



Bedford Beer and Cider Festival a Big Success Again!



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Chairman's Corner

I would like to wish all our readers a very Happy New Year.

Since the last edition of *The Firkin* the branch has had a number of successful branch events.

In August, an evening visiting the pubs along the Embankment in Bedford proved very popular with members and non-members alike, as did our evening trip to Northampton in September. In October, we held our annual beer and cider festival which has once again proved very popular with our members and the public. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those members and non-members who helped organise and worked so hard to make this event so popular, giving up their spare time and working very hard to make it better every year. A big thank you to all who came along to enjoy the beers and ciders, and to soak up the entertainment and atmosphere. We hope to see you all again next year!

November's outing was to the B&T brewery in Shefford, and was once again well supported by our branch. We were joined by South Beds and East Beds branches. It was a great evening - it is always nice to meet fellow members and non-members, and the exchange of views is very rewarding.

In January and February, our social secretary will be organising visits to enable us to make the selections for the next edition of *The Good Beer Guide* (2011). To help us make these decisions, please feel free to email or send into the branch names of any pubs you would like to nominate so that they can be considered for inclusion.

In February it is our sister South Beds branch's beer festival, 17th-20th February in Luton. Please come along and support them, as they always have a great selection, and it is easily reached by local train services.

Please come along to social evenings as we are always pleased to see new faces. And join CAMRA and help us to campaign for more real ale and to fight against pub closures!

Don Allan
Branch Chairman

A visit to the Potbelly brewery in Kettering in October was, as usual, a great evening. Tony and his crew go out of their way to make this evening special, and the fish and chip supper helped the wonderful selection of beers to go down extra well.

CAMRA celebrates news of National Brewing Museum

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is delighted to announce their support for the opening of the National Brewery Centre in Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, in 2010, after brewer Molson Coors UK reversed its decision to close the brewery site.

Nik Antona, CAMRA Director, and Burton branch spokesperson, said: 'It's fantastic news that we will again have a brewing museum in this country, and a centre reflecting the brewing styles of the UK. This is something CAMRA has been campaigning strongly for over the past year.

Last summer, the Coors Visitor Centre, formerly the Bass Museum, closed its doors due to falling visitor numbers, despite opposition by CAMRA, local MP Janet Dean, local and county councils, Burton Civic Society and Chamber of Commerce, and the local media.

'The plans for the Centre are very promising, and an official opening could be a real boost for the local Burton economy. As the capital of British brewing, this is exactly what the town deserves. This is especially promising for the White Shield Brewery, which is based on site.

However, through the work of a Local Action Group, CAMRA is pleased that the Brewing Centre will now become a reality, and will retain key elements of the existing facilities to ensure the building's historic aspects remain.

'Once again this is a really exciting development, and CAMRA is looking forward to working with all parties involved in the opening in order to promote real ale and celebrate one of Britain's most historic industries.'

Pub News

Polhill Arms, Renhold

A belated welcome back to Paul Smith, who returned some months ago to run this popular pub at Salph End after working elsewhere. Greene King IPA and guest ales are available, with daily pub lunches, regular karaoke and quiz nights. Cards and darts are played in a separate games area. Call 01234 771398.

Bedford Arms, Oakley

New landlords Tim and Yvonne Walker have taken over this large pub in the High Street, after it closed for several weeks for refurbishment into a smart pub/restaurant. The old two-bar layout has been knocked into one, with the whole pub now used for meals and social drinking. Wells Eagle IPA, Young's Special and Courage Directors are available on the bar. Early reports on the choice and quality of food are very good. Call 01234 822280 or visit www.bedfordarmsoakley.co.uk

Chequers, Yelden

Welcome to Phil and Lindsey, who now manage this Good Beer Guide-listed pub near the Northants border. The range of real ales and cider is much the same, but the interior has been re-arranged to create a homely snug, and good honest pub lunches are now available daily except Mondays. Call 01933 356383.

Embankment Hotel, Bedford



This handsome hotel overlooking the Great Ouse is now leased to Peach Pubs, which has

transformed it into a "premier dining venue". The interior has been refurbished. Although real ales are normally available on the bar, the emphasis is definitely on food. Reports tell us the food quality is good and the menus are creative. Call 01234 261332.

Three Cranes, Turvey

Welcome to new landlord Peter Sinclair, who took over recently at this attractive pub just off the main road. Greene King IPA, Old Speckled Hen and Davenports Highland Whiskey Ale were available on our last visit. Call 01234 881305.

