

The firkin



CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

FREE

Newsletter of CAMRA North Bedfordshire Branch

Vol 36 No 1

Spring 2011

Bedford Arms at Souldrop N Beds Pub of the Year



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Chairman's Corner

Christmas and New Year are behind us now, and we are all looking forward to longer evenings. I hope you all enjoyed partying, and may 2011 be good to one and all.

Since our last issue we have had three excellent socials. The first was to the North West of our area and was enjoyed by all who were lucky enough to secure a place. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the Bedford town walking tour, but I have had great reports of its success, and it turned up a few surprises. The third was to pubs in the North East Bedfordshire, and once again Gary did a wonderful job arranging these visits. It is nice to see so many members scrambling for places on our social outings – they must be good, because people keep coming back. If you wish to have your name added to Gary's list, email him at bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk We went to the Luton Beer and Cider Festival in February, and in March we are off to the St Neots Beer Festival. In April we will be visiting the new Hopping Mad Brewery. I look forward to these outings very much.

We have nominated The Bedford Arms in the village of Souldrop as North Beds CAMRA Pub Of The Year, and I feel that it is a strong contender to go forward to represent Bedfordshire in the next round. This village pub is worth a visit, and it is nice to see so many different pubs in our area

benefiting for their efforts and being rewarded for all their hard work.

I will be writing to all of our members soon inviting them to the AGM in July. As I said last year, I would like to stand down as Chairman, and I had hoped that we would get a nomination as Vice-Chairman, who would have made an easy transition to the Chair. It was not to be, but I am hopeful that there will be someone prepared to take on this position. Also, Ian Higgs has told me that due to pressure of work he is intending to stand down as our Secretary, so we will be looking to fill this important position within our branch. At this time it appears that all other Branch Officers and Committee members are prepared to stand for re-election. So if you would like to participate in Branch decision making why not consider thinking of standing for election?

At this time of the year we are all looking forward to our holidays, and Fytton is always glad to hear from our readers about any stories from their travels. Did you find a nice little gem of a pub on holiday, visit a brewery, or anything else you would like to tell us about? Send them in – it's a great way to get involved. If you have anything that you would like us know about, please feel free to email us or write in – you never know, it might start a debate.

*Don Allan
Branch Chairman*

A New Brewery in the Bedford Area!

Well, almost. Hopping Mad Brewery has recently opened in Yardley Road in Olney – strictly in the area of Milton Keynes and North Bucks Branch of CAMRA, but hey, it has 01234 phone numbers. Your editor has had the good fortune to be offered samples of their beers no less than three times since the New Year – at the Bell and Bear in Emberton, at the Lamb in Stoke Goldington, and at our own N Beds CAMRA Branch Meeting in January – as David from the brewery has energetically marketed the new beers. Milton Keynes CAMRA have already visited the new brewery, and we will be going there in April –

see the Branch Diary in this issue for details. They are currently advertising Brainstorm, a 4.3% abv Best Bitter, and Fruitcase, a fruity golden ale at 4.5% abv, and we tasted both of these at the branch meeting and found them good. It is rumoured that there will be a session bitter at 3.7% as well. Contact Hopping Mad on 01234 919200, by e-mail at info@hoppingmad.com or on their website at www.hoppingmad.com – which was under construction when we went to press but, like the session bitter, may be ready by the time you read this.

Bedford Arms at Souldrop wins Pub of the Year

CAMRA North Bedfordshire's Pub of the Year 2011 is the Bedford Arms at Souldrop.



The Bedford Arms, a handsome village local just half a mile off the A6 north of Sharnbrook, was once part of the Greene King empire. It was sold to Punch Taverns



some years ago, support sadly declined and like so many others, and the pub faced permanent closure.

Fortunately, it was bought by a local businessman who cared about keeping the village pub, and it was refurbished and re-opened in 2005 as a free house.

The sad decline has now gone into sharp reverse. In the hands of Fred and Caroline Rich with chef Sally Rushworth, the Bedford Arms has blossomed into a destination pub, offering excellent real ales and really good food. It is wise to book tables at busy times in the restaurant, which features a central, open fireplace. There are also a games room with hood skittles to the right of the bar and a spacious garden with play area at the rear. The pub is closed all day Monday and no food is served on Sunday evening. Call 01234 781384 to check the menu and book tables.

