

The Firkin



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

**Newsletter of CAMRA North Bedfordshire Branch
Winter 2006/07 Vol 31 No 4 FREE!**



**Staff beauty parade at Bedford
Beer & Cider Festival in October
Will you be there next time?**

Photo by courtesy of Mark Lindsay-White

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**A merry Christmas and happy
New Year to all our readers –
licensees, pub staff, pub cus-
tomers and advertisers.**

**We make no charge for the Firkin. If you
enjoy reading it and take a copy home,
please be generous and put a
seasonal donation in your
pub's charity box.**

Cheers – North Beds CAMRA



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

The Royal George



Wells Eagle + Adnams Broadside
 Guest ales changing weekly
 Lunches daily + Sunday 12-2
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 Relaxed atmosphere
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80 Westgate, Peterborough
 Cambridgeshire PE1 2AA

Email. oakhamales@aol.com

Jeffrey Hudson Bitter
 3.8% A.B.V.



A golden beer whose aroma is dominated by hops that give characteristic citrus notes. Hops and fruit on the palate are balanced by malt and a bitter base. Dry hoppy finish with soft fruit flavours.



White Dwarf
 4.3% A.B.V.



Piercing bitterness in this 'bite' English style wheat beer, mellows to reveal fruit overtones amidst a dry as bone finish. A real thirst quencher.



Bishops Farewell
 4.6% A.B.V.



A strong premium beer of structured quality dominated by elaborate fruity hop notes, with a grainy background and dry finish.



SEASONAL ALES

SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY



Community Pubs Week

17 – 24 February 2007

CAMRA's annual National Pubs Week has got a new identity, with its re-launch as Community Pubs Week. This new week of action is designed to raise the profile of pubs in the community and to promote pubs as an asset to their local communities.

Going, going, gone...

It is a worrying fact that at least 26 pubs are closing in Britain every month. Early indications from new CAMRA research suggest that this figure could actually be even higher.

Worse still, the great majority of these pubs are not high street chain outlets or theme bars, but community pubs, recognised by most people these days as important local amenities. The local pub is often the heart of the community.

A hub for local people

CAMRA defines a community pub as a pub that appeals to a wide cross-section of the local community, rather than being predominantly targeted at particular social or age groups.

Chief Executive Mike Benner explained why CAMRA believes community pubs deserve our support. "All TV and radio soaps have community pubs – the Bull, the Rovers Return, the Queen Vic, the Woolpack. Sadly, many real communities in rural and urban areas are in serious danger of losing, or indeed have already lost their community pub.

"Community pubs, particularly in more remote rural areas, are often a hub in the lives of local people. None of us wants to be in a situation where the only way we speak to our neighbours is through a car window or at a supermarket many miles away. However an increasing number of these pubs are being permanently lost.

"The smoking ban coming into force across the UK means that pubs face a difficult time in 2007. People need to realise that their local is a valuable asset worth protecting.

"We know people care about their communities – four million people recently signed a petition calling for the Government to do more to save rural post offices. Unless we do something to curb the trend, CAMRA fears that many communities will lose their local pub for good."



Nothing can match the British pub

CAMRA has run National Pubs Week for four years to persuade more people to visit pubs more often. CAMRA members across the country have worked hard to promote pub-going in a period of growth in home drinking. Despite low supermarket prices, nothing can match the British pub for its service and atmosphere.

CAMRA is now changing the focus of its week of action to help raise the profile and importance of pubs in the community. The new Community Pubs Week will celebrate and promote all community pubs – urban and rural locals alike.

Get promotional material for your pub

Promotional beer mats, posters and advice sheets are available from 1st December for pubs that wish to take part in the campaign. To order promotional material, call 01727 867201 or email cressida.feiler@camra.org.uk. Further information about the campaign is available online at www.camra.org.uk/communitypubsweek

Local CAMRA members will support Community Pubs Week with a pub crawl in Bedford's Russell Park (see page 15).

Another great festival!

CAMRA's 29th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival in October was yet another success for the organisers. Held again in the Corn Exchange, the town's premier entertainment venue, the festival sold almost 18,000 pints of real ale, cider, perry and foreign beers between Wednesday and Saturday.

Broader spread of suppliers

The festival was about the same size as in 2005, with about 114 different real ales from 35 breweries, 30 different brands of real cider and perry, and a range of draught and bottled beers from Belgium and other European countries. The breweries represented, however, came from a much broader geographical spread than in 2005, when hosting a regional competition had meant offering mainly EastAnglian beers.

Although only a handful of Bedfordshire pubs sell real cider or its stable mate perry, made from pears, the popularity of these traditional fermented fruit drinks has certainly earned cider a regular place in the festival's title. As with draught beers, there is a world of difference between real cider or perry and the processed keg ciders available in most pubs.

Wells & Young's

As most local people now know, Young's of Wandsworth in London joined Charles Wells to form a new brewing company at the beginning of October. Although the two parent companies are maintaining their separate pub estates, beers for both are now brewed at the Wells plant in Queen's Park, Bedford.