Cock, Pavenham



This friendly village pub now has new owners. Greene King IPA and changing guest ales are available on the bar, with a varied menu of snacks and traditional pub dishes served daily, except Sunday to Tuesday evenings. Reports say the food is good, but book for main meals as dining space is limited. Call 01234 822834.

Fox and Hounds, Clapham

Welcome to Pavitter Singh, who took over this prominent pub at the Folly junction some months ago. Authentic Indian meals are served on Wednesday evenings, with senior citizens' lunches on Tuesday and a carvery on Sunday. Wells Eagle IPA is available on hand pump. Call 01234 340114.

Three Fyshes, Turvey

Landlord Clifford Elbourne tells us that business has grown well in recent months at this fine old

inn by the bridge, with the parent pub company considering a new restaurant extension. When we last called, Everards Equinox, Deuchars IPA and St. Austell Tribute were on the bar as well as the regular Black Sheep Best Bitter. Call 01234 881463.

King William IV, Kempston

Welcome to former managers Andrew & Radka Bidmead, who have returned to take over this modernised, half-timbered old pub on the High Street. Wells & Young's beers are available, with lunches and evening meals. Call 01234 409298.

Slaters Arms, Kempston Box End

Familiar face Gareth Hitchings has returned to the Slaters after running a hotel in the West Country for a few years. The interior has been redecorated and refurbished. Greene King IPA, Abbot and usually a guest ale or two are available, with a range of lunches, evening meals and a carvery on Sunday. Call 01234 854433.

Castle, Newnham Street, Bedford

Welcome to new landlord Paul Wiseman, who took over this popular pub just east of the town centre, following a brief closure for refurbishment. Regular Wells & Young's and guest beers are available. Call 01234 353295.

Eurobar, St John's Street, Bedford

We discovered Greene King IPA on the bar when we last visited the former Clarence at the end of September. Hardly a novelty you may think, but it comes after years without any real ale at all. Let's hope it stays there! Call 01234 352781.

Five Bells, Cople

Welcome to new landlords Jane and Andy Heaton, who arrived at this attractive village pub during the summer. They offer Greene King beers and a range of good food. Call 01234 838289

Royal Oak, Kempston

Ian Standingford, landlord of the Griffin on Bedford Road, Kempston, has also taken over the Royal Oak. Both pubs were offering Greene King IPA at a very decent price, but sadly the promotion was only guaranteed until Christmas. Call 01234 851114.

Swan, Bromham

Welcome to new managers Corrine and Matthew, who took over this handsome pub near Bromham Water Mill in the summer. The pub was recently refurbished and offers classic pub food throughout the week with regular special offers. Greene King IPA, Abbot and a changing guest ale are available, together with an extensive wine list. Call 01234 823284.

Chameleon Bar, St Paul's Square, Bedford

After at least three former names – the Bull Nosed Bat, the Square and Que Pasa – this town centre bar just along the square from the Corn Exchange has been re-launched under yet another. However, its latest guise has also brought a couple of handpumps serving Greene King IPA and Old Speckled Hen at very reasonable prices. Call 01234 356986.



Guinea, Moggerhanger

Welcome to Jeff Gunn, who recently took over this large pub on the A603. Wells Eagle IPA, Bombardier and Young's Special are normally available on handpump. The former public bar is now laid out for eating and the pool table is in the conservatory. Call 01767 640388.

Fox & Hounds, Kempston

Real Greene King IPA has re-appeared at this modern pub on the High Street, after several years with only the fizzy stuff. We hope it stays there! Call 01234 856213.

Horseshoes, Blunham

Welcome to new landlords Andy & Tanya Brown, who took over this village pub in the early summer Wells Eagle IPA and Young's Bitter are available on handpump. Call 01767 640526.

Bedford Beer and Cider Festival a Big Success Again!

CAMRA's 32nd Bedford Beer & Cider Festival in October was another great success. Held again in the Corn Exchange, the town's premier entertainment venue, the festival attracted over 5,000 visitors and sold nearly 18,000 pints of real ale, cider, perry and foreign beers between Wednesday and Saturday.



The festival offered 111 real ales, 33 real ciders and perries, and a wide selection of draught and bottled beers from Belgium, Germany and other countries during the week. Real ales included local brews from B&T, Buntingford, Concrete Cow, Potbelly, Son of Sid, Potton, and Wells & Young's, while others came from around East Anglia, the Midlands and further afield. Although we never heard the skirl of the pipes, there was a definite Scottish accent with a number of brews from north of the Border, although sadly the Valhalla ales from Shetland failed to make the distance in time.

