



the

Casket

Campaign for Real Ale



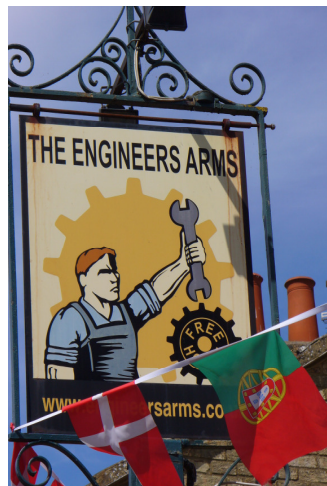
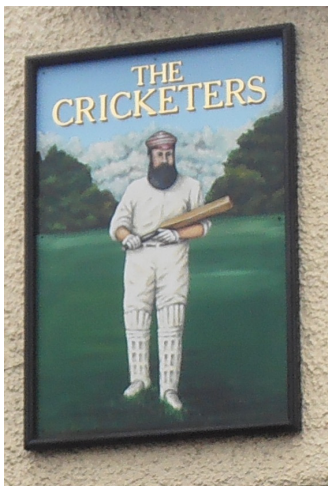
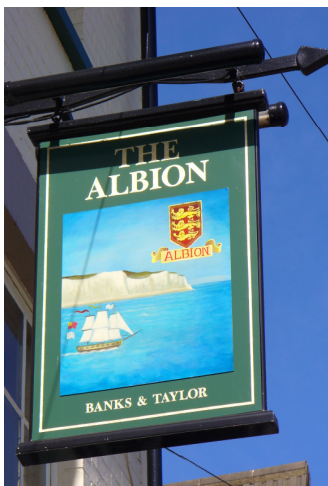
FREE

May 2012

EAST BEDFORDSHIRE

www.eastbedscamra.org.uk

casket@eastbedscamra.org.uk



Albion, Amptill

Cricketers, Bedford

Engineers, Henlow

Which pub will be Beds POTY, see page 11 & 12

WHATS IN THIS ISSUE

Page 4	Local Pub & Brewery News	Page 13	All change at the John o'Gaunt
Page 6	In-Cider Dealings	Page 14	16th Cambridge Winter Ale Festival
Page 8	Diary Dates, Beer Festivals	Page 16	A beer tour in Athens, Georgia
Page 9	A new driver takes the reins....	Page 22	Wessex Wanderings Pt. 2
Page 10	Tale from the Brewery	Page 24	On the trail of a classic Belgian beer
Page 11	POTY Awards	Page 26	Ramblers Welcome

Help Charity

There is no charge for the Casket. If you enjoy reading the Casket and/or take a copy home then please consider putting a donation in the Pub's charity box.

Issue number 2

Volume 8

2012

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For more information see
www.eastbedscamra.org.uk.

The Casket

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Payment to East Beds CAMRA

A quick word from the Editor

Well springtime is almost here, despite the late April rains and we turn our attention to local beer festivals. The nation's eyes will be fixed on the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and both the Ivy Leaf Club in Langford and the Stratton House Hotel in Biggleswade have moved their beer festival into the Jubilee weekend in early June. Please do try to get along to one of these fine festivals and support them in their celebrations. No doubt there will be a plethora of real ales with sporting names appearing later in the summer when London hosts the Olympic Games.

In the coming 12 months, the local CAMRA branch will be expanding their pub based campaign to increase choice of regular and guest ales, by including 'real cider & perry'. We aim to support a nationwide campaign to increase the number of pubs selling at least one real cider or perry on a permanent basis. Check out our plans on page 6 & 7, and if you want get involved, contact Jo Freeman for more details. The branch will also be searching for a potential venue where we can hold a 'cider stall' to promote locally produced cider and also raise some funds to support branch campaigning.

John Goodlet

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CAMRA North Herts POTY 09, 10 & 11
CAMRA Herts Pub of the Year 09 & 10

The Beers

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Great Wine List

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Everyday

Tapas & Light Bite Menu:

Served Till 11pm Everyday

Special Food Nights:

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LOCAL PUB & BREWERY NEWS

True Briton, Arlesey

Real Ale makes a welcome return to this busy community pub. It has been many years since we have seen handpulled ales available here. Owners Detlef & Marilyn have retired from the day to day running of the business and have asked Doug McCrossan & Elaine Smith to be the licensees, they took over on 6th February. The pub is open every day from 12 to 12midnight and quiz, bingo and lotteries events are popular. On a recent visit Courage Directors was in fine condition and Doug hopes to build up the 'real ale' sales and may rotate with Courage Best or Adnams Bitter. If successful, he may install a second handpump at a later date.



Bricklayers Arms, Pottton

The Bricklayers Arms, Newtown changed over at the end of January. Jamie Slaughter is a temporary manager for a holding company and is keeping the pub ticking over, whilst it is still up 'for sale' by Punch Taverns. Opening hours are Mon-Fri 3-11, Sat-Sun 12-12 midnight, Greene King IPA is £2.80.

Events at the pub are limited for now, but there is darts and cribbage available, plus a large decked area at the rear can be a suntrap. The future of the pub is uncertain, but at least it is still going—for now.



Pottton Brewery Update

In March, Pottton Brewery took delivery of 100 new plastic nine gallon casks from Green Cast in Lincolnshire. The cost of these casks is about half the price of their stainless steel equivalent, have no scrap metal value and should be less likely to go astray. The casks and banding come in a variety of colours, so a brewery can pick colours to suit their current colour coding. Pottton have chosen dark grey casks with red banding, their name and telephone no. is embossed on the end of the cask for easy identification. These modern day plastic casks are a definite improvement on the originals of a few years ago. The only real difference being that they need a special screwed in shive (where you put the spile) but the keystone (where you put the tap) is the usual type. These casks are light, easier to handle, have no tainting problems and are 100% recyclable.

Inn Briefs

There seems to be no way back for the Hopbine, Biggleswade. The recent 'indian restaurant' business has failed and the pub closed again. Greene King have applied for planning permission to convert the former pub into a private house and build two new houses on the car park.

