



the

Casket

Campaign for Real Ale

FREE

May 2010



EAST BEDFORDSHIRE
www.eastbedscamra.org.uk casket@eastbedscamra.org.uk



**CONGRATULATIONS
To The
Rising Sun, Potton
East Beds CAMRA Branch
Pub of the Year 2010
See page 9**

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The Casket

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Contributions to the Casket are always

Welcome.

For more information see
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A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

It must be election time as we write this editorial as pubs seem to be an important part of the community again.

Labour has committed to supporting pubs - and making it more difficult to demolish them – as part of its election manifesto. The statement echoes the support package announced by minister for pubs John Healey in March. Under the communities section of the manifesto it states that pubs are an important part of community life that, like Post Offices, need to be protected.

The manifesto states: "The local pub and social club are also hubs of community life. Too many pubs have closed that could have been sustained by local people. "We will support pubs that have a viable future with a new fund for community ownership in 2010-11. "Councils must take full account of the importance of pubs to the local community when assessing proposals that change their use, and we will make it more difficult to demolish pubs. It goes on to say that non-tied options should be made available for tied tenants and that Labour plans to make it easier for pubs to stage live entertainment without a licence.

CAMRA chief executive Mike Benner added: "The proposals in the manifesto have the potential to make the UK pub market a freer, more competitive environment where consumers benefit from greater choice, improved amenity and lower prices, and on the planning side.

"CAMRA welcomes these proposals which will help halt pubs being demolished unnecessarily through curbing the use of restrictive covenants. However, CAMRA hopes the Labour Party stand by all the points included in the package of reforms outlined by John Healey MP in March, including a guest beer right for tied tenants, as these points remain vital to the future of community pubs."

We wonder how long this will be on the agenda after the election and why has it taken so long for them to accept that the pub is part of the community?.

It is pleasing to report so many local beer festivals over the past month from pubs that hopefully have been well supported. Sir William Peel Sandy, Half Moon Hitchin, Rising Sun Potton and The Ivy Leaf Club Langford have had their festivals and now The Stag Stotfold have their festival at the end of the month. Stotfold Mill Steam Festival will also have a real ale tent. All good news for real ale drinkers. Bedford also has a German Beer Festival during May.

We are holding our AGM at The Engineers Arms Henlow on May 11th and all are welcome. Several of the committee members are standing down with the Chairman and Secretary of the branch not seeking re-election.

As this is our last editorial from the present editors of Casket we wish the new editor every success in the future editions.

LOCAL PUB NEWS

The Red Lion, Potton is now closed and is now for sale.



March Hare Dunton,

There seems to be some thing occurring here, It may be re-

opening soon with a Micro Brewery, this would be good news if it did happen.

The Carriage House has changed its' name to

The Airman Hotel.

Open 11.00 -11.00 every day and serving one real ale, Courage Best. Caters for business functions and weddings.

Old Oak, Arlesey A new tenant Paul Morrison has taken over. Opening hours are Mon-Thu 12-2.30 & 4 til. close, Fri, Sat, Sun 12-close



The Brown Bear, Biggleswade, is now open again



after major refurbishment. No Real Ale

The Coach and Horses, Stotfold, Re-opened in early March as a freehouse . Wells Eagle IPA & Courage Directors are served. Opening hours are Mon - Thu 4-11, Fri 3-12 midnight, Sat 11-12 midnight & Sun 12-11pm. Meals may be introduced in the future



Three Tuns, Arlesey

Central Beds council have granted change of use, so that's another one gone for good.



**EAST BEDS CAMRA PUB OF THE
YEAR 2010**

**OUR SUMMER BEER FESTIVAL
WILL TAKE PLACE OVER
THE AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY**

**THURSDAY 26 TH UNTIL MONDAY 30TH
AROUND 25 SUMMER ALES PLUS CIDER**

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AND ALSO PARTICIPATING IN THE “LOCALE” SCHEME
SUPPORTING LOCAL BREWERIES**



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The Bird in Hand

The Old...



