

The Firkkin



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

**Newsletter of CAMRA North Bedfordshire Branch
Spring 2006 Vol 31 No 1 FREE!**

A sad day for brewing Gales to close – page 3

**North Beds Pub
of the Year
Stone Jug at Clophill
page 6**

**Tring Brewery
page 12**



Also inside:

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| 4 | Pub News | 11 | Harviestoun and Belhaven sold |
| 6 | Pub of the Year | 13 | Get wild about Mild! |
| 7 | Spring festivals | 14 | Hoegaarden goes under |
| 8 | Historic plaques for pubs | 14 | Yelden beer festival |
| 8 | Intelligent beer mats | 15 | Branch diary |
| 9 | Make the pub an English icon | 16 | Help us win CAMRA challenge |
| 10 | Champion winter ale | 17 | Join CAMRA today! |
| 10 | Relief over smoking ban | 18 | Branch contacts |

THE SLATERS ARMS BAR AND RESTAURANT

A warm, friendly welcome awaits you at this newly refurbished public house in the heart of Kempston rural



- A selection of 3 Real Ales
- An extensive range of draught and bottled lagers
- An impressive selection of wines, both new and old world

- Fully non-smoking restaurant

- FRESHLY prepared food served daily

- Wednesday and Thursday 12-3
Senior citizens £4.95 for 2 courses

- Sunday lunches served 12-5pm
Booking essential to avoid disappointment



*97 Box End Road, Kempston Rural, Bedfordshire. MK43 8RS
(01234) 854433*

A sad day for brewing

THE front page story in our last issue reported the take-over of Hampshire brewer George Gale & Co by regional brewer Fuller's of Chiswick, London. CAMRA's fears have since been borne out – Gale's historic Horndean brewery will be closed.

End of 150 years heritage

The London brewer's swoop on Gale's and its 111 pubs came out of the blue, but CAMRA's response was swift. All branches in CAMRA's Wessex region, which includes Hampshire, agreed to work together to campaign to save Gale's Horndean brewery – whose future was pointedly not mentioned when the takeover was announced.

Although Fuller's said that "a number of well-respected brands" would remain in its portfolio, it has been economical with information about future of Gale's.

Now the worst has been confirmed. Gale's Horndean brewery will close this year, bringing an end to 150 years of brewing heritage in Hampshire.

Public concern brushed aside

CAMRA has condemned the decision to close Gale's brewery, as a contemptible disregard for over 5,000 people who signed a petition to keep the brewery open and more than 150 years of brewing heritage. It is so much worse that it comes from a reputable regional brewer that has been a champion of real ale and pluralism in the brewing industry.

CAMRA's Chief Executive Mike Benner said: "This is a black day for the people of Wessex who fought so hard only to be let down so badly. We are appalled at Fullers' decision. Thousands of supporters rallied behind CAMRA's Wessex branches when a Save Gales Campaign was launched following the shock takeover announcement in November. But Fuller's has simply brushed the overwhelming public concern aside and continued with its own agenda.

"Fuller's has given assurances that the main Gale's brands – HSB, Butser, Festival Mild and Prize Old Ale – will remain. However we will be keeping a close eye on the beers to ensure they do not become seasonal or disappear altogether. It's questionable whether 'Horndean Special Bitter' (HSB) brewed in Chiswick will appeal to Hampshire drinkers, or indeed wheth-

er the beers will taste the same.

"Fuller's has justified the closure by saying it expects to make savings of around £3 million. This is a small amount to gain in return for destroying a century and a half of Hampshire's heritage and dealing a blow to all fans of Gale's beers."

Sign the petition

After the shock takeover announcement in November, CAMRA's Wessex branches leapt to defend their local brewery by setting up a dedicated website and petition that has so far attracted more than 5,000 signatures. You can back CAMRA's bid to Save Gale's by signing the online petition at www.savegales.org.uk

Do it today and help save a great brewery!

Our new look

Welcome to the new look Firkin. We hope injecting a shot of colour will bring new life to the old newsletter format and create more interest in what we have to say.

We also hope going into colour will encourage advertisers to use the Firkin to promote their services. We welcome adverts from breweries, pubs, taxi services and any other businesses interested in reaching the pub user. Details page 18.

Adverts add interest to the page and help us raise income to fund a larger Firkin with more news about pubs and beer.