The Brown Bear, Biggleswade has sporadically been open and closed during 2011 under temporary management. It remains up for sale and there is NO real ale at present. It was closed again in mid April just before we went to print.

Another temporary manager arrived at the Stag, Stotfold. Danny Finch is overseeing the business for the time being. The beer range has been reduced and no 'real cider' either. The local branch has withdrawn the Stag from the current LocAle scheme.



The Potton Brewery Co.

**10 Shannon Place,
Potton, Sandy, Beds. SG19 2PZ
Tel:- 01767 261042
www.potton-brewery.co.uk**

**Suppliers of 'Real Ale' in
Cask, Polypin or Bottle to the
Licensed Trade and General
Public.**

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Consult our Website or Call the
Above Number.**

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Shannon IPA**

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Sir William Peel P. H.



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Gales Fruit Wines



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In-Cider Dealings

Welcome to what we hope will be a regular feature of your Casket – a page or two devoted to all things of an orchard-based nature. All three Bedfordshire CAMRA branches have appointed Cider Reps, in line with a major campaign push to try to encourage the sale of real cider and perry in our pubs.



The branches will be working together to encourage:

- More pubs to sell at least one 'real' cider or perry on a permanent basis.
- Pubs that sell multiple ciders to increase choice and rotate ciders
- Pubs to try local cider producers in Beds and neighbouring counties

In the coming months we shall be writing to licensees of many pubs across the county, enclosing a list of local cider producers in Beds, Bucks, Cambs & Herts, with their contact and product details. Later in the year, we will organise some social trips to these pubs and campaign for increased choice. Those pubs achieving 'permanent' status will be registered on our national website & receive a 'Real Cider Sold Here' window sticker.

Over in Dunton at the start of the year, there was a traditional *Wassail* to 'bless' the apple trees – so next year's haul could well be even greater! As well as the requirements to put toast on the branches of the trees, sing the traditional Wassail song and bang saucepan lids/plates and anything else to make a noise (to ward off spirits and wake up the trees from Winter slumber), we were treated to Morris Dancing displays, hot spiced cider, a mummer's play in the March Hare and a folk music session to round it all off! Quite a busy evening for all concerned and very well attended. Look out for Dunton Cider, and keep up with their exploits at www.duntoncider.co.uk - where you can also find out how to contact them or view their Facebook page.



[dipping toast in cider]



[hanging cider toast on trees]

News from around the region The East Anglian Cider competition was judged at the Norwich Beer Festival last October. With scant regard for life and limb, your intrepid explorer got herself involved with judging. To prepare, I scanned the internet for information on how to 'taste' cider. There wasn't any. Obviously there are many wine tasting sites, even 'proper beer' tasting sites, but of information on not-showing-myself-up-in-front-of-cider-judges, there was none.

It turned out this was fine as copious notes were provided – taste, aftertaste, smell (cider drinkers think ‘bouquet’ is a wimpy term), and only at the very end do we make personal recommendations or comments. I’ve been a lover of cider for a number of years – shan’t tell you how many as it’s been most of my life and you might work out how old I am ... what I *can* tell you is that the 2011 award was won by Hog and Vine of Martham, near Gt. Yarmouth. Other winners are listed to view on the CAMRA website.

The National Apple Committee had their most recent meeting at the Engineer’s Arms in Henlow. This Committee oversees the representation and promotion of cider and perry throughout CAMRA and provides advice and guidance to pubs, branches and other groups. It was therefore a fitting occasion for the Engineer’s to receive the award for Bedfordshire Cider Pub of the Year 2012 – as voted by the Bedfordshire branches. Beds Area Organiser Mike Coombes and East Anglia regional director Andrea Briers presented the award. The Engineer’s Arms will go forward to Regional Competition in May and the overall national Cider Pub of the Year will be announced in the Autumn.



[Kevin, Andrea, Claire, Jo & Mike]



[Apple committee, Kevin & Claire]

If you’re interested in trying real cider for yourself, but not sure where to start, can I invite you to join us on our trip to the Merchant’s Inn in Rugby on Saturday 14th July, where they will be holding their annual Cider Festival. This is a good, solid real ale pub, known to many of our local members from personal experience. The visit will give you the chance to explore a variety of ciders, and with ten handpumps there is the option of drinking some very good beers too! Further details available from me! (Social Secretary contact information on inside front cover of this issue)

And finally there are now **six** pubs in our branch area that have been awarded the CAMRA designation of ‘Real Cider’ pubs – this is anywhere that serves ‘proper’ cider, on a regular basis. There are **four** other pubs on ‘cider watch’ i.e. Anywhere that serves cider on an occasional, seasonal or trial basis but hasn’t done so for long enough for it to be considered a permanent featurethis is where you can help. Does your local serve ‘proper cider’ and how often? Do let me know. If they don’t, perhaps you could encourage them..... **See our list of pubs and cider producers on page 15.**

DIARY DATES

MAY. 8th, Branch AGM, Engineers Arms, Henlow, 8pm
27th, Social Bike Ride, meet Vicars Inn, Arlesey at 1pm

JUNE. 19th, Branch Meeting, Green Man, Stanford, 8pm
??th, Bus Trip to Hopping Mad Brewery, Olney [date & details TBA]

JULY. 14th, Bus trip to Merchants Inn, Rugby [details TBA]
24th, Branch Meeting, Plough, Langford, 8pm

SEP. 4th, Branch Meeting, Thornton Arms, Everton, 8pm

BEER FESTIVALS

<u>May.</u>	21st-26th. The 39th Cambridge Beer Festival, Jesus Green, Cambridge	CAMRA
<u>June.</u>	1st-5th. The Langford Beer Festival, Ivy Leaf Club, Station Road, Langford	
	2th-4th. The Stratton House Beer Festival, Stratton House Hotel, London Road, Biggleswade	
<u>Aug.</u>	7th-11th. The Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, London	CAMRA
	23rd-27th. The 9th Potton Beer Festival, Rising Sun, Potton	
	21st-25th. The 35th Peterborough Beer festival, The Embankment, Bishops Road, Peterborough	CAMRA

The Conker Tree Inn?
Where's that?. You won't
find it in Bedfordshire.
However, what you should
Look for is the on-line guide
to the pubs of Bedfordshire
At www.bedspubs.org.uk

The Conker Tree Inn

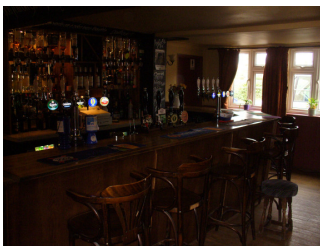
61 High Street **Pinton**
SG9 3AA
 Directions: In village centre off
 A246
 0311 123456
 Owner: Free House
 CAMRA Branch: Beds
 Bodgers Bitter [H]
 Guest Ales: Beer Range Varies
 [H]
 P                                                            



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
fireplace. A small beer garden at the
back.
Surveyed: 21/10/2007

A new driver takes the reins at.....

