



the

Casket

Campaign for Real Ale

FREE

January 2014



EAST BEDFORDSHIRE

www.eastbedscamra.org.uk

casket@eastbedscamra.org.uk

Going, Going, Gone! - Great British Pub Auction



**CLOSING
SALE
DOWN**



East Beds Pubs under the hammer - see pages 4-6

WHATS IN THIS ISSUE

Page 4 Local Pub & Brewery News

Page 8 National Campaign News

Page 10 Diary Dates, Beer Festivals

Page 11 Casket Cryptic Crossword

Page 12 No Evil On My Hallowe'en

Page 13 Recommended Brewery Tours

Page 14 Ye Olde Trip to Nottingham

Page 16 Bamberg Beer Tour

Page 20 The Wonders of Wiltshire Part One

Page 24 Knaresborough & Harrogate Trip

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The Casket

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

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A quick word from the Editor

Fundraising was on the agenda during autumn at the Bedford Beer festival. Alan Binnington led a small team of volunteers who manned the CAMRA products & tombola stand. Early indications are that we have raised over £1000 for branch campaigning. I would also like to say a big **'Thank You'** to Colin Morris of Potton Brewery, who generously donated a 26 litre polypin of Village Bike bitter as a raffle prize. Well done to all the team involved

At the end of September we ran a cider stall at the Potton Apple Day. We were blessed with good weather on the day and visitors stayed longer. Branch cider rep Jo Freeman conducted a cider tasting session with some of the customers. They sampled Potton Press, Potton Apple Festival, Dunton, Eversheds, Gwatkins, Cam Valley and Stotfold Mill. In the end they voted for Dunton Cider as their favourite tippie. As a result we just about sold out of all the cider and perry during the afternoon session, making a profit of £275 which goes towards branch campaigning funds.

Local campaigning in pubs continues to pay dividends as we push on with LocALe and Cider promotions. The Cock Inn at Broom and the Thornton Arms at Everton have introduced 'real cider' in recent months. We hope these offerings will become a permanent fixture, so we can invite both pubs to join our 'cider scheme' and be listed as regular sellers of real cider. Also the Thornton Arms which has four changing ales, seems to have one handpump dedicated to a Wells & Young beer. If this is a regular feature, then the pub could also qualify to join our LocALe scheme. We aim to talk to both pubs in the near future to pursue these options.



[Bedford Tombola Stand]



[Christmas Social]



[All Beds London Social]

On Saturday 16th November, members from North, South & East Beds gathered in the Islington area of London for a social and walk around some fantastic pubs. It was organised by Malcolm Lloyd who put together a great list of ten pubs including the wonderful Wenlock Arms, plus two pubs featuring 'craft ales' for members to sample. Well Done Malcolm.

On Friday 6th December, East Beds held their Xmas Social at the Engineers Arms in Henlow. Thirty branch members drank their way through the ale board resulting in many beers selling out and being replaced. No doubt the ales washed down the wonderful food laid on by landlord Kevin Machin, as we enjoyed Chicken Curry, a spicy Chilli and a five bean veggie special. To finish the evening we held a raffle where I paraded the prizes in front of enthusiastic members whose *'oohs and aahs'* reminded me of the audiences on 'Sale of the Century' or 'Bullseye'.

LOCAL PUB & BREWERY NEWS

Chequers, Wrestlingworth

We have received mixed news about the **Chequers** in Wrestlingworth. Initially it was reported as closed in early November and then put *up for sale*. However, the closure was only for a few days, and a new manager John Scott arrived to run the pub. Whilst the longer term future is being sorted out, John has a four month period to consider taking on the tenancy himself.



He originally hails from Blantyre outside Glasgow and has a base in Swindon. There is traditional pub grub available and a quiz on the first Sunday of each month. Some Open Mic sessions and occasional live music, it is popular with the local Historical Society. On a recent visit he had Greene King - IPA and Hook Norton - Old Hooky on at the bar and was trying to get two more beer engines replaced so he can extend the range of ales - good news.

The threat of closure seems to have rallied some of the local villagers, who are now out in force to use the pub more often. We believe the asking price for the pub has been reduced to £250,000.

Crown, Stotfold

The tenant at the Crown has confirmed that an offer by a local developer to buy the property has been accepted by Greene King. At the time we went to press, there was no agreed date to swap contracts, but it seems likely that the pub will close down, probably by the end of January 2014.



Elsewhere in Stotfold, it was reported that the **Fox & Duck** had been sold, but the new owner has not yet decided on the future of the site. Is it now in the hands of a property developer? - only time will tell.

At the **Stag** current tenant 'Chad' will be leaving at the end of February and it is not known if owners Punch Taverns will appoint managers or a new tenant.

An advert was seen in the Morning Advertiser during November valuing the **Pig & Whistle** at £425,000. We have no further news at this point, but Greene King seem intent on selling off many pubs in the East Beds region.

Gardeners Arms, Biggleswade

This pub had been advertised 'for sale' for several months last year, but it has been taken off the market. Back in March 2013 Chris and Jan Clark came in as temporary managers, then later took on the lease on 1st May for a year. The couple have over 20 years experience in the trade.



