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# Casket

Campaign for Real Ale

January 2020



EAST BEDFORDSHIRE

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[casket@eastbeds.camra.org.uk](mailto:casket@eastbeds.camra.org.uk)



## Dave's Trek to Bishop's Castle - see page 20

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Issue number 1

Volume 16

2020

## **EAST BEDS COMMITTEE 2019/20**

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### **The Casket**

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The views expressed in The Casket are those of individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the policy of CAMRA, the Editors or the East Bedfordshire Branch. Contributions to the Casket are always Welcome.

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# A word from the Editor

The more observant of you may have noticed that the Casket has been absent from the pubs and clubs of East Bedfordshire for a large part of last year. Fear not, say we, it has neither become extinct due to climate change nor deported under a hostile environment. What has happened is that there have been a number of changes to the committee and editorial team this year, and whilst we have tried to follow in the footsteps of the slick well-oiled machinery of the old guard we freely admit to having staggered and hiccupped a bit in their path. Nevertheless, the Casket is now back and we hope to keep you abreast of events and entertained with the traditional 3 issues a year again.

So, what of the content of this issue I hear you ask? We have put together a collection of articles relating to various events and activities over the year for your perusal and enjoyment. We would also like to remind members that although the authors of all these are committee members this is by no means a prerequisite to having an article published. We welcome submissions from all members at any time to [casket@eastbeds.camra.org.uk](mailto:casket@eastbeds.camra.org.uk). And yes, the sharper eyed may have noticed our new 'dot' in the website and email addresses this year, with a move to the main Camra web server bringing us into line with other branches.

So drink up, read on and looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Jo Freeman



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# LOCAL PUB NEWS

## **Sugar Loaf, Meppershall**

Since July last year a new manager, Anthony Rosier, now runs the Sugar Loaf and the pub has finally got a long awaited facelift. It is much brighter now and makes better use of the space. In the front section the old furniture has gone and it is now a games room with a large screen TV with Sky Sports, gaming machines and darts. The pool table has been relocated there. In the rear section, there are new tables & chairs down both sides of the room, plus a long central table with high stools. The bar itself is more spacious after the removal of upper cabinets. Outside, part of the car park has been reclaimed to offer an extended patio garden with fence and there is a new hanging pub sign.



The opening hours are now Mon-Fri 1pm-11pm, Sat 12-midnight, Sun 12-11pm .

Meals have been introduced on Wed, Thu & Fri evenings from 6-9pm, plus a Sunday Roast Dinner 12-6pm. At the bar GK IPA is the regular ale, plus one guest ale which on this visit was Hobgoblin (ruby), which replaced the Hobgoblin (gold) which was served in the summer. There is a Happy Hour on Fridays 5-7pm with 10% off ales, lagers, wine & soft drinks. Games remain popular in the pub - pool, darts, cribbage and dominoes.

## **Chequers, Stotfold**

A belated welcome to Jane Dore who became the latest tenant of the Chequers last April. She has a 5 year lease from Greene King and will be supported by other family members. The pub received a new coat of paint on the exterior, but the interior remains the same. At the bar, GK IPA and Taylor Landlord are the regular real ales, plus one guest from GK's list on this visit it was Rockin' Rudolph. The public bar features two large screen TVs with BT & Sky Sports. The opening hours are Mon-Thu 12-11pm, Fri & Sat 12-midnight and Sun 12-10.30pm. The Chequers is a food-led pub offering traditional pub grub with seasonal changes to the menu (see pub's website for details). Meals are served Mon-Sat 12-8pm and Sun 12-5pm. There is a regular quiz competition on Wednesdays evenings at 8.30pm, plus live entertainment once a month featuring bands or singers. Come springtime, Jane aims to make good use of the family friendly garden area with outside bar and pizza oven.

### **The Engineers Arms, Henlow**

In addition to receiving the East Beds award The Engineers Arms was overall Bedfordshire Pub of the Year 2019. Kevin and Sharon are seen here receiving the certificate from Mike Coombes, Beds County Area Organiser, at the AGM.