The Bird in Hand in Lower Stondon started life as a rural public house, popular for country pursuits. The pub sign depicts a scene from falconry and an early picture from 1910 shows a visiting fox hunting party. Exactly when it became a pub is unclear, but it was certainly in existence when mortgages were taken out on the property, firstly in 1842 by a William Wilson, then in 1846 by his son Samuel Wilson. In-

cluded were the pub with its barns, stables and various outbuildings, plus the purchase of 2 acres of land called Holwellbury Field on which the pub was built, 16 acres of Spinney Field, a 2 acre allotment and a row of ten cottages.

Samuel Wilson supplied the pub with ales from his own small family brewery in Grange Street, Clifton. His son William took over the business and pub in 1857, but in 1866 the brewery was up for sale and the pub was sold off to Joseph Gudgin of Shillington. When Joseph died in 1894, he left a rather complicated will in which ownership passed into the hands of several trustees, who were to oversee the pub on behalf of his widow, and later after her death, to sell the pub and spilt the proceeds. But the trustees still had the pub long after her death, perhaps it was flourishing and providing a good income.

Eventually in 1910, the pub was sold to the Wells & Winch brewery of Biggleswade. It seems likely that the brewery had already been supplying the ales on a lease agreement, following the departure of the Wilsons. The brewery was taken over by Greene King & Sons Ltd in 1961.

The premises were deemed adequate for passing trade on the crossroads and for passengers on the nearby Midland Railway line, which opened in 1845 to run between Bedford and Hitchin. Then the local area was transformed with the creation in 1918 of an airfield, by the newly constituted Royal Air Force. During the 1920's and 1930's RAF Henlow was producing a wide range of aircraft and engines, and became home to the Parachute Test Unit. It was then one of the four largest stations in the country and continued to grow until by 1939 there were over 4,000 personnel stationed there. This figure doubled during World War 2, but in recent years the base has reduced in scale.

The brewery directors realised that a much larger pub was required and so the new hotel was built in 1939 and the old pub demolished. Cont ... Page 8



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for details
www.camra.org.uk



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SUNDAY 12noon - 3pm

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...And The New



It is still the largest public house in the area and dominates the busy roundabout, which replaced the earlier crossroads. The crescent shape of the pub shows that plans were already in place to create the roundabout, although it was a further 30 years before the roundabout appeared.

Recently, I took the opportunity to talk to the current tenants Doug & Libby Ellis about their time at the pub and to describe the recent changes there. Doug is formerly from the Westmill area of Hitchin, but has lived in Lower Stondon for the past 25 years. He was a printer by trade for 18 years, later moving into the mobile catering business, before taking over at the Bird in Hand on a short term tenancy in September 2007. He explained that the pub had been in steady decline for over ten years and lost many of their regular airforce customers. This is in partly due to the reduction in staffing at the RAF camp and partly due to 'terror alerts' when staff were advised not to leave the base and instead they used the on-site bar called 'The Pickle'.

Within the first three months, Doug embarked on a major refurbishment project. The old public bar was converted into a restaurant and extended with the removal of the wall into the old snug room, which now has the carvery. The old lounge bar was also upgraded and a new bar installed, turning this room into the main public bar. Today it houses a jukebox, a slot machine, pool table and TV screens for sports coverage. Upstairs all 13 bedrooms have been redecorated and are used mostly by tradesmen working locally or in London during the week, and going home on weekends. The old function room in the west wing has long since been converted into bedrooms, although an old bar remains embedded in a corridor wall. At the rear of the property, the large garden area has been opened up, a new smokers shelter and external toilet block have been erected. The garden is now child friendly and provides play equipment in the summertime.