The current opening hours are Mon-Thur 2-11pm, Fri-Sat 12-midnight and Sun 12-10.30pm and the regular ale is GK IPA at £2.80. Outside there is a large garden with kids play equipment and games, plus a separate area for dogs. Inside there are pool, cribbage and darts teams, plus an electronic golf game. Also music is popular with live bands on most Saturday nights, plus 'jam sessions' every other Thursday evening. To find out what events are coming to the pub, ring 01767 315126.

John O'Gaunt, Sutton

We have been told that a new team are taking over the **John O'Gaunt** in early January. We believe the pub has been sold to Jago Hurt and Jane Hasler, who were running the Hare & Hounds in Old Warden. We hope to have further information in the next edition.

Chequers, Stotfold

A new tenant arrived at the **Chequers** in the first week of December 2013. Rob Tarran has taken a 6 year lease on the business and moved up from Pinner in North London. A number of changes will take place over the next few months inside and outside the pub. You can expect to see the bars being restored to wooden surfaces as part of a delicate refurbishment aimed at complementing the history and architecture of this old inn.

A new Chef with a 4 star reputation has taken over the kitchen, with a view to producing good quality rustic pub meals. Apart from a few regular favourites, the menus will change weekly. They will offer seasonal meals using locally sourced ingredients and include vegetarian options. OAPs can still get a discount from a set menu with 2 courses for £10.50.

The former public bar, now known as the 'Mill Bar' will receive a modest makeover, with new comfy sofas and seats, a small TV screen and darts will continue. At the bar, regular ales will be GK IPA, Abbott and St Edmunds Ale may also feature. As the beer trade increases, Rob hopes to add two more handpumps for guest ales. The pub is now open all day, every day from 12-11pm during the week and 12-midnight on weekends. Food is served on weekdays 12-3 & 6-9, Sat 12-9 and Sun 12-5 including a Sunday roast.

Next summer the pub aims to run events in a marquee, a possible beer festival and perhaps a discount for CAMRA members. Check the new website for further details.

www.thechequersstotfold.co.uk

More Biggleswade News

Mervyn and Kerry at the **Pembroke Arms** also run the **Coach & Horses**. It was thought that they had decided not to renew their tenancy at the Coach & Horses, when the pub closed for a short period after Greene King had asked the sitting tenants to invest in a major refurbishment. Eventually a new deal was negotiated and the pub has re-opened.

On the corner of Shortmead Street and the High Street, the **White Horse** has been closed for many months. One report suggested that a sale had been agreed and that the new owner was going to use it as a private house, but we have not been able to confirm the situation..

A little further along the High Street, the **Crown Hotel** remains closed and it is unclear if a sale has been agreed. It was rumoured that a London based company wanted to relocate and convert the pub to offices, but owners Greene King have declined to comment. JD Wetherspoons may also be checking out the property.

Potton Brewery News

“Potton Brewery has changed hands and has temporarily stopped production. The new owners, **Bedfordshire Breweries**, are carrying out a major clean-up throughout the brewing equipment and the premises. This is scheduled for completion in the second week of December. Trial brewing is expected to begin on the 16th December. Production proper will commence soon afterwards. The range of beers is not yet decided, but is expected to include some of the former Potton Brewery favourites plus other new brews. Further details can be obtained from the brewery on 01767 261042.”

This statement was the position as of the first week of December 2013, since then I can confirm that trial brewing did start during the second week of December.

Green Man, Stanford

Back in the summer of 2013 long term owner Trevor Morgan sold the Green Man to Paul Simmons. The current manager is Mark Aston, he has a lot of experience having worked in the past for Tap & Spile and Local Heroes pub chains and he is enthusiastic about Real Ale.

Two Wells & Youngs beers are regular features, plus a guest ale which recently had been Theakston's Lightfoot and later Caledonian's Flying Scotsman. Food is now served all day, every day with emphasis on wood fired ovens and charcoal grills for delicious pizzas & steaks.

Mark aims to make the quality of service and food as consistent as possible. Behind the scenes, the premises will undergo a gradual refurbishment over the next 6-12 months. It is a pub to watch for the future.

Late News

The **Tudor Oaks**, at Astwick has been sold and Eric Welek left on Wed 5th December after 25 years in charge. The **White Horse**, Broom is for sale at £350k and there is a 'sold' sign on the old **Boot** in Langford.

THE POTTON BREWERY



COMPANY

Under New
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See page 6
for more details



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National Campaign News

Whilst East Beds CAMRA members are busy campaigning at local level, It is time to update our readers on events happening at national level across the whole of the UK.

Whatpub & National Beer Scoring System

In September 2013 CAMRA launched **WhatPub** a new national pub website and online guide. It features a staggering **36,000** real ale outlets, mainly pubs, but also hotels and clubs and it is still growing. Whatpub also includes many pubs that have been closed, to help provide industry statistics and also act as a source for historical research. Plus there are an extra **10,000** outlets which don't currently sell real ale but they can be the future targets for CAMRA to campaign in, to get real ale re-introduced. There is also a feedback form which members can fill in to inform us of any change to pub data.