Last year was a big year for Kevin and the team as they celebrated "Cheers to 30

Years" with a string of events throughout the year to mark Kevin's 30 years in the pub. In addition to the established annual beer and cider festivals and newly established gin festival there were a number of charity functions and minor festivals. Themed beer choices throughout the year included a 'Classics' range over Easter, a 'War of the Roses' collection of 26 Yorkshire and Lancashire brews, plus of course plenty of Derbyshire ales over the year. Congratulations again to all the team and long may the pub thrive!



### **Potton Brewing Company News**

Richard has been working on new interpretations of Village Bike, Shannon IPA and Pride of Potton and is pleased to announce that all three have met with the approval of Bob Hearson, the previous Brewmaster at the 'old' Potton Brewery. The only differences that have been made from the originals are slight...firstly because of Richard's brew plant and secondly because of changes to the available ingredients.

To mark this milestone there was an unveiling of the new brew at Rising Sun, Potton, in November. A number of members were in attendance and the beer was well received. Richard is seen here pouring a pint for former brewer Bob Hearson.





## PLENTY FOR 2020 AT THE ENGINEERS ARMS HENLOW

FRIDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> APRIL – MONDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> APRIL  
**CLASSIC BEER FESTIVAL**

SATURDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> MAY  
**VE CELEBRATIONS - 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**  
WITH EUGENE PORTMAN ON THE PIANO  
FANCY DRESS A MUST!!

FRIDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> JUNE – MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> JUNE  
**SEASIDE WEEKEND**  
BEERS FROM COASTAL BREWERIES, FISH & CHIPS, ICE CREAM  
PUNCH & JUDY

THURSDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER – MONDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER  
**EAST MIDLANDS BEER FESTIVAL**

WEDNESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER – SUNDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER  
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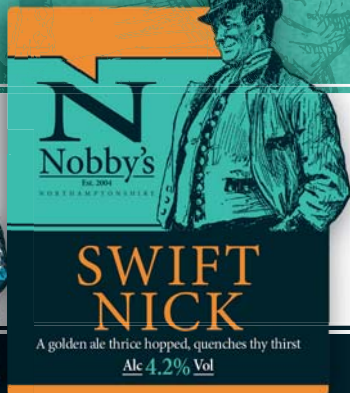
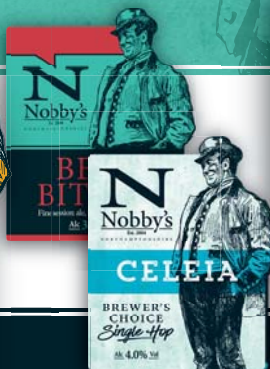
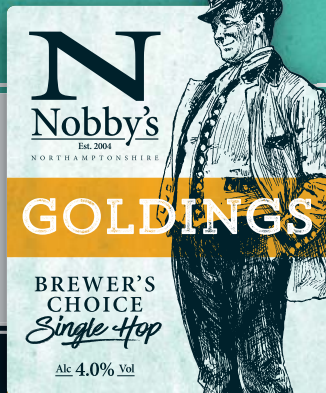
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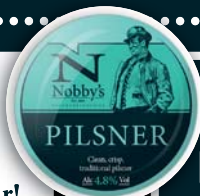
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# DIARY DATES

- JAN.** 22nd. Special GBG & POTY Selection Meeting, Cock, Broom 8 pm  
23rd. Wetherspoon London Beer festival preview Crown Hotel, Biggleswade, 7.30pm
- FEB.** 12th. Branch Meeting, Rising Sun, Potton, 8 pm
- MAR.** 13th Branch social, Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival, 1pm onwards  
24th. Branch Meeting, Venue TBC
- APR.** 3rd - 5th - CAMRA Members Weekend, AGM and Conference, York
- MAY** 13th AGM, Engineers Arms, Henlow

## BEER FESTIVALS

- Jan** 24th-26th. March Hare, Winter Beer Festival, Dunton  
24th-26th January is "Drinka Taylor Solda Pie", Engineers Arms featuring all of Timothy Taylor's Range
- Feb.** 4th-8th. Great British Beer Festival Winter, The New Bingley Hall, Birmingham  
**CAMRA**
- Mar.** 12th-14h. Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival, Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St Neots. **CAMRA**

For updates see <http://eastbeds.camra.org.uk/events.html>



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
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**Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival**  
**Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St Neots**  
**12th-14th March 2020**