A busy evening session at the bars

As the launch coincided with the festival in its home town, the new Wells & Young's Brewing Company was prominent at the event, with its logo on the glasses. All four regular real ales were available on handpumps – Wells Eagle IPA, Wells Bombardier, Young's Bitter and Young's Special – all four brewed in Bedford. Casks of the last Young's Waggle dance and Ramrod from Wandsworth were also available on the bar.

Getting it right

Problems with lack of choice on the Saturday at previous festivals were largely overcome by making new beers available after the most popular sessions on Thursday and Friday evenings. Foresight in planning the cellar ensured that a reasonable range remained available until Saturday evening.

Although customers come to beer festivals expecting a decent choice, it is risky for organisers to order too much as unsold beer can make all the difference between profit and loss on the event. Half-empty casks of live beer cannot be returned or used elsewhere, and unlike a pub running its own festival, cannot be sold the following week.



Wells' Bombardier Bus toured the town centre

Photos left, top right and front page
by courtesy of Mark Lindsay-White

October is Cider and Perry Month

As always, real cider and perry sold like those proverbial hot cakes, although any local cider tradition in Bedfordshire was lost long ago. October is now CAMRA's Cider and Perry Month.

The ever popular foreign beer bar offered speciality draught and bottled beers from Belgium, Germany, the USA and other countries.

The Corn Exchange in-house caterers were a winner for the second year running, serving hot and cold meals to several thousand visitors during the week. Feedback from visitors about the food quality was consistently favourable.

Entertainment

Local singer and satirist **Dr Busker** got the festival off to a fine start on Wednesday evening with his usual irreverence and musical wit. On Saturday evening, local band **Paul Roberts & The Swingers** brought the festival to a rousing close with a range of jazz and blues numbers.

The **Bedford Morris Men** and several visiting teams in Bedford for the annual Day of Dance demonstrated their skills on Saturday lunchtime. Morris dancers are always thirsty and have a sharp nose for decent beer!

Many thanks to helpers...

Chief organiser Peter Argyle paid tribute to everyone involved in planning, managing and staffing the event.

"Organising this festival requires months of planning and enough CAMRA volunteers and friends willing to give their time free to work behind the bars, glasses and other functions. We couldn't run the festival without volunteers."



East Beds CAMRA members ran the shop



A great place to party!

Helpers included a number of hard-working volunteers from outside the area, as well as local member and friends. East Bedfordshire CAMRA members ran the shop and tombola, while the entire team of stewards greeting visitors at the door came up from Luton every day. Other helpers came from even further afield.

... and to sponsors

The organisers were grateful to the new **Wells & Young's Brewing Company** for sponsoring the souvenir glasses and banners displayed around the town, to beer supplier **Waverley TBS** for sponsoring the free soft drinks and the press and trade preview, to **Everards Brewery** for sponsoring hire of bar counters, to train operator **First Capital Connect** for promoting the festival in stations along the Bedford-Brighton line, to the Corn Exchange staff for their help and co-operation, and to all the local pubs and clubs that displayed posters advertising the festival.

The basement cloakroom was run once again by **Bedford Lions** to raise money for their local charities. We are delighted that almost £1,000 was again raised through the cloakroom and the collection bucket at the door. Many thanks to everyone for their generosity – the money raised will all go to local good causes.

Volunteers needed!

The 30th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival will open from **Wednesday 3rd to Saturday 6th October 2007**, providing enough volunteers come forward again to organise and staff the event. If you are interested in helping, please call Peter Argyle on 01234 822698 or email festival@northbedscamra.org.uk

Pub news

Cock, Pavenham

Welcome to new landlord Brendan, who took over this friendly village pub in October. Brendan previously ran the Blacksmiths Arms, Ravensden. The food menu offers traditional, home-cooked dishes, including steaks, pies, daily specials and a choice of roasts on Sunday. Greene King IPA, Abbot and a weekly guest beer are available on handpump. The bar now opens all day every day from 12 noon. As dining space is limited, it is advisable to book your table beforehand on 01234 822834.



Change of hands at the Cock, Pavenham

Queen, Preston Road, Bedford

Welcome to new landlords Allan and Theresa at this community pub in Queen's Park. The pumps offer Wells Eagle IPA, but Allan hopes to add a regular guest beer soon. Although there is no food, there is a fun quiz night every Thursday and a brand new heated patio to accommodate smokers when the smoking ban comes in next summer.

Five Bells, Cople

Apologies to new landlord Thomas Kilroy for incorrectly reporting in our last issue that the pub was specialising in Nepalese cuisine. Although Thomas has interests in Nepal, the Five Bells offers modern British cuisine such as steak and ale hotpot, char-grilled steaks and creative fish dishes. Greene King IPA and Abbot are available on handpump. As Thomas's quality cooking has already created demand, it is wise to book a table beforehand – call 01234 838289.