During the spring/summer 2013 branch chairman John Goodlet surveyed over 60 pubs in urban areas of Bedfordshire to help the county reach our targets for the WhatPub launch. Surprisingly he found that some pubs that did not currently sell real ale, wanted to, but they were hindered by their Brewery or PubCo rep. Many licensees believed they had enough interest from customers to keep at least one hand-pump on all the time, but the pub's owners were denying them access to real ale by saying that it was "too expensive" to install hand-pumps. What rot! Real Ale is one of the fastest growing sectors of the drinks industry, in 2012 it rose 6.8% higher than the rest of the beer market. John encourages members to campaign in these pubs and help the licensees get real ale back on. Try writing a letter to the Brewery or Pub Company and insist that there is enough demand to support the re-introduction of hand-pumps for real ale.

One of the features of WhatPub is the **National Beer Scoring System** (NBSS) this allows members to contribute scoring on beer and cider quality all year round. CAMRA members can sign in to WhatPub (<http://whatpub.com>) using their membership number and the same password they use to access the CAMRA national website. Search for the pub and enter a score for each beer that you drank in the **Submit Beer Scores** panel on the right of the screen. The point scoring is as follows:

0-No Real Ale	1-Poor	2-Average
3-Good	4-Very Good	5-Perfect

[some may also use half points]

WhatPub is being enhanced for use by Smart Phones and later by downloadable apps. The local branches can benefit from this data, by collating the scores and number of visits and using it to assist them in shortlisting pubs to be surveyed as part of the selection process for producing the Good Beer Guide.

Asset of Community Value

During these difficult years of the recession, it was inevitable that thousands of pubs would close and the current rate of closures has now escalated to 26 pubs per week. One of the most frustrating practices that has arisen during this period, is the sale of pubs to property developers or under the table deals e.g. Tesco Express. Many deals seem to bypass the planning laws entirely or at least jump through the many loopholes in the process. CAMRA are now lobbying the government to tighten up the planning process and close these loopholes, calling for a consistent approach to be adopted right across England. But there is one way that pub customers can get involved.

Under the 2011 Localism Act people living in England can nominate a pub to be listed as an Asset of Community Value. If your local pub is put up for sale or under threat of closure, getting it listed gives communities the power to stop the clock and prevent back door deals. It generally provides a six month window to explore other options to save the pub. This includes finding a suitable buyer who wants to continue operating it as a pub or even for local customers to organise themselves under the Community Right to Bid option. CAMRA has set an initial target of getting 300 listed by the end of 2013 and by late December 2013 we had reached 260 pubs listed. Visit your local council website to see how communities can protect their local pub.

Fair Deal & PubCo Reform

CAMRA is lobbying the government with an Early Day Motion supporting the Fair Deal for Your Local campaign. By mid November 2013, 200 MPs had signed up for the motion, which calls for a statutory code of practice and a market rent only option to tied landlords of PubCos, freeing up their right to buy beer. New regulation is needed to protect licensees from unfair rent increases, which penalise the success of pub staff. They can opt to stay tied to the Pub Company but the motion guarantees a Guest Beer option. The last 9 years of self-regulation have failed and around 50% of UK pubs are owned by Pub Companies who borrowed heavily to create large pub estates, but are now in severe debt. Although they lease pubs out to tenants to run as their own businesses, their contracts insist on tenants buying their beer from a restricted supplier list and they generally pay up to 50% more than freehouses. A recent survey of 850 tied licensees, found that 57% earn less than £10,000 per year. A government estimate suggests that tied pubs could be £4000 better off annually under the new scheme.

Lindsey and the team Welcome you to the

Sir William Peel P. H.



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DIARY DATES

- JAN.** 21st, Special GBG Selection Meeting, Rising Sun, Potton, 8 pm
- FEB.** 8th, Branch Social, March Hare beer festival, Dunton, 1 pm
25th, Branch Meeting, Queen's Head, Sandy, 8 pm
- MAR.** 1st, Branch Social, Engineers Arms cider festival, Henlow, 1 pm
14th, Branch Social, St Neots beer festival, 1 pm
- APR.** 8th, Branch Meeting, Green Man, Stanford, 8 pm
25th, Branch Social, Sir William Peel beer festival, Sandy, 1 pm
- MAY.** 13th, Branch AGM, Engineers Arms, Henlow, 8 pm
- JUNE.** 17th, Branch Meeting, Chequers, Wrestlingworth, 8 pm

BEER FESTIVALS

- Feb.** 7th-9th. 2nd Winter Beer Festival, March Hare, Dunton
20th-22nd. 31st Luton Beer & Cider Festival, Hightown Sports & Arts Centre, Concorde Street, Luton **CAMRA**
27th-2nd. 4th Henlow Cider & Country Wine Festival, Engineers Arms, High Street, Henlow
- Mar.** 13th-15th. The 39th Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival, Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St. Neots **CAMRA**
- Apr.** 24th-27th. The 6th Sir William Peel Beer Festival, High Street, Sandy
24th-27th. The Half Moon Beer Festival, Queen Street, Hitchin
- May.** 1st-5th. The 12th Potton Beer Festival, Rising Sun, Potton