### Opening times

**Thu 12th March from Noon to 10.30pm**  
**Fri 13th March from Noon to 10.30pm**  
**Sat 14th March from Noon to 10pm**

# Casket Cryptic Crossword

As before, all answers have been used as names of beers and/or breweries at some time somewhere in the world or have some other connection (however tenuous) with the wonderful world of beer

## Across

- 7 Let rip as a result of this beer abroad (6)
- 8 One to start the day off old style (3,3)
- 9 The fruit of ill-usage, upset with no ales. (4)
- 10 Taking tube back to hotel at a US city is a turning point. (8)
- 11 Instrument part backing tenor occasionally (7)
- 13 Pass out when caught, it's said, between opposing points of view (5)
- 15 Climb over the bar? Finding quite the opposite! (5)
- 16 Military chief can be established by backing fresh trainee or lower grade. (7)
- 18 Comic Eddie losing himself in twisted magic (8)

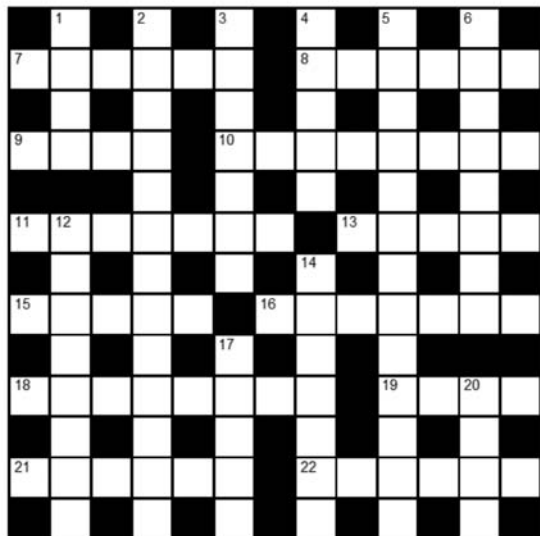
- 19 Thus Ted's haircut will add sparkle (4)
- 21 Flower of the French after tool of 18 (6)
- 22 Should any dry day lack excitement initially get back in it? (6)

## Down

- 1 When drinking, Roger finds a rum concoction (4)
- 2 Fruity spirit disturbed in crypt abroad (7,6)
- 3 Spy could be railed on? (7)
- 4 Agent's gadget man's up to date apparently with a surprising vessel (1-4)
- 5 Lewd hedonist I gathered took a walk here? (2,3,4,4)
- 6 Absolute shower have coin in dry surroundings (8)
- 12 Talked about one drink to start with (8)
- 14 After losing song of the sea psychoanalyst will dance to a different tune. (7)
- 17 Summer reptile? (5)
- 20 Doctor's unending enemy is depression (4)

Compiled by Chris Freeman

The solution is on Page 22



nature's  
voice

# Are You Experienced?

In this day and age there appears to be a growing market for “experience” days, usually bought as gifts, whereby the recipient can be treated to the delights of such diverse pursuits as paintballing by tank, tearing round a racetrack in a supercar or something more sedate and down to earth such as a quiet afternoon tea. I was lucky enough to receive such a gift, falling nicely between the high octane and low stress types of package, in the form of a Brewing Experience say at the **Brewhouse and Kitchen**.

My wife had thoughtfully bought me a package for two, lovingly presented to me accompanied with wistful comments along the lines of “I wonder who you could possibly take along with you?” As such, we duly turned up at the Bedford premises together one Saturday back in July, to be greeted by the brewers, Richard and Caitlin. The day started with a light breakfast of a cup of tea and a bacon roll (vegetarian alternatives available) and then followed though the process of creating the day’s brew, interspersed with a lunch break and, of course, sampling sessions.



Like a large number of CAMRA members, I am not a complete novice to the world of brewing, although the student homebrewing days back in the ‘80s when other residents of the student flats would wonder why some of the dustbins would disappear for a couple of weeks at a time are probably best consigned to the big dustbin of history. It was therefore a very welcome experience to be taken through an end to end session of creating a proper brew. As we were joined by just one other couple on the day there was ample opportunity for everyone to get involved with all stages of the process in a much more ‘hands on’ approach than a standard brewery tour. What was very evident from the start was the knowledge enthusiasm that Richard and Caitlin have for their craft, taking us through the whole process and the various aspects such as the choice of ingredients, temperatures and timings.