Like many other pubs with the same moniker, the Bedford Arms takes its name from the Duchy of Bedford, once the feudal overlord of this small village. Former estate cottages may still be seen with the Duchy's mark over the door. Part of the building was a hop and ale-house in the 17th century. The pub now offers a friendly reception to all. Real ales usually include Black Sheep Best Bitter, Greene King IPA and Phipps Red Star (brewed for the Northampton Brewery Company by Grainstore of Oakham), but there are also usually guest beers, sometimes including ales from local independents such as Potbelly in Kettering. The Bedford Arms is enjoying its third successive

entry in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide, a distinction shared by only 50 Bedfordshire pubs each year. But the title of North Beds Pub of the Year is awarded to only one pub each year, the one that local CAMRA members think deserves it. You cannot buy CAMRA awards – they are given only to the best pubs and to the hard-working people who run them. So our warm congratulations to the Bedford Arms.

Our photo shows the presentation in February of a framed certificate to Fred, Caroline and Sally.

County and regional winners



Meanwhile, our colleagues in CAMRA South Beds Branch have chosen the **English Rose** in Luton as their branch Pub of the Year. The East Beds Branch POTY was unknown when we

went to press, but the three branch winners will go head to head for CAMRA's Bedfordshire Pub of the Year title for 2011. The county winner will then compete with the best from around the region for the East Anglian Pub of the Year title.

Last year's Bedfordshire Pub of the Year title was the **Globe in Dunstable**, but the East Anglia title went to the **Dove in Bury St Edmunds**, Suffolk. The national POTY title winner for 2010 is the **Harp in Chandos Place** in central London, a friendly free house just yards from Trafalgar Square. This is first time that a London pub has won the national title. Among the runners-up was the **Beacon Hotel in Sedgley**, which North Beds CAMRA visited last summer on our Black Country tour.

CAMRA Celebrating 40 Years of Campaigning – 1971-2011

CAMRA is celebrating its 40th birthday in 2011 and we hope you will join us in raising a glass of real ale in your local pub to celebrate this landmark. CAMRA was formed on 16th March 1971 by four founding members – Michael Hardman, Graham Lees, Jim Makin and Bill Mellor – whilst visiting a pub on holiday in Ireland. They had become deeply disillusioned with the domination of the market by a handful of national brewing companies, determined to push lower quality keg beer brands into the market, displacing smaller, local breweries and ales from the bars of pubs across the land. It turned out they weren't alone in their anger at the rapidly reducing choice and quality available to drinkers across the UK – hundreds and then thousands joined the cause.

Forty years later and CAMRA now have more than 120,000 members who love a good pint of beer in a great pub. CAMRA has achieved many successes over this period. Saving pubs and breweries under threat from closure, the introduction of Small Brewers Relief, LocAle, Licensing Hours Reform, and the promotion of endangered beer styles are just a few of the successes CAMRA is proud of over the last 40 years. These and many other achievements have played a major role in there now being more than 3,000 different real ales being brewed in the UK by over 750 real ale breweries.



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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Pub News

Bell, Odell

A warm welcome to Will and Katie Healy, who took over this delightful, thatched pub in November. With the Harrold-Odell Country Park just down the lane, it is a popular pit-stop for walkers and families on a day out. Greene King IPA, Abbot and a guest beer are available on the pumps, with freshly prepared lunches and evening meals served all week except Sunday evening and Monday lunch. The pub is closed Monday lunchtime, but now opens all day for the rest of the week. Call 01234 720254 or visit www.thebellinodell.co.uk



Three Compasses, Upper Dean

A warm welcome too to Pat and Andi, new arrivals at this pretty, thatched village pub near our northern branch border. Wells Eagle IPA, Young's Special and occasional guest ales are served on handpump, while hearty, home cooked food is available lunchtime and evenings. Although there is a small, dedicated dining room, meals are also served in the main bar. The games area at the rear can get busy when there are skittles matches. The pub is closed all day Tuesday. Call 01234 708346.

Three Tuns, Biddenham



This large, handsome pub in one of Bedford's smartest villages is now run by landlord Chris Smith, a qualified chef who previously worked for

Jean Christophe Novelli and at the Paris House Hotel, Woburn. The interior has been thoroughly refurbished as a modern dining pub. Greene King IPA, Abbot and up to two guest beers are available on the pumps. The pub is open all day throughout the week for drinkers, lunches and evening meals, but no food on Sunday after 4pm. Call 01234 354847.