St Neots Beer & Cider Festival, Priory Centre, St Neots
Thursday 13th - Saturday 15th March 2014
60+ real ales, plus real cider and perry and bottled beer

Opening Times

Thursday 5pm-11pm

Friday All day; 12 noon-11pm

Saturday All day; 12 noon-10pm

Entry

£1 5-7pm; £2 >7pm

£1 12-7pm; £3 >7pm

£1 all day

Families welcome until 8pm

Free entry to CAMRA Members at all sessions

Casket Cryptic Crossword

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

Across

- 5 We hear you spin paddle for a row. (6)
- 7 Getting on well? (8)
- 9 Get the impression the prodigal one returns to roaring fires. (8)
- 10 Endless pub in Russian region is the place to go. (6)
- 11 Too much work for man or beast when he's smashed. (6,6)
- 13 Local member is activated for national centre (6)
- 15 A result of a bad strain, they sometimes have trouble running. (6)
- 18 Leicestershire tippie could be abbot enticer. (6,6)
- 21 Soldier with gun pointed at alien makes a deathly stand. (6)
- 22 Moor is behind the scenes. (8)
- 23 Heli disc dances. (8)
- 24 Slippery ones in a tangle over silver for some-times golden ones. (6)

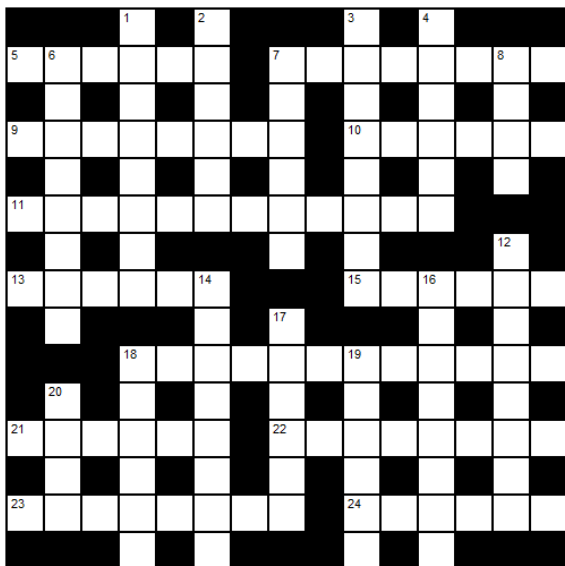
Down

- 1 Sticky vessel for perfect unknown drug. (8)
- 2 Place said to be the pivotal joint for fantastic creature. (6)
- 3 She puts it about that celestial gatekeeper loses the point and gets in a muddle over indecision. (8)
- 4 Sweet and mellow but in a fury it changes. (6)
- 6 Old time swinger to finish classily in deep purple. (8)
- 7 Deploy in silent public building, a good one in thirteen? (6)
- 8 In so fine a tippie nothing should be added. (4)
- 12 Half of duo to secretly find new partner, the beast! (8)
- 14 A deep tin changes a small range of water levels. (4,4)
- 16 Geo is the way to find the other side of me. (5,3)
- 17 Beer Nuts? (6)

- 18 King guitarist in his singular musical arrangement, found in pop. (6)
- 19 It's the last thing you can kick. (6)
- 20 Six points for a plant. (4)

Compiled by Chris Freeman

The solution is on Page 26



No Evil on My Hallowe'en

The 31st October 2013 seemed like any other day when you're enjoying your retirement from gainful employment – quiet and peaceful. Either Carol or I had probably got up a couple of times during the night to let one or both of our cats in or out, but there was no sign of ghosts, ghoulies or spirits abroad as there might be later in the day.

I checked my e-mails when I eventually surfaced then had a quick look at the St Sixtus Abbey website to see when they were taking calls for their beers. I was quite surprised to see that the lines were open that afternoon as there hadn't been any indication that they would be earlier in the week.

I half-heartedly made a couple of calls after the allotted hour and on the third attempt was quite amazed to get through – to be honest I thought I must have misdialled.

“Hello, spreek uw Engels?” rolled from my mouth as though I'd been born to the Flemish dialect.

“Yes, if you speak slowly,” was the accented response.

“Is that St Sixtus Abbey?”

“Yes.”

“It's my lucky day. Can I order a couple of crates of '12?”

“Of course. Is Tuesday next week your lucky day?”

“Yes if you want it to be.”

“Can I have your car registration and I'll see you for collection at around 3.00 pm?”

We hastily booked a crossing with Eurotunnel, I couldn't quite believe my luck as I'd been trying on and off to get a crate or two since retiring from work on 31st December 2009.