Peter Arzyle
Editor

Bedford Arms, Souldrop

Welcome to Simon and Beccy Bendix, who took over this extensive village pub at the end of September. The place has changed a lot in their first six months, with the bars completely refurbished, the walls brightly redecorated and smart oak flooring. The upgraded kitchen now offers a completely new menu, ranging from sandwiches and pizzas to traditional Sunday roasts. Greene King IPA, Abbot and guest Fuller's London price are available on hand-pump. Plans to improve the extensive garden and install a children's play area are in hand.



Smart new look at the Bedford Arms, Souldrop

Black Horse, Wootton

A warm welcome to Andrew and Amanda Hall at this popular pub in Potters Cross, just off the Bedford Road. Andrew is keen on real ale and offers Greene King IPA and one from Adnams on a regular basis, with a changing monthly guest ale. The pub is open Monday to Wednesday from 4 to 11.30, Thursday to Saturday 12 to 12, and Sundays 12 to 10.30. Lunches are served between 12 and 2 on Thursday to Saturday, with an over 50's special two course for £4.95 on Thursday. Sunday lunches offer a choice of two roasts from 12 to 4pm.

Royal Oak, Lidlington



New team at the Black Horse, Wootton

Welcome to new landlords Jim and Anne, who currently offer Wells Eagle IPA and Bombardier on handpump. They hope to expand the range of ales and start serving food later in the year.

New Inn, Wymington

Welcome to Brian and Julie Christie, who took over this popular pub on the outskirts of Rushden just before Christmas. It is open all day every day from 12 noon, with lunches from 12 to 2 (3 on Sunday) and evening meals from 6.30 to 9 (not Sunday). Greene King IPA and Abbot are the regular real ales, with a third pump available for guest beers – Old Speckled Hen on our last visit. A new overspill car park has been created in the paddock at the rear, next to the fully enclosed, child-friendly garden. Brian and Julie are keen to retain a traditional pub atmosphere.

Star Rowing Club, Bedford

Welcome to Cheryl Linnett, who took over as bar manager in January. The bar is open to visitors as well as members and currently offers Fuller's London Pride, Wells Eagle IPA and Brains Reverend James on handpump. The bar opens Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, Thursday lunchtimes and evening, Friday lunchtime only and Saturday and Sunday from 8am to 2.30pm. Breakfast, tea and coffee available on Saturday and Sunday mornings, soup and sandwiches during lunchtime sessions and home-made meals on Thursday evening. The Club room with a fine view of the river is available for parties and special events. For further information, call Cheryl on 07757 277514 or visit www.starclub-rowing.org

Muntjac, Harrold

The bar at this pub/restaurant on Harrold High Street has been attractively redecorated and the front entrance is now more welcoming. The

Pub news

pub is closed Monday lunchtime but opens all day on Sunday. The restaurant is open evenings to 9 or 10 pm except Sunday and Monday. Luxury en-suite rooms are available from about £25 per person. For further information visit www.themuntjac.co.uk

Chequers, Houghton Conquest

Welcome to Alan Smith and chef Angie Green, who recently took over this free house on the B530 Bedford to Ampthill Road. If their plans for an extension are approved, they hope to add further real ales to the current Draught Bass and Fuller's London Pride and ESB. The restaurant menu offers traditional and home cooked specials, while the bar has an extensive range of bar snacks and light meals.

Swan Inn, Cranfield

Welcome to new landlord Steve Meredith, who moved recently from the Royal Oak at Woburn after it was closed by a roof fire. Steve is an experienced chef who learned his trade in top

London restaurants and comes with a reputation for good food and ale. Greene King IPA and Old Speckled Hen are available on hand-pump, but Steve hopes to expand the range of real ales in future. There is an extensive bar food range and a table d'hôte menu in the no-smoking lounge/restaurant. The pub is open all day from 12 noon and serves food until 9pm (10pm on Friday/Saturday).



Banks & Taylor's Shefford Ales

Brewery Tap

Northbridge Street
Shefford

01462 628448

Open Mon-Sat 11.30-11
Sun 12-10.30

6 B&T and guest cask beers
Patio garden and family room
Occasional live music on Friday evenings

The Globe

Winfield Street
Dunstable

01582 512300

<http://globe-pub.co.uk>
Open Mon-Sat 12-12
Sun 12-10.30

12 handpumps serving B&T and guest cask beers
Real ciders
Wide range of Belgian and other European beers

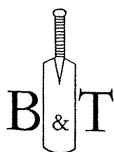
Wellington Arms

Wellington Street
Bedford

01234 308033

www.wellingtonarms.co.uk
Open Mon-Sat 12-11
Sun 12-10.30

16 handpumps serving B&T and guest cask beers
Real cider and perry
100 draught and bottled Belgian beers

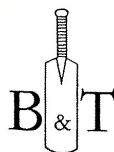


Drink more locally brewed beer

B&T Brewery, Shefford, Beds, SG17 5DZ

01462 815080

www.banksandtaylor.com



Pub of the Year

EVERY year, CAMRA runs a Pub of the Year competition. Each of the 200 branches selects its own Pub of the Year, the branch winners are entered into 16 regional competitions and the national winner is chosen from a final shortlist of four.