Paying attention to the timings was a crucial part of the day, of course for getting the brew correct but also for allowing sampling time. Although there are a number of B&K houses throughout the country each one is encouraged to develop a local flavour and the beer



names are chosen to reflect the history of the town and its inhabitants. The Bedford B&K brews a range of core beers and occasional specials that will cater for a variety of moods and palates. The main cask beers are their Bankers Draught, a 3.6% session bitter, Intrepid, a 4.2% golden ale Braxator, a 4.5% amber and Invarsity, a good strong 6% hoppy bitter. These are augmented by other popular delights from KeyKeg such as a 4% pilsner, their Tasmanian Tom 4.5% tropical IPA and the Chief Goober 5.4% oatmeal stout. The schedule was designed so that we could progress through the range and Richard was happy to make any substitutions should anyone find anything not to their particular taste but I seem to recall that all four of us enjoyed the offerings that he had chosen. We were also

encouraged to sit down, relax and revisit any of our favourites from throughout the day

once the brew was complete. This gave us each plenty of time to decide which beer to take home in the 5 litre minikeg that is included in the package. I believe we settled on Invarsity and Braxator. During the course of the day we also met up with the North Beds chairman, Dan. North Beds were in the process of organising a brewing day as a Young Members event, which I believe went ahead very successfully. Definitely a worthwhile day out and upon hearing me sing the praises of the day my daughter gave very heavy hints should be added to her Christmas list! Further details of the B&K package and their beer tasting masterclass events can be found at <https://www.brewhouseandkitchen.com/venue/bedford/>



Chris Freeman

## Tour of East Bedfordshire – Stage 10

The **Vicars Inn, Arlesey** was the starting point for this year's sun-soaked Stage of the Tour of East Bedfordshire – one of the most popular events on the Branch's Social calendar. This year was no different when, over a pint, a half or other less identifiable beverage, a record number of participants – including three from South Beds CAMRA - assembled in the garden of the pub to discuss the various routes they had taken to get there. The more fetishistic element pored over the various machines which were being used for the trip and the bikes ranged from sporty little numbers to one fitted with electric assistance to make easier the parts which may be uphill or into an headwind. Of far more importance to some of those making the journey were the two beers served by Theresa – a limited number but of the usual excellent quality.



The route which Chris had plotted was just under 14 miles but an executive decision was taken to follow the *parcours* in a clockwise direction rather than anti-clockwise as originally planned so the next stop was the **Crown, Stotfold**.

Arlesey to Stotfold is a bit of a joy for the cyclist as much of the route is along a cycle path and - as is the norm on a Sunday afternoon - the **Crown** was busy, with those not watching sport on the television enjoying 'family time' on the patio

where the *peloton* rested for refreshments. Four or five well-kept real ales satisfied our collective thirsts while the antics of some of the outdoor clientele kept others amused – particularly the individual who should, perhaps, have visited Specsavers (other opticians are available) before her sight had become so unfocussed that she thought Chris was a Billy Connolly look-alike. Archie's Glaswegian accent may have added to her confusion as the pair happened to be sitting with each other. As well as the beers, Keith very generously provides a free buffet for his customers on Sundays.

Again the ride from Stotfold to Baldock is a reasonable journey given that much of it can be taken on a cycle track - the opportunity to use which, unfortunately, most of us either by design, default or bloody-mindedness, ignored

**The Orange Tree, Baldock**, our next destination, is another pub which, like the Vicars Inn, has a very attractive garden. Disappointingly the number of summer migrants – Swifts, Martins and Swallows – seemed depleted this year as it had been a delight to watch them zipping around the garden and surrounding trees and bushes in search of food in the past. Symptomatic, perhaps, of the tough times birds are having due to loss of habitat, increased use of pesticides and insecticides, monoculture and fewer suitable sites for nesting.

Leaving the pub at various intervals – entirely dependent upon when you arrived, how much fuel you needed for the coming stretch and how keen you were to get to the next stop – we progressed in dribs and drabs to the **Garden City Brewery & Bar** tucked away in The Wynd in Letchworth.