As the festival had to close on Saturday, with no opportunity to sell left-overs the following week, choice for customers had to be balanced against avoiding waste. However, careful planning ensured that a decent choice was maintained into Saturday evening, with little beer to chuck away at the end.

Cider and perry

As befits a festival during CAMRA's annual Cider and Perry Month, the cider bar attracted a lot of interest, with heavy pressure on staff at busy times. Cider lovers finally drained the last of 340 gallons shortly before the festival closed.

Although real cider and its stablemate perry (made by fermenting pears) are available regularly in only a handful of Bedfordshire pubs, they have become highly popular at Bedford festivals. As with real ale, there is an enormous difference between real cider or perry and the processed keg products commonly available. As there is clearly demand, why do not more local pubs offer real cider and perry? Ask your local why not.

In the Howard Room

As well as the real ales, cider and perry in the main hall, the popular foreign beer bar in the Howard Room upstairs offered speciality draught and bottled beers from other European countries. With so many taking holidays abroad, local drinkers are now better informed about the great beer traditions of our neighbours. More local pubs now offer quality draught and bottled beers from Belgium and elsewhere, not just the usual imported lagers.

The Corn Exchange in-house caterers were a hit for the fifth year running, serving several thousand hot and cold meals during the week. Thanks to Sunil, Tracey and their team, comments on the food and service were very positive.

Entertainment

Local singer and satirist **Dr Busker**, who has become a regular at these festivals, helped launch the event on Wednesday evening with his sharp re-working of familiar songs. For the first time on Saturday evening, folk quartet **Hair of the Dog** brought the event to a rousing close with music and songs from Britain, Ireland and elsewhere. The **Bedford Morris Men**, without visiting teams this year, performed in the hall on Saturday lunchtime and early afternoon. Morris dancers are always thirsty and have a sharp nose for decent beer!

Thanks to the helpers...

CAMRA could not run the festival without unpaid volunteers. Chief Organiser Don Allan paid tribute to everyone involved in planning, managing and staffing it.

"Organising this festival takes months of planning and enough CAMRA members and friends willing to give their time behind the bars, glasses bar and the shop, spending chilly hours at the door, working as stewards or behind the scenes. Without a small army of volunteers, we just could not run an event of this sort."

Helpers included hard-working volunteers from outside the area, as well as local members and friends. East Bedfordshire CAMRA members ran the shop and tombola, while other helpers came from as far away as London, Lincoln and the North-west.

...and to the sponsors

The organisers were grateful to **Wells & Young's** for sponsoring the souvenir glasses once again, to train operator **First Capital Connect** for promoting the festival on the Bedford-London line and to local companies for sponsoring beer casks on the stillage.

Thanks were also due to the Corn Exchange staff for their help and co-operation, and to the many local pubs and clubs that kindly displayed posters advertising the festival.

The basement cloakroom was run once again by **Bedford Lions** in aid of local good causes. We believe that about £900 was again raised through the cloakroom and collection boxes. Many thanks to everyone who contributed.



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To allow settling not all beers will be available at any one time. Also some beers will become 'SOLD OUT' as the Festival progresses. Entertainment is on evening sessions only.

Beer Festivals

Elysian Winter Beer Festival

Fri 15 to Sat 16 January at the Maltings, Ship Lane, Ely CB7 4BB. Open Fri 12-10, Sat 12-6, admission £1, CAMRA members free. Range of winter beers, hot and cold food. www.elycamra.org.uk

National Winter Ales Festival

Wed 20 to Sat 23 January at the Sheridan Suite, Oldham Road, Manchester (five minutes from the city centre by bus). Open Wed 5-10.20, Thu-Sat 12-10.30, admission Wed/Thu £2 (concessions £1), Fri £3 before 4.30, then £5, Sat £3. CAMRA members free Thu until 4pm, discount other sessions. More than 200 beers including foreign beers, ciders and perries. Larger, more palatial venue than previous winter festivals. www.alefestival.org.uk