Old Mill, Newton Blossomville

After being shut up for six months, this village pub just over our western border near Turvey has reopened under new management. Although food is temporarily unavailable while the kitchens are refurbished, real ales are served on the bar. Call 01234 881863.

Slaters Arms, Kempston Box End

Welcome to new landlords Karl and Joanne Hill, who took over this attractive village pub on the old Bromham to Kempston road in November. The bars are open all day throughout the week, with Greene King IPA and a guest ale on handpump. A wide selection of traditional, home-cooked food is available Monday to Saturday lunchtime and evenings, with a carving on Sunday until 3pm. The large beer garden includes a children's play area. Call 01234 854433.

CAMRA Discount Scheme

As noted in our last issue, some pubs now give a discount on the price of real ale to CAMRA members on presentation of their current membership card. We can now announce that a second Bedford pub, the **Bedford Arms in Bromham Road**, has now joined the scheme and offers the discount to any CAMRA member. The **White Horse in Newnham Avenue** was the first pub in our area to join up. As other pubs in our area sign up, we will include the info in future editions of the Firkin.

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Spring Beer Festivals

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Wed 9 to Sat 12 March at Charotar Patidar Samaj, Bay St (off Margarets Way), LE1 3AE (bus stn 5 min, rail stn 15 min). Open Wed 5-11, Thu/Fri 11-11, Sat 11-10. Admission Wed £2.50, Thu after 3pm £2.50, Fri up to 3pm £2.50 then £3.50, Sat up to 5pm £2.50 then free. CAMRA members free. More than 220 real ales and 35 ciders and perries. LocAle bars feature about 80 beers brewed within 25 miles of Leicester. Authentic Indian curries and English food. Regular trains from Bedford; last train back, 10 p.m. (9.45 p.m. Sat).
www.camra.org.uk/leicester

London Drinker Beer & Cider Festival

Wed 9 to Fri 11 March at the Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, WC1H 9AU (very near Kings Cross and St Pancras stations). 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.uk

St Neots Booze on the Ouse Beer Festival

Thu 10 to Sat 12 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. Families welcome until 8pm. More than 55 cask beers, foreign beers and real cider, souvenir glass, tombola, CAMRA shop. Hot and cold food, free soft drinks for designated drivers. Regular X5 express bus from Bedford, including late return bus. www.huntscamra.org.uk

Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival

Fri 18 to Sat 19 March at Hitchin Town Hall, Brand St SG5 1HX (bus stn 5 min). In association with Hitchin Round Table. Open Fri 12-11, Sat 11-11, admission Fri before 3pm £1, otherwise £2.50, CAMRA and Round Table members free. More than 60 real ales plus cider, perry + foreign beers. Souvenir glasses, hot and cold food, tombola and CAMRA shop. No music!. Regular M1/M2 bus from Bedford.
www.camranorthherts.org.uk

East Anglian Beer Festival

Wed 20 to Sat 23 April at the Apex, St Andrews South shopping centre, Bury St Edmunds (bus stn 10 min). Open 12-11 daily. Featuring 85 real ales and ciders, all from independent brewers and cider makers in East Anglia. Use X5 bus to Cambridge and connection to Bury.
www.freewebs.com/westsuffolkcamra

Banbury Beer Festival

Thu 5 to Sat 7 May at the TA Centre, Oxford Road OX16 7AN. Admission Thu 5-11 (£1), Fri 12-12 (£2, after 5pm £4), Sat 11-11 (£3, after 5pm £1), CAMRA members free. More than 90 real ales plus at least 20 ciders and perries. Hot and cold food all sessions. Live music Thu eve and Sat.
www.banburybeerfest.org.uk

Bedford-Bamberg Spring Fest

Fri 13 to Sat 14 May at the Harpur Suite, Harpur Square, Bedford. Open noon-midnight. Admission free before 8, £2 after 8, CAMRA members free all times. Over 40 German beers, plus wines, schnapps and a German BBQ.
www.bedfordcornexchange.co.uk

