



the

Casket

Campaign for Real Ale

FREE

September 2013



EAST BEDFORDSHIRE

www.eastbedscamra.org.uk

casket@eastbedscamra.org.uk



Historic Cock Inn saved from closure - see page 4

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The Casket

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For more information see
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A quick word from the Editor

Well what a scorcher of a summer so far, with July turning out to be a heatwave. Many of our local pubs switched their ale selection to lighter golden ales to suit the climate and local cider continues to do well. Over in Dunton the March Hare with its 'Apple Be Thy Day' weekend became the fourth pub in East Beds to have held a dedicated cider festival. The branch will be running a cider stall at the Potton Apple Day on Sunday 29th September [12-4pm]. Talking of Potton and cider, Potton Press cider is available via Potton Brewery and two of their ciders have popped up in the Cock Inn at Broom.

On that subject, it came as a great relief to the East Beds committee that the Cock Inn was successfully sold recently by Greene King to a small local pub company [more details on Page 4]. Members had started to prepare material in anticipation of "fighting a campaign" against the closure of this historic pub, should Greene King try to sell the property unlicensed. Thankfully, the pub has been saved and we can turn our attention towards many other local pubs still under threat of closure. Finally, a plea for volunteers to please come along and support the Bedford Beer festival in October. Local members will be manning the products & tombola stand and we would like some more helpers.

John Goodlet

ENGINEERS ARMS, HIGH STREET, HENLOW, BEDS.

www.engineersarms.co.uk 01462 812284

Wednesday 23rd – Sunday 27th October

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LOCAL PUB & BREWERY NEWS

Cock, Broom

Great news for a change, following a press release from Camelot Inns, a small pub company with 8 sites in the Beds, Herts and Bucks area. Director Mike Kane has confirmed that Camelot Inns have completed negotiations with Greene King for the sale of the Cock Inn at Broom.

Contracts were exchanged on the 31st July and current tenants Michelle and Nick will continue to operate the pub on behalf of the company. They plan to ensure this heritage pub remains a thriving freehouse, beginning with a range of great national and local ales, plus Potton Press cider.



They want it to be *“a pub that does great food”* not *“a restaurant that sells drinks”* and will rely heavily on local suppliers. Some redecoration and improvements have not affected any of the character and charm of the old inn. The freehouse is currently being tested for Cask Marque accreditation and there will be a mini beer festival in late August. East Beds CAMRA say **“Thank You”** to Camelot Inns for saving this historic pub from closure.

White Horse, Broom

Just a short walk down from the Cock Inn and you will find more changes, this time at the White Horse after the departures of the Biswell Catering business. The new managers are Peter & Linda Adams who have moved from the Plough at Langford. They took over on the 28th May on behalf of a holding company Pubs & Bars Ltd. By now they may have achieved a rolling year by year lease. Current opening hours are Tue-Thu 11-3, 5-11, Fri-Sat 11-midnight & Sun 11-10pm



There is an extensive menu of homemade food, including Sunday roast. Occasional live music and open mic nights, plus the quiz will be returning in the autumn. At the bar there is GK IPA and a guest ale. The pub has shrugged off the “restaurant only” theme of the previous tenants & reverted to a traditional pub that also sells food.

Plough, Langford

We welcome John Wooley as the new tenant at the Plough in Langford with a 3 year lease. There is a new extensive food menu, plus daily specials. Proving popular

are the Friday night curry and the Saturday steak night, plus a good deal for the Sunday roast + a drink for £10. Fortnightly quiz on Wednesday evening and karaoke on Friday nights. Opening hours are now Mon-Thu 12-11, Fri-Sat 12-12mid & Sun 12-11pm.



At the bar GK IPA will be accompanied by two guest ales, both of which were quite adventurous on a recent visit, Hurdy Gurdy wheat beer and Twisted Wheel with added ginger. Every few weeks there will be a family fun day or barbecue making best use of the large and child friendly garden.

Coach & Horses, Stotfold

A warm welcome to Karen Ward, who took over as manager in April following the departure of Kim Clark. Since then further improvements have been made inside the pub, with both the Ladies and Gentlemens toilets being redecorated and they have swapped locations.



Behind the bar there has been a wide range of light and zesty summer ales to suit the recent hot spell. Under the bar, the pub has now achieved Cask Marque accreditation for good cellarman ship.

Owner Mark McGilley bought the old bakery next door to the pub. The main house remains, but all other buildings have been demolished to make way for two new houses. The bakery ovens were removed and will get a new lease of life in Stotfold Mill. Mark also bought a second pub, this time from Greene King. It is the **Crown at Willington** and it relaunched on 29th June. We wish Mark all the best for his new pub.

Queens Head, Sandy

A new tenant has arrived at the Queens Head following the retirement of Clare Ryan. Sharon Walsh is in charge at the bar, overseeing GK IPA, Abbot and three guest ales. Recently the guest ales featured Maulden's Golden Adder and York Brewery's Growler. There is no change to the opening hours, basically open all day every day, with lunches served from 12 to 2.45pm. Sharon will re-introduce pre-booked Sunday lunches in September. The pub hosts regular live music, check out the pub's website for more details:-
<http://thequeensheadsandy.co.uk>



Engineers Arms, Henlow

The final branch presentation of the season just missed the deadline for the May issue of the Casket. At the end of the East Beds AGM on the 7th May, Mike Coombes, The Beds Area Organiser was on hand to present the **Bedfordshire Cider Pub of the Year 2013** award to landlord Kevin Machin.