Second time round!

CAMRA's national Pub of the Year 2005 title has been won for a second time by the **Swan at Little Totham, Essex**. This delightful 16th century cottage style pub also won the coveted award in 2002.

Owners John and Valerie Pascoe are delighted that their hard work and attention to detail has been recognised yet again – particularly as the pub was threatened with closure before they took it over.

The Swan is described in CAMRA's *Good Beer Guide 2006* as "An archetypal heavy beamed village pub. The unspoilt public bar has billiards and darts, while the comfortable saloon has open fires."

THE SWAN



Cask ales

Award winning bar menu

Modern classical French cuisine

Wide variety of fish dishes

All meat butchered and cut in house

Old fashioned desserts

High Street, Cranfield

01234 750332

Shining example

Bob Stukins, CAMRA's Pubs Director and one of the final judges said: "It is wonderful to revisit the Swan three years after it last won national Pub of the Year and see that it is still a shining example. Through maintaining the very highest quality, John and Val have shown what a marvellous asset the community pub can be."

"We award National Pub of the Year in National Pubs Week to highlight what we believe makes a pub great. If pubs are to survive in today's competitive leisure industry, they have to become more market focused.

"Licensees need to find out what their locals want and promote their pubs accordingly. The day has gone when people visit a pub just because it is a pub."

Other winners

The other national finalists were the Check Inn, North Wroughton, Wiltshire, the Old Coach House, Southwell, Notts, and the Robin Hood, Jarrow, Tyne & Wear.

Bedfordshire's Pub of the Year 2005 was the Engineers Arms at Henlow.

Stone Jug is new North Beds POTY

North Bedfordshire CAMRA has chosen the **Stone Jug, Clophill**, as its new Pub of the Year.

The Stone Jug in Back Street is a thriving local run for many years by the Stevens family. Current licensee Vicky Stevens took over the business after her popular father Arthur sadly died in 2000 and has maintained the friendly, welcoming spirit of the pub.

The pub is a classic village local that was originally three 17th century cottages. Apart from the L-shaped bar, there is a separate games area and a family/function room leading to a rear patio garden. Excellent home-made lunches are available, but evening meals and snacks are only by arrangement for functions.

A framed certificate confirming the award will be presented to Vicky Stevens in a few weeks time.

CAMRA spring festivals

Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival

Fri 17 to Sat 18 March at Hitchin Town Hall, Brand St, in association with Hitchin Round Table. Open 11-11, admission £1 (£2 after 4pm), CAMRA and Round Table members free. About 50 real ales with cider, perry and foreign beers. No live entertainment, but Six Nations rugby matches available on TV. For further details, call 01438 816938 or visit www.nherts-camra.org.uk

London Drinker Beer & Cider Festival

Wed 22 to Fri 24 March at Camden Centre, Bidborough St, WC1(near Kings Cross St Pancras). Open Wed/Thu 12-3, 5-10.30, Fri 12-10.30, no admission after 10pm. Admission £3, CAMRA members £1.50, Wed/Thu lunchtimes free. Food at all sessions, breweriana auction Wed eve. Visit www.camranorthlondon.org.uk

12th Dunstable Beer Festival

Thu 20 to Sat 22 April at Young Person's Centre, Manchester Place. About 30 real ales plus cider and perry. No under 18s admitted. Regular buses from Luton rail station. Further information in display panel right. Call 01525 222206 or visit www.sbedscamra.org.uk

East Anglian Beer Festival

Wed 26 to Sat 29 April at Corn Exchange, Bury St Edmunds. Open Wed/Thu 12-11, Fri/Sat 11-11. Admission £2, CAMRA members free. More than 60 real ales plus cider and perry. Hot

Yelden Beer Festival

Plans are in hand for the annual Yelden Beer Festival, to be held as usual at the Chequers over the Late Spring Bank Holiday, from Friday 26 to Monday 29 May. A large marquee in the garden will host live entertainment and children's activities. Food will include a pig roast and barbecues throughout the weekend. The cellar will offer about 30 real ales and real ciders, although the menu has not yet been decided. Locals are invited to take part in a competition to get their favourite beers on the list. Campers can be accommodated, but check space is available by phoning 01933 356383.

