

The Firkin



Magazine for CAMRA North Bedfordshire

• Vol 49 No 2 Autumn 2025

47th Bedford Beer and Cider Festival
1st - 4th October 2025



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WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE

Hornes Brewery 10th Anniversary
A Perfect Afternoon for a CycAle!

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North Beds CAMRA launched first CycAle ride, combining pubs and pedalling.

Branch Diary (all dates and venues subject to confirmation)

When	What	Where
Sunday 7th September	Trip to the Little R'Ale House micropub	Wellingborough
Monday 15th September	Branch Social	Wellington Arms, Bedford
Thursday 18th September	Branch Meeting 3	The Pilgrim's Progress Hotel, Bedford
1st - 4th October	47th Bedford Beer and Cider Festival	The Corn Exchange, Bedford
Thursday 13th November, 7pm	North Beds CAMRA Branch meeting	Pilgrims Progress, Bedford
Weds 19th November 7-9pm	CAMRA members meet-up	Devonshire Arms, Bedford

For details of events check the Events page of the branch web site www.northbeds.camra.org.uk

North Bedfordshire CAMRA Committee

Chairman	Fytton Rowland
Vice-Chairman	Roger Stokes
Secretary/Contact	Dave Hodgson
Treasurer	Mike Parks
Membership Secretary	Neil Ratnett
Website Coordinator	Peter Argyle
Pubs Data Coordinator	Paul Barnes
Festival Organiser	Katherine Lilley
Social Secretary	Gary Mudd

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CHAIR'S CORNER

North Bedfordshire CAMRA Branch

I no longer edit the Firkin, but I'm still Chair of the North Beds branch of CAMRA, so instead of my editorial you get my Chair's report.

The major item to mention, and indeed the reason why this issue is appearing now, although we had no Summer issue this year, is the CAMRA Bedford Beer and Cider Festival at the Corn Exchange on 1st-4th October. That our organiser is once again Kath Lilley, perhaps more committed than anyone else in the whole of CAMRA to our beer festivals, is definitely a very good sign that it will be a great festival once again. Read the article in this issue, and come along, from 4 p.m. on the Wednesday and 12 noon on the other days – it's always fun.



CAMRA is a campaign, though, not just a drinking club for people who like traditional British cask-conditioned beer. The reason for its existence is to keep encouraging people to drink our national beer and support the great British pub. So, we try to make our festival an occasion when we provide a wide selection of real ales from around the country for Bedfordians to sample, so that for the rest of the year they will be encouraged to drink cask ale in their local and enjoy the unique social life that a pub provides at the same time.

I'd like to thank the fairly recent recruits who have taken on branch responsibilities: our treasurer Mike Parks, Paul Barnes and Dave Hodgson. As Chair I give my heartfelt thanks to all these relatively recent activists!

Fytton Rowland

DISCLAIMER

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ARTICLES & CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome contributions that will benefit our readers, to submit an article, please email secretary@northbeds.camra.org.uk

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HORNES BREWERY 10TH ANNIVERSARY – SUMMER SUNDOWNER

by Gary Mudd

This year marks 10 years of brewing for Ryan Horne! It doesn't seem that long since North Beds CAMRA first visited on a cold autumn evening and Ryan had cleared his barn and lit a brazier to keep us warm and out of the drizzle!

A few of us met to celebrate by going down to his 'Summer Sundowner' Celebration in Bow Brickhill. Yet again, this was by Rail Replacement Bus but we got there safe and sound.

There was a great turn out, enjoying live music from the stage and food and ice-cream from the various street food stands.

Ryan had a bar with the whole range of beers available including his special Anniversary Brew – No Goats, No Glory at a hefty 6.5% ABV.

Although the day was a little grey and blustery, everyone had a great time!

Here's to the next ten years, Ryan!



FESTIVAL TIME AGAIN!

We are now just a few weeks away from the **47th Bedford Beer and Cider Festival**. The Festival will run from Wednesday 1st October to Saturday 4th October 2025.

Volunteers have been working hard for many months planning the festival and we are now almost there.

What can you expect from this year's Festival? We will have over 90 beers, ciders and perries at the festival, entertainment each evening and food available each day.

The bar will, once again will be at the far end of the Corn Exchange and there will be plenty of seating downstairs as well as some stand up tables and additional seating upstairs, plenty of space to enjoy your drink.