On the Monday before collection I thought it would be pertinent to check the price of the Holy liquid and was quite surprised to see how reasonable it still was at the Abbey. Two crates and forty eight bottles for €104 which included €24 refundable deposit. Purely from an inquisitive point of view I thought I'd have a look on E-bay to see what the going rate was for those daft enough to pay it - \$540 per crate **plus** shipping to the USofA!! My guess is that there wouldn't be any available if you tried to put in an order at any of the retailers purporting to sell it anyway. A UK site was advertising it at a very reasonable £12.08 per bottle – that is a 33cl bottle, not a Jeroboam or even a Magnum!

On 5th November we arrived at the 'In der Vrede' café across the road from the Abbey where lucky punters were able to buy an unprecedented twelve bottles - the most I've ever seen there for sale in the past was six bottles per person - for €40. I was tempted but Carol's common sense prevailed – if I was about to get twenty-four bottles for the same price as twelve what would be the point? She also felt that it would be greedy and not in keeping with the generous attitude of the monks who produce it. She was right, of course.

After a light but enjoyable meal from the café's limited menu and a bottle of beer or two we joined the queue of cars and waited for the prize to be loaded on the back seat as our boot happened to be full of crates of other Belgian bottle-fermented ales.

No photos are permitted in the collection area of the brewery, which is hardly surprising given the lengths and expense some people seem prepared to go to obtain it and the seemingly nonchalant attitude toward security of the site. Perhaps the inhabitants of Belgium are a little too respectful to steal from churches or anywhere remotely holy, a practice which seems to be coming more commonplace in the UK.



So Hallowe'en started with an unghostly surprise which manifested itself on Guy Fawkes Day with, for me, a happy event. The beer? Well it's resting at the moment and will keep and apparently improve for years.

Even so I'm sure the Trappist monks at Abdij St. Sixtus will raise a glass to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day so, although separated by a couple of hundred miles and religious belief, it would be churlish of Carol and I not to join them, wouldn't it?

Barry Price

Recommended Brewery Tours

Since Malcolm retired we seem to have been focusing rather a lot on beer. We have recently gone on two excellent brewery tours. Both breweries are booked up some time in advance but they are worth the wait.

Wychwood (Hobgoblin) Brewery in Witney.

The tour lasts for approximately 2 hours and includes visiting the Brakspear Double Drop System which is still in use. There is an excellent tasting session at the start of the tour with empty glasses regularly filled which makes negotiating the stairs very interesting.

Wadworth Brewery in Devizes.

A traditional family brewery. The tour lasts for 2 hours and includes visiting the cooperage, the signwriting workshop and the stables where you can stroke the shire horses. The signs are painted by hand with gold leaf still being used on the lettering. A fascinating and extremely interesting brewery. The tour ends in the bar with a tasting session of generous proportions.



Christine Lloyd

Ye Olde Trip to Nottingham

On one of the hottest days of the summer a small band of Merry Men and Women caught the bus to Bedford Station and then the train to Nottingham where we followed our very own Robin Hood, aka Malcolm Lloyd, as he led us to some amazing venues.

A very short walk from Nottingham Station is the **VAT & Fiddle** at 12 Queen's Bridge Road. The building is a 1930's rebuild of a Victorian local and is the home of the Castle Rock Brewery. An excellent pub serving the complete range of Castle Rock Beers. I particularly liked the Richard Beckinsale, which was Castle Rock Brewery's 12th ale in a series celebrating famous sons and daughters of the city and county. Black Gold and Elsie Mo were also superb.



Very reluctantly we moved on to the **Canal House** at 48-52 Canal Street. Well what a surprise. The pub has been converted from an old Waterways Warehouse and the Canal actually runs inside the pub where there are Narrow Boats moored. Castle Rock Harvest Pale, guest beers, and 120 bottled world beers were available.

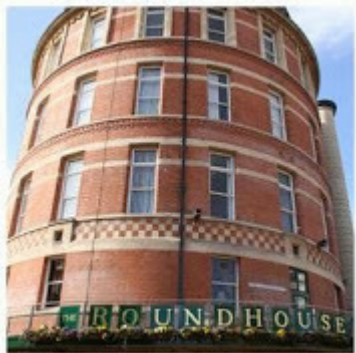


On to **Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem** on Castle Road. This is built into the walls of Nottingham Castle and purports to be the oldest pub in England dating from 1189. An amazing building full of caves and cellars. Owned now by Greene King and serving Hardy & Hansons, Ye Olde Trip and a guest ale from a local brewery. Lynne sat under a lethal game built into the castle wall involving an iron spike on a chain – luckily nobody wished to play.

As we walked along to No. 77a Maid Marian Way in the city centre and into **Ye Olde Salutation Inn** we fell very quiet as we wondered why we had been led there. The building was very old dating from about 1240. The bar had 8 hand pumps including Westons Old Rosie Cider all of which were of good quality, but we felt slightly out of place – it's a rock and ale pub.



Robin Hood vanished and then very quickly reappeared with a man offering to be our guide!!! What a surprise. A door near the bar was unlocked and we were taken on a tour of caves and tunnels dating from Saxon times which are beneath the Inn. There is even a resident ghost (Rosie), and a “chimney” which can still carry smoke from the fire hearth deep in the caves out of the roof. At Hallowe’en the caves are opened for customers to sit and have a drink around the fire. A truly memorable tour and excellent beer.