British cuisine at the Five Bells, Cople

Balloon, Foster Hill Road, Bedford

Welcome to new landlords Chris and Louise, who arrived at this attractive corner pub just north of the town centre in October. Open all day every day from 12 noon, with active domino, darts and pool. Greene King IPA and rotating guest beers, including Abbot Ale, are available on handpump. A new food service may start in the New Year.

Bell, Westbourne Road, Bedford

A belated welcome to new landlord Bradleigh (formerly of the Barley Mow in St Loyes St), who took over this local community pub in Queen's Park a few months ago. Greene King IPA and regular guest beers (Batemans XB was next on when we called recently) are available, with bar staff Lisa and Sarah usually behind the pumps. The pub runs regular karaoke nights every other week and is hosting various community parties around the festive season.

Three Cranes, Turvey

Welcome to new landlord Tony Murphy, recently arrived at this former coaching inn near the parish church. Home-cooked meals, bar snacks and daily specials such as fish pie or lasagne are available lunchtime and evening, with Greene King IPA, Abbot, Old Speckled Hen and usually two guest beers on the handpumps – Tom Wood's Bomber County was on when we last visited. The pub also offers bed and breakfast, occasional live music and is open from 11am through to 1am on Friday and Saturday.

Pub news



New team at the Swan, Bromham

Swan, Bromham

Welcome to new landlady Jennyfer Lennon, who took over the Swan in late October. The Swan is a cosy inn with a friendly atmosphere, open all day for Greene King IPA, Abbot and guest ales. An extensive menu of quality meals, snacks and daily specials is available from 12 to 9.45 Monday to Saturday and from 12 to 8.45 on Sunday, when there is also a traditional roast.

Magpie, Harrod

Our apologies for failing to welcome new licensees Tanya and Terry and in our last issue. Hot meals and sandwiches are available at reasonable times, with Wells Eagle IPA and guest beers on handpump. A bonus beer card offers a free pint for every ten pints bought between 5 and 6 pm on Monday to Friday.

Banker's Draft, High Street, Bedford

This town centre Wetherspoon pub now offers a regular Potton Brewery beer. After a customer competition, a new 4.3 per cent abv premium bitter brewed specially for the pub has been named **Beat the Banker**.

Crown, Willington

Our apologies to Lindsay and colleagues at the Crown for using details from a year-old advert for the pub's advert in the last issue. The amended advert is printed on the right.

Rose and Crown, Wootton

After catering through an Indian restaurant for several years, the menu has now changed to more traditional fare and offers a carvery most days.

Coventry Arms, Queen's Park, Bedford

This traditional community corner pub closed recently, with no sign of resurrection. It may well be demolished to make way for new housing.

Cross Keys, Kempston Wood End

After nearly two years boarded up and looking ripe for demolition, an extended, refurbished Cross Keys was re-opened by the Licciardi family in July as a free house and restaurant. There is a large bar with adjacent carvery and an impressive 90-seat restaurant at the rear. The bar offers real Wells Eagle IPA and Bombardier and a range of bar meals. The carvery is open from 12.30 to 9pm daily, while the new Fratelli Italian Restaurant is also open at lunchtime and evenings.

The Crown



Mobile bar and catering available

Big screen Sky Sports

Food served daily 12-2 and 5-8

3 real ales, great lager and wines

Sun lunch 12-3 - 2 courses £6.95



Large beer garden

Families welcome

We are dog friendly



17 Station Road, Willington

01234 838308

Winter beer festivals

6th Derby Winter Beer Festival

Thu 4 to Sat 6 January, Darwin Suite, Assembly Rooms, Market Place (rail station 10 min). Open (admission price) Thu 6-11 (£3), Fri/Sat 11-4 (£2) and 5-11 (£5), discounts for CAMRA members and students. More than 75 real ales, cider, perry, foreign bottled beers and fruit wines. Top quality entertainment every night. Midland Main Line trains run from Bedford. For further details check www.derbycamra.org.uk

National Winter Ales Festival

Wed 17 to Sat 20 January, New Century Hall, Corporation Street, Manchester (Victoria Station 5 min). Open Wed 5.30-10.30 Thu 4.30-10.30, Fri 12-10.30, Sat 12-10.30. Admission £3 (Fri £4 after 5pm), students and pensioners Wed £2, CAMRA members £1 off throughout. Over 200 beers, including winter warmers, bottled real ales, ciders and perries. CAMRA's Champion Winter Beer of Britain awards announced on Thursday. Live entertainment Thu/Sat eves. Tickets available at the door. For further details check www.winterales.uku.co.uk



St Neots Beer Festival (Booze on the Ouse)

**Thu 1st to Sat 3rd March 2007
at the Priory Centre
Happy hour Thu 6-7 and Fri 5-7
See details right**

11th Cambridge Winter Ale Festival

Thu 25 to Sat 27 January, University Sports & Social Club, Mill Lane (bus station 10 min). Open Thu 5-10.30, Fri 12- 3, 5-10.30, Sat 12-10.30. Admission £2.50, CAMRA members free. About 120 beers featuring seasonal ales and winter warmers, but also plenty of session beers. Hot and cold food available. Sorry no family room and no under-18s admitted to evening sessions. Regular X5 express bus service from Bedford. For further details, check website at www.cambridge-camra.org.uk/waf

7th Chelmsford Winter Beer Festival

Thu 1 to Sat 3 February at Triangle Club, Essex County Council, Duke Street (rail station 5 min). Open Thu 6-11, Fri/Sat 12-11, admission after 7pm Thu £3, Fri £4, Sat £2, CAMRA members free. Over 60 beers including winter warmers, plus ciders and Belgian beers. Food available at all sessions. For further details call 01245 600294 or check www.chelmsfordcamra.org.uk

24th Luton Beer Festival – probably!