This award was presented for the second successive year in recognition of the excellent work by Kevin and his staff in promoting Real Cider and Perry. They have a wide range of ciders on any given day in the pub, but they also held the 3rd Cider & Country Wine Festival in February. This event has also inspired other pubs to run dedicated cider festivals.



More news from Stotfold

Mixed news in Stotfold with some pubs closed and some up for sale. It is business as usual at the **Stag**, but **The Fox & Duck** is still closed and rumours are afoot that a covenant on the land may be preventing development opportunities. Not far away the **Two Brewers** seems doomed now as building work has started on two new houses in the pub car park. We assume the former pub will be retained as a private house.

Greene King have two pubs for sale, the **Crown** and the **Chequers**. The outcome of these sales may have a profound effect on the long term future of the **Pig & Whistle** following the retirement of Alan Reece at the end of July. Alan had run the pub for 47 years and was one the longest serving Greene King tenant in the East Anglian region. Many had assumed that the pub would be sold to allow the nearby Aragon development to expand and have additional road access. Instead Greene King have asked Rob Scahill, the landlord of the hugely successful Orange Tree in Baldock to take a one year tenancy and oversee a minor refurbishment of the pub interior and gardens. Sarah Howitt will the manage the pub whilst Greene King consider whether to provide a larger budget for modernisation, but it may still go up for sale at a later date.

Meanwhile Rob has bought outright the **Victoria** on Sun Street, Baldock and it will operate as a freehouse featuring Buntingford ales under current tenant Tony West. Maybe it will feature Twitchell and Polar Star, these ales picked up awards in the Champion beer competition at the Great British Beer Festival in August — well done Buntingford Brewery.

Potton Brewery Update

Brewery manager, Colin Morris, reports an increase in the number of outlets for Potton products in the area and further afield. Several Bedford pubs: The Devonshire Arms, The Three Cups and The Bedford Arms are all offering Potton ales as is the Wyboston Lakes Hotel. Farther away The Lion Hotel and The George, both at Buckden, are stocking Potton ales. Phoenix Bitter is due to be supplied to Biggleswade Football Club and has been supported by SIBA for the CAMRA St Albans Beer Festival in September. Phoenix is a 3.8% double hopped bitter now being brewed after a gap of some time – hence the name!



Bottled beers are now being stocked at Bedford Growers farm shop. Panther, the 5.5% hand drawn Natural Dark Lager is already in production for the autumn – so keep a look out for that. On the staffing front Colin has been joined by Chris Cutts on the sales side. Chris is a rugby stalwart who plays prop for Shelford (so don't argue with him!).

David Young

Lindsey and the team Welcome you to the

Sir William Peel P.H.



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39 High Street, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 1AG 01767 680607

DIARY DATES

- SEP.** 10th, Branch meeting, Pembroke Arms, Biggleswade, 8pm
29th, Cider stall @ Potton Apple Day, St. Mary's Hall, Potton, 12-4pm
- OCT.** 2nd-5th, Products & Tombola Stall @ Bedford Beer & Cider Festival
15th, Branch meeting, Coach & Horses, Stotfold, 8pm
- NOV** 16th, All Beds Branches Social in London. Meet near Westminster Bridge and afternoon walk alongside the Thames, details TBA
19th, Branch meeting, Rising Sun, Potton, 8pm

BEER FESTIVALS

- Sep.** 25th-28th. St. Albans Beer Festival, Alban Arena, Civic Centre **CAMRA**
27th-29th."Grin and Beer It II" Beer Festival, March Hare, Dunton
- Oct.** 2nd-5th. The 36th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival, Corn Exchange, St. Paul's Square, Bedford **CAMRA**
23rd-27th. The 18th Henlow Beer Festival, Engineers Arms, Henlow
17th-20th. Trafalgar Beer Festival, Half Moon, Queen Street, Hitchin
- 28th-2nd. Norwich Beer Festival, St. Andrew's & Blackfriars' Halls **CAMRA**
Nov. 19th-23rd. 25th SE Essex Beer Festival, Freight House, Rochford **CAMRA**

Last Orders for the Website below — It will be replaced by a new national website *Whatpub.com* coming soon

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**
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

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



Queen's Head Landlady Bows Out

Tuesday 28th May 2013 was the last day that Claire Ryan was a licensee in Sandy after a long and illustrious career firstly in the Lord Nelson (now the Sir William Peel) and then at the Queen's Head (previously The Maidenhead). The name "Queen's Head" first seems to have been used in or around 1816 so if anybody would like to know what life was like in the Maidenhead might I suggest you organise a seance. The party you will need to reach is a "William Randall".