14th Cambridge Winter Ales Festival

Thu 21 to Sat 23 January at the University Social Club, Mill Lane (opposite Mill pub, bus stn 5 min). Open Thu 5-10.30, Fri 12-3, 5-10.30, Sat 12-10.30. Admission free Friday lunch, otherwise £2.50; CAMRA, USC and CURAS members free. More than 100 real ales, ciders + foreign beers, hot and cold food. Regular X5 express buses from Bedford. www.cambridgebeerfestival.com/winter

9th Derby Winter Beer Festival

Thu 4 to Sat 6 February at the Darwin Suite, Assembly Rooms, Market Place (bus station 1 min). Open Thu 6-11, Fri 11-12, Sat 11-11. Admission Thu £3, Fri/Sat lunch £2; Fri £4 eve (after 5pm), Sat eve £5. CAMRA members + under 30s free Thu, Fri/Sat lunch; £2 Fri/Sat eve. Over 100 real ales, cider, perry and foreign bottled beers. Souvenir glasses, T-shirts, hot and cold food. Live music every evening. East Midland Trains from Bedford. www.derbycamra.org.uk

11th Chelmsford Winter Beer Festival

Thu 4 to Sat 6 February at the Triangle Club, Essex County Council, Duke Street, CM1 1LX (rail stn 5 min). Open 12-11 daily, admission after 7pm Thu £3, Fri £5, Sat £2, CAMRA members free. Over 130 real ales, with an emphasis on winter brews, cider and Belgian beers. Souvenir glasses and food. www.chelmsfordcamra.org.uk

27th Luton Beer & Cider Festival

Thu 18 to Sat 20 February at Hightown Sports and Arts Centre, Concorde Street LU2 0JD ((rail stn 10 min). Open Thu 5 to 11, Fri/Sat 12-11,

admission Thu £2.50, Fri £2.50 before 6pm then £3.50, Sat £2.50 before 6pm then £1.50, CAMRA members free except Fri eve £1.50. About 80 real ales from independent brewers, cider, perry, foreign and bottled beers in two halls. Food available lunch to 3pm, eves to 9pm (9.30 Fri). Includes daily specials. Live entertainment evenings in one bar only. CAMRA books and products stall, passouts for smokers. www.sbedscamra.org.uk

26th London Drinker Beer & Cider Festival

Wed 10 to Fri 12 March at the Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, WC1H 9AU (near Kings Cross and St Pancras). Open Wed/Thu 12-3, 5-10.30, Fri 12-10.30, last admission 10pm. Entry Wed/Thu lunch free, otherwise £3.50, CAMRA members £2. Over 70 real ales, imported beers, ciders + perries. Tombola, table games + excellent food. Wheelchair access, no music. www.camranorthlondon.org

St Neots Booze on the Ouse Beer Festival

Thu 18 to Sat 20 March at the Priory Centre, Priory Lane, PE19 2BH. Open Thu 5-10.45, Fri/Sat 12-10.45, admission Thu/Fri before 7pm £1, Thu eve £2, Fri eve £3, Sat £1 all day, CAMRA members free all sessions. More than 50 cask beers, foreign beers, real cider, souvenir glass, tombola, CAMRA shop. Hot and cold food, free soft drinks for drivers. Regular X5 express buses from Bedford. www.huntscamra.org.uk/festivals

27th Luton Beer & Cider Festival



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Friday 6pm - 11pm	£1.50	£3.50	Saturday - Cerberus
Saturday 11am - 6pm	Free	£2.50	(Main Hall is music free at all times)
Saturday 6pm - 11pm	Free	£1.50	

No admission to persons aged under 18. Proof of age may be required. We reserve the right to refuse admission. Last admission 10.30pm. All details correct at time of publishing and may be subject to change.

www.sbedscamra.org.uk for latest details

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London Pub Tour

A tour around some of the historical pubs of Belgravia

On Saturday 25th July a party of fifteen members from North, South and East Beds CAMRA branches set off on an epic tour of pubs in the Belgravia area of London. We met in the Princess Louise in Holborn, which everybody knew, so no one got lost at the start.

We made our way to the **Wilton Arms (1)**, in Kinnerton Street - a Shepherd Neame pub with Master Brew, Spitfire and Bishops Finger on draught, a nice pub with a pleasant atmosphere. Almost next door, so not too far too stroll, is the **Nags Head (2)**, a truly rustic pub serving Adnams Bitter and Broadside.