Thu 15 to Sat 17 February at the new Hightown Community Sports & Arts Centre, Concorde Street (rail station 5 min). Dates and venue are still provisional as we go to press. For confirmation and further details, check the South Beds CAMRA website at www.sbedscamra.org.uk in the New Year.

St Neots Beer Festival (Booze on the Ouse)

Thu 1 to Sat 3 March, Priory Centre, Priory Lane (near town centre). Open Thu 6-10.45, Fri 12-3, 5-10.45, Sat 12-10.45, no entry or re-admission after 10.30. Admission £1 except Fri 12-3 free, Thu/Fri after 7pm £2, CAMRA members free at all times. Happy Hour with reduced price draught beer Thu 6-7 and Fri 5-7. More than 40 real ales, ciders and bottled foreign beers during the week. Hot and cold food at all sessions, free soft drinks for designated drivers, supervised children welcome until 9pm. Regular X5 express bus service from Bedford. For further details call 01480 355893 or check the Hunts CAMRA website at www.huntscamra.org.uk/festivals

Greene King kills brewing in Kimberley

CAMRA has condemned Greene King's decision to close the Hardys & Hansons brewery in Kimberley, Nottingham, by the end of 2006.

Despite thousands of Hardys & Hansons drinkers signing a petition to keep the 174-year-old brewery open, Greene King has announced that brewing will be moved to Bury St Edmunds by Christmas. The Kimberley site will be retained as little more than a distribution centre for Greene King in the midlands and the north.

Angry reaction

CAMRA members in Nottingham have reacted with anger at the news. Andrew Ludlow, of the *Save Hardys & Hansons Brewery Group* said: "Only weeks after acquiring this remarkable Victorian brewery, Greene King has ignored calls from beer drinkers across the UK to keep brewing in Kimberley. We have not given up and we will continue our campaign until Greene King reverses its decision."

CAMRA has called on its 84,000 members and all lovers of good beer to support its campaign to keep the brewery open by sending postcards condemning the closure to Greene King, or by signing the online petition at www.camra.org.uk

Unnecessary loss

Mike Benner, CAMRA's Chief Executive said: "We regard this as an unnecessary loss. Despite a history of brewery closures, Greene King has shown with its acquisition of Belhaven that it can integrate other breweries into a growing empire. We urge Greene King to follow this approach with the Kimberley Brewery.

"We are calling on Greene King to maintain the Hardys & Hansons real ales, including the bitter. We don't want to see Hardys & Hansons beers being replaced by Greene King beers in the pubs of Nottingham. Loss of consumer choice is almost always the end result of consolidation."

"Greene King is a major brewer and promoter of real ale, but it has to listen to real ale drinkers, reverse its decision, invest in the Hardys & Hansons brewery and promote genuine Hardys & Hansons beers for the future."



Hardys & Hansons Kimberley Brewery on a CAMRA branch visit in 2001

Other lost breweries

Over the last ten years, Greene King has taken over a series of real ale breweries. In every case except one (Belhaven), the brewing plants have been closed and the beers either discontinued or transferred to Bury St Edmunds. Most of the pubs were absorbed into the Greene King estate.

Ironically, the company's fast growth is making it increasingly vulnerable to takeovers itself. Rumours are circulating about a future bid from rival super-regional Wolverhampton & Dudley, although it is not certain whether a merger of the two to create yet another national giant would be cleared by the competition authorities. Despite an element of *schadenfreude* at seeing Greene King get a taste of its own medicine, CAMRA would certainly oppose it.

CAMRA is now calling on the Government to restore the now defunct guest beer law before yet more of Britain's independent brewers are lost.

Christmas gift membership offers

It is always difficult to decide what to buy family and friends at Christmas. Look no further! CAMRA is offering a variety of Gift Membership packages that can be enjoyed by Dad, Mum, Brother, or even Auntie Flo!

Single membership with Good Bottled Beer Guide 6th Edition and bottle opener key-ring — £25

This package will suit family or friends who enjoy bottled real ale, whether in a pub or in the comfort of his or her own home. A year's CAMRA membership and the new *Good Bottled Beer Guide*, the bible for all aficionados of real ale in a bottle, which profiles nearly 800 bottle-conditioned beers is a great match. The bottle opener key-ring finishes off this ideal gift package! Includes 33% discount – usually retails at £33.44 including postage.