and cold food available at all sessions, soft drinks free for drivers. Use X5 express bus from Bedford to Cambridge and change for Bury St Edmunds. Call 01842 860063 or email chriscurtis37@aol.com

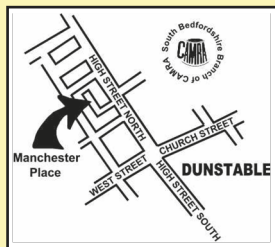
33rd Cambridge Beer Festival

Mon 22 to Sat 27 May, under canvas on Jesus Green (bus station 5 min). Provisional opening hours Mon 5-10.30, Tue-Fri 11-3, 5-10.30. Sat 11-10.30, last entry 10pm. Admission after 6pm £2.50, CAMRA members free. More than 140 real ales, plus cider, perry, foreign beers and English wines. Traditional food includes famous cheeses. Suitable footwear for grass essential, no bare feet or roller skates. Easy day trip from Bedford by X5 express bus. Check hours, admission and beer list nearer date on www.cambridge-camra.org.uk/festival

12th Dunstable Beer Festival

Thu 20th to Sat 22nd April
Young Persons Centre, Manchester Place

Thursday 6-11, Friday/Saturday 12-11
Admission £1 Thu and Fri after 6pm
CAMRA members free, no under 18s
Buses 31 and 61 from Luton station



ABOUT 30 REAL ALES
CIDER AND PERRY

01525 222206

www.sbedscamra.org.uk

Historic plaques for pubs

CAMRA has launched a new initiative called **Pubs in Time**. The new scheme will see commemorative plaques appear all over the country in pubs where events of historical significance have taken place, or where there are close connections with major historical figures.

The first 14 pubs selected for an award received their plaques during National Pubs Week, at the end of February.

Notable events

The Pubs in Time plaques will be awarded to pubs where notable events have happened. Historian Simon Davies from the London School of Economics will CAMRA will do proper historical research to ensure that plaques are granted only for genuine historical claims.

CAMRA's Chief Executive Mike Benner said: "Hundreds of pubs across the country have a story to tell, and these 14 are only the beginning. We want to encourage more licensees to come forward and apply for Pubs in Time accreditation, which we expect will soon become a stamp of authenticity for the incredible stories surrounding pubs handed down through the years."

The Pubs in Time initiative will highlight significant events that have taken place in pubs in the past. The claims may be major historical events or events connected with the arts and popular culture, where pubs have played host to writers, poets and musicians.

Slice of cheese

There are no Bedfordshire pubs among the first group of 14 awards. The nearest are the **Bell in Stilton, Cambs**, and the **Eagle in Cambridge**.

The Bell is famous for its connection with Stilton cheese. Although the cheese is made in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, this former coaching inn was the first place to sell it during the 1720's. The owner Cooper Thornhill popularised the cheese and created a substantial and enduring market for it.

The secret of life

The Eagle, in Bene't Street, Cambridge, was

where Francis Crick and James Watson announced to a surprised bar in February 1953 that they had solved the structure of DNA and recognised its significance. As they put it themselves: "We have discovered the secret of life."

Throughout their early partnership Watson and Crick dined in the pub six days a week.

Other plaques celebrate military events such as a meeting between the Duke of Wellington and the Tsar of Russia, or commanders making battle plans during the Civil War.

Plaques for Bedfordshire?

CAMRA welcomes nominations for further plaques to celebrate pubs with a connection to significant historical events or historical figures.

Please let us know by phone, post or email if your local has an important connection that might deserve one of the new plaques. We will be delighted to print the story in *Firkin* and forward the case for investigation.



Intelligent beer mats

GERMAN students have invented an intelligent beer mat that senses when it is time to order another pint. The coaster measures the weight of the beer and sends a signal behind the bar when it's time for a refill. Anxious drinkers can also attract attention by waving the plastic mat, thanks to a motion sensor.

The mat was invented by Matthias Hahnen and Robert Dörr for a project at the University of Saarbrücken. One of the project supervisors, explained: "They wanted to know if they could use it or make it themselves. Although the prototype cost about €87 (£60) to make, it could be mass-produced for around €10."

Good thinking Batman, but what happens when you lift the glass to take a sip?

Make the pub an English icon

EARLY in January, the Government launched the **Icons Online Project** to invite the public to nominate and vote for the symbols that best represent England.