Cambridge Beer Festival

Mon 23 to Sat 28 May under canvas on Jesus Green (X5 bus stop 5 min). Open Mon 5-10.30, Tue-Fri 12-3, 5-10.30, Sat 12-10.30. Admission after 5pm £4, Sat all day £2, CAMRA members free. More than 200 real ales, 80 odd ciders and perries, foreign beers. Free soft drinks for designated drivers. Traditional hot and cold food, including famous CAMRA cheese counter. Safe footwear essential. Regular X5 bus from Bedford, including late return bus.
www.cambridgebeerfestival.com

Northamptonshire Beer Festival

Thu 26 to Sat 28 May at Delapré Abbey, Northampton. Organised jointly by CAMRA Northants and the Friends of Delapré Abbey. Regular P1 bus from Bedford.
www.northantscamra.org.uk

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N Beds CAMRA Winter Pubcrawls

Braving the winter weather, N Beds CAMRA members made three trips in January and February to try out pubs in our area. Our first minibus tour took us to the remotest parts of North Beds on 13 January.

First stop – the **Horse and Groom in Clapham**. An open fire, low ceilings and exposed beams – now it is a foodie pub, leaving the purely local drinking market to others. A Greene King House, and Abbot, IPA and (appropriately) Fireside were on. I tried Fireside, which I hadn't had before, and found it a very acceptable premium bitter (4.5% abv), though perhaps kept a hint too cold.



Cock at Pavenham

Next, the **Cock at Pavenham**. Probably rebuilt somewhat in the early 20th century, another welcoming log fire, though, matched by a welcoming landlord. A former Greene King house, it still keeps GK IPA, but now its other cask ale is London Pride, which most of us had: a new barrel had just gone on when we arrived, so the beer was good and fresh.

The **Fox at Carlton** is another historic village pub with low ceilings, exposed beams and a fireplace. Once a Wells house, but as a free house it had Wells Eagle, Old Speckled Hen, Adnams Bitter and St Austell Tribute. I tried Tribute – and found it of a good standard. And another welcoming staff – it's hard to fault the people who work in these village pubs.

Another similar old village pub, with exposed beams and horse-brasses, came next – the **Sun at Felmersham**. This is a Wells house, and Directors, Wells Eagle and Young's London Gold were available on hand pump. I had Directors and I thought it was good, and again the pleasant staff coped well with a sudden influx of twenty people.

A drive through the lanes took us to the **Chequers at Yelden**. This village pub is modern and the interior lacks character. It is a free house and has five hand pumps, but disappointingly only two cask ales were available when we called: Bombardier and London Pride again. I had Pride, and its standard was acceptable.

Final stop, with high expectations: the **Bedford Arms at Souldrop**, chosen as 2011 North Beds CAMRA Pub of the Year – see page 4 for details. Not surprisingly, we stayed until closing time!

Our second trip on 27 January took us to town pubs in Bedford on foot – but on a very cold night there was a sparse attendance.

We started at the **Flowerpot**, an attractive old pub with the obligatory exposed beams: a free house, on the evening of our visit it had three cask ales on handpump: Brain's IPA, London Pride, and, appropriately to the date, Caledonian's Rabbie Burns. I tried the Brain's at 3.4% abv and found it acceptable if a little thin.

Next stop was the **Ship** in St Cuthbert's Street, a Greene King house. Another old pub, greatly extended at the rear and nowadays much into food. Open fires burned in the older front bars. The pub was quite full, leading to a good atmosphere. The usual Abbot and IPA were joined by two genuine guest ales – Yorkshire Terrier from the York Brewery Co., and Holden's Golden Glow. I tried the Terrier first and found it well kept.

Holden's second – this very pale bitter was every bit as good as I remembered it.

Third stop, the **Castle**, always lively and welcoming. This Wells house does food and also has letting bedrooms, but is nonetheless a proper pub as well. A library corner is nice touch for the quieter drinker! They had Eagle and Directors on, while the week's approved Wells guest ale seemed to be Thwaites Lancaster Bomber, which was on here and at our two subsequent Wells stops. The Directors was in good condition here.

Then the **Gordon Arms**, transformed a few years back by a major investment from Wells Pubco, and now a very popular venue on Castle Road for food, drink and entertainment. They have five hand-pumps with Bombardier, Eagle, Young's Bitter, Directors and a guest regularly on – the guest was again Lancaster Bomber, but I had Young's and found it in good condition.