Single membership with tie and bottle opener key-ring — £30

This package offers CAMRA membership for a year, a blue silk CAMRA tie and bottle opener key-ring. The ideal gift for any male in the family. Over 10% discount – usually retails at £33.45 including postage.

Single membership with Good Beer Guide 2007 — £28

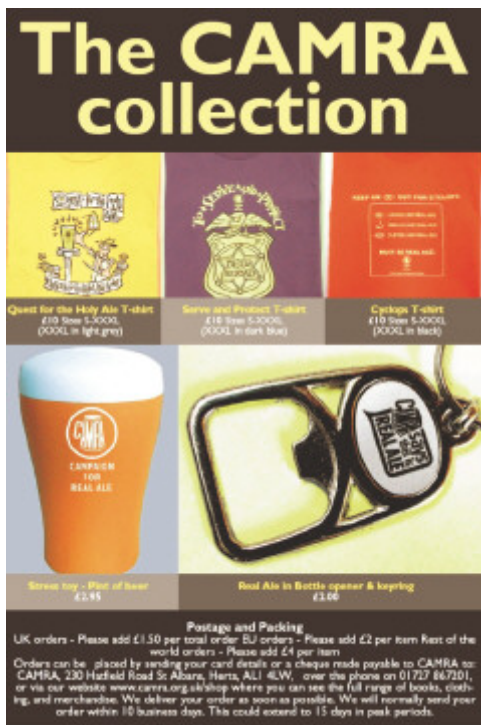
Every beer lover's ideal gift for Christmas! A year's CAMRA membership and a copy of CAMRA's best selling *Good Beer Guide* profiling the best 4,500 pubs in Britain. Includes over 20% discount – usually retails at £34.49 including postage.

Single membership with Big Book of Beer — £28

The final gift package offers a year's CAMRA membership and a copy of the fantastic *Big Book of Beer*. This book includes everything you need to know about beer including its history and traditions, and explains in depth who brews the beer and the breweries that produce it from the UK to Europe and beyond! Includes over 20% discount – usually retails at £34.49 including postage.

To purchase one of these Christmas gift offers, please call 01727 867201 or visit www.camra.org.uk/shop

All Christmas gift offers come post free.



The CAMRA collection

Quest for the Holy Ale T-shirt
£10 (Size S-XXXL, (POOR in light green))

Serve and Protect T-shirt
£10 (Size S-XXXL, (POOR in dark blue))

Caskage T-shirt
£10 (Size S-XXXL, (POOR in black))

Serve tag - Stop of Beer
£2.95

Real Ale in Bottle opener & keyring
£3.99

Postage and Packing
UK orders - Please add £1.50 per total order EU orders - Please add £2 per item Rest of the world orders - Please add £4 per item

Orders can be placed by sending your card details or a cheque made payable to CAMRA on CAMRA, 220 Hatfield Road St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LN, or on the phone on 01727 867201, or via our website www.camra.org.uk/shop where you can see the full range of books, clothing, and merchandise. We deliver your order as soon as possible. We will normally send your order within 10 business days. This could extend to 15 days in peak periods.



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Current Titles from CAMRA Books

Books for Beer Lovers

THE BEST PUBS IN BRITAIN

GOOD BEER GUIDE

NEW!

2007

EDITED BY ROGER PROTZ



The Good Beer Guide
...the perfect book
when you're out!
Andrew Hines!

The completely independent guide to more than 1250 German
breweries, 7500 German beers plus great places to try them

NEW!

Good BEER Guide GERMANY

STEVE THOMAS

Includes details on
how to get there

GOOD BOTTLED BEER GUIDE

JEFF EVANS

NEW!

THE CAMRA GUIDE TO REAL ALE IN A BOTTLE

A guide to Britain's best 600 pubs for real food and YES ale

Good Pub Food

Susan Nowak & Jill Adam

NEW!

Foreword by Jean-Christophe Novelli



Buy these books online at
www.camra.org.uk/books
or phone 01727 867201

Regional beer awards

EVERY year, tasting panels formed by CAMRA branches to evaluate beers brewed in the East Anglia Region (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk) nominate the best beers brewed in each county.

Cross-county panels are then formed to compare the best and select the best beers brewed in the region for each category. A regional champion is finally selected from the five category winners and the best runner-up.

Who are the Champions?

The Champion Beer of East Anglia 2006 award and the Old Ale category award were won by **Old Stoat Wobbler** (6% abv) from **Spectrum Ales**, Wymondham, Norfolk. A complex dark brew with a fruity nose and chocolate flavour notes. The other award winners were:

■ **Hotel Porter** (4.1% abv) from **Farmer's Ales**, Maldon, Essex. A bitter oatmeal stout.

■ **Golden Jackal** (3.7%) from the **Wolf Brewery**, Attleborough, Norfolk. A golden ale with a hoppy citrus nose.

■ **The Village Bike** (4.3%) from the **Potton Brewery**, Potton, Beds. A classic, amber-coloured, hoppy, premium bitter. Champion Beer of Bedfordshire 2003.