By this time we felt that we had seen the best Nottingham had to offer. How wrong we were. Our next stop was **The Round House** in Royal Standard Place. A circular building built on the site where King Charles I had raised his standard at the start of the Civil War. At some point in its history, it had been a hospital wing. Now it is an amazing freehouse. Deep leather armchairs, 6 hand pumps including one brewed especially for them by the Dancing Duck Brewery. We didn't want to leave.

Our last stop was **The Malt Cross** at 16 St James's Street. It is a Grade II listed former Victorian Music Hall. A truly wonderful building where music hall concerts still take place. A wide variety of beers from local micro breweries are available together with foreign bottled beers and a good range of whiskeys. We sat in the gallery and waited for the show to begin. Sadly there was no performance that night and we had a train to catch.



We really didn't want to leave Nottingham. It truly was a brilliant day out and one of the best pub tours ever. All the beer was simply superb and we are already planning our next trip – perhaps for a weekend this time. Visit Nottingham and the surrounding area to try some of these pubs. Also keep an eye out for ‘micro pubs’, which resurrect the old traditional art of brewing beer to be sold in their own pub and nowhere else. During the hard times of a recession it pays to offer customers something unique.

Christine Lloyd

Bamberg Beer Tour

Bamberg is one of those places that will call you back. You don't have to be a beer geek or a student of Romanesque architecture to love the place, it somehow always shows you something new. Bamberg managed to escape the depredations of the Thirty Years' War, unlike many major towns at that time and more recently was left largely unscathed by the Second World War. It is a charming and ancient place which, governed by its Prince Bishops, was a semi-independent city state from the tenth century through to the nineteenth century. It has many wonderful buildings which you can look at between bars and a really quirky Rathaus perched precariously on an island in the middle of the river. It also has the distinction of being the most northerly town to have both a Holy Roman Emperor and a Pope buried in the city.



In spite of this, we did go for the beer and this time round we were fortunate enough to have as our guide a local, Klaus Vogt and his charming assistant, Nicola (from Halifax!!). Bamberg has 9 breweries within the city & a massive maltings which supplies breweries all over Germany.

We had been to most of the city breweries on previous visits so Klaus had organised a trip to visit some of the other 55 independent Franconian breweries within 10 miles of Bamberg. As an aside, when you visit Bamberg don't mention that it is in Bavaria, because the locals don't like the idea and insist it is in Franconia. Both are true but localism is alive and well in Germany and taken quite seriously.



On our first day we stayed in the town and visited old haunts including the Fässla Brauhaus which is our favourite place to stay on these trips. It's a friendly, relaxed sort of place where one always feels at home – the beer is excellent too – nothing fancy just really enjoyable. The next day Klaus picked us up after breakfast and off we went to our first stop, the Brauerei-Gasthof Trunk at Bad Staffelstein.

This is located by the extraordinary pilgrim church Basilica ofierzehnheiligen. I can't hope to describe this in a few words other than to say it is staggering in its proportions and decoration, totally OTT really, but a must-see if you're in the area. The Trunk pils and lager were fine, but the dark beer was lovely and is considered to be their forte. We then left for Wattendorf & the Dremel Brauerei.



It is not usually open so early in the day but Klaus went off to find the proprietor who appeared, opened the bar and was very hospitable. Unbeknown to us, Klaus had told him we were from a visiting choir and would sing a couple of songs for him! His beer was excellent, the highlight for me being the dark lager, which is brewed by a long family tradition and involves wood burning. Yes, we did sing him some songs but I think he twigged that we weren't part of a choir, not that it seemed to bother him too much.



On to the Brauerei Hartmann at Scheßlitz-Würgau, where the Hartmann family has owned the brewery and license since 1550 which makes it one of the oldest breweries in Franconia. The brewery boasts “the best aroma hops, barley domestic law and the crystal clear waters of the brewery's own source rock with a lot of love for specialty beers”. We were made very welcome with a table set for us where we had a delicious lunch.

Brauerei Göller, Drosendorf was our next stop. The Franconians are very proud of their brewing traditions and once they realise that you have come specially to try their particular offerings they are anxious to ensure you taste a good selection. In fact, in spite of there being a far greater density of breweries than in the UK, the range of beers is fairly limited, although there are subtle differences between the various pils, lagers and dunkel beers.



To my mind the sheer enthusiasm they have for their beer is somehow infectious and enhances the whole experience. They brew seasonal beers but these tend to be specials rather than session beers. This brewery is, like many of the smaller ones, has been run by the same family for many years. They produce a smoked beer but had none available for our visit. The pils was very pleasant. By this time we were starting to relax so treated them to an example of our stunning choral technique which went down reasonably well. Kevin gave a rendering of some of his socialist songs which had us all close to tears.