Those of us who arrived last found the Wynd overflowing with both bikes and customers but there were still plenty of real ales on offer. As anybody who visits the brewery bar regularly will know, there are always four or five beers brewed on the premises as well as three or four guests all served by gravity. Most of us sat in the under cover beer garden at the side of the pub which is an excellent spot from which to observe the pedestrians traversing up and down the Wynd – not quite Italy's *La Passeggiata* but interesting enough to watch. It was the first time some of us had visited the pub/brewery and as you may expect the beers sampled were all in fine condition.

I'm not entirely sure what was the cause of the 'split' in the ranks but the journey to the **True Briton, Arlesey** wasn't entirely without incident...well for two of us anyway.

After passing the Spirella Building the bulk of the *peloton* quite rightly took a left and a right at the next two roundabouts which took them to Bedford Road and a straight run to Arlesey New Road. Ian and I, solely at my suggestion I admit, went straight on from Bridge Road to Cowslip Hill where the expected short-cut turned into a long one. We could only console ourselves by the fact that we perhaps saw a less urban side of Letchworth than our colleagues. The bulk of the rest of our journey was going a little like my navigation – downhill – which was very enjoyable for me as I don't particularly relish cycling in the opposite trajectory.



Our arrival at the **True Briton** was further delayed by overshooting Station Road/Hospital Road but we eventually got there to find the assembled mass enjoying the sunshine outside the pub along with many of the regulars, some of whom seemed to have never seen so many bikes outside the pub at the same time. In retrospect they could have been taken aback by the variety of sporting attire on display. Only a couple of beers were available but they were perfectly palatable.

The journey from there to our final destination, the **Engineers Arms, Henlow** was, for myself, a little hazy although the weather had stayed clear all day. The patio at the front of the pub was the favoured spot for most of us and we soaked up a few more pints along with the sunshine. The usual array of ten to twelve real ales and half a dozen ciders and perries allowed all palates to be satisfied before we all took our separate routes homeward after another very enjoyable day.

As is usual following our Branch Bike ride, I would like to thank all of the licensees and their staff who served us very efficiently considering the number of us who turned up en masse; their customers, who were never less than friendly; my cycling companions for their banter; and Steve Nakoneczny for providing back-up.

Another wholly enjoyable excursion and hopefully some participants are already looking forward to the 2020 leg.

Barry Price



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# Great British Beer Festival 2019



Early August is not only a great time of year for pleasant weather, barbecues, flowers out in bloom and holidays, but also for CAMRA's yearly Great British Beer Festival (GBBF). This year it was held between 6-10 August, and as has been the case for many years, it was again hosted at Olympia in London. Styled as 'The World's Biggest Pub', the festival is a superb opportunity to

try some new brews as well as enjoy some old-time favourites. Roughly 450 British cask beers were said to be on offer this year, and about the same again in foreign and bottled beer, alongside of course a great range of cider. Additionally, and for the first time, CAMRA also brought in a number of breweries selling craft beer in keg. It is also possible to try other beverages such as mead and wines on some of the stalls.

First-time goers could easily find that number of beverages available daunting. I've been a regular attendee of GBBF over the years (in fact this was my 16<sup>th</sup> year going to the festival) and I remember the first year was quite overwhelming, with knowing where to start being the trickiest part. As a consequence, I've made it a habit to buy a festival guide, which includes a full list of beers and ciders as well as a map. Sampling alongside me were three friends who are also consistent attendees, and my brother-in-law, who was attending for the first time. We tend to keep a good atmosphere of trying each other's drinks at festivals, to ensure we don't miss out on anything truly special.



Sticking to halves and thirds (so we could sample as many as possible!), we first started on a few local new beers and favourites. It was firstly great to see our local Potton Brewery at the festival, and it would have been remiss of me to not help celebrate their arrival at the festival without trying the delicious Republic IPA. My brother-in-law had never really got into darker beers before, so we both spent a lot of the day sampling stouts, porters, milds, old ales and other darker varieties. Other particularly good local ones we tried were the Crafty Beers Imperial Stout (a deceptively drinkable beer at a whopping 10%) from over the border in Cambridgeshire, Moon Gazer's Nibbler (a relaxing and drinkable 4% ruby ale from Norfolk) and De La Crème, a delicious milk stout from Mad Squirrel based in Hertfordshire.