The Queens Head is now Grade II listed and the Bedfordshire County Archive describes it as *"... listed by the former Department of Environment in December 1979 as Grade II, of special interest. The department dated the property to the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries stating that it began life as a row of cottages. The central section is 17th century and built of roughcast with one storey and attics under an old clay tile roof. The right hand side of the building is 18th century in an L-shape. It is also roughcast but has two storeys and attics. The left hand side is 19th century, of mottled red and yellow brick, with two storeys under a clay tile roof."*

Claire was at the "Nellie", as the Lord Nelson was colloquially known, for six years from 1987 before leaving for a short period in Cambridgeshire. She took over the Queens Head in 1994 and had been the licensee until her retirement.

I'm sure Claire wouldn't mind me saying that she was a "no nonsense" landlady who would not tolerate bad behaviour or loutishness in any shape or form but everybody knew exactly where they stood with her. She was the epitome of diplomacy and I once watched her for about twenty minutes gently but firmly refuse entry to her pub to an individual whom she had previously barred. There were no threats, no raised voices and no histrionics just measured discussion which resulted in the individual calmly leaving. As this episode occurred during the Christmas period, when there was a packed pub and high spirits, it was a perfect illustration of Claire's determination not to be persuaded, bullied or cajoled into changing her stance.

Claire's ales were usually in very good condition and the Queen's Head appeared in several editions of the Good Beer Guide through the years. However she was sadly hampered by Greene King's blind insistence on using cask breathers, for many years their determination to prevent guest ales appearing in their pubs and a pretty uninspiring range of beers coming out of Bury St Edmunds.



Claire had a loyal group of regulars, she welcomed strangers and hosted Bedfordshire's dignitaries on the occasions when they visited the Sandy Christmas Fair. After twenty-five years service to the drinkers of Sandy I hope that the rest of East Beds CAMRA Branch's members will join me in wishing Claire a very long and happy retirement.

Apple Be Thy Day

What a great Summer Cider and Perry weekend the March Hare had in July. So many people came to support this weekend. This was a real local cider day because more than 80% of the ciders were sourced from within about a 25 mile radius of Dunton. Until John researched this, he did not realise that there were so many cider producers in the local area. This weekend has encouraged the March Hare to stock local ciders on a regular basis. The most popular ciders of the weekend were Dunton Cider; Watergull Orchard's Blackcurrant Cider and their Elderflower Cider; Evershed's Original Dry and Apple Cottage's Strawberry Fields. Watch this space for ciders coming to the March Hare.

Dunton Cider is made from locally harvested apples and made here in Dunton by cider enthusiasts, Andy and Simon.

Watergull Orchards are a family business which concentrates on producing a high quality English apple juice. Their East Anglian apple juice is made from apples which have been grown in Cambridgeshire, most from their orchards. They make very little cider so we were very lucky to have some of their small production.

Evershed's cider is made by Elizabeth Evershed in Odell, Bedfordshire, an enthusiastic one person operation which is concerned in using only natural ingredients

Apple Cottage cider is made in the heart of Baldock. They pride themselves on bringing us ciders of exceptional quality. They have been making cider in Baldock for over 15 years.



To complement the March Hare's well-kept real ales, ciders, perries and wine, Janice introduced Martin's delicious, handmade pies and pastries, including sausage rolls, vegetable pasties, mushroom strudel, scotch eggs, pork pies and goat's cheese and caramelized red onion tarts—something for everyone. Martin is a local chef from Hitchin and he doesn't use preservatives in his cooking. The meat is provided by Offley Hoo Farm and Meadow Farm in Holwell, while the flour is sourced from Redbournbury Mill. The quality that the March Hare customers expect at the bar is reflected in Martin's pies and pastries. They were so popular that the March Hare sold out by Saturday evening. The pub will order more of Martin's pies & pasties for the 'Grin and Beer It II' Beer Festival coming to the freehouse from Friday 27th to Sunday 29th September 2013.

Thanks to the members of the Hare Beer Bunch for helping at the cider festival. The March Hare couldn't have done it without them. On the Saturday of the cider festival, South Beds CAMRA did a 'pub of the year 2013' cycling tour, including the March Hare. The happy cyclists left The March Hare on route to the next pub.

The Berliner Republik

Whilst on a recent trip to Berlin I visited the Beer Market, which acts like a financial stock market as in London but for beer. The bar on Schilffbauerdamm is unique to Berlin and has 16 different beers available on the market. Everyday starting at 5pm the beer prices fluctuate depending on their popularity just like a stock market. The prices are relayed via screens which are continually changing.



Beer Name	Price	Other Info
Paulaner Pils 0.5	3.60	0.10-2.70 2.90 4.20
Berliner Pils 0.5	3.70	0.10-2.63 3.00 4.30
Berliner Kindl 0.5	4.30	0.20 4.88 3.10 4.60
Matweizen 0.5	3.60	3.10 4.00
Rax 0.5	7.20	0.10 1.41 6.50 7.20
Paulaner Pils 1L	10.50	9.40 11.50
Becks 1.5 L	10.50	9.50 11.70
Berliner Kindl 1.5 L	10.50	9.50 11.70
Paulaner Pils 1.5 L	3.20	3.20
Rax 1.5 L	3.20	3.20
Paulaner Pils 1.5 L	3.20	3.20
Becks 1.5 L	3.20	3.20
Berliner Kindl 1.5 L	3.20	3.20
Paulaner Pils 1.5 L	3.20	3.20
Becks 1.5 L	3.20	3.20
Berliner Kindl 1.5 L	3.20	3.20
Paulaner Pils 1.5 L	3.20	3.20

When a customer decides to buy a beer the order is entered onto the system which continually calculates the beer prices so the beer prices change. For example a beer could be as low as 1.55 euros for a 0.3l sized beer and just minutes later it could rise significantly higher due to demand.