■ **Edwin Taylor's Extra Stout** (4.5%) from the **B&T Brewery**, Shefford, Beds. A bitter stout with a strong roast malt flavour.

■ **Shefford Dark Mild** (3.8 per cent), also from the **B&T Brewery** in Shefford. A sweetish, dark mild with a roast malt aftertaste.



Congratulations

We offer our congratulations to all five winning brewers, but especially to B&T and Potton for bringing home three of the six awards to Bedfordshire.

B&T Edwin Taylor's Extra Stout and Shefford Dark Mild are among the range offered at B&T's three Bedfordshire pubs – the Brewery Tap in Shefford, the Globe in Dunstable and the Wellington Arms in Bedford.

Although Potton Brewery has no pubs of its own, The Village Bike is now a regular beer at the Muntjac in Harrold and a frequent guest in several free houses or small chain pubs in North Bedfordshire.

We hope both breweries continue to do well both within and outside the county.

ENGINEERS ARMS

A GENUINE FREEHOUSE

Seasonal Greetings
To Friends Old and New



From December 1st Through the Festive Period,
Over 100 Christmas Beers

SATURDAY 16TH & SUNDAY 17TH DECEMBER
MINI WINTER BEER FESTIVAL

22 Guest Beers All Available from Micro's throughout the Country

Why not visit our website - www.engineersarms.co.uk

HIGH STREET, HENLOW, BEDFORDSHIRE

01462 812284

Oldest brewery In Britain?

Kent brewer Shepherd Neame has found evidence that its Faversham home is the oldest British working brewery site, dating from 1573 or earlier. The old Young's brewery in Wandsworth, London, was previously thought to be the oldest, having been used for brewing since 1581.

New local breweries

MICRO-BREWERIES have been mushrooming within about 30 miles of Bedford in the last two or three years. There are five new micros in In Northamptonshire alone:

- **Digfield** in Barnwell, near Peterborough
- **Great Oakley** in Great Oakley, near Corby
- **Hoggleys** in Kislingbury, near Northampton
- **Nobby's** in Kettering
- **Potbelly**, also in Kettering

Oxfordshire Ales is in Marsh Gibbon, near Bicester on the Bucks/Oxfordshire border.

With the longer established **Oakham Ales** (Peterborough), **Rockingham Ales** (near Peterborough), **Tring Brewery** (Tring, Herts), **Buntingford** (Royston, Herts), **Frog Island** (Northampton), **Chiltern** (Wendover, Bucks), **Vale** (Haddenham, Bucks), **B&T** (Shefford, Beds) and **Potton** (Potton, Beds), there is now a lot of choice and competition between smaller local brewers.

Most of these breweries supplied beers to the recent Bedford Beer & Cider Festival and most will gladly supply direct to pubs and clubs in Bedfordshire. For contact details and a list of their regular beers, see CAMRA's new *Good Beer Guide 2007*.

Save Pilgrim's Progress! Midland Road, Bedford

Outline plans for redeveloping the town centre include demolishing this popular Wetherspoon's pub to re-align River Street.

CAMRA joins JD Wetherspoon and patrons of the Pilgrim's in opposing the loss of a fine building and a popular local pub. We think the road can easily go round the pub.

If you agree that the Pilgrim's Progress is well worth saving, please write to the *Chief Planning Officer, Bedford Borough Council, Town Hall, Bedford MK40 1SJ*.



North Bedfordshire CAMRA is planning to visit some of the new Northamptonshire breweries in April: further details in our next issue.

... and two more to come?

The **Strathmore Arms** at St. Paul's Warden, Herts, is currently planning to launch its own micro-brewery. If it all goes ahead, the brewing plant will be installed in a barn over the road from the pub.

Kevin Machin, owner of the **Engineers Arms**, Henlow, will be a partner in the venture. They plan to employ a part-time brewer who lives nearby.

Another new microbrewery, this one somewhere in Bedford, is being planned by a couple of brothers living locally. We have no reliable details of the new venture yet, except that the owners plan to launch it in 2007.

Watch this space!

The Bedford Arms



Wells Eagle and Bombardier
Guest real ales
Erdinger wheat beer
New menu now available
Tapas night Tuesday
Curry night Thursday
Open all day from 12 noon

57 High Street, Oakley
01234 822280
www.bedfordarms.net

Pub of the Year

THE Stone Jug, Clophill, already the current CAMRA North Beds Branch Pub of the Year, went on to win the Bedfordshire county title as well during the summer, beating the **Engineers Arms, Henlow**, and the **English Rose, Luton**. A specially engraved plaque was presented to landlady Vicky Stevens in late September.

Sadly, the Stone Jug failed to take the East Anglia regional title in the next round of the competition. The new East Anglia Pub of the Year is the **Dove Inn, Ipswich**. For more information about the Dove and other regional winners, visit www.camra.org.uk/gbgregionalpoty

CAMRA's national Pub of the Year winner, chosen by a panel from among the regional winners, will be announced during Community Pubs Week in February (*see page 3*).