Next we trundled over to the Tiny Rebel bar, to sample a (gasp!) keg beer. I was keen to try one I'd not sampled before, and opted for the Amplified Imperial Stay Puft, a beefed up (and 12.8%!) version of the classic Stay Puft, and equally superb compared to its little cousin. The Paper Planes from Tiny Rebel was also a big hit with my group. The keg beer stands were very popular, full of superb beers, and a welcome addition to the festival.

For the rest of the session we ventured to other parts of the country. My absolute favourite beer this year was Beartown's rather superb Crème Bear Lee, a velvety smooth stout with lovely hints of vanilla, coffee and dark chocolate.

After a few more beers, a couple of ciders, and a few visits to the pub games (as usual, I was particularly terrible at skittles!), we enjoyed a bit of the entertainment from Bulsara & His Queenies, a quite unique Queen tribute act that produced some excellent renditions of a few of the old Queen favourites (that I definitely didn't mind singing along to!).

All in all, we had a fantastic day, and it was a really great opportunity to meet up with some old friends, and sample some terrific beers and ciders.

Dave Strong

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Forename(s) .....  
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By Email ☐ By Post ☐

*BEER*  
By Email ☐ By Post ☐

Concessionary rates are available only for Under 26 Memberships.

I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association which can be found on our website.

Signed .....

Date .....

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## Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To the Manager ..... Bank or Building Society

Address .....

Postcode .....

## Name(s) of Account Holder

## Bank or Building Society Account Number

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## Branch Sort Code

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## Reference

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Please pay Campaign For Real Ale Limited Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Campaign For Real Ale Limited and, if so, will be passed electronically to my Bank/ Building Society.

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Date



This Guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer.

## The Direct Debit Guarantee

- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay by Direct Debits
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request The Campaign for Real Ale Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request
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- If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when The Campaign Real Ale Ltd asks you to
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

# Campaign Corner Report

Village or Town, Pub	LocALe	Real Cider	ACV	Festival	Discount
Arlesey, Vicars Inn	Wells				
Arlesey, White Horse			Yes		
Biggleswade, Crown Hotel	Yes				Yes 50p
Biggleswade, Golden Pheasant	Wells +	Yes			
Biggleswade, New Inn	Wells	Yes			
Biggleswade, Stratton House		Yes			
Biggleswade, Pembroke Arms					
Biggleswade, Yorkshire Grey					10%
Broom, Cock		Yes		July	
Clifton, Admiral		Yes		June	
Dunton, March Hare	Wells, B&T	Yes		Sep & Feb	
Everton, Thornton Arms	Wells	Yes			
Henlow, Engineers Arms	L. Buzzard, Tring	Yes		Oct & Feb	
Henlow, Old Transporter	Several	Yes		several	Yes 20p
Langford, Plough			Yes		
Meppershall, Sugar Loaf			Yes		
Potton, Coach House	Wells, Buntingford				
Potton, George & Dragon			Yes		
Potton, Rising Sun	Wells	Yes		May & Aug	
Potton, Royal Oak			Yes		
Sandy, Bell			Yes		
Sandy, Four Horsemen		Yes			
Sandy, Kings Arms			Yes		
Sandy, Queens Head			Yes		
Sandy, Sir William Peel		Yes		Apr & July	
Stotfold, Coach & Horses	Wells	Yes			
Stotfold, Crown		Yes			
Stotfold, Stag		Yes			
Sutton, John O'Gaunt		Yes			
Wrestlingworth, Chequers	Wells	Yes	Yes	May	

**A full list of LocALe Breweries and Cider Producers can be seen at**  
**[www.eastbeds.camra.org.uk/locale](http://www.eastbeds.camra.org.uk/locale)** **[www.eastbeds.camra.org.uk/cider](http://www.eastbeds.camra.org.uk/cider)**

## Dave's Trek to Bishop's Castle

Being an avid walker, I'm always keen to find pubs and breweries that act as a good way-point or target for a stroll or hike. As such, I'm always interested to hear of places with both good pub offerings and the capacity to take in a nice walk.