Of course one of the problems is to attract a waiter when you decide to buy. At random times the market crashes and all beers come down to a cheap level. This is indicated by the ringing of a bell. It was a very enjoyable evening with the beers in excellent condition and the food was very good.



One of the most unusual beers available is the Berliner Weisse. This 'wheat beer' has the addition of Woodruff a herb which reduces the sharpness and acidity of the beer. The german name for the herb is Waldmeister literally translated as 'Master of the Woods'. Berliners tend to drink the wheat beer through a straw.

Next time you are visiting Berlin, look for this quirky bar. It is within walking distance of several tourist attractions including the Brandenburg Gate and Holocaust Memorial. Don't forget to try the food, from the traditional wiener schnitzel and pork knuckles to herring fillets and tasty flatbread pizzas.



Engineers Arms on Tour

The Engineers Arms, Henlow has had two trips so far this summer. The first on the 15th May was a Mystery Tour ostensibly to celebrate landlord Kevin's birthday – any excuse! 20 stalwarts left the pub by coach for destinations unknown. The cries of “Are we nearly there yet?” were being heard before we even got to the M1! We stopped at **The Boat Inn** at Stoke Bruerne and thoroughly enjoyed the wide range of Marston's beers available. It's in a beautiful spot right on the Grand Union Canal close to the Canal Museum and famous Blisworth Tunnel.



Back in the coach and off to our next destination which turned out to be **The Merchants Inn** at Rugby. This is a favourite of The Engineers drinkers and we were not to be disappointed by the wide range of excellent beers on offer. There followed a rather random crawl around the real ale pubs of Rugby being guided by local advice and The Good Beer Guide. In no particular order we visited:

The Squirrel Inn – a friendly pub with local beers and Marston's

The Raglan Arms – a comfortable former CAMRA Pub of the Year with a good range of beer

The Alexandra Arms – also a former CAMRA Pub of the Year with national and local beers on offer

The Victoria Inn – traditional local pub with small cosy atmosphere and well kept beers

The Seven Stars – now a B & T pub which seems to be doing very well, though by this stage the writer is rather vague about any further details!



All in all none of the six pubs visited in Rugby disappointed and we (eventually) gathered back at the coach for the trip home. The coach, guided by some mysterious magic (sat-nav?), found its way to the **Rushden Historical Transport Society** bar which is situated in a part of the now disused railway station.

For those that do not know, this is not to be missed and is really quaint. The number of beers available is limited by the space and turnover, but what they do offer is spot on – the Draught Bass was beautiful. If you haven't been there it's a must, but check the opening times. After this we returned to The Engineers where those with any capacity left took on Kevin's wide selection.

On the 20th July a party of 20 joined our luxury coach for a visit to Hook Norton and North Cotswold breweries. Actually there seemed to be a remarkable similarity between this 20 and the previous lot! **Hook Norton Brewery** is a must for anyone interested in real ale, its brewing and the subtleties of the brewing process. The ancient brewery is nestled in the beautiful Cotswold countryside and its whole ambiance is one of “if it works, don’t change it”. Some aspects have changed with the passage of time such as the steam engine which powered the plant being replaced by an electric motor although the old engine is still there and it can still run the plant although it has now been modified to run on diesel. The brewery is the classic gravity based process to minimise the amount of pumping and hence disturbance of the liquor.



The water comes directly from wells on site and other ingredients are sourced as locally as possible. Those interested scrambled over the plant and were given a comprehensive description of each aspect. Afterwards we were given samples of the various brews – the traditional Hooky and Old Hooky being the favourites. The Lion Bitter, a light coloured beer by Hook Norton standards, was particularly enjoyed even by the ‘brown beer brigade’. The full range of brews were available for tasting and there didn’t seem to be any rush to get rid of us! Those who didn’t join in the visit had established themselves in The Pear Tree in Hook Norton village. We joined them there and had lunch. The Pear Tree is effectively the brewery tap being the nearest pub to the brewery – an excellent pub for beer and food.



It was difficult to tear ourselves away but another visit had been arranged and so off we went over the border to Warwickshire and to Stretton-on-Fosse where the **North Cotswold Brewery** is located. It wasn’t easy to find being in a former farmyard unit out in the sticks. We were warmly welcomed by the proprietor and his family. They showed us around the modern plant and the contrast with Hook Norton was about as great as can be imagined. However, it was a lovely day and we enjoyed the visit and the hospitality. Plenty of samples were drunk and snacks were provided. The favourite beer was Shag Weaver at 4.5% but it was difficult to fully appreciate the beers as it was a very warm day and the beers being served from jugs soon became a bit flat and tepid.