As in recent years the bars will be cashless – you can either pay for your drinks with beer card – which can be purchased in multiples of £5 – if you don't use it all we will refund anything left on the beer card. The second way is to pay for the drinks at the bar with a credit/debit card.

For non-beer drinkers(!) there will be wine available at the Festival. As well as alcoholic drinks we will have some low alcohol beer, low alcohol cider and soft drinks – some soft drinks are free.

This year we have "Better than Mama's" back to do the catering offering a range of food including Nigerian/Caribbean cuisine. There's an extensive menu to choose from. Geoff, our beer orderer, has been hard at work selecting an interesting range of beers for you to enjoy. This year as well as locally produced beers there will be beers from Scotland, Northern England, South-West England and the Isle of Man. We also hope to include the gold, silver and bronze winners of the Champion Beer of Britain, to be announced in August.

Tom is our new cider bar manager and as well as ordering locally produced ciders, no doubt he will have some from his native Wiltshire!



The continental beer bar will be upstairs, we will have bottled and draught and we should have some ever-popular beer from Bedford's twin town Bamberg.



There is entertainment on each evening, we kick off on Wednesday evening with Bedford Ukulele Band. On Thursday we have Acoustopaea entertaining us, Friday it's the turn of Who Stung Sting and closing the Festival on Saturday evening is Skimmington Ride.

Our Festival charity this year is the MS Therapy Centre, who will be attending with fun games and exciting prizes. All the proceeds of their stand will go to support everyone at the Bedford MS Therapy Centre. The Centre supports people with Multiple

Sclerosis as well as other similar neurological conditions and Parkinson's.

The Opening hours for the Festival are
Wednesday 4pm -11pm
Thursday/Friday noon – 11pm
and Saturday noon – 10.30pm.

The Festival would not be possible without the generous sponsorship of **Gallaghers Developments** – who are sponsoring the festival for the second year – thank you.

Finally make sure you check out the web site for season ticket offers (4 days for the price of 3) and group booking opportunities. We should also have offers for Tutored tasting sessions at the festival. So please check out the web site www.northbeds.camra.org.uk or scan the QR code for all the latest information.





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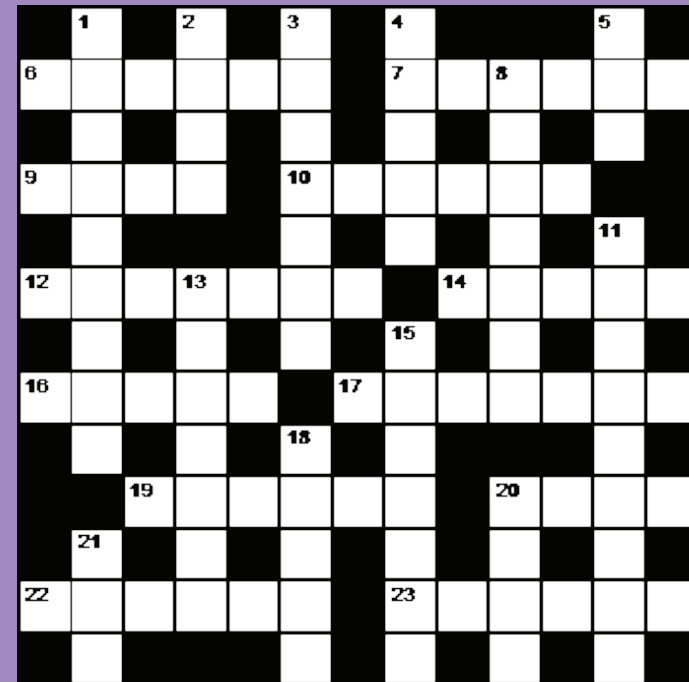
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THE FIRKIN CROSSWORD