Then we called at the Brauerei Knoblach, Schammelsdorf. Here the speciality is the "Ungspundete lager". For you brewers - here is the brewery's description of this beer:

“A genuine Franconian specialty that is unique to the district of Bamberg. Its idiosyncratic name is because as it ripens it is not closed during the maturation of beer, so the resulting carbonic acid can escape. This produces a spicy-hearty and slightly malty taste with a strong hop flavour. Therefore, it has less head and is not as tangy, but is very easy on the stomach. The lager beer tastes best from the bulbous earthenware jug. The lager is a bottom-fermented, unfiltered beer with a 5.2% alcohol content.”



In Franconia wheat beer is produced by most of the small breweries. It can be bought draught or in bottles and is often a little cloudy in appearance. This Brauhaus is also a long established family business with the next generation already trained up to take over.

Our penultimate stop was at the Kaiser brewery on Grasmannsdorf founded in 1783. It produces many seasonal beers, but its speciality is Kaiser Pils which we all enjoyed, so much so that we decided to sing to them. That will teach them to be so hospitable!

Brauerei Zehendner on Burgebrach-Monchsambach was our last stop before returning to Bamberg. Being the seventh port of call, I, for one, am a little vague as to the details. All I remember is that the locals decided that the best way to stop us singing was to sing back at us, which they did and a good time was had by all.

David Young



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The Wonders of Wiltshire - Part One

First a little quiz.

What have the following in common:

William Henry Fox Talbot, discoverer and advocate of the three stage photographic process of developing, fixing & printing; Meryton, the fictional village in the 2005 production of *"Pride and Prejudice"*; the location in *"Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone"* in which Harry is chosen for the "quidditch" team; and the films and TV series (and mini series) *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*; *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*; *Larkrise to Candleford*; *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders*; *The Other Boleyn Girl*; *The Wolfman*; *Cranford*; *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*; *Emma*; *Robin of Sherwood*; *The Moonraker*; *The Grass is Greener*; *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* etc?

If your answer was "Never heard of 'em." or "They're all rubbish!" try these - The Carpenter's Arms, The George. The Red Lion, The Bell, The Sign of The Angel and an Abbey which has a brewery but doesn't produce beer?

They are all in, have been filmed in, or are associated with, the small unspoilt village of Lacock which has been owned in its entirety by the National Trust since 1944. It is just south of Chippenham in Wiltshire and where Carol and I visited in mid-July last year.

We booked to stay at the Red Lion and it turned out to be a rather handsome Wadworth pub/inn/hotel which had a range of beers but didn't spread any further the brewery's own offerings. In truth there wasn't a even a great selection of Wadworth brews which was a little surprising given the fact that the village was packed. Even so the first pint was a bit of a relief after travelling from Sandy on a Friday morning and being held up, not on the notorious M25, but on the A406 between Hatfield and St Albans. It was nose-to-tail traffic as the council or Highways Agency had coned off one lane of the carriageway for two miles to cut the grass on the central reservation.

Our room in the Red Lion on the first floor overlooked the High Street junction with East Street but it wasn't really an address which needed to be committed to memory as Lacock only has about five streets in the whole village. The view from the window took in the High Street, East Street and over the rooftops to the church dedicated to St Cyriac. The skies were full of summer migrants - house martins, swallows and swifts.



Our first excursion was to Lacock Abbey, a fairly imposing building close to the banks of the River Avon which, this far upstream, was fairly shallow as there were youngsters splashing about in it and sunning themselves on the bank. The Abbey itself was the home of William Henry Fox Talbot and is featured in many of the films listed above. It is built around a grassed quadrangle and is the location of the aforementioned non operational brewery.

After touring the Abbey we went back toward the village and visited the William Henry Fox Talbot Museum which is full of many interesting articles associated with the birth and development of photography.



A stroll down East Road was rewarding as the first building you come to on the left is the old Tithe Barn dating back to the Fourteenth Century. The massive doors were open so we wandered in and the interior seemed to be the local hang-out for the house martins who entered and exited via large vertical openings on the end of the building. At the farthest end of East Street from the Red Lion is Church Street which leads to St Cyriac's Church to the right and West Street to the left. The church has some fine stained glass windows.

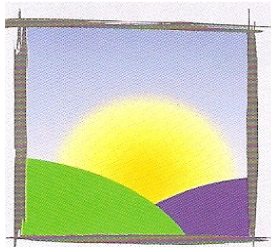
One of the first buildings you come to on the right as you walk down Church Street toward the Church is the Carpenter's Arms into which we did not venture as it was mid-afternoon and closed. It seems that we didn't really miss much judging by the comments on the Beer in the Evening (BitE) website.

We retreated and walked back up Church Street and turned left again up West Street and found the George – a hostelry which has served ale and victuals to travellers and locals since around 1361. It is another Wadworth pub but on the day we visited Titanic Iceberg was on alongside Wadworth Red White & Brew, Bishops Tipple, Henry's IPA, St George & the Dragon and the ubiquitous 6X. Both the Iceberg and Henry's IPA were fine on a nice warm summer afternoon.