Taking our leave we were not to be denied a proper taste of the beers so we went straight to a local pub which we were told kept them. The **Ebrington Arms** near Chipping Campden is a very local-oriented pub and served up very good pints of the North Cotswold beers – a good port of call if you’re in that neck of the woods. Back on the coach and homewards to the Engineers and the usual ‘nightcaps’. Another excellent trip enjoyed by all.

David Young

Rebellion with good cause

In September 1975 I started at Sir William Borlase School in Marlow, Bucks. Being in the A-G section of the alphabet, the division of the cohort was such that my classmates included Tim Coombes and Mark Gloyens. The school had several historic connections with the Wethered family but the most notable of which was its proximity to the brewery, which was strikingly evident when the wind was blowing in the right direction. In 1987 Whitbread, in their infinite wisdom decided to close said brewery, thus depriving the world of brews such as Winter Royal, a pint whose seasonal arrival became a spotting contest between my father and me somewhat akin to the sighting of the first cuckoo of spring.

Having left the area by then the brewery closure was a mere blip on my radar but my erstwhile classmates, being made of more worthy stuff would not take this lying down and decided that the long tradition of brewing in Marlow should continue. Thus with the business plan established and the groundwork covered the Rebellion Brewery was born in 1993.



Roll on to the present day. Each month the brewery has 2 open nights (one fully open and one for members of their beer club) and an open weekend every 2 years with proceeds going local hospital charity, ***Scannappeal***. It was to this event, on 6th July, that a coach set off carrying a motley crew plucked from the ranks of both East and South Beds branches of CAMRA. The coach started in Sandy, then across to pick up the South Beds contingent before a journey, rendered somewhat circuitous by the seemingly obligatory M25 hold ups, brought us to Bencombe Farm, Marlow Bottom in glorious sunshine. There was then a pleasant surprise in store for a few people who hadn't fully read the advance publicity. After making a voluntary donation of an amount of your choice on entry, ***all beer was free***.

All the brewery and farm buildings were in use with three main bars, each with the range of five ales Blonde, IPA, Smuggler, Mutiny and XX (brewed for their 20th anniversary). There was a variety of seating sections outside, plus a grassed area. But the intense heat of the day drove many to find shelter in the large barn used as a media centre with the air-conditioning on full blast. Very sensibly the bars also gave out free glasses of water.





The event itself was well managed with barbecue and live music also provided, along with “topper-uppers” [see photo on left] roaming the site with mini beer boxes to keep down the queues as the event filled up. Mark and Tim also took turns to provide talks on the history and philosophy of the brewery, which those of us who attended found most interesting.

They very much fit in with the whole **LocALe** philosophy in that whereas many business seem to be obsessed with growth (methinks they maybe take their spam email too much to heart) Rebellion have reached a production level of around 70,000 pints per week and like to keep their beers to pubs within a 30 mile radius. This keeps down transport costs and fits with their low carbon footprint ideals, also sourcing ingredients locally where possible. It helps to ensure that the beer retains its freshness at point of sale and allows them to easily get to any pubs that need assistance and advice with cellarage etc. Having spent a most enjoyable 4 hours on site we re-embarked on the coach, many laden with purchases from the brewery shop.

You would have thought that we would have had our fill for the day, but our route home somehow managed to take us via the Hop Pole, home of the Aylesbury Brewhouse, for a very brief pit stop. It too had a brewery shop with a good collection of beers, wine etc. Thus topped up we completed our journey to the respective drop off points at Dunstable and Luton, once again meeting heavy traffic, this time diverted from the M1, but by this time I believe most were too comfortable to be concerned.



In all, a great day out to my former stamping ground and pleasant to learn later on that we had helped the brewery raise a staggering (possibly in every sense) £51,000 by the end of the weekend event—that’s impressive. To learn more about the brewery and their support of local charities, see the websites below.



<http://www.rebellionbeer.co.uk>

<http://www.scannappeal.org.uk>

Tour de Bedfordshire Est 2013

As I write this (Thursday 1st August) Great Britain is going through a period of sporting excellence – Chris Froome has won the Tour de France (OK he was born in Kenya but don't let's quibble); the British and Irish Lions have just given Australia more stuffing than I had with my last Christmas turkey; Andy Murray has won the Men's Wimbledon Final, but his greatest achievement to me is that he almost smiled; the GB team have performed well at the Anniversary Games – both Olympians and Paralympians; and England are 2-0 up in the Test series against Australia.

The aforementioned sporting achievements fade into insignificance when compared with the punishing schedule followed by the Third Leg of the “**Tour de Bedfordshire Est**” on 23rd June when East Bedfordshire CAMRA Branch Members were joined by three from South Bedfordshire Branch on a two-wheeled peregrination through the flatlands to the east of Biggleswade.