Within hours of the launch, both pubs and real ale had been nominated. CAMRA is encouraging beer drinkers and other pub users with access to the internet to vote and ensure that both nominations secure their rightful place on the list.

CAMRA press officer Owen Morris said: "The brewing industry in England is a proud and vital part of our heritage and it would be extremely surprising if a pint of real ale or the traditional English pub did not make this list. Pubs have been regarded as the focal point for the community for centuries and it is hard to imagine an England without them.

"Pubs themselves are associated with any number of iconic images. The swaying pub sign, the hand-pump from which your favourite real ale is poured, but very little can compare

with the pint of beer itself.

"CAMRA was founded by people with a passion for traditional brewing, beer, and pubs, and today boasts nearly 80,000 members who believe in the same thing. When that many people can be so passionate about something they wish to see preserved for the future, how can it be thought of as anything but iconic?"

The list will be changed every three months according to online votes received for each item. Once in the top 10, that nomination will become an official English icon. The list is likely to encourage quite a bit of debate – and where better for that debate

than in the pub?

If you have internet access, please visit www.icons.org.uk/nom and vote for real ale and the English pub to be included in the list of icons.



Oakham ales
Award Winning Ales

Tel. (01733) 358300
Fax. (01733) 892658

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 'brite' 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



“A Over T” is champion winter ale

SUPREME Champion Winter Beer of Britain 2006 is A Over T from the Hogs Back Brewery at Tongham, Surrey. The title was awarded in January by a panel of experts and beer writers at CAMRA's National Winter Ales Festival in Manchester.

A Over T, short for **Aromas Over Tongham**, is a powerful 9 per cent alcohol barley wine with a deep tawny colour and fruity notes with hints of chocolate and raisins.

Steve Prescott, National Winter Ales Festival Organiser, said the award had been well deserved. “Congratulations to Hogs Back. A Over T is a fantastic barley wine. I hope this will encourage more beer drinkers to try this style of beer.”

Tony Stanton, Hogs Back marketing manager, was delighted. “A over T is our flagship dark strong ale and our king of ales. At Hogs Back we have always been proud of our range of winter dark ales and having the opportunity to exhibit at Manchester and win the national

title was amazing”.

Other winners

The Silver award went to Gales Festival Mild, a 4.8 per cent dark sweetish beer whose future, like the rest of the Gales stable, may be at risk following Fuller's recent takeover of the company. Steve Prescott commented: “We hope this recognition will encourage Fuller's to continue brewing this excellent brew at Horndean in Hampshire.”

The Bronze award went to Goff's Black Knight, a 5.3 per cent ruby-red beer from Gloucestershire.

Other awards for various categories went to Orkney Dark Island, Bazens' Knoll Street Porter, Fuller's London Porter, Bath Festivity, Isle of Skye Cuillen Beast and last year's supreme champion, Robinson's Old Tom.



Relief over smoking ban

CAMRA has greeted with some relief the House of Commons vote on Valentine's Day for a total ban on smoking in public places. If the Upper House does not overturn the huge free-vote majority of 200, the new law will take effect in the summer of 2007.

CAMRA had lobbied hard for smoking to be allowed in pubs that could offer separate rooms without bar counters. The Government had favoured banning smoking in all pubs where food was served, allowing smoking to continue as at present in those open for drinking only. But MPs disagreed and imposed a total ban on smoking in all pubs, clubs and other public places, in one of the most heated political debates in recent years.

The Government's plan to exempt private members' clubs and pubs that do not serve food from the ban was voted down by 324 to 124, with 16 Cabinet members including the Prime

Minister and the Health Secretary voting against what was a manifesto commitment.

CAMRA's Head of Public Affairs, Jonathan Mail, said that a ban with no exemptions meant there would be a level playing field for all publicans. “We're relieved that the proposed exemptions didn't go through,” he said. “The original proposals would have faced many publicans with a difficult choice.

“This was a very divisive debate and there was a huge majority in favour of a total ban. What we have to do now is move forward and step up our campaigning efforts to encourage people to use their local pubs. The pub is for everyone: we hope that smokers will not be put off by the ban and that non-smokers will find it attractive.”



Harviestoun Brewery sold

KEN BROOKER, a former home-brewer who started making beer in a barn, recently sold his business for £3 million.

Mr Brooker, age 59, founded the Harviestoun Brewery 21 years ago using a bucket in his old farm stables in Dollar, Clackmannanshire. He has now sold the business to the Caledonian Brewing Company in Edinburgh.