A short walk took us to the **Grenadier (3)** in Wilton Row. This is down a very small side street, and sometimes there is an armed guard on duty! At the entrance to the street, the Grenadier had on Batemans XXXB, Stronginthearm, Wadworths, Timothy Taylor's Landlord, plus others. An eye needs to be kept on the map to find the **Star Tavern (4)**, tucked away down Belgravia Mews West - a nice Fuller's pub, with their full range, including London Porter. We could have stayed all day but we had to proceed to the next on, which caused a few moans, as it was quite a hike!!



The **Antelope (5)** in Eaton Terrace is a Fuller's house with the full range. This is a pleasant little pub tucked out of the way in a residential area. On to the **Duke of Wellington (6)**, also in Eaton Terrace, just down the road on the left, a Shepherd Neame pub with all their beers - a small place, with a TV which is not too intrusive.

Finally on to the last pub on this particular tour: the **Fox & Hounds (7)** in Passmore Street., which sells Young's beers.

From here it was just a short walk to Sloane Square tube station and back into central London and the train home. I think everybody enjoyed the day, and I am having fun researching another tour in a different part of London.

Malcolm Lloyd



Local pub campaigns

Pubs are closing every month throughout the country, with villages especially losing vital community facilities. However, some local people are prepared to stand up and fight for their pub.

Five Bells, Riseley

The villagers' campaign to re-open the Five Bells, reported in our last issue, seems to have been successful, with Bedford Borough Council's refusal to give permission for change of use to a private house. Campaign organiser Martyn Wady writes:

A Huge Victory!

Thanks to amazing support for the campaign to save the Five Bells, Bedford planners have rejected the 'change the use' application without even putting it to committee. The application was rejected on the grounds that permanent closure of the Five Bells would result in loss of a valuable amenity and have a long-term negative impact on the village. This claim that The Five Bells was currently untenable as a business was considered an invalid reason for change of use. This ruling should not be underestimated, as it was a huge step towards realising our long-term goal to get the pub reopened.

Back On The Market

Following the planners' decision and the reasons given, the developer has decided not to appeal the judgement and has put the Bells back on the market for the original selling price of £300,000. The Five Bells is once more up for sale, but now with the strict stipulation that it can only be sold as a public house.

Support for the pub and the tentative green shoots of economic recovery have led to a number of interested parties viewing the Bells, each with ideas on how to capitalise on the extensive premises and local business opportunities. By mid-November, a number of offers had been put forward, but we do not yet know whether one has yet been accepted.

The Campaign Continues

While defeating the planning application and getting the Five Bells back on the market as a pub is a

massive victory, it's not the end. A key element of our campaign has always been to help and assist anyone willing to re-open the pub as much as possible, with marketing support and advice or more practical assistance. That commitment remains. Regardless of the amount of interest shown in the pub, the campaign continues to promote the business possibilities of the Five Bells to prospective buyers such as small breweries and independent microbrewery companies. For further information, call Lynne Clayton on 07903 886512 or Martyn Wady on 01234 709333, or visit www.savethefivebells.org.uk

White Horse, Riseley

Meanwhile, a new campaign has been stirring in Riseley, where Charles Wells closed the White Horse more than a year ago.

The new owners had purchased the premises for conversion to a private house, but as with the Five Bells, their application for change of change of use was rejected by Bedford Borough Council, again on the grounds of lost amenity. Campaigners are currently waiting to see whether they will appeal or "re-apply", but neither course is likely to change the decision unless a persuasive new argument can be put forward.

If the refusal is upheld, the White Horse is likely to be worth more as a pub than as a property for potential conversion. Although no one can compel an owner to re-open a pub, market forces may act in favour of its eventual re-opening.

The campaigners believe there is firm local support for re-opening the White Horse. They are currently considering whether to form a village co-operative to buy and run the pub as a social enterprise. This approach almost succeeded a few years ago, when locals launched a community company to buy the Three Fyshes in Turvey. Although Greene King eventually sold the prem-

ises to another pub company prepared to re-open it, the Fyshes might have become Bedfordshire's first community-owned pub.

For more information on the White Horse campaign, contact Paul Ellerington at paul@ellerington.net

Royal George, Stagsden



Campaigners in Stagsden have also formed an action group to save the Royal George, closed by Charles Wells and sold during 2009. In this case, the new owner seems genuinely interested in re-opening the pub, probably as a smart pub/restaurant, with part of the extensive garden to be used for a pair of upmarket executive homes.