Doug and Libby now run the pub under a 15 year lease from Greene King and have plans for further development. In particular there will be a re-launch . of the restaurant as 'TLJ's Bar & Grill' coming soon to the area. The emphasis will be on traditional steaks and rack of ribs, as well as the current carvery on Sundays, with seating for 80 customers. Business is much improved with a lively public bar, playing host to pool teams, dances and parties.

The RAF customers have returned and the pub is again . 'attracting group events, with special rates for weddings & functions'. Various car enthusiast clubs have enquired about holding regular meetings there and the monthly cheese & wine nights are proving very popular. It is great to see this pub under stable management again and the future looks promising for the staff and customers at the Bird in Hand. John Goodlet.

EAST BEDS PUB OF THE YEAR



The East Beds CAMRA

Branch committee are pleased to announce that our Pub of The Year for 2010 is the **Rising Sun, Potton**. In another very close contest, the Rising Sun just held off well-supported challenges from three previous winners. This is testament to the hard work that the Dunkley family has put into developing the pub over the last year, particularly with regard to their excellent beer festival, their support for LocAle and the interesting range of beers sourced through the SIBA guest beer scheme. If you don't already know the pub, please do pay it a visit.

North Beds Pub of the Year Wellington Arms, Bedford



South Beds Pub of the Year The Globe, Dunstable



All three now go through a selection process to determine Bedfordshire Pub of the Year and be entered in the regional finals

DIARY DATES

MAY

6th-9th Stotfold Mill - Steam Fair and Country Show.
Possible Beer Festival
9th National Mild Day

11th, **A.G.M. Engineers Arms, Henlow, 8 pm Start**

JUNE

15th, Branch Meeting, Thornton Arms, Everton, 8pm

JULY

24th Joint Branch Trip, London Pub Tour.

27th, Branch Meeting, John O' Gaunt, Sutton, 8pm

SEPT.

14th, Branch Meeting, Crown, Henlow, 8pm

OCT.

26th, Branch Meeting, Golden Pheasant, Biggleswade

NOV.

23rd, Branch Meeting, Coach & Horses, Stotfold

DEC.

10/11th, Christmas Meal

BEER FESTIVALS

MAY

24th-29th 37th Cambridge Beer Festival.

Jesus Green. Cambridge **CAMRA**

27th-31st The Stag, 3rd Annual Beer Festival. Stotfold

JUNE

10th to 12th Harpenden Beer Festival. Harpenden Public
Halls Southdown Road

JULY

Thurs 29th - Sat 31st Bishops Stortford Beer Festival
British Legion Club, 28 Wind Hill, Bishops Stortford CM23
2NG. **CAMRA**

AUGUST

3rd to 7th Great British Beer Festival. Earls Court London

24th to 28th Peterborough Beer & Cider Festival. **CAMRA**

The Embankment Peterborough **CAMRA**

SEPT

23-25 North Hertfordshire Letchworth Beer & Cider Festival.
Plinston Hall Letchworth **CAMRA**



CAMRA launched a scheme called LocAle to help pubs promoting locally produced real ales as well as local breweries.

East Beds Branch has adopted the area for the breweries to be 30 miles from Biggleswade and pubs selling good quality ales.

The benefits of the Locale scheme are to improve consumer choice, enable local breweries to sell more ales so they can expand and benefit the local economy and an increase in local identity and pride.

Breweries that are within 30 miles of Biggleswade are:-

Potton, Potton, Beds.	B&T Shefford, Beds.
White Park, Cranfield, Bucks.	Green Tye, Much Hadham, Herts.
Buntingford, Royston, Herts	Red Squirrel, Hertford. Herts.
Wells & Youngs, Bedford.	Alehouse, St Albans, Herts.
McMullen, Hertford, Herts.	Concrete Cow, Milton Keynes.
Milton, Cambridge, Cambs.	Cambridge Moonshine, Cambs.
Potbelly, Kettering, Northants.	Tring. Tring, Herts.