Devonshire Arms

Finally, to an old favourite in a new guise – the **Devonshire Arms**, a late Victorian local. Val Walter retired from the Devvy in November after twelve years in charge, and Martin and Naomi moved in

following a significant facelift of the building. Martin aims to pull in the serious real ale drinker, and judging by the numbers present on a cold January Thursday evening, the strategy is beginning to pay off. Eagle, Directors, Young's London Gold and a guest are on regularly, and the two more handpumps have been renovated for potential use at times of high demand. The back bar and the smokers' gazebo in the garden are unchanged from Val's time, but the main front bar is quite different now. Gone are the pool table, jukebox, television and fruit machine, and the decor is light and airy. All you now hear is the buzz of conversation, and a real fire burns in the grate. Keeping up Val's standard of cellarmanship will be a challenge, but on this showing the outlook is promising: we mostly sampled the London Gold, and found it up to standard.

On 3 February, N Beds CAMRA gathered for the *third of its winter pub tours*, this by minibus to pubs on the eastern side of our area. A good attendance of 23 members, and in contrast with the previous two tours, no low ceilings and oak beams this time – all five pubs visited were 20th century buildings, had large car parks and served food fairly seriously.



Anchor at Great Barford

First stop, the **Guinea at Moggerhanger**, a Wells house on the main Bedford–Sandy road. Sadly, the Young's Special had run out, so the choice was Eagle and the guest ale, Bath Gem. Most of us chose the Gem and found it well-kept. Jennings Snecklifter was listed as 'coming soon'.

Next, the **Anchor at Great Barford**, really a pub for warm summer afternoons by the river. Another Wells house, but the cask ales on offer were Young's Bitter and Young's London Gold, plus guest Snecklifter, which had actually arrived! I tried the Gold plus a taste of the guest, a dark beer with a molasses aroma. Both seemed in decent condition.

Through dark country lanes brought to **Little Staughton** and the **Crown**. The pub is modern – its predecessor burned down. It is a free house, and was busy and lively. The cask ales on offer were two from Black Sheep – Black Sheep Ale (4.4% abv) and Black Sheep Best (3.8%) – and Oakham's JHB. I had the JHB, a pale, very bitter bitter, much to my liking, and well kept. The pub doubles up as a fish and chip shop on Thursday and Friday evenings.

Continued overleaf >

N Beds CAMRA Winter Pubcrawls continued

Moving back towards town, our fourth pub was the Polhill Arms at Renhold. This is a Greene King house, and it stocked GK IPA, Old Speckled Hen, and Yorkshire Terrier as guest. I tried the Hen chased by the Terrier (!) and found them both in good condition. Another fish and chip shop pub!

Our final stop was packed: the Pheasant on Kimbolton Road in Bedford, a big modern pub on a roundabout at the edge of town. A Wells house, this one had Bombardier, Eagle and Directors, but no guest. It was quiz night at one end, full sit-down meals were being served at the other end, so we squeezed into the middle section of the bar, which was lively bordering on rowdy. I finished the evening with my favourite W&Y cask ale – Directors – and found it o.k., though it may have been towards the end of the barrel. It was good to see a real ale pub way out in the suburbs doing such good business on a Thursday night.



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The Three Compasses in Upper Dean

The Three Compasses has a new Landlord and Landlady (Patrick and Andrea) who moved in with their son Calum on 11th Oct. It is a traditional thatched country pub with a cosy log fire and is building up a reputation for serving up good, home prepared food that is locally sourced where possible.

We have a skittles team that play 2-3 nights a week and are also starting up a Cribbage Team - More members always welcome.

Patrick prides himself on the quality of the cask ale he serves and there is a good selection of wines available. Come and visit The Three Compasses for a warm welcome and maybe sample the new menu.

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What is IPA? It's the hops that matter!

As a few of our brewers catch up with the USA in sourcing their hops from anywhere – New Zealand, America, even hedgerows – the flavour revolution of less than ten years is in danger of becoming the next orthodoxy. First Gold and Boudicea hops were behind some of Adnams recent success. In 2000 an experiment inspired by the boss of the White Horse pub, Parsons Green, London, produced a version of an old Bass IPA recipe at 7.2%. It was pale and had 83 units of bitterness, twice that of current 'bitter'. Next, Burton Bridge brewery made Empire Pale Ale. Bottle conditioned, it came in at 7.3–7.5%. Then Marstons offered a 'traditional' IPA; brewed at over 5%, it was promoted as 'how IPAs were originally', deluged in hops as a preservative for the lengthy voyage to India. Other breweries followed, and in 2010 Greene King, offered a bottled IPA at 7.5%. Not pale, not remarkably hoppy, not distinctive – grand, but no cigar. Compare the burst of hops in Brew Dog's Punk IPA at 6%.