Although the start was at the **Engineers Arms** at 1.00 pm the last train heading south out of Sandy was a few minutes before 11 o'clock (due to engineering works) and I caught it, even though it only went as far as Biggleswade, to ensure that I had enough energy to complete the course. On the train I was met by my old mate Ian from Eaton Ford who's actually a displaced West Londoner. I overlooked that shortcoming years ago although I'm still trying to teach him that the town he lives near is “Nits” not, as he grandly refers to it, “Saint NeOts” (with the emphasis on the “O” to rhyme with the “o” in “pots”). The driver of the bus replacement service at Biggleswade Station had looked bemused then ignored us completely when I enquired about the possibility of sticking our bikes in his luggage compartment and taking the coach to Arlesey.

Now Ian thinks that a morning's entertainment is 100 lengths of his local swimming pool followed by a twenty-five or thirty mile bike ride, so I wasn't too impressed when we left Biggleswade and I was in front going into the strong headwind. He made some sly remark about me being a good “lead out man”, which I think was a euphemism for “fat git”. By the time we got to the far side of Langford it was only the thought of a rest at Kevin's (and the knowledge imparted to me by Chris that the Engineers was opening early) that gave me the impetus to keep pedalling and we arrived about 11.25.



Ian and I then set about the difficult task of nursing three pints until the rest of the “Tour” had arrived and we were all ready to leave. Al from Sandy had arrived from Hitchin where he had been visiting; Phil and Archie had come from Sandy mainly on local Bridleways; Chris and Tricia had cycled from Langford; Mike, Mick and Steve had made their way from Maulden. I'm pretty sure that the weather was playing tricks with Kevin's cellar as several of the beers were hazy although I was fortunate enough to have three sparkling and enjoyable pints.



After a brief discussion it was agreed that we should travel the route in the reverse order to that originally published and also to visit the **Admiral** in Clifton, rather than the Golden Lion. After a gentle ride to the Admiral we were pleased to see a reasonable crowd in there, particularly given the constant “cloud” which seems to hang over the pub as it seems to be a regular on Greene King’s possible “closure” list. The range of ales may be limited but the beer seemed to be in very good condition. After some friendly banter with the regulars we saddled up again for the short ride to **The Brewery Tap** in Shefford where five or six beers were on tap.

Although yours truly was the last into the pub I suspected, from a previous visit many years ago, that roast potatoes would be available on the bar and was pleased to be proven correct so I helped myself before ordering my beer which elicited a certain amount of muttering from some of my colleagues. I’m pleased to say that I ignored them and we all eventually found seats on the patio to enjoy our selected ales. Those taking the moral high-ground didn’t manage to get a spud so I was quite pleased.



I should perhaps point out at this stage that none of us were “tickers” so I don’t think anybody knew what they had drunk after the event so those readers looking for a comprehensive list and tasting notes will be disappointed - the cycling wasn’t taken too seriously either.

I found myself lagging again on the 2.55 miles to the **White Horse**, Southill but the route did include the only climb (?) of the day – a steady rise from around 130 feet at the Brewery Tap to roughly 240 feet an hundred yards or so before the turn to Ireland. It was downhill with the wind behind us from that point but the speedier members of the group were already sitting in the garden of the pub enjoying the weather when I arrived. It was some years since I’d been to the White Horse but I was very disappointed to discover that the well, which used to be one of the features of the pub, had disappeared following the fate of the little railway line which graced the pub’s garden many years ago.



After the Brewery Tap the beer selection wasn’t very exciting but what we had was perfectly palatable and it was a pleasure for some of us to be joined by an old friend from Arlesey who now lives in Nottinghamshire and was visiting his relations for the weekend – best referred to as “Al’s mate, Bob”. Additionally CAMRA members Barry and Little Steve from Sandy joined us along with Big Steve (who’s yet to join our august organisation) although Little Steve and Al’s mate, Bob had both driven.

Continued on next page

The little jaunt down to the **Cock** at Broom for the next pint was very pleasant as the wind was now blowing from the West or South-West and *almost* made pedalling superfluous. The new people in the Cock seem to be doing OK as far as trade is concerned but, like all of the pubs we visited, they could do with some more so. If you don't go out regularly, then try to make the effort to visit your local if you can! I think that some of our party had not previously been to the Cock so were fascinated by the layout of the pub with its little rooms off of the central corridor each having its own “personality” (if an inanimate object can possess such a characteristic). Another enjoyable pint was taken in the garden before setting off for our final destination.



By this time, I have to admit, I had passed the point where the wind direction was having much effect on my cycling ability as my muscles had relaxed and all tension or pressure to compete, limited as that had been from the start, had receded

We were greeted effusively at the **Wrestlers** in Langford by Chris's wife Jo, the Branch's Cider Officer, who was ensuring that the pub's offering was in good order. There we had another couple of drinks before saying our “Goodbyes” and heading on various routes roughly in the direction of home.

Archie, Ian and myself pedalled back to Biggleswade, crossed the Common then split up at Sandy Station with Ian determined to get back to Eaton Ford. Unfortunately his geography didn't quite live up to his resolve as he found himself in Potton when he was expecting to find Everton Hill with its steep drop from the Greensand Ridge to assist on the run back to “Nits” and home.