The Coach & Horses, Stotfold, where on March 29th Kim Clark took over as licensee on behalf of owner Mark McGilley. Last September we reported that Mark was planning a major refurbishment to the pub, and although the building extension is not proceeding for now, the rest of the alterations to the interior are well under way. In recent months, a new larger bar has been installed, running down the right hand side of the pub as you enter, where the former pool room was located. The main public/lounge room is more spacious and new furniture is being ordered. The dartboard remains, plus two large screen TVs with Viasat sports coverage and they can also be used for advertising pub music events or hook up to the jukebox, which doubles up as an online quiz machine. The pool table is in a new room at the back and there is a corridor to the rear giving access via French doors to the patio area and garden beyond.



Kim Clark is no stranger to the pub game, having spent the last 4 years or so learning the ropes in the Engineers Arms, Henlow. She brings plenty of experience and training in good cellar-manship and hospitality and plans to continue building up the 'real ale' side of the trade. There are 4 handpumps, with 3 likely to be in use at any one session. Wells Eagle IPA remains for now, but Kim hopes to source more local ales, such as Potton & Buntingford. A real cider has been introduced, possibly a future outlet for local producers Dunton Cider or Stotfold Press.



Alongside the regular pool and darts teams, you can expect to find Live Music weekly, usually on a Saturday evening and a Trivia quiz on the 1st & 3rd Thursday evenings on the month. The trading hours are Mon-Wed 4-11.30pm and the rest of the week 'all day' until 1am, except Sunday which is 11pm. The opening times of the pub will vary due to an early Morning Café service but generally Thu & Fri it opens at 10am and stops food by 3pm and Sat & Sun open from 8am with food stopping by 2pm. Basic bar meals may be introduced at a later date. We wish Mark, Kim and all the staff 'good luck' with their plans for the future. Pop in and check out the changes—support your local pub.

Tale from the Brewery

Potton Brewery was formed by the late Clive Towner and myself in 1997 with our first production run in June 1998. Needless to say the first firkin and invoice number 0001 went to Mary at The Brown Bear!!

It was a couple of months later that Clive and I first met a very keen Jaguar fan at a trade festival at Duxford. He introduced himself (I'll call him James) and after a couple of beers asked if we might be interested in producing a special bottled beer to celebrate 50 years of the Jag XK. In those days we rarely turned anything down, we needed the cash!! We kept in contact and along with another micro-brewery we were invited to Coventry to meet some sales guys to discuss the project. James organised the meeting through his contacts at the head office of Jaguar.

The next phase was to brew and bottle the beer. It was too big a job for us so armed with a recipe for a 5% beer we approached a large well established brewery who agreed to handle that for us. The final product was delivered to a location known only to James. There were a few thousand bottles at this stage. Now it had to be marketed and sold. This was James department and the outlets were known only to him. The beer started to sell and everything looked promising. After a few months we decided to start a separate company and a meeting date was organised to sign the necessary documents. So far so good.

On the day of the meeting we received a phone call from a tearful lady who explained that nobody had seen James all day. We therefore thought that James had changed his mind about the venture, hence the disappearance. How wrong we were. When I got home I was listening to the television when there was a report of an incident off the east coast and it mentioned James' name.

It transpired that James was in a boat with his girlfriend when they got stranded on a sand bar. James was a non-swimmer so his girlfriend swam ashore to get the coastguard. A boat was despatched but when they got to the sand bar James was not there and to the best of my knowledge was never ever found.

He took with him the location of the remainder of the beer and also the location of the various outlets. Somewhere out near the east coast there's a warehouse of our beer. If any reader finds it could they let me know?

Bob Hearson

Pub of the Year Awards

It has been a very busy time for East Beds and in particular for the Engineers Arms, Henlow during the last few months. The national Pub of the Year result finally came through in early February, and although the Engineers just missed out on the 'top gong', we all congratulate the overall winner - The Bridge End Inn, Ruabon in Wales. East Anglian regional director Andrea Briers was back in Henlow on Sunday 11th March, to present a certificate to Kevin and Claire and congratulate them and all the staff on reaching the 'national final'.



The current year's competition is well under way already and in recent months, the branch has again chosen the Engineers Arms as the branch **Pub of the Year 2012**. A presentation will be made at the end of the Annual General Meeting, to be held at the pub on Tuesday 8th May. Well done to Kevin, Claire and all the staff at the Engineers Arms.

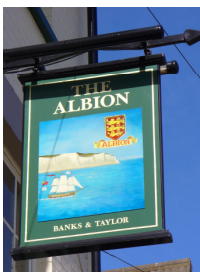
A few days before that on Saturday 5th May during their Spring beer festival, the Rising Sun will be receiving a branch '**Runner-up**' certificate. This pub was '**highly commended**' by many members who took part in the competition judging. The recent increase to 8 hand-pumps, including a regular Oakham ale and a 'real cider' from Wales has struck a chord with the local branch. Congratulations to both pubs, we shall post a report and photos on the branch website in the near future.



