your beers, don't lean at the bar chatting to your mates. Leave the bar for the twenty other people waiting to be served. They'll all be waving their tenners in the air by now.

The views expressed in this article are entirely those of the author, and are not endorsed by any normal sane CAMRA members – or the Editor

Mike Mackechnie

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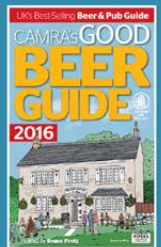
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