He told me later that he thought he'd gone wrong when he passed the entrance to the RSPB but had pressed on regardless. He then got lost in “the woods” somewhere and eventually got to Everton at the Potton end of the village. Even so, despite the cuts and stings from the undergrowth, he eventually got home at 19.45 having taken one and three-quarter hours to travel a journey which would normally have taken him less than half an hour. The gashes up the backs of his legs where he “slipped off the pedals” were still visible the following Friday.

Great kudos should be given to the South Beds lads, Mike, Mick and Steve who were cycling back to Maulden, Luton and Houghton Regis respectively and thanks to everybody for participating and to Chris for designing an interesting, but not too challenging route. In conclusion it seems as though everybody enjoyed themselves and I'm sure that we'll repeat the exercise next year...but don't let's go mad, I'll need that long to recover!

36th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

Wednesday 2nd to Saturday 5th October 2013
Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SL

Wed 4-11, Thu-Sat 12-11

Admission before 4pm £1

After 4pm: Wed £2, Thu £3,

Fri £4, Sat £2

CAMRA members free

No one under 18: ID may
be requested

Wed eve: Dr Busker

Sat lunch: Bedford Morris

Sat eve: Kerry Jo Hodgkin



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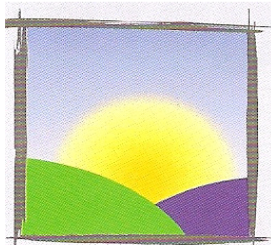
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All Day Saturday and Sunday

**Upstairs restaurant and soft seating area available for private
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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 in the scheme

Potton, Potton, Beds.	B&T, Shefford, Beds.
White Park, Cranfield, Beds.	Addled, Weston, 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.	Copper Kettle, Rushden, Nhants
Hopping Mad, Olney, Bucks.	Red, Gt. Staughton, Hunt'don
Tring, Tring, Herts	Green Tye, M. Hadham, Herts.

Pubs in the scheme

Golden Pheasant, Biggleswade.
 Engineers Arms, Henlow
 Sir William Peel, Sandy
 Stratton House Hotel, Biggleswade
 Coach House, Potton
 Vicars Inn, Arlesey
 Rising Sun, Potton
 Coach & Horses, Stotfold
 March Hare, Dunton

Please visit these pubs and enjoy locally produced ales.

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
 Coach & Horses, Stotfold
 John O'Gaunt, Sutton

Cider may also be available seasonally in

Tudor Oaks, Astwick
 Ivy Leaf Club, Langford

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
 Potton Press, Potton, Beds
 Virtual Orchard, Wolverton Mill, Bucks

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

The Sir William Peel 5th Beer Festival

Every year since 2009 the Sir William Peel in Sandy has held a beer and cider festival, but unlike the norm, each festival has a theme, with all the beers on offer having a connection to the said theme. Previous examples ranging from “All Creatures Great and Small” - with beers that had animals in the name; “Down on the Farm” – all beers with farming connotations, and so on. This year’s theme was the Battle of Britain. Following an excited squeak by your correspondent when this closely guarded secret was revealed (I could bore for England on the subject), I donned my anorak and tried to think of 30 Battle of Britain beers - and, just to prove my pedantry, I could only think of three that were actually “Battle of Britain” related; Shepherd Neame’s Spitfire, Buntingford’s 92 Squadron (flew Spitfires from Biggin Hill during the B.o.B) and Bateman’s UXB, (an abbreviation for UneXploded Bomb – thank you Luftflotte 2 and 3).



[The Operations Rooms]



[WW2 paraphernalia]

OK, history lesson over, let’s get to the beer. Twenty nine beers that all had a “war” connection were actually offered, varying in tenuousness of linkage to the theme. There was Tring’s “Death or Glory” (motto of 17th/21st Lancers – add anorak points here), Potbelly’s “Captain Pigwash”, the more obvious Shepherd Neame’s Spitfire (which disappeared from the barrel faster than the Luftwaffe over the Channel), plus one beer without any link to hostilities whatever being, provided by the brewer in lieu of the original intended.

Therefore, the full complement of 30 beers were offered, with the majority of the beers being served from the “Operations Room” – a brilliant conversion of one of the old stables at the rear of the pub into a facsimile of a WW2 military headquarters. It held maps, photos, newspaper articles, Ministry of Information wartime pamphlets, two Red Arrows flying suits and a rotor blade. They adorned the walls and plan tables to give a really authentic 1940’s feel that was enhanced by having to enter via a very convincing sandbagged doorway. With Second World War music playing, it was a far more novel way to present the beers than the standard stillage-at-the-bar and it made a great contribution to the excellent atmosphere of the festival overall.

Beer was offered in the traditional pint and half measures (with no deposit required on the glasses, other pubs please note). There was also the chance to buy in one-third pints (the lowest legal measure) so that there was an excellent opportunity of sampling each brew without subsequent newt impersonations. This was especially good value for money too, as any six thirds were six pounds, irrespective of the price per pint. For the tickers among you, ABV's varied from 3.5% to 7.2% from 28 different breweries throughout England.