The North Beds branch have awarded the Cricketers Arms on Goldington Road, Bedford as their pub of the year for the second time, they were also winners back in 2007. This lovely wood-panelled pub is popular with the 'rugby crowd' and run by a Welshman, so you can expect to see Brains beers featuring on the five handpumps.

continued on next page

The South Beds branch have chosen as their local winner the Albion, Ampthill. This pub was rescued from obscurity two years ago and is run as a joint venture between Everards and B&T. It is now a thriving town pub with up to twelve handpumps, offering a mix of beers from both breweries, plus up to 6 guest ales and several real cider & perry.



With very little to choose between the pubs, members from all three branches selected the **Albion** as their **Bedfordshire Pub of the Year 2012** and it goes into the East Anglia regional heat. Congratulations to landlord Russell Fletcher [pictured above] and all the team at the Albion.

John Goodlet



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A 330 year old traditional Pub with 8 real ales on sale at all times, always including Greene King XX Mild. Fantastic home-made, locally sourced food available every lunchtime and evening, along with wonderful Sunday lunches with Chapman's roasted meats.

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All change at the John o'Gaunt

It was 'all change' at the John o'Gaunt in Sutton in recent weeks, following the retirement of long-standing licensees Les & Heleena Ivall, after 35 years in charge. They left the pub on Sunday March 18th and moved to Potton, fairly close to the Rising Sun. There was gathering of customers and CAMRA members two weeks previously on Sunday 4th April to bid farewell to the couple. East Beds branch chairman John Goodlet paid tribute to the retiring licensees and reflected on their years at the helm, turning the pub into a focal point in local community life. John also congratulated them on being in a rare and select group of pubs across the nation that had achieved more than 25 consecutive years in the Good Beer Guide, a testimony to the excellent cellarman'ship and service seen at the John o'Gaunt throughout the years.

As a 'Thank You' from the local branch, two CAMRA members and loyal customers of the pub presented the retirees with some small gifts. Chris Jones passed over a bouquet of flowers and some chocolates to Heleena, and Trevor Gilpin gave a CAMRA mirror to Les. We wish Les and Heleena a long and happy retirement and hope to see them at local branch events and possibly supping a pint or two in the Rising Sun.



Following the departure of Les and Heleena, pub owners Steve and Jennifer Waller, closed the premises to complete the refurbishment started earlier in the year. At the beginning of April, Chris and Lilly Byng took over as managers. Chris is already well known in the local community, having been the chef at the John o'Gaunt golf club. The current opening hours will be Mon-Thu 11-2 & 7-11pm, Fri-Sat 11-12 midnight and Sun 12-4 & 7-10pm. Food will be served daily [except monday] from 12-1.45pm and 7-9pm, then from 12-3pm on Sunday. Try Chris' traditional country pub food and you will soon find details of menus and events on the pub's website in the coming weeks



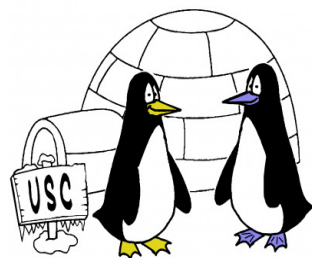
There is a new restaurant area in the recently built extension at the rear of the lounge bar, plus a new kitchen. The old kitchen may be turned into a small snug or function room in the future. There is some new furniture in both the lounge and public bars, with the latter still playing host to Northamptonshire skittles, darts and other pub games. Pentanque is available in the garden and live music will continue on an occasional basis. At the bar, the beer range will remain familiar with Woodforde's Wherry likely to be permanent and 3 more handpumps rotating some favourite ales such as London Pride, Bombardier, Doom Bar & Landlord. Chris is on the hunt for a premium European lager to add to the list, perhaps the Czech Pilsner Urquell or something similar. The John o'Gaunt welcomes all customers and groups, both old and new, and aims to continue the recent high standard of service achieved by their predecessors.

16th Cambridge Winter Ale Festival

Despite it being less than an hour away by train from Biggleswade I certainly haven't taken advantage of Cambridge as often as I should, so when a friend suggested we visit the 16th Cambridge Winter Ale Festival I took them up on their offer without hesitation.

As a rule I normally give beer festivals on a Saturday a miss as it's generally the last day but I was pretty surprised to see quite a number of beers still on. Picking up a half pint glass (all the pint ones had gone) I carried over my citrus beer frenzy from last year supping a half of Hopshackle - Marillo (3.8%) for starters. Sadly it sounded better than it tasted so over the next few hours I mixed dark beers, hoppy beers and even cask lagers to find a beer that satisfied and the results were a mix bag indeed. Well that's the joy of beer festivals isn't it?

Highlights for me included Blue Monkey's excellent fruity BG Sips (4.0%), Allendale's - Winter Dunkel (4.6%) which was as good as any German beer I have had, Limestone - Stone Cold (4.7%) with its bitter toffee/biscuit overtones and the flavour-some Prospect - Whatever (3.8%) which is brewed with four different hops. The biggest disappointment was Milestones - Crusader (4.4%) which, again on paper sounded delicious, but failed miserably at its attempt to mimic a Belgian Blonde and I don't mean Tin Tin.....



The venue, the University Social Club, was well laid out with the main bar and foreign beers upstairs whilst downstairs saw the main seating area with a smaller bar serving stronger beers and ciders. Food was also being churned out at a steady rate and was typical student fare. The venue is also right next to the river but everyone had their sensible hats on and we didn't see anyone taking out the punts after sampling a few ales!

By 4pm the place was getting packed and the beers running low so we decided to leave to sample one or two pubs in the area (ah the trusty beer guide phone app!) and duly set off. First up was The Maypole, which on the outside looked like a dolled up 1970's council estate pub but the old adage "never trust a book by its cover" rang true as inside it was a real ale mecca catering for a varied student, worker, tourist and ale drinker crowd.



I had a pint of what, scribbled on my notes, translates as Single Hop Wai-Tai (4.2%) which was extremely more-ish and tasty, but I must have written it down wrong as I could find neither hide nor hare of it anywhere! Further research proved it to be from the Marston's single hop series.

After catching up with the days footy scores (Orient away win!) we decided to walk to The Cambridge Blue when another pub caught our eye. This was the extremely small but welcoming St. Radegund where we stayed longer than planned supping the likes of Milton Brewery - Minotaur Mild (3.4%) in this incredibly comfortable place.