Better news than elsewhere, but the action group is not yet ready to disband. After collecting over 300 signatures on a petition to save the pub, the campaigners have conducted a survey to find out what villagers want from their pub. "Save our Pub" posters have appeared in many windows in the village. The action group has offered to meet the new owners to discuss the pub's future. The villagers of Stagsden find it lonely and quiet without their pub, having nowhere else to spend a convivial evening within the village. The local sense of community has been challenged and huge effort is needed to get back what they have lost – but success will be sweet.

For more information on the campaign, contact Lyndsay Maguire on lynz099@btinternet.com

**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 at the foot of this page.

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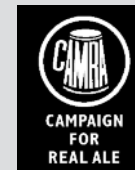
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Britain's National Drink – The Cask Report 2009 - 10 by Pete Brown

'Helping British pubs beat the recession' is the subtitle of this report, recently published, in which beer marketing expert Pete Brown argues that cask ale is playing a positive role in helping the pub trade in these difficult economic times.

The sponsors of the research include CAMRA, the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA), The Independent Family Brewers of Britain (IFBB), the Cask Marque Trust and several of the larger regional real ale brewers including Bedford's very own Wells & Young's. The data behind the report come from: The British Beer and Pub Association's annual barrelage survey, adjusted to include an estimate of microbrewery volumes; Neilsen's publications *Drinks Strategic Overview – on-trade*, *Cask Ale Report*, and *Ad Dynamix*; CGA Strategy; Brulines; and the Target Group Index (TGI). Pete has interpreted statistics from these sources to arrive at some overall conclusions which may seem surprisingly optimistic; 'Cask ale', he says in conclusion, 'is ideally positioned to be the next big thing'.

If a pub stocks well-kept cask ale, more drinkers are attracted to the pub – often the cask ale drinker chooses the pub to go to, and others tag along; cask ale drinkers visit pubs more often than other drinkers, with a higher spend per visit. Cask ale volumes sold declined slightly in 2008, but cask ale sales in both volume and value have increased in 2009 to date – coming out of recession faster than Pete Brown had earlier predicted they would. Cask ale's share of total beer sold is showing a long-term increase, as is the total number of people who drink real ale. The number of women who drink real ale is increasing particularly rapidly. In terms of increase of sale volumes, cask ale is outperforming not only all other types of beer, but most other drinks in pubs – beating wine and most spirits. In the off-trade, sales of premium bottled ales, including bottle-conditioned ales, are still showing strong growth,

despite their high price compared to the lager brands often sold at heavy discounts in supermarkets. In fact, premium ales are the only category of beer showing growth in off-sales volume.

Within the overall category of cask ale, real ales produced by the major multinational brewing companies – who concentrate on their international lager brands – are still showing falls in sales volume. It is the large regional brewers specialising in real ale that are showing strong growth, with Adnam's Bitter, Bombardier, Greene King IPA, London Pride, Marston's Pedigree and Deuchars IPA being major beneficiaries. The smaller brewers belonging to the SIBA are also reporting double-figure percentage year-on-year sales growth. Because these are local and regional beers, there is wide variation between regions in cask ale sales – cask ale sales are particularly strong in the Southeast, especially London, and in Scotland.

The proportion of all pubs serving cask ale has risen from 48% to 51% in one year, and major contributors to this growth have been M&B – whose policy is now to stock real ale in all their houses, including Toby Inns and Crown Carveries – and Tattershall Castle. Wetherspoons' continued expansion, despite the recession, also contributes to the increase in the number of outlets for real ale, as do the increases in the numbers of Marston's and Greene King houses. While the increase in the percentage of pubs selling real ale may also, sadly, reflect closures of pubs that do not, this indicates that real ale helps pubs to survive. So the message is – licensees, cask ale is good for your wealth!

Fytton Rowland
Editor, The Firkin

Join CAMRA today!

THE Campaign for Real Ale was founded by four worried men in 1971 to keep real ale alive. Thirty-seven years later we have 100,000 members and more than 600 British breweries brewing over 2,500 different varieties of real ale.

So what does CAMRA do?

Fight pub closures

CAMRA research shows that more than 80 pubs closed every month in Britain during 2008. Most of these were local community pubs, often run down by their owners and turned into private houses for a quick profit. Many communities no longer have a pub at all. CAMRA works through initiatives such as the Community Pubs Foundation and Pub is the Hub to stop unnecessary pub closures. The next one under threat might be your local!

Fight short measure

Did you realise that 9 out of 10 "pints" of draught beer contain less than 100% liquid? Consumers lose over a million pounds a day through short measure. CAMRA is pressing the Government to change the law so you get what you pay for – a full 20 fluid ounce pint every time.