As luck would have it, a friend of mine informed me of such a place called Bishop's Castle, in Shropshire near the Welsh border. I'd never heard of it, but his tales of a small market town, with not one but two brewpubs and another two or three very respectable hostelrys, combined with some of the best hillwalking in Britain, had me hooked. I had to check this place out, and took a few days there with my wife during October half term to explore what it had to offer.

When we arrived late afternoon, I was pleased to discover that Bishop's Castle was exactly as my friend had described. I found small independent shops selling knick-knacks and with signs in the window exclaiming "Walkers are welcome!". There were many small B&Bs, a big campsite just up the road (at which we were staying), little takeaway shops, and, of course, at least four pubs to write home about.

The first pub we visited was **The Crown & Anchor Vaults**. This pub is known in the area for having excellent live music, and the walls were adorned with numerous music-related paraphernalia complete with listings of upcoming gigs. Feeling that it would be rude to not whet the whistle, I enjoyed a well-kept pint of Ludlow Brewery's Gold and my wife had a delicious pint of Weston's Rosie's Pig cloudy rhubarb cider from a polypin on the bar.



The following day, we set off on a long hike through the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and up the Stiperstones. The views were spectacular, and the terrain was variable enough that it would be possible to plan a walk of almost any length and difficulty here whilst still getting beautiful scenery.



Halfway round our route, we stopped in **The Miner's Arms** in Montgomery, near Priest Weston, which is an old Tanner's pub on the edge of the AONB. It was a proper pub of old, with low beams, exposed stone walls, a plethora of wood burning stoves and fires, and a cracking pint or two of Wye Valley HPA to help ease the walking pains in the legs!

Feeling like we needed a bit more

of a relax once returning to Bishop's Castle, we stopped off in **The Six Bells**, the first of the town's breweries (which takes its name from the pub), though I've heard since visiting that due to increase in demand, the beers are now brewed off-site at Big Hand Brewery in nearby Wrexham. I managed to sample each of their three beer offerings of Ow Do bitter (4.0%), Cloud Nine golden ale (4.2%), and my favourite, Noggin Session Bitter (3.8%). The pub itself is a cosy two-roomed inn from the 1670s, complete with inglenooks and low beams.

Further up the road we stopped into the **Boar's Head**, which claims to be the oldest pub in the town, where 4 ales were on offer including Ludlow Brewery



beers and a lovely pint of St Austell Proper Job.



The following day we had an easier hike, taking in more of the lowland areas that Shropshire had to offer. This gave us plenty of time to relax at the campsite (which by this point we had completely to ourselves!) and sample a few more pubs in the afternoon and evening.

First we visited **The King's Head**, a freehouse and Grade II Listed building that offered a nice pint of Wye Valley Butty Bach and some very friendly locals. Next on our list was the **Castle Hotel**, another Grade II listed building with a comfortable bar serving a great pint of Hobson's Mild.



Continued on next page .....



Our last pub, and where we stayed for dinner, was the **Three Tuns**. This is a proper brewpub, with all brewing still done on-site. It is one of only four pubs in the country where brewing was taking place on-site in the 70s, and still continues to do so. Moreover, it lays claim to being Britain's Oldest Brewery. Many breweries have made this claim, including the much more famous Shepherd Neame, but Three Tuns possibly has the greatest claim, with a continuous licence since 1642 to brew on the premises. The pub has many cosy rooms and is a listed building, and I took time to sample all four of the fantastic beers they had on offer

– Cleric's Cure (5.0%), XXX (4.3%), Stout (4.4%) and the Solstice (3.9%). Their food was absolutely stunning, with lots of pub favourites on offer such as southern fried chicken burgers, a quite wonderful fish and chips, and pie of the day. After a final day of scaling Roundton Hill Fort, viewing stone circles and going to a mining museum, we headed back to the campsite. Just as I was going to suggest going to the chippy for dinner, my wife pipes up, "do you fancy going back to the Three Tuns for another pint and a chicken burger to-night?" ....well, when you put it like that, why not!

The whole trip was absolutely fantastic, and has left me yearning to go back for both the brilliant walks and brilliant pubs, of such a truly great gem in the heart of the British countryside.

Dave Strong

## Cryptic Crossword Solution



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CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

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