[I'm happy to share my beer tasting]



[but not my pie—it's all mine]

ST. ALBANS BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL 2013

25th-28th September
ALBAN ARENA, ST ALBANS, AL1 3LD

Up to 300 real ales, plus ciders, perries and foreign beers

Open: 11am - 11pm Wed 25th - Sat 28th September

Admission: £3 Wed - Fri, £4.50 Sat. (CAMRA members free at all times)

Thursday night on stage: The Faith Stealers

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Don't drink and drive. For the love of beer, NO ONE UNDER THE AGE OF 18 CAN BE ADMITTED

stalbansbeerfestival.org.uk / realales@yahoo.com

Programmes stating the beers and brewers were provided as is standard, stating colour and ABV, but printed in such a way as to resemble a WW2 ration book issued by the “Ministry of Beer”. It had with plenty of room to mark or comment on the beers offered, all of which were in damn fine form (no wonder we saw off the Bosche). I didn’t witness one complaint about poor quality or short measures; round of applause here I think? For the cider drinker, twelve offerings varying from sweet to dry and a perry which I can’t comment on as I was getting stuck into the beer, but like the threat of invasion, they didn’t last too long either. One of the most Fun beer festivals I’ve been to – roll on next year!

Chris Bunyan

City of Ale by Rail

On Saturday 25th May, 12 East Beds CAMRA members set out on a (very reasonably priced) Group Save Rail Ticket to sample the delights of *Norwich City of Ale*. Billed as “a beer festival with a difference”, this 10 day event, now in its third year, is a celebration of real ale and micro-brewing taking place in over 40 friendly, welcoming pubs spread all over the fine city of Norwich. The pubs serve up around 250 beers from 60 or so local breweries within a thirty-mile radius of Norwich and there is a programme of supporting events, including music, dance and a brewer’s market. With less than seven hours in the city, we were only ever going to scratch the surface of what was on offer, but with drinking shoes firmly on, the wares in six participating pubs were tried and found not to be wanting.



1) A taxi ride took us to our furthest destination: the iconic **Fat Cat** [see above]. The original Cat (there are now three “branches” in the city) is a real ale classic, twice winner of CAMRA’s National Pub of the Year award. It houses many fine examples of East Anglian breweriana alongside an almost bewildering double-figure array of ales. Favourites here were the Fat Cat’s own range of beers, with the 4.3% Honey Cat scoring well in the popularity stakes. Many other LocAles were on offer, including ales from Woodfordes and Green Jack.

2) A short walk took us to the Earlham Arms, a newly reopened pub that was once a girl’s school. Temptation to indulge in St Trinian’s style high jinks was avoided in favour of the excellent food (including a barbecue) and the beer. The highlight here were the JoC’s beers, including Norfolk Kiwi (3.8%), with a similarly light & citrusy supporting cast including Golden Triangle Citropolis (3.9%) and Humpty Dumpty Lemon & Ginger (4.0%).



3) At this point there was a parting of the ways amongst our members, with some heading towards the **Plough**. Purchased and refurbished by Grain brewery, this small pub with its suntrap patio garden was a firm favourite with those that visited, along with the 5.2% Grain Porter.

4) Those resisting the temptation of such heady beverages early in the day, headed for another award winner, former East Anglia POTY - the **Kings Head**. A longer than planned session here (it really is quite hard to drag yourself away... group photo below left) provided the opportunity to sample more fine ales from Norfolk micros including Winters and Beeston. I was extremely pleased to get my first chance to drink Affinity (4.8%) from Lacon's brewery, Gt. Yarmouth. The recently revived venue restores a historic brewing tradition to Gt. Yarmouth curtailed by Whitbread's closure of the original brewery in the late 1960s.



5) A short walk took us to the **Ribs of Beef** [above right], with its pleasant river frontage and beers including Panther Black Panther (4.5%), St. Peter's Organic Best (4.1%) and Wolf Golden Jackal (3.7%).

6) Into the city centre proper and the magnificent Timber Hill pub with the dual name of the **Murderers/Gardeners Arms** [below left] – visit the pub or its website for an explanation. Such was the beer range available here (taking up every inch of bar space, with extra stillage in the pub's corners) that any thoughts of visiting further pubs were abandoned in favour of a last frenzied drinkathon. Ticked off were rarities such as Norfolk Brewhouse Moon Gazer Golden Ale (4.0%), Ole Slewfoot EBA (5.3%) and Waveney Welterweight (4.2%) but for me the pick was the dark and delicious Elmtree Dark Horse Stout (5.0%).



There followed a hasty, and somewhat ragged, retreat to the station and a long journey home, the only moan to be heard concerned the lack of edible hot food at Peterborough and Norwich stations. *Norwich City of Ale* really is a magnificently well run event and I take my hat off to the organisers. As the slogan says, it offers fine ale in a fine city. I for one will be returning; hopefully for a longer session.

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NOTICE OF CORRECTION

In the Pubs News section of the September edition of the Casket newsletter, we stated that the Crown in Stotfold was "up for sale". This is NOT the case, in fact it was another Greene King pub with the same name, the Crown in Biggleswade that was "up for sale" at the time we went to press. We would also like to clarify that the tenancy of the Chequers in Stotfold is available to purchase, but not the building or property. We extend our apologies to the licensees concerned for any confusion arising from our report.

John Goodlet, Editor of the Casket