But then American brewers started to make IPAs far stronger and exploding in flavours beyond any currently available in Britain. This IPA style, using American hops, came home: Dark Star brewed an IPA in the American style; Thornbridge's Jaipur won strong bitter of the year, and for the Peterborough Beer Festival they brewed two versions, one with English hops, the other with American.

John Bryan at Oakham Brewery used New Zealand hops in 2007 for HAKA at the Peterborough beer festival. His experiments continue. He tweaked his recipe for HAKA, just as he would tweak White Dwarf, his wheat beer, to market it as an ordinary ale, using all English hops. As the price of hops zoomed, he took his decision. Brew with a ratio of 21, just enough to create beer? Skimp? No! He decided to stuff it with 59. His experiments continue.

John Nicholson



Every year we craft over 25 different cask ales. You can find these in many of the region's pubs and bars. You can also 'try & buy' direct from our brewery shop.

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CAMRA East Anglian Pub of the Year 2008

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No sparkler thanks!

DRINKERS in the south and east just don't like swan necks and sparklers, even when used to serve a beer specially formulated for them.

That's the conclusion of Suffolk landlord Roy Buttle, who decided to conduct a taste test of his own when Tolly Cobbold's IPA summer ale, which was designed to be pulled through a swan-neck, arrived at his pub. Offering the ale through both "northern" pumps with a swan-neck and sparkler, and the traditional southern handpump, he asked drinkers which they preferred. A thumping 76 out of 80 replies said no sparkler, thanks. Among the anti-sparkler comments were old favourites such as the immortal: "You drink ale, not shave with it."

Irresistible march

The seemingly irresistible southward march of the swan-neck and sparkler, designed to force the tight creamy head that northern drinkers demand from their beers, has dismayed many beer lovers in the south and east, where beers have not generally been brewed with these devices in mind. The effect of forcing a creamy head out of real ales not formulated to resist the enormous pressures involved is to knock out much of their condition, so that when the temporary head subsides, the beer tastes flat and lacks flavour. Northern beers are formulated to resist these changes and to hold the head for longer.

Suffolk brewer Adnams, whose beers are widely available in Bedfordshire, has taken a strong line against use of the swan-neck and sparkler on its own beers, refusing to fit them in its tied pubs. Other brewers, including Charles Wells, seem to have a different opinion. Where swan-necks and sparklers were once a rarity, used to serve pints of Tetleys, Websters and other visiting northern ales with a creamy head, an increasing number have now appeared on handpumps serving our local brews.

Fresh glasses please

It is hard to fathom out why brewers and the pub trade have become so keen on these devices, unless

it is through watching too many TV adverts for Webster's Yorkshire Bitter. They really don't do our local beers any favours.

One thing landlords determined to use these things should remember: Yorkshire dispense means other Yorkshire habits. As a swan-neck works by inserting the tip under the surface of the beer as it is drawn, hygiene demands the use of fresh glasses for every pint. Drawing beer through a swan neck into a used glass deserves attention from the boys in Environmental Health.

Firkin Weakly Vol 21 no 1, winter 1996.

Editor Peter Argyle

Anonymous feature, probably taken from a contemporary What's Brewing or CAMRA press release. Still a real issue in local pubs!

Molson Coors buys Sharp's

Molson Coors has bought the Sharp's real ale brewery in Cornwall and its brands. The international company said the acquisition represented a "tremendous opportunity for growth in volume and distribution, with cask beer now accounting for 15.2% of on-trade beer volumes – its highest for a decade – with 8.6m drinkers".

Molson Coors is believed to have paid around £20m for Sharp's, who had reported a quadrupling of profit after turnover growth of 40% in 2010. The company saw turnover leap from £11.4m in the year to 31 October 2009 to £16.1m in the year to 31 October 2010. It is thought that Coors' main interest is in the acquisition of the Doom Bar name, though they have promised to keep the Sharp's brewery open and to continue to make its other beers.