Pubs that are participating in the scheme are:-

Golden Pheasant, Biggleswade.	
Engineers Arms, Henlow.	Rising Sun, Potton.
Sir William Peel, Sandy.	Stag, Stotfold.
Vicars Inn, Arlesey.	Stratton House Hotel, Biggleswade.

Please Make a visit to these pubs and enjoy local produced ales.

Cathy and John Badham - N. Beds CAMRA Members looking for the perfect pub and pint.



We had been together about six weeks when we realised we had been in lots of different pubs.

We happened to be in The Green Man at Granchester in the garden at the time. So we decided to start writing down every pub we'd first visited.

Well there are now 967 in over ten years and ten months.

To fill you in about the variety of pubs to be found, here are some examples.

One of the most memorable pubs for us is the Ship at Porthleven, Cornwall. We were staying in the village and it took our fancy. Wedged in the cliff between the gentle harbour and the crashing waves of the Atlantic we ventured in for a drink and a meal. A superb choice of Cornish ales and food menu.

Found a seat after some waiting in the garden which overlooked the harbour so was very pleasant.

We observed the menu which was all homemade with lots of local sea-food. Placed our order, and sat comfortably in the bar. Time went by with a few drinks ordered, but no food. About an hour passed and we were quite content with the harbour view and Cornish ale, ie Tribute. A delicious meal was presented to us, a homemade local fish pie, monkfish and bacon on mash arrived. Well worth the wait. This pub had everything ale, food, views, atmosphere and character. We have been back twice, just as good, the only thing is that you have to wait a very long time for the food so therefore getting slowly sozzled !



Cont. Page14...

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Whilst on holiday in Pembrokeshire, we



found the Dyfryn Arms, just south of Fishguard. A unique experience.....you walk in the front door through to the hall to the front room where you are then greeted by a lovely elderly lady, sitting in her lounge that has not changed since the 1940s. With the decor and pictures to reflect the period. She then asks which drink you wished to have. Bass being the only option I decided on Bass. She disappeared out of the room, a hatch opened and she poured the beer into a glass from a jug. The other option was cider from a Tesco bottle. Very friendly, and we found that her family had owned and run that pub for over 150 years.

The Royal Oak, Fritham.



Down a long narrow track in the depths of the New Forest, we found this charming little pub. In a tiny hamlet. This inn is owned by the farm and run by the family members. It is very quaint and unspoilt and the front bar is very cosy with no music or children.

We went through to the back to an even smaller room, with armchairs and books. To the rear is a small public bar. They did homemade quiches, soups and ploughmans, which were very enjoyable in the pretty garden with splendid views. On a winters eve you could quite happily sit by the fire and sup New Forest ale. On returning to the car you may find ponies or pigs sniffing your tyres! A real step back in time.

Well that is just a taste of our discoveries. There are many more of the 967 to talk about in a later edition.

Cathy and John Badham

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News from Potton Brewery



The extension of the Brewery is now complete and mainly used for the fermenting and conditioning beer for bottling, for sale in supermarkets. The summer seasonal ale 'Potton Gold' will shortly be available from the Brewery. As the name suggests this a golden ale with a flowery hop aftertaste, ABV 4.1%.

In celebration of the 30th Anniversary at St. John's Hospice, Moggerhanger,

they have collaborated with Potton Brewery Company who have produced a commemorative beer that will be distributed to licensed premises throughout the region of Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire from 1st April 2010.

The beer is called 'The Fundraiser', has an ABV of 4% and is described as a light golden bitter with a noticeable hop aroma and a calm bitter aftertaste. For every Firkin of 'The Fundraiser' sold, St John's Hospice will receive £7.50 from the brewery. This beer is not a one off but will continue as long as there is a demand from Publicans and the public. By drinking this beer you will be helping St. John's Hospice provide expert care for people living with conditions including Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis and Brain Injury. You may also enjoy a pint or two.