We finally made our way to The Cambridge Blue, which is the one pub I always try to visit when I actually get to Cambridge. It's a great pub and not too far from the station with a big ethos on all things beer related. The beer was in excellent condition and a pint each of Titanic - Iceberg (4.1%) and Oakham - Inferno (4%) was the perfect way to end the day.

I must head back to Cambridge on a more frequent basis. Hmmm? Anyone fancy the 39th Cambridge Beer Festival (21st-26th May 2012)?

Tom Bartlett

Real Cider & Perry in Bedfordshire

Pubs in East Beds branch permanently selling at least one 'Real Cider or Perry'.

Golden Pheasant, Biggleswade
March Hare, Dunton
Engineers Arms, Henlow
Rising Sun, Potton
Sir William Peel, Sandy
John O'Gaunt, Sutton

Cider may also be available seasonally in

Tudor Oaks, Astwick
Ivy Leaf Club, Langford
Red Lion, Potton
Coach & Horses, Stotfold

Locally produced cider can be ordered from the following outlets

Apple Cottage, Baldock, Herts
Millwhites, Boxmoor, Herts
Cassels Cider, Cambridge
Dunton Cider, Dunton, Beds
Hereward Cider, Ely, Cambs
Harrold Calvados Society, Harrold, Beds
Eversheds Cider, near Odell, Beds
Pickled Pig, Stretham, near Ely, Cambs
Virtual Orchard, Wolverton Mill, Bucks

**ASK YOUR LOCAL PUB TO STOCK
A REAL CIDER OR PERRY**

“The Fourth Night of My Drinking”

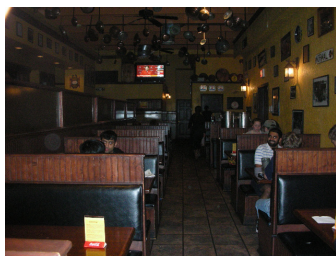
A SEARCH FOR MICROBREWERIES, BEER AND ROCK ‘n’ ROLL IN GEORGIA, U.S.A

I have penned this article following a short visit to the USA in January 2012, the main purpose of this trip was to see the US rock band ‘Drive-By Truckers’ play their annual ‘homecoming tour’ in their home town of Athens, Georgia with my friend Steve. He had mentioned beforehand that we should be able to sample some homebrew beers during our visit, as he had done quite a lot of internet research, so we were well informed before we left Heathrow for Atlanta, Georgia.

Athens epitomizes “small town bible belt USA”, formed along the Oconee River. With around 115,000 population, it features the main University of the state of Georgia founded in 1785 and was considered a town in 1806. Due to the number of cotton mills it was called the “Manchester of the South”.

During the American Civil War it was a supply centre for the confederate army and nearby there were several skirmishes involving Union and rebel armies, although the main action took place in Atlanta where there was an extensive siege. In the town centre of Athens there is on display a double-barrelled cannon, a relic from the war. Despite the hated segregation of the 1960’s, two black students became the first to be enrolled in the University in 1961. These days Athens is a very pleasant town with a real “buzz” where the large student population mixes well with the locals in the many small shops, bars, coffee shops and restaurants.

After we had checked into the Hotel we had a stroll to find the venue where the Drive-By Truckers were playing their tour, the legendary “40 Watt Club” where REM and the B-52’s amongst others had played in the past. Then off to find a beer, we soon located our first pitstop, The Copper Creek bar with microbrewery at the front of the bar (see photographs below). This bar was everything I had imagined in a bar in the USA, a long, long bar with a separate seated area for diners. Here we were treated to four superb draught beers around 4-5% ABV strength, also after the 9 hours flight we were starved, so we ordered some excellent burgers.



A Brief History of the USA microbreweries in the early 20th century may be useful. Prohibition drove many breweries in the US into bankruptcy because they could not all rely on selling their beer, nor "sacramental wine" as wineries of that era did. After several decades of brewery consolidation, most American commercial beer was produced by a few very large corporations, resulting in a very uniform, mild-tasting lager, such as Budweiser and Miller. Consequently, some beer drinkers craving variety turned to home-brewing and eventually a few started doing so on a slightly larger scale. For inspiration, they turned to Britain, Germany, and Belgium, where centuries-old tradition of artisan beer & cask ale production had never died out.

The popularity of these products was such that the trend quickly spread, and hundreds of small breweries sprang up, often attached to a bar (known as a "brewpub") where the product could be sold directly. As microbrews proliferated, some became more than microbrews, necessitating the definition of the broader category of craft beer - high quality beer. The largest American craft brewery is the Boston Beer Company, makers of Samuel Adams. Portland, Oregon is very well known for its microbrew proliferation. In 2008, Portland had 30 microbreweries located within the city limits, more than any city in the world and greater than one-third of the state total. Many of Portland's 46 microbrew outlets have won nationwide and international acclaim.

American microbreweries typically distribute through a wholesaler in a traditional three-tier system, others act as their own distributor (wholesaler) and sell to retailers and/or directly to the consumer through a tap room, attached restaurant, or off-premise sales. Because alcohol control is left up to the states, there are many state-to-state differences in the laws. The Association of Brewers reports that as of July 31, 2009 there was a total 1,482 craft breweries (962 Brewpubs, 456 Microbreweries, and 64 Regional Craft Breweries) in the United States. So, here follows a resume of our visits round the microbreweries in Athens and Atlanta with a web link for readers to make further investigations. By and large the beers we tasted were much stronger than one would normally have in a typical English bar, ranging from 4% ABV to a mind numbing 11%. We had some true draft beers in all the sites with an amount of 'top pressure' and a large amount of bottled beers & even 'canned' beer in the farm 220 restaurant but it tasted ok!

Copper Creek, Athens, GA <http://coppercreekathens.com/>

They have produced nearly 50 different brews—we tried Espresso Stout, Xmas Winter, Pilz and a Golden Ale.