After the sale was announced, Mr Brooker commented: "It was a hobby – a way of producing beer as cheaply as possible. I spent a year building up the brewery and it worked. We managed to produce some beer. As time went by we got a little bit better. We are delighted that the brewery has gone for so much – it is really incredible."

Harviestoun's Bitter and Twisted became CAMRA's Supreme Champion Beer of Britain in 2003 and is commonly found in bottled form on supermarket shelves all over Britain.

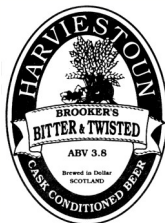
Caledonian's managing director, Stephen

Crawley, said the company would retain all five staff at Harviestoun. He added: "The Harviestoun portfolio fits perfectly into our range."

Belhaven too

SCOTTISH independent regional brewer Belhaven of Dunbar is the latest to fall victim to Greene King. We hear reports that Belhaven Best Smooth has already started appearing in Greene King pubs, but have not yet seen real Belhaven beers appearing as "guest" ales from an apparently independent source.

We wonder how long it will take before trial brewing of Belhaven 80/- starts at Bury St Edmunds. Remember Ruddles, Morland and Riddleys?



The Ship Inn

Licenses: RAY & INGRID FOSTER

St. Cuthbert's Street, Bedford

Tel: 01234 267126



- ☆ LICENSEES OF THE YEAR 2003
- ☆ GREAT LUNCHTIME FOOD
- ☆ LIVE MUSIC 3 TIMES A WEEK
- ☆ 3 BARS AND LARGE HEATED PATIO
- ☆ ONE OF THE FEW TRADITIONAL PUBS LEFT IN BEDFORD. OVER 450 YEARS OLD

The Bedford Arms



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

57 High Street, Oakley

01234 822280

www.bedfordarms.net

Let's go to Tring

BREWERY visits are one of the most popular benefits of belonging to CAMRA. So last December, what better way of spending a dark and chilly evening than a trip to Tring Brewery, on the western borders of Hertfordshire?

The Tring Brewery Company was founded in 1992 by former Greene King brewer Richard Shardlow. He was later joined by Andrew Jackson from Whitbread who had a background in both retail and brewing research. They take pride in a well-deserved reputation for product quality and excellent customer service.

Do what you do well

Although the brewery used to own a few tied pubs, including the Two Brewers in Luton (now closed), it now concentrates on brewing and designing breweries for others.

Do what you do well and leave the rest to someone else is the best recipe for success in a highly competitive business sector. Remember Sir John Harvey-Jones's repeated advice on the Troubleshooter TV series?

Build breweries for others



The directors' passion for exceeding customer expectations also extends to designing and building microbreweries and pub brewing plants for others, through the brewery's sister company, Brewing Design Services, both at home and abroad.

The modern microbrewery is housed inside the premises of an older brewery, long since converted to a small industrial estate. Like most microbreweries, a tour of Tring Brewery does not take very long, but as our hosts naturally



expect CAMRA members to take an interest in technical matters, we were treated by director Andrew Jackson to a learned explanation of the brewing processes used here.

To make best use of its plant capacity, Tring always brews over-strength and dilutes to the alcohol level required. The four eight or six-barrel fermenting vessels are capable of brewing 37 barrels per week. A very active yeast is used that can ferment out in two to three days.

Old Hertfordshire legends

Tring offers three regular beers and a range of seasonal ales, mostly named after old Hertfordshire legends and expressions. They have earned a clutch of awards from CAMRA and SIBA (The Society of Independent Brewers).

The brewery's tasty session bitter, **Side Pocket for a Toad** (3.6 per cent abv), named after an old expression referring to anything useless, won a regional silver award from SIBA (Society of Independent Brewers) in 2002 and features regularly at CAMRA festivals.

Jack O'Legs, a 4.2 per cent copper-coloured premium ale made with four types of malt and two varieties of aroma hop has also won awards, including CAMRA East Anglia's silver award in 2001. Jack was a legendary Hertfordshire giant of the Robin Hood variety, who assisted wealth redistribution by robbing the rich and giving to the poor.

(concluded opposite)

Let's go to Tring

The strongest regular beer is Colley's Dog, a dark 5.2 per cent ale with a dry finish and overtones of malt and walnuts. It won CAMRA

Get wild about Mild!

EVERY year CAMRA celebrates May as Mild Month. Saturday 6th May will be National Mild Day. Licensees are invited to join in by stocking a Mild in May and encouraging pub-goers to give it a try.

What is Mild?