Meanwhile, staff and regulars at the Stone Jug have carried on celebrating, with the 30th anniversary of the Stevens family running the pub falling at the beginning of December. Vicky's late father, Arthur Stevens, was largely responsi-



Vicky Stevens receives her Beds POTY award from North Beds chairman John Martin

ble for making what is literally a “back-street” pub (the address is 10 Back Street, Clophill) into a highly popular community pub attracting customers from inside and outside the village. A special beer to celebrate the occasion is being brewed by B&T in Shefford, itself an appropriate choice as the Stone Jug was one of the first pubs to stock B&T beers when the brewery was founded in 1982.

Our congratulations to the Stone Jug for its double award and our best wishes to Vicky, mother Joyce and their bar staff for the future.



Good Beer Guide 2008

North Beds CAMRA will begin selecting entries for the *Good Beer Guide 2008* early in the New Year.

Anyone may nominate a North Beds pub for the next guide, although only branch members may attend and vote at selection meetings.

Send your nomination with reasons c/o the Firkin editor: Peter Argyle, 65 Wingfield Road, Bromham, Bedford MK43 8JY, or email secretary@northbedscamra.org.uk, to arrive by Monday 8th January.



Branch diary



BRANCH business meetings are normally held in the third week of uneven months, e.g. January and March. Social and campaigning events are usually held in the second week of every month. Additional meetings may be held to select *Good Beer Guide* entries, or to plan the next Bedford Beer & Cider Festival.

Guests are always welcome at social events, but CAMRA members have priority on brewery tours. For the latest information, check the members' newspaper, *What's Brewing*, or the branch website at www.northbedscamra.org.uk

Thursday 14 December

Christmas social and buffet at the Castle, Newnham Street, Bedford, from 7.30pm. Wells & Young's beers plus a guest ale – Adnams Broadside on a recent visit. An informal occasion for getting to know other branch members and one of the most important social events of the year. Guests are welcome. To book for the buffet, phone chairman John Martin on 01234 768294 or email chairman@northbedscamra.org.uk before Monday 11 December.

Thursday 11 January

First rural pubs tour to check likely nominations for the next *Good Beer Guide*. Minibus will leave the Wellington Arms, Bedford, at 7pm prompt. A £5 contribution is required towards travel costs.

Thursday 18 January

Branch meeting at Bedford North End Club, corner Roff Avenue and Tavistock Street, 8pm prompt. Includes shortlisting entries for the next *Good Beer Guide*. CAMRA members only.

Thursday 8 February

Second rural pubs tour to check nominations for the next *Good Beer Guide*. Minibus will leave the Wellington Arms, Bedford, at 7pm prompt. A £5 contribution is required towards travel costs.

Thursday 15 February

Special branch meeting to select final entries for the next *Good Beer Guide* at Bedford North End Club, corner Roff Avenue and Tavistock Street, 8pm prompt. CAMRA members only.

Thursday 22 February

Pub crawl through Bedford Russell Park to support Community Pubs Week. Meet at the White Horse, Newnham Avenue, at 7.30pm and move towards the town centre via the Devonshire Arms and Gordon Arms. Members and guests welcome.

Thursday 8 March

Social pub tour to be decided. Check *What's Brewing* or the branch website for details.

Thursday 15 March

Branch meeting at Bedford North End Club, corner Roff Avenue and Tavistock Street, 8pm prompt. All CAMRA members welcome.

Late April 2007

Planned Northamptonshire brewery tour, details to be announced. Check branch website, email socials@northbedscamra.org.uk, or call 01234 342287 nearer the time.



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CAMRA is a not-for-profit organisation led by volunteers. It is the biggest single-issue consumer group in Britain today and actively campaigns to protect local pubs and breweries, as well as fighting for pub-goers' rights. You can help the Campaign reach its membership challenge target of 100,000!

CAMRA members come from all walks of life and all adult age groups. Members get a range of benefits, including:

- A lively and informative monthly newspaper, *What's Brewing*
- Free or cheap entry to more than 140 CAMRA festivals throughout the UK
- Discounts on CAMRA products and books, including the best-selling annual *Good Beer Guide*.

Many issues we campaign on matter to you. We lobby for fairer and more flexible pub opening hours. We campaign for new laws on full pints to ensure you are not ripped off by unscrupulous pub operators. We press for more choice and competition to keep the pubs you like open and the beers you like on the bar.

Full membership costs only £18 a year (£22 from 1st January). If you are under 26, over 60 and retired, or registered unemployed or disabled, you pay only £10 (£13). If you have a keen partner living at the same address, you can join together for just £3 (£5) more.

To join, clip and complete the form opposite, call 01727 867201, or visit our national website at www.camra.org.uk

If you pay by direct debit, save a further £2 and get your first three months' membership free. And if you decide to cancel it within this period, you owe the Campaign nothing. That's a pretty good bargain!