Globe Café, Athens, GA <http://www.classiccitybrew.com/globe>

14 draft & 70 bottled beers—we had Highland Brewing - Oatmeal Porter (Asheville, NC) 5.9%, BridgePort - IPA (Portland, OR) 5.5% & Dogfish Head - 60 Minute IPA (Milton, DE) 6.0%

Terrapin, Athens, GA <http://terrabinbeer.com/>

They have many regular, seasonal & special beers—we had Golden Ale 5.3% & Rye Pale Ale 5.5%



5 Seasons Brew Pub, Atlanta, GA <http://www.5seasonsbrewing.com/>

Blonde Saison 5.0%, Echo Street IPA 6.1%, Nut Brown Ale, Winter Warmer 6.5%, Dark Star Stout 4.8%, Mayan Coffee Stout 6.0%, Tabla Saison 7.9%, Seeing Dubbel, The Pound Pale Ale, Golden Ale, Venus Belgian Wit 4.8%

continued on next page

Farm 220 Restaurant, Athens, GA

<http://www.farm255.com/>

Lazy Magnolia - Southern Pecan Ale (Kiln, MS) 4.4%, Duck-Rabbit - Milk Stout (Farmville, NC) 5.7%, 21st Amendment Brewery - Back in Black (San Francisco, CA) 6.8%, Thomas Creek - River Falls Red (Greenville, SC) 5.7% & Oskar Blues - Mamas Little Yella Pils (Longmont, CO) 5.3%

Trappeze Bar, 269 North Hull Street, Athens, GA

<http://trappezepub.com/>

Smutty Nose - Winter Ale (Portsmouth, NH) 5.1%, Red Brick - Old Stock Ale (Atlanta, GA) 7.9%, Wild Heaven - Invocation (Mercy, GA) 8.5%, Oskar Blues - Nitro Dale's Pale Ale (Longmont, CO) 6.5%, Wild Heaven - Ode to Mercy (Decatur, GA) 8.2%, Southern Tier - 2XIPA, New York (Lakewood, NY) 8.2%, Lost Abbey - Red Barn (San Marcos, CA) 6.7%, Founders - Reds Rye P.A. (Grand Rapids, MI) 6.6%, Southern Tier - Choklat (Lakewood, NY) 11%, Heavy Seas - Below Decks (Baltimore, MD) 10% Barley Wine

I hope this article has whetted a few beer appetites more used to UK brewing and if any local CAMRA members are in the USA they should search out a microbrewery in the area they are visiting. Oh, and the title of my article. It comes from a 'Drive-By Truckers' song title!

Steve Nakoneczny

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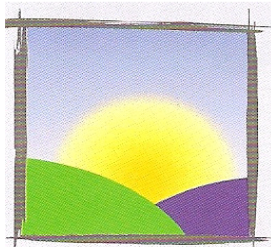
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CAMRA launched a scheme called LocAle to help pubs promoting locally produced real ales as well as local breweries.

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.

White Park, Cranfield, Beds.

Buntingford, Royston, Herts.

Wells & Youngs, Bedford.

McMullen, Hertford, Herts.

Milton, Cambridge, Cambs.

Potbelly, Kettering, Northants.

Hopping Mad, Olney, Bucks.

B&T, Shefford, Beds.

Green Tye, Much Hadham, Herts.

Red Squirrel, Hertford. Herts.

Alehouse, St Albans, Herts.

Concrete Cow, Milton Keynes.

Cambridge Moonshine, Cambs.

Tring, Tring, Herts.

Pubs that are participating in the scheme are:-

Golden Pheasant, Biggleswade.

Engineers Arms, Henlow.

Sir William Peel, Sandy.

Stratton House Hotel, Biggleswade.

Vicars Inn, Arlesey.

Rising Sun, Potton.

Coach & Horses, Stotfold.

March Hare, Dunton

Please visit these pubs and enjoy locally produced ales.

Wessex Wanderings - Part Two

In the January 2011 issue, I wrote about Thomas Hardy's Ale and also of some of the West Dorset pubs that have featured in the novels of Thomas Hardy. In the January 2012 issue I wrote the first of a two part instalment recounting the treks of my wife and myself in autumn 2010 to some of the more remote 'Wessex' country pubs. This is the second part of that story.

The Knapp Inn, Beaminster

Beaminster is a small, relatively quiet town north of Bridport nestling in the valley of the upper reaches of the River Brit which flows through Bridport and into the sea at West Bay. The approach from Crewkerne in the north is through a tunnel about a mile from the town but the turning to Broadwindsor near the north end of town leads to the Knapp Inn.

The Knapp Inn is a single bar local with a congenial atmosphere and an ever changing range of ales, as shown by an impressive wall, adorned with many pump-clips. The two beers tried (but not noted) were both in great condition and, if I lived in Beaminster, this would be my local, not flash but very welcoming. For those with a sweet tooth there was an amazing list of takeaway food, comprising mostly of cakes and fruit pies all baked on the premises, a very novel touch.



New Inn, Eype

Eype is signposted to the left off of the Bridport-Honiton road (A 35) just out of Bridport. If you visit the New Inn by car do not take the first turn to the right (Higher Eype) else you will be swept back out on to the A35, but take the second turning to the right leading down a narrow road to the sea at Eype Mouth, a few hundred yards along the lane you reach the New Inn on your right.

The New Inn is a fairly substantial white painted pub with a small car park at the front and some seats and tables outside which are in a veritable sun-trap. If there's no space in the car park there is parking at Eype Mouth and the walk up the hill back to the pub will give you a thirst. The view from the Eype Mouth car park to the West and South West is fairly spectacular and it was possible to see Start Point, about fifty miles away, and some of the hills on Dartmoor.

The outside terraced area at the back, which has several levels each with their own tables and chairs, has a great view across to Thorncombe Beacon, although it was lacking "...dramatic views across Lyme Bay" which were hinted at in the 2011 GBG.

The bar had Palmers Dorset Gold, 200, Copper Ale and Best Bitter along with Taunton Traditional cider on hand-pump with very pleasant staff serving. The Dorset Gold was in absolutely superb condition and the food also looked good (Sunday Lunchtime) but it wasn't possible to get any as they only seemed to take bookings.