A Pub to visit



The Hunters Lodge, Priddy, Somerset. This place is "The" pub to go to if you are caving, potholing or walking in the area. Set high on the Mendip Hills, at small isolated cross roads.(OS Grid Ref. ST549500). The same Landlord has been in charge for over forty years. Of the three bars, the main bar has a flag stone floor. Beers are served straight from the barrel, Butcombe and Cheddar ales being just two of many on offer, Wilkins cider is also available. Good inexpensive home cooked food is served lunch time and evenings.

Friday and Saturday evenings can be lively. The post Code for Sat Navs. BA5 3AR.

Malcolm Lloyd



Last Chance Saloon for Large Pub Companies to Reform CAMRA Responds to Select Committee Report on Pub Companies

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, has welcomed the Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee Report on Pub Companies which demands major reform in the way the Large Pub Companies operate and threatens statutory intervention if these reforms are not implemented voluntarily by June 2011. The Committee also urges the Office of Fair Trading to look more carefully at the issues involved as it responds to CAMRA's super-complaint for the second time.

In addition to the Select Committee Report the Liberal Democrats have indicated that they will pursue radical reform of the Beer Tie in the next Parliament, including a free of tie option and a guest beer right. *CAMRA defines a Large Pub Company as one which owns more than 500 pubs.*

Mike Benner, CAMRA Chief Executive, said:

'The Large Pub Companies are now in the last chance saloon. The pub sector has had long enough to deliver self regulation and failed. They either voluntarily reform to ensure a fair deal for consumers or risk potentially punitive intervention from the Competition Authorities and Government.'

'CAMRA is demanding that the Large Pub Companies act immediately to allow their licensees the option of selling one guest real ale purchased at free market prices. Given the popularity of locally brewed real ale it is simply crazy that most pub licensees are prevented from buying beer from their local brewers. The Large Pub Companies should also agree to a legally binding code of conduct and move quickly towards offering all their lessees a free of tie option at a fair rent.'

'Over half of the UK's pub licensees are prevented from buying beer on the open market at freely negotiated prices and the Large Pub Companies are exploiting this to charge licensees between 40% - 45% more than free market prices. These artificially inflated prices are passed onto consumers in the form of higher prices, reduced investment in pubs and pub closures.'

The Conker Tree Inn? Where's that?. You won't find it in Bedfordshire. However, what you should look for is the new on-line guide to the pubs of Bedfordshire at

The Conker Tree Inn

61 High Street **Pinton**
SG99 3AA
Directions: In village centre off A246
0311 123456
Owner: Free House
CAMRA Branch: Beds
Bodgers Bitter [H]
Guest Ales: Beer Range Varies [H]
P A W C T B L D Q R
Opening Times:
Mon-Sat 11.00-23.30
Sun 12.00-15.00, 18.00-22.30
Meals:
Mon-Sat 12.00-15.00, 18.30-21.00
Sun 12.00-15.00
Traditional cosy village inn with oak beams and a large inglenook fireplace. A small beer garden at the rear. Regular quiz nights
Surveyed: 21/10/2007



www.bedspubs.org.uk

In 2003 the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) produced a booklet entitled Beer in Beds encompassing all public houses in Bedfordshire. Due to the ever changing circumstances surrounding the pub trade the campaign has produced an on-line guide listing all public houses in Bedfordshire, at www.bedspubs.org.uk

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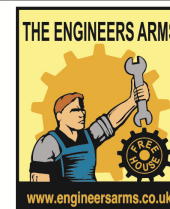
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der on Draught.

Quality home cooked food served lunch and
evening

10 Quality wines by the glass or bottle.

A FREE HOUSE

**A CAMRA community pub of the year.
and CAMRA Rural Pub of the year 2009**

Skittles table in public bar,
Floodlit boules piste in garden. Real fires
and cosy atmosphere

1st and 3rd Friday of the month—Folk music Session

Telephone Les or H 01767 260377

www.johnogauntinnsutton.co.uk