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Get Firkin by post

If you can't find the *Firkin* at your local pub or club, subscribe by post. Send a cheque for £1 payable to *CAMRA North Beds* to *Tony Burke, 3 Bracken Place, Bedford MK41 0TG*. You will receive the next five issues by post.

CAMRA members living within the North Beds branch area are entitled to copies by post free of charge. Call Tony Burke on 01234 273676, by post as above, or email membership@northbedscamra.org.uk

Trading standards

If you complain to the licensee about short measure, lack of a visible price list or misleading promotion of products, and do not get a satisfactory response, contact *Bedfordshire Trading Standards Service* at County Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AP. Tel. 01234 228280.

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Complete the Direct Debit form below and you will receive three months membership free and a fantastic discount on your membership subscription. Alternatively you can send a cheque payable to CAMRA Ltd with your completed form, visit www.camra.org.uk or call 01727 867201. All forms should be addressed to Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 4LW.



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For concessionary rates please visit www.camra.org.uk or call 01727 867201.

I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

I enclose a cheque for

Signed Date

Applications will be processed within 21 days



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CAMRA membership rates go up on 1st January 2007. Join before 31st December for £18 single or only £10 under 26 or over 60 retired. Or buy one of the value gift membership packages on page 10. Call 01727 867201 or visit www.camra.org.uk

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The Firkin

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The Firkin is produced by volunteers in their own time and is distributed to most pubs and clubs in Bedfordshire north of a line joining the M1, Clophill, Shefford and Tempsford.

We welcome correspondence and any decent items of interest for publication. Views expressed may not be those of the Editor, the Campaign for Real Ale, or its North Bedfordshire Branch.

Items for publication should reach the Editor by the date at the foot of this page.

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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. Our readers also include pub and club licensees.

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- Simple artwork created at no extra cost, or supply your own.
- Space in the next issue must be reserved by **1st February 2007**.

For details of our rates or to place an advert, call:

Neil Richards on 01536 358670 or 07710 281381
or email n.richards@btinternet.com



Wells & Young's Brewing Company Ltd

On the 24th May 2006, Charles Wells Brewery based in Bedford made an historic announcement to its employees and the media – the announcement being a merger of breweries between Charles Wells and England's oldest brewery – Young's & Co's Brewery Plc based at The Ram Brewery in Wandsworth, London. From the merger a new company has been formed – Wells & Young's Brewing Company Ltd.

This new company is based on the Charles Wells site in Bedford and heralds good news for the economy and employment for this region. By merging with Young's, Charles Wells have secured the future of brewing in Bedford. We became one of the country's biggest brewers and, as the company is fiercely independent of The City, we are secure from any threat of takeover or sale. Subsequently we anticipate continuing to brew beer in Bedford for decades and centuries to follow.

Wells & Young's is the no.1 national brewer of speciality beers. Our beer portfolio is unrivalled elsewhere, as we have a wonderful balance between speciality cask ale and speciality lagers. Our cask ale range was recently showcased at the popular Bedford CAMRA beer festival where stocks of Young's Bitter and Young's Special sold out in record time.

Since May our brewers have been working hard to 'match' the beers. We are using exactly the same ingredients as the brewing team in Wandsworth, the only difference being that we use natural mineral water drawn from our well in the centre of town, as opposed to water used in Wandsworth from the local river. Gratifyingly the drinkers at the festival couldn't notice the difference at all and remarked that the beer was tasting the very best it has ever tasted.

Ken Don, Master Brewer from Young's & Co, has been integral to the whole brew matching process. Ken has been a passionate brewer for Young's for many years and would not let any beer bearing the Young's name leave the Bedford site unless he him-

self was personally proud of that brew. To date there have been no negative responses to the Bedford brewed beer. The beers brewed in Bedford have been out in pubs since mid September and are being enjoyed by drinkers across London and the rest of the UK.

It was with great pride that Wells & Young's announced that only three beers would be discontinued and this was for commercial reasons, in that these beers just didn't sell well. These include Dirty Dick's which was for the export markets, Young's Pilsner lager and Golden Zest. Everything else will be brewed with care and passion from Bedford.

Throughout this whole process we have been at pains to ensure that this merger is about expansion of our beer portfolio and not restriction. Our Bedford based brewers are particularly excited at the prospect of learning from the Wandsworth brewers who have joined the new company, all the magic and mystery of bottle conditioned beers. The line that Young's used to brew and package their famous bottle-conditioned range was being installed into the Bedford brewery during October and from there we hope to further extend the bottle-conditioned range.

To cope with the additional brewing and distribution demands, Wells & Young's are currently developing a £10 million distribution centre on Cambridge Road to ensure greater efficiency with regards to customer service, and there will be a 'sister' distribution centre in Croydon from the middle of next year to manage the London, south and south west distribution for the new company. We hope you enjoy a pint or two of Young's beers in your local very soon.

If you have any questions about Wells & Young's, please do contact the PR department at the brewery and we will be delighted to help out. For any beer or company news please log on to www.wellsandyoungs.co.uk

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