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North Beds Toasts Ten Years

From Firkin Weakly vol 11 no 2 (March/April 1986)

Celebration was the order of the evening at the Castle, Bedford, in February, when North Beds Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale toasted its 10th anniversary. Local ranks were swollen for the special occasion by ex-Branch chairmen, members from neighbouring branches, regional organisers and most of the National Executive, which had been meeting earlier on the town.

During the party, national chairman Jim Scanlon received a record donation from the Branch to national campaign funds. Delighted with this 'really magnificent contribution', Jim commended the Branch for its sterling efforts in fund raising and for running a highly successful annual beer festival. Branch chairman Peter Argyle said the Branch was proud of its donation, but knew it could do even better if more local members could be persuaded to join in with campaigning and fund-raising activities.



Branch chairman Peter Argyle (right) presents Landlord Ken Gillett with a CAMRA mirror.

With a tinge of sadness, the Branch also presented a traditional CAMRA mirror to Castle landlords Dot and Ken Gillett, with thanks for many years of good ale at the pub, recognised by 12 successive Good Beer Guide entries, and with best wishes for their forthcoming retirement. Ken and Dot had already been long established at the Castle when a younger CAMRA, seeking welcome from a then largely hostile licensed trade, held its fledgling inaugural local meeting in the same bar just 10 years ago.



CAMRA North Beds branch chairmen, past and present (left to right): Robin Lee; John and Chris Cryne; Andy Shaw; and Peter Argyle.

Glasses were raised all round to Bedford brewers Charles Wells for kindly donating a celebratory firkin to the occasion.

The five branch chairmen present were Robin Lee, John and Christine Cryne, Andy Shaw and Peter Argyle. John went on to become national CAMRA chairman, Andy is still an active member in Huntingdonshire and Peter is still campaigning in North Beds 25 years on.

Although Ken Gillett is sadly no longer with us, his wife Dot carried on in the licensed trade, looking after the bar at Bedford Rowing Club for many years.

Branch Diary



CAMRA North Beds 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

MARCH

Thursday 10 – Branch Visit to St Neots Beer and Cider Festival

Travelling from Bedford by X5 bus. Those with free bus passes may use them; others will have to pay £7 return to the driver on boarding. Meet at Bedford Bus Station at 6.30 p.m. for the 6.45 bus.

For more information, visit

<http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk> or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk

Thursday 17 – Branch meeting

Business Meeting at the Three Cups, Newnham Street, Bedford, 8 for 8.15 p.m. CAMRA members only.

APRIL

Thursday 14 – Brewery Visit to the Hopping Mad Brewery, Olney

Travelling from Bedford by minibus, leaving from the Wellington Arms, Wellington Street, at 7 p.m., £10 deposit per person.

To book a place, contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk

MAY

Thursday 12 – Social

Details to be announced; however, this social may be replaced by a daytime event over the Royal Wedding bank holiday weekend, 29 April-2 May. For latest information, visit <http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk> or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk

Thursday 19 – Branch meeting

Business Meeting at the Three Cups, Newnham Street, Bedford, 8 for 8.15 p.m. CAMRA members only

JUNE

Thursday 9 – All-day Visit to Breweries in Leicester & Rutland

Full details to be announced. £10 deposit per person required. To book, or for latest information, visit <http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk> or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk

JULY

Thursday 7 – Branch Annual General Meeting

At 8 p.m.; venue to be announced. CAMRA members only. For full information, visit <http://www.northbedscamra.org.uk> or contact Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or bedsocks@tiscali.co.uk

Thursday 21 – Branch meeting

Business Meeting at the Three Cups, Newnham Street, Bedford, 8 for 8.15 p.m. CAMRA members only

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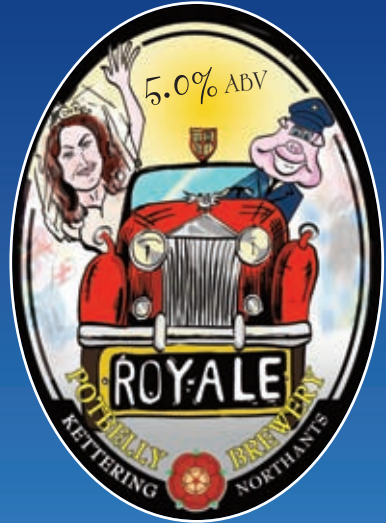
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