Anchor Inn, Seatown

The Anchor is located on a slight rise overlooking the sea at the base of "Golden Cap", the highest sea cliff on the south coast at 191 metres. The terrace at the front of the pub faces Doghouse Hill [great view of kestrels hunting on the lower cliffs] and a little further along the skyline it's possible to see Thorncombe Beacon from the opposite side to the view of it from the New Inn, Eype. Seatown is reached by a narrow road which turns off of the A35 near the church in Chideock.



The inn had three Palmers Ales - 200, Copper Ale and Best Bitter but I was slightly disconcerted when the barman pulled back the handle on the Best and I watched the beer flow out. I asked him to stop until I'd established that, because of the cellar layout, electric pumps were used to dispense the beer to the beer engine. Despite my initial worries the beers were in fine condition.

The front bar is quite cosy with several artefacts on the wall relating to the pub and some of the characters who have visited it. There is also a bar to the right of the front bar which seemed to be more like a lounge/diner. The best place to sit is on the cliff top seating located to the right as you come out of the pub door. There are a few ordinary benches and tables but the view, which stretches from the Isle of Portland to the South East to Start Point in the South West, has to be one of the best from any pub in Britain.



Shave Cross Inn, Shave Cross

You'll definitely need either a lot of luck, an O.S. map or GPS to find this place as Shave Cross would probably feel flattered if I described it as an "hamlet". The Inn itself is a building of considerable antiquity with a fascinating history and is entered from a door facing an extremely well kept garden with water features. The entrance is a bit of a tight squeeze as there is a small serving area directly in front of the door which sometimes has people (probably a maximum of three) and their dogs drinking at it. Once past that there is a small and cosy bar area with a huge inglenook fireplace and, beyond that, a restaurant which specialises in Caribbean cookery – the licensees also have a home in Tobago. Behind the pub is some upmarket accommodation.

We tried Branscombe Vale's Branoc & Drayman's Best, and noted real ciders too. The landlord provides beer and cider for carry-outs, a good idea given the limited capacity in the pub, and the description "rural gem", often found in the GBG, was probably coined with this pub in mind.

Fountain Head, Brancsombe

This pub was the only one we visited in East Devon as we'd been to the Donkey Sanctuary near Sidmouth and the GBG entry made it seem well worth a visit. The GBG was correct – it is a lovely pub - but it's a little out of the way. Be careful not to miss it, as it sits side on to the road and the seating area outside the pub is probably unique inasmuch that the two rows of tables and chairs are dissected by a public bridleway, with a spring bubbling underneath. There is a small pub car park but to reach it, you have to take the turn past the pub leading to Berry Hill.

Inside the pub there is much wood panelling and three rooms – the bar area as you walk in; a small annexe to the right with several pictures of the container ship "Napoli" which became shipwrecked on Branscombe Beach in 2007; and another small seating area through the bar.

Beers on offer were Exmoor Wildcat and two from Branscombe Vale - Branoc and Summathat, the latter suited my palate and got my top mark for the week. We also tried the local fish in batter which was very tasty and another bonus for the pub. The bar staff were very pleasant and I had a good chat with a local drinker who turned out to be the owner. All I could do was congratulate him as it was another very good pub to visit.



All in all a totally enjoyable trip but next time we visit Dorset I'm sure we'll stay somewhere a bit more central or at least where there is access to public transport.

Ale be blown if I can get any

Firstly let's get the joke out of the way. Can you name me ten famous Belgians? NO, Hercule Poirot doesn't count as he's a fictional figure. You probably can't name ten but try these for starters – you may not have heard of some of them but you will probably be aware of them or their works:

Leo Hendrik Baekeland, the inventor of bakelite

Jacques Brel, singer/songwriter/actor - "Seasons in the Sun", "If You Go Away", "Jacky"

Kim Clijsters, tennis player

Audrey Hepburn, actress

Hergé (Georges Remi) , the creator of TinTin

René Magritte, surrealist painter

Eddy Merckx, five times winner of the Tour de France

"Django" Reinhardt, Jazz Guitarist

Peter Paul Rubens, baroque painter (born in Antwerp before Belgium was created)

Adolphe Sax, inventor of the saxophone

We could add to the list Plastic Bertrand (Punk Musician), James Sidney Ensor (Painter), César Franck (Composer), Justine Henin (Tennis Player), Jackie Ickx (Formula 1 driver), Toots Thielemans (Jazz Musician) and who, of a certain age, can forget The Singing Nun - or, more to the point, who wants to own up to remembering her?

Well there's another very important Belgian in my life, although I've never met him – Brother Benedikt, one of the brewers at Sint-Sixtus Abdij (St Sixtus Abbey) in a little hamlet just south of Westvleteren and about five kilometres north of Poperinge – the main town in Belgium's hop growing region. The Brothers of the Abbey are of the "Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance" otherwise known as Trappists.



Why is Brother Benedikt important? He's the head brewer at St Sixtus and carries on the tradition of making one of the most highly regarded beers in the World—Westvleteren 12.

In Belgium "Abbey" beers are ten a penny mainly because lots of the old abbeys which made beer in the past have ceased brewing and passed on their trade names to other brewers who make a facsimile of the old beers and the abbey gets an income from this new operation. Another twist is that some abbeys have commercial brewers producing the beers in the Abbey but with no input from the monks.

To confuse matters even more there are about 170 Trappist monasteries around the world but only seven make beer – six in Belgium (Achel, Chimay, Orval, Rochefort, Westmalle and Westvleteren) and one in the Netherlands (La Trappe). These breweries are the only ones, by law, who are able to use the "Authentic Trappist Product" logo on their bottles. Of these Westvleteren is the only one in which the Brothers still do all of the brewing. To further cloud the issue Westvleteren beers do not have the "Authentic Trappist Product" logo on their bottles as their bottles don't have labels! The three beers they produce 6" (5.8% Alcohol by Volume), "8" (8% ABV) and "12" (10.2% ABV) are only distinguished by their crown caps (bottle tops).