Promote guest beers

Six out of ten pubs cannot offer a guest beer of their choice. Two thirds are tied to a single brewery or to a pub company that restricts what they can buy. CAMRA campaigns for a guest beer law to give licensees the right to serve a guest beer of their choice in British pubs.

Achievements

CAMRA's many achievements include: Helping change the law to allow pubs to open longer where it suits the local community. Running a powerful campaign for small brewers' duty relief, helping small breweries to invest and become more viable. Working with local people to save hundreds of community pubs from closure. Organising more than 150 beer festivals a year, including the Great British Beer Festival at London's Earls Court Arena. Encouraging members to survey pubs, organise and work at beer festivals, and actively campaign for real ale in real pubs.

Read more about CAMRA's successful campaigning at www.camra.org.uk

Join CAMRA today!

If you want to make a difference, join CAMRA today! For less than the price of a pint a month, you can join 100,000 other members throughout Britain and help campaign for quality real ale and good pubs.

Single membership costs only £22 a year, reduced to £14 over age 60, under age 26, unemployed or disabled. Save £2 a year and get three months free if you pay by direct debit. Use the form opposite, call 01727 867201 or visit www.camra.org.uk/joinus.

Wells and Young's to be Fit for the Olympics!

Bedford's Wells & Young's Brewing Company recently announced a campaign 'Fit for 2012' with an Olympics theme. Mostly the campaign is an internal one intended to inspire their staff to greater efforts, but one of their mission statements is of interest to CAMRA members too:

'Retain the position of being the number one privately owned brewing company in the UK through focusing our efforts on Bombardier, Red Stripe, Young's Bitter, Courage Best and Corona, adding £5 million of earnings over the next five years. In short, 5 in 5 with 5 (BRYCC).'

BRYCC, in case you are wondering, is an acronym for the five chosen beers. Three real ales out of the five isn't bad, either. But we might ask, what's happened to Directors, perhaps the most historic and distinguished of W&Y's real ales?

Meanwhile, Bedfordshire on Sunday on 29 November reported that W&Y are making job cuts 'in order to secure our future' in the light of the VAT and duty increases due to take place on 1 January. A number of people have already applied for voluntary redundancy, but the company cannot yet say what the final number of job losses will be. W&Y is Bedford's largest private-sector employer.

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Branch Diary



BRANCH business meetings are normally held on the third Thursday of alternate months, e.g. January and March. Social and campaigning events are usually held on the second 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.northbedscamra.org.uk

JANUARY

Thursday 14th January – rural pub tour 1

Visiting selected pubs, probably south and east of Bedford. Minibus leaves Wellington Arms at 7pm. Book seat with John Martin, £7 contribution to costs to be collected on the night.

Thursday 21st January – branch meeting

Business meeting including shortlisting entries for Good Beer Guide 2011, at the Three Cups, Newnham Street, Bedford, 8 for 8.15pm. CAMRA members only.

FEBRUARY

Thursday 4th February – rural pub tour 2

Visiting selected pubs, probably south and east of Bedford. Minibus leaves Wellington Arms at 7pm. Book seat with John Martin, £7 contribution to costs to be collected on the night.

Thursday 11th February

– Good Beer Guide selection

Special branch meeting to select entries for Good Beer Guide 2011. At the Three Cups, Newnham Street, Bedford, 8 for 8.15pm. CAMRA members only.

Friday 19th February – Branch social at the Luton Beer & Cider Festival

Meet on train from Bedford or at the festival about 8pm. See Winter Festivals feature for further information. All welcome.

MARCH

Monday 8th March – Bedford Beer & Cider Festival 2010 organising meeting

Meeting to form an organising committee for the next Bedford festival in October 2010. Details to be confirmed – contact Don Allan if you are interested.

Thursday 11th March – Mystery pub tour

Visiting selected pubs by minibus. Details including cost and start time to be announced. Check website or What's Brewing for details.

Thursday 25th March – Branch meeting

Business meeting at the ThreeCups, Newnham Street, Bedford, 8 for 8.15pm. CAMRA members only.

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Produced by local beer drinkers for local beer drinkers – a select target audience. Our readers use shops and taxis to get home, buy insurance and drive cars, as well as spending time in the pub. They also include pub and club licensees.

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- Simple artwork created at no extra cost, or supply your own

- Reserve space in the next issue by 1st February

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