Can you complete our tricky crossword? Answers on P13



- ACROSS**
- 6 Pierre's yesterday, when taking in start and end, is not so fine. (6)
 - 7 Classical Greek style is about right to be absurdly annoying (6)
 - 9 See 5 Down
 - 10 Two points about mad peer of the realm or realms (6)
 - 12 A very loud set of tunes that participants would prefer to keep quiet? (7)
 - 14 Perry maybe, could be free, for mother and child (5)
 - 16 A drawback? 5-15-9, 11-2-3, 22-20 and 4 don't see having one as such (5)
 - 17 Brazilian diplomacy or what may be needed when it breaks down? (4,3)
 - 19 Souvlaki not ok when stirred - that's how it looks (6)
 - 20 Top's bottom when shut is opened out (4)
 - 22/20D Regional 16 winner, greater one excited (6,4)
 - 23 Examination shows I left local river after beer. (1,5)
- DOWN**
- 1 I hear this could be an excuse to drink beer - duck! (9)
 - 2 Two learners on motorway move haphazardly (4)
 - 3 Berry we pulped to get drinks here (7)
 - 4 Headgear for a smart joint (5)
 - 5/15/9 Distinguished officer is well imperial at sea (3,7,4)
 - 8 Lost lad is all at sea and has been for quite some time (3,4)
 - 11 Market town with pop up shops I hear? (9)
 - 13 Summons results in a ruling being heard (7)
 - 15 See 5
 - 18 Slippery drug smugglers? (5)
 - 20 See 22 Across
 - 21 Fine for cider and wine maybe, less so for hostelries (3)

A GRAND DAY OUT?

by Gary Mudd

As social secretary I thought a day by the seaside sampling a few pubs in Brighton might be nice. Straight from one Thameslink terminus to the other with no danger of sleeping past your stop... excellent!

Eleven intrepid CAMRA members duly turned up on 21st June to catch the 09.18, which left on time. A hot, sunny day, but we'd be slaking our thirst regularly!

The driver apologised that we'd be a bit slow to London due to an issue with the overhead catenary but we'd pick up speed once we reached live rail pick-up. All was going well and we were in good spirits as we started on a diversion due to engineering works. We slowed to a halt. The driver informed us of a fault with a train in front of us at Loughborough Junction (don't ask me why Loughborough Junction is in South London!). It would be fixed shortly and we'd carry on... 'Shortly' became nearly 2 hours! 'Fixed' meant Not Fixed!

We couldn't go back as other trains were stuck behind us! Network Rail had had to switch off the live rail so we gradually stewed with no aircon. Some passengers broke the emergency panels and forced doors. The driver offered the use of his open window for a breath of fresh air (if the 1500 passengers could form an orderly queue).

Eventually Thameslink admitted defeat and the Transport Police and Fire Brigade arrived to evacuate the passengers down the track. Some doors had a ladder but most of us had to sit on the floor and jump down. We wandered to the road and were left to our own devices....

We found The Bear, where the unflappable barman served us Bath Gem whilst supervising some Beatles on the Vinyl Decks at the back of the bar.

We made plans.

The kitchen was shut so we made do with a meal deal from the Tesco Express. Two stayed at The Bear and we later learned they'd ensconced themselves in 'It ain't much if it ain't Dutch' on Bermondsey Beer Mile.



The rest of us returned to St Pancras (where all trains were cancelled or delayed!) via bus and tube. Staff knew of our plight and kindly waved us through the barriers.

We walked to the Queen's Head in Acton Street. A wood panelled, ex-Charrington house serving three ales from independent brewers (Redemption, Brew York) and at a very reasonable price for London (c.£4.40). It was cool; we stayed a while.

Those who could, decided to go EMR back to Bedford and Dinner.

The four of us in a group caught Thameslink Lutonwards and got off at St Albans. We spent the rest of the afternoon in the garden of The Mermaid. Very pleasant.

Eventually we got a train home with a quick check that the beers were still ok in the Welly. Not the day out planned but we did get our money back.

We passed a resolution that we'd try for Brighton on another day.....TBC



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BEER STYLES: AN INTRODUCTION...

by Michael Parks

A beer style is a name given to a category of beers with similar characteristics which can be distinguished from another category of beers. The characteristics used to define a beer style often include taste (sweet, sour, bitter), flavour (chocolate, toffee, figs), aroma, appearance (colour, clarity), alcoholic strength and mouthfeel (watery, smooth, thick).