Mild is normally low in hops and usually has a modest alcohol content. Of course there are exceptions – try the mighty **Woild Moild** from Wolf of Norfolk at 4.9 per cent alcohol, or **Dark Ruby** at 6 per cent from Black Country brewer Sarah Hughes!

Mild is normally slightly sweeter, and distinctly less bitter on the palate than the more highly hopped bitters. Mild is usually (but not always) darker in colour than bitter, through the use of roast malt or caramel.

Mild is a modern descendant of the original style of Ale, dating back over 400 years from when hops were a newcomer in the art of brewing. Unfortunately, Mild has become a rare sight in many pubs and is in danger of becoming extinct in some parts of Britain.

Local Mild

East Anglia's silver award in 2004 and has been a finalist in the Champion Beer of Britain awards. Colley was a highwayman whose spirit is said to roam the shire in the form of a huge black dog.

Tring also produces a range of seasonal ales. As it was December, we were able to sample the winter seasonal **Snowflake**, the Christmas ale **Santa's Little Helper** (4.8 per cent) and the winter special **Death or Glory** at a mighty 7.2 per cent alcohol. The occasional **Ridgeway premium** bitter at a comparatively modest 4 per cent was also available on the night.

Many thanks

A great opportunity for a close look at a successful micro-brewery. Many thanks to Andrew and Richard for their hospitality and our very best wishes for the future of Tring Brewery.

Bedford brewer Charles Wells stopped producing Mild many years ago, while Greene King's XX Dark is rare in Bedfordshire except where a determined landlord drinks it himself. B&T of Shefford usually offers one of its own or a guest Mild in its three Bedfordshire pubs.

Otherwise, Mild appears only as an occasional guest beer in free houses or pub chains like Wetherspoon's. However, as many brewers have chosen to drop the word "Mild" from their pump clips, you could be enjoying a Mild without realising it!

Promote it!

CAMRA offers a number of posters and leaflets promoting Mild. Pub landlords interested in offering a Mild during May can get a range of free promotional material by phoning CAMRA HQ on 01727 867201 or emailing samantha.jones@camra.org.uk

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Hoegaarden goes under

THE world's biggest beer machine, InBev, has decided to move production of the famous Hoegaarden *Witbier* (white beer) to Jupille-sur-Meuse in Wallonia, home of the ubiquitous Jupiler lager.

Since InBev bought the Hoegaarden brewery from founder Pierre Celis, the characteristic cloudy brew has become increasingly popular in British pubs and supermarkets. Although many beer buffs argue that it is now a "commercial" brew and not as good as it used to be, others claim that there are few better Belgian wheat beers readily available in the UK.

A group of North Beds CAMRA members visited Hoegaarden Brewery during a tour of Belgian breweries and festivals in 2003. We reported in the Firkin summer 2004 issue:

"Although the widespread availability of Hoegaarden *Witbier* is due partly to the fact that it now belongs to the mighty InBev, the owners do appear, to their credit, to have respected the brewery's distinctive products. Hoegaarden Brewery has its own café, where a good-value lunch can be washed down liberally



with the home-produced beers. We managed all half-dozen available – a very enjoyable way to spend Sunday lunchtime and afternoon!"

Happy memories! But never trust the big boys to value anything worthwhile

A silent march was organised through the town on 10th December with the support of the local council. Many admirers of Hoegaarden *Witbier* joined brewery employees and local people to protest against the loss of the town's best known asset.

Critics want to force InBev into selling the brewery as it is and to prevent the name being used for a beer brewed elsewhere.

Piggin' Great Ale!

Try one of our award winning ales
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Join Bedford Morris Men!

Want to get fit, pick up a new skill and keep our traditions alive?

Musicians and dancers young (14+) or old needed. No experience required.

Meet Wednesdays 8-10pm at Goldington Church Hall, Church Lane, Bedford

For further information, email bmm@ntlworld.com or visit www.bedfordmorris.org.uk





Branch diary



BRANCH business meetings are normally held in the third week of uneven months, e.g. March and May. Campaigning events, brewery and beer festival visits may be any day of the week.

Guests are welcome at social events, but members have priority on brewery visits. For updated information see the members' monthly newspaper, *What's Brewing*, or visit our branch website at www.northbedscamra.org.uk

29th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival Wed 4th to Sat 7th October 2006 Corn Exchange, Bedford

Four days of first class real ales, cider, perry and foreign beers. Further details to follow.

Volunteers are needed to organise and staff our next Bedford festival.