Originally the “12” was 12% but the alcohol had a nasty habit of killing the yeast at this strength which occasionally meant a lot of wasted work for the brewers, by the 1930’s the ABV was dropped to 11%. Due to the properties of the current yeast being used (from the Westmalle Abbey strain) the strength has dropped to 10.2 % as can be seen in this photo of the crown cap. The first time I ever got the beer, about 10 or 15 years ago, was completely by chance when my wife and I were in a drive-through beer shop/warehouse in the little coastal town of De Panne close to the French border.

When I retired I made it my ambition to get a crate or two of the “12” but I was thwarted early on as the 'phone number for the Abbey became unobtainable (NU) from the UK. I reported it as a fault but, despite the best efforts of BT’s technicians and clerical staff, it remained unobtainable. I know that it's not the right thing to do but I almost resorted to expletives as I couldn't believe the Brothers could have done this to me. Whenever the beer was available there was notification on the Abbey's website and before it became NU from the UK, I once spent seven and a half hours trying to get through. I managed to get ringing tone once then it timed out!! Fortunately it's no longer blocked but I still haven't got any – except for a few bottles from the café they own, “In derVrede”, across from the monastery where you can drink it on site or very occasionally get 3 or 6 bottles.

Perhaps I should explain that production of Westvleteren beers is still at the same level as it was in 1949 and it is not sold commercially. When their modernised brewery opened a few years ago the Head Abbot declared, “*We are not brewers. We are monks. We brew beer to be able to afford being monks.*” To illustrate the beers' rarity the Abbey brewery only produce 4750 Hectolitres per year compared to Westmalle and Chimay producing 120,000 Hl.



It is possible to buy the beer in the “grey” trade where it is sold for exorbitant prices. A USofA beer fan on a music website I go on paid \$80 for two bottles of each and \$70 for the postage and packing two or three years ago. The current going rate for the stuff on the internet in the UsofA is \$40 per bottle and the gift packs of a couple of glasses and six bottles of “12” is \$195. At the brewery twenty four bottles of the “6” sells for 30 Euros, the “8” is 34 Euros and the “12” 39 Euros. Plus there's a refundable 12 Euros deposit for the bottles and crate – proper recycling because you take them back and they get reused as do all beer bottles in Belgium. The gift pack as described is 25 Euros at the Abbey i.e. \$33 .

“So what's it like?” I hear you enquire. It's a dark beer and they're not normally to my taste but, asked to describe it by one of my mates all I could say was, “It's like having a rainbow on your tongue”. Roger Protz, the famous beer writer is a little more eloquent. His description is as follows, “Big fluffy head with a massive nose of “fruit and veg” - celery, raisins, sultanas, burnt grain, cobnuts and dry chocolate. Sweet grain coats the tongue with chocolate, followed by herbal notes with spicy hop resins kicking in. A rich, sweet finish has vinous fruit, chocolate, toffee and light hops.” After a description like that I'd consider it one of my “Five a Day” if I could get more of it but I've only got half a dozen bottles at the moment and they're for special occasions. I live in hope that one day I'll get a crate. “Op uw gezondheid” - “Your Good Health” or “Cheers”.

Barry Price.

Ramblers Welcome

It is a well known fact that Ramblers like to start and end their walks at pubs. And that's why CAMRA and the Ramblers have teamed up together to try and raise awareness of pubs locally which will 'Welcome Ramblers'.

The initiative has been supported by CAMRA branches in the following counties: Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Middlesex, Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

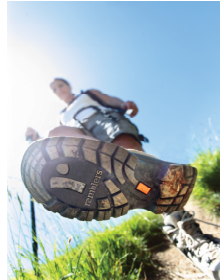
In the same counties there are more than 12,000 Ramblers' members who meet every week to pull on their boots and enjoy the countryside in the company of like-minded friends. Many of the walks take place at the weekend but there are rambles which are organised to take place during the week.

Numbers taking part in the walks can vary from just a handful to up to about 40.

We hope that by supporting this initiative we will be able to promote pubs to our members. By agreeing to display a window sticker, a poster as well as use our beer mats, we will recommend pubs on our website - www.ramblers.org.uk. Participating pubs will get a free listing which states that it supports the Walkers Welcome scheme and our members will be able to consider using it as a start and end point when organising their walks. We hope that over time we will be able to build up a comprehensive database of those pubs which welcome Ramblers.

Of course our Ramblers will have the opportunity to feedback on the welcome they might have received at your pub and any comments will be posted online.

Generally, the groups welcome the opportunity to use a pub car park to gather in (car sharing is encouraged). They then walk and return later for a drink and sometimes a meal. Quite often meals are ordered in advance so that chefs can organise the dishes before the group returns. This can all be agreed with the landlord/manager beforehand. And naturally Ramblers respect their environment. Muddy boots are left at the door or in the car so there is no mess. Hopefully just extra custom for you.



We hope that you will support this initiative and sign up for our promotional material. Local CAMRA newsletters will also provide information throughout the year on how the scheme is progressing. And of course if you would like to become a Rambler yourself or have a group which is interested in joining the Ramblers family, then get in touch!

The Ramblers is always on the lookout for new members. Why not join us today? All readers of this newsletter qualify for a 20% discount on the normal joining fee. All you have to do is go to www.ramblers.org.uk/offer and use the code **U12V2W**. So why not combine a passion for pubs with a will to walk?

Sam Newby-Ricci, Ramblers Northern Home Counties Regional Marketing Officer



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Real Ales, Real Cider, Real Music, Real Food



An unspoilt traditional, country free house, with a beer garden, selling a selection of well kept real ales and real ciders for the canny drinker, including Mild, Stout, Porter and Dunton Cider

The Hare Beer Bunch, our own beer club, chooses a Beer Of The Month, runs real ale excursions and will hold our first Beer Festival in September 2012

Always up to four changing real ales, mainly from local breweries.
Buntingford and B & T regularly featured

Tuesday folk nights, Themed Food Nights, Friday Take Away Night, Wednesday and Sunday Quiz Nights, Thursday Games Night, BBQ and Cream Teas

We are on bus route 188

Free WIFI

For information contact the March Hare on 01767 448093 for a copy of Dates for your Diary, including the next Hare Beer Bunch meeting or email janice.tasc@ntlworld.com