CAMRA categorizes beers into 12 primary style categories for its annual Champion Beer of Britain competition (CBoB) for real ales. Those 12 categories are: milds; session bitters; premium bitters; session blond, golden and pale ales; premium blond, golden and pale ales; India Pale Ales (IPAs); session porters and stouts; premium porters and stouts; brown, red and old ales and strong milds; barley wines and strong ales; differently produced specialty beers and flavoured specialty beers. Session and premium styles are distinguished by the percentage of alcohol by volume (ABV). Some styles are further segregated into substyles (e.g., session porters, session dry stouts, session milk stouts, etc.). For CBoB, CAMRA judges select a winner in each of the 12 style categories and then judge these against each other to select the Champion.

CAMRA's focus is on UK real ales. In other countries where beer brewing and drinking traditions are different, alternative style guidelines have been developed to include beers such as American, German and Czech lagers and Belgian fruited sour beers. In the USA, the Beer Judge Certification Program's (BJCP) style guidelines use 34 categories and well over 100 different styles and substyles for the world's beers with commonly available commercial examples. The European Beer Consumers Union's (EBCU) style guidelines classify the beers of the world into 6 broad groups which are then separated into well over 100 styles and substyles.

As you would hope, the various sets of style guidelines generally ascribe the same characteristics to the same style of beer. Where they differ, generally, is in recognizing a smaller, more narrowly defined style or substyle with more specifically described characteristics (such as geographic area where the beer is/was produced).

Style guidelines can be useful for beer drinkers when selecting new beers to try. For example, if you know your favourite beer is a strong porter then there's a good chance you'll like a strong porter from another brewer. For this to work though, the style of the new beer must be accurately labelled, and this is where the actual usefulness of style guidelines falls short of its potential. Brewers are not required to use any of the multiple style guidelines when describing or labelling their beers and there's no requirement to identify a beer's style accurately.

CAMRA is helping real ale drinkers with this. For CBoB, CAMRA ignores a beer's label and assigns it a style based on the characteristics in the CAMRA style guidelines. All the beers tasted by CAMRA tasting panels are assigned to the appropriate CAMRA styles and a drinker can view the style for over 15,000 real ales on CAMRA's website. CAMRA's website also has information about its beer styles. If you're a CAMRA member you can sign in to CAMRA's website and record in your personal list beers you've tasted and whether you've liked them or not.

For more information on CAMRA's beer style guidelines, CBoB, the style of a particular beer and more, visit the Beers & Breweries section of CAMRA's website at www.camra.org.uk.

For more information about the BJCP's beer style guidelines see their website at www.bjcp.org.

For more information about the EBCU's beer style guidelines see the Beer Styles section of the EBCU's website at www.ebcu.org.



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A PERFECT AFTERNOON FOR A CYCALE!

by Jon Abbott

On a sunny Saturday afternoon, six members of the North Beds CAMRA branch embarked on our inaugural CycAle ride, a fantastic social event combining our love for good beer and scenic countryside. The good-natured group cycled nearly 10 miles, exploring some of the lovely pubs our area has to offer.

Our journey began in Clapham, with refreshing stops at the Horse & Groom, a Greene King house, where most of us enjoyed a half of Greene King IPA, and the Fox & Hounds, Wells house, who didn't have any Wells cask on, but we did sample the London Pride. We then headed towards Oakley and the welcoming Bedford Arms, another Wells house, where Woodforde's Wherry was on tap. From there, the route presented a few gentle gradients as we made our way to The Cock, a free house, in Pavenham. The pub was buzzing with a wedding reception, which added to the cheerful atmosphere, and it proved a perfect spot for a bit of impromptu bike maintenance while we enjoyed our JHB.

With gears checked, we tackled the rolling roads on the way to the Royal George, another free house, in Stevington, where a few well-kept cask beers were available, including a Harvey's Sussex Bitter. The picturesque route was a delight, and the promise of another fine ale kept our pedals turning. One last hill climb brought us back to Oakley, where we finished our tour at the Oakley Sports & Social Club, with a final Banks's Amber. The Club, along with The Cock, impressed with the best selection of cask ales of the day.

Every pub we visited had at least one real ale on the hand pump and gave us a warm welcome. It was a relaxed and friendly ride, with members enjoying a half at most stops, and no pressure to drink alcohol at every venue.

This was a wonderful way to spend an afternoon, and as part of our branch's effort to host more social events, we are already looking forward to planning the next one. We'd love for more members to join us in the future - you could even just meet us for part of the ride. Keep an eye out for future announcements!






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