Call Peter Argyle on 01234 822698 or email festival@northbedscamra.org.uk

Monday 20 March

First Bedford Beer & Cider Festival committee meeting, 8pm at Barley Mow, St Loyes Street, Bedford. Volunteers to organise or help at the festival call Peter Argyle on 01234 822698 or email festival@northbedscamra.org.uk

Friday 7 April

Possible social event to be announced. Check What's Brewing or our branch website.

Thursday 11 May

Social and Pub of the Year presentation at Stone Jug, Clophill. Transport from Bedford may be arranged – check What's Brewing or branch website.

Thursday 18 May

Branch meeting, 8 for 8.15pm at Phoenix, St John's Street, Bedford. All CAMRA members welcome.

CAMRA gets more clout

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has been awarded "Super Complainant" status under the Enterprise Act 2000. This gives CAMRA direct access to the Office of Fair Trading to raise complaints about aspects of the beer market that it appear to work against the interests of consumers. And the OFT has just 90 days to respond.

Other designated super complainants include the National Consumer Council, Citizen's Advice Bureaux, the Consumers Association (Which? magazine) and Postwatch.

Being part of this small elite of consumer groups gives CAMRA a powerful voice on structural aspects of the market, such as the concentration of pub ownership and effective barriers against small brewers. CAMRA's Chief Executive, Mike Benner, believes that being granted this new status recognises the crucial role played by CAMRA over 35 years in highlighting where the pub and beer markets are failing to operate in the consumer's interest.



Pick a 6X object up at the bar.

Help us win the CAMRA challenge

YOU probably already enjoy a pint or two of real ale in a decent pub. But are you a member of CAMRA?

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 don't get 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 – well under the price of a pint a month. If you are under 26, are over 60 and retired, or registered unemployed or disabled, you pay only £10. If you've a keen partner living at the same address, you can join together for just £3 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, there's an extra benefit – your first three months' membership comes free. And if you decide to cancel it within this period, you owe the Campaign nothing. Not a bad bargain!

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Opening Hours:
Tuesday to Saturday 9.30am to 5.30pm

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 in 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.

It takes all sorts to campaign for real ale



Join CAMRA Today...

Just fill in the form below and send, with a cheque (payable to CAMRA Ltd) or for Three Months Free membership (for those renewing or joining by Direct Debit) complete the Direct Debit Form. All forms should be addressed to membership secretary, CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW. Alternatively you can join online at www.camra.org.uk. Rates for single membership are £18 and joint £21. Concession rates are available on request.

.....
 Title Surname Forename(s) Date of Birth

.....
 P'tner Surname Forename(s) Date of Birth

.....
 Address Postcode

.....
 Tel. no.(s)

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

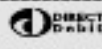
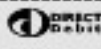
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Applications will be processed within 21 days

BEN Firkin



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Please fill in this form and send it to CAMRA Ltd, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW. Name and full postal address of your bank or building society.

To the Manager (with a self-addressed envelope)

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- If an error is made by CAMRA or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund if you have been affected by the error.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society by phone or in a way of your choice to us.

Campaign for Real Ale

North Bedfordshire Branch

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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 the North Bedfordshire Branch.

Adverts and other items for publication must reach the editor by the date at the foot of this page.

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Advertise in the Firkin

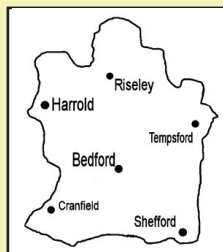
Promote your pub, product or services in our pages

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.

- Circulation 3,000 copies every quarter, delivered to almost every pub or real ale club in north Bedfordshire.
- Space in the next issue must be reserved by the date at the foot of this page.
- Simple artwork created at no extra cost, or supply your own.

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

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



The Bell Odell

Tel 01234 720254

Set in the beautiful village of Odell, The Bell is a traditional thatched village pub with stonewalls, open fires and exposed beams. You will find the river a short stroll from the bottom of our garden and The Bell is a favourite with walkers visiting the nearby Harold and Odell Country Park.



Since we took over the pub last May the interior has been refurbished throughout and our emphasis is always on providing friendly service, good beer and good quality food. It is particularly pleasing for us to find people, who have not used the pub over the last few years, now returning and enjoying The Bell again.

Real ales by far out weigh lagers in popularity here. We serve Greene King IPA, Abbot Ale & Ruddles County on hand pump and take great care to ensure that they are consistently served in tiptop condition.

So, whether taking the kids out for lunch or your granddad out for a pint, give us a try. You will find no gimmicks here; just a fine example of what makes the village pub such a great institution!

Peter and Rachel Causton



DRINK OF ENGLAND