We didn't really have a good look around the George as we were rather transfixed by the “Turnspit” in the bar. It is a bit like a giant hamster's wheel in which specially bred dogs were used to keep the meat-spit turning on the huge open fire which was located on the other side of the Turnspit's back wall. Hot, dreary and thirsty work for the poor little pooches pressed into the machine's service and I can't begin to imagine how they were motivated to keep walking that treadmill.

Barry Price



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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
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Knaresborough and Harrogate Trip

This is an area I had very little knowledge of, so I decided to spend a couple of days in October investigating the real ale pub scene with a friend who knew the area very well.

I caught the local train to Peterborough and visited the **Drapers Arms**, a must when changing trains and allowing time for refreshment. I tried Wooden Hand Brewery's Cornish Mutiny 4.8%, a basic bitter that had an unusual woody aftertaste before I headed north on East Coast to Leeds. (A surprise to me as I thought I was going via York and The York Tap on the station). Outside Leeds station is **Leeds Brewery Tap** which of course is another pub for refreshment. This is a converted shop offering a fine range of their own beers as well as many guest ales. This time I had Joshua Jane 3.7% and Leeds Best 4.3% both fine bitters. Also I had Wharf Bank Celtic Glory a very pleasant basic stout at 4.5%. It was good to find barmen who knew how to pour beer properly with the sparkler off.

Now I was off to Knaresborough an old and historic market town, spa town and civil parish in the Borough of Harrogate. Historically part of the West Riding of Yorkshire, located on the River Nidd, 4 miles east from the centre of Harrogate. The main centre is up a steep hill from the railway station. My stay was at **The George & Dragon** at 9 Briggate where I had Daleside Blonde 3.9%. The landlord was reluctant to take the sparkler off and when I insisted, as I do not want the condition knocked out of the beer, he placed the swan neck at the base of the glass and poured hard soaking himself and customers around the bar. Welcome to the north! Not a lot to say about this pub, a good place to stay but not a pub I would wish to visit again for atmosphere.

Now the important part of my visit here and the first pub was the **Cross Keys** at 17 Cheapside which had eight hand-pumps, 4 were regular beers from Ossett, plus 4 guest ales. It has a stone floor around the bar and wooden floors to the sides. This is a superb pub with a good town pub atmosphere. I had Ossett Big Red 4% and Daleside Monkey Wrench 5.3%, both very enjoyable and in lovely condition.



My next pub was **The Mitre**, which was opposite the railway station. This pub has a split level lounge with a brasserie/restaurant where we had a delicious meal. Blue Monkey's 99 Red Baboons and Ilkley's Mary Jane 3.5% were both superb but Okells MPA 3.6% was too hoppy for my taste. Six other beers were available mainly from local microbreweries.



The last pub we visited was **Blind Jacks** at 19 Market Place named after John Metcalf (1717–1810), aka Blind Jack of Knaresborough or Blind Jack Metcalf, the first professional road builder to emerge during the Industrial Revolution. Blind from the age of six, John had an eventful life. In the period 1765 to 1792 he built about 180 miles (290 km) of turnpike road, mainly in the north of England. This is a multi bar local pub on 2 floors. I sampled Highwire Rock 5.5% which was very enjoyable and 6 other beers were available all from local microbreweries.

This concluded my visit to Knaresborough so as Michael Portillo would say, I found my room for the night and after a hearty breakfast, headed for Harrogate. The first pub was **The Winter Gardens** run by Wetherspoons, located in the Royal Baths on Parliament Street. This is an old dance hall and the interior is beyond imagination [see photo on the right]. There were 15 handpumps available although the beer I tried was rather on the cold side.



The next pub was **Hales Bar at 1 Crescent Road** where I received the third degree when the barmaid refused to take the sparkler off. After my response about sparklers put in my usual diplomatic way, she eventually removed it. This building dates from 1827 and was an old coaching inn. Six beers were available but I didn't note what I sampled, it must have been OK.

On to Royal Parade and the **Old Bell Tavern**, there was no problem with removing sparklers here, in fact the barman was not impressed with the attitude I had received in the last pub. Opened in 1999 it expanded into the former Farrah's toffee shop and it has plenty of the old shop memorabilia on show. The pub takes its name from an early 17th century alehouse that stood on this site. It later became a coaching inn, a stage on the York to Harrogate run until it closed in 1815. Ten beers were available not all from microbreweries, but still all local. There were far too many golden ales for my liking, but I had Theakstons Infallable 4.2% which was in perfect condition.

The next pub was **The Fat Badger** which is at one end of the White Hart Hotel on Cold Bath Road. It is open plan and has superb chandelier lighting. Timothy Taylor had 3 beers of the 7 available and the others were from local breweries. The staff were very friendly and I had Timothy Taylors Ram Tam 4.3% again in good condition.



The last pub was the **Coach and Horses** at 6 West Park which was a lovely backstreet boozer with character [see photo on the left]. Six beers were available again from local breweries and I had Barnegates Ted 3.8% which again was very enjoyable.

So to summarise a visit to 8 pubs produced 64 mainly local beers in very good surroundings and with the exception of one, very helpful friendly staff. I look forward to a return here. What a pity that except for the Engineers Arms, we seem to be stuck with the same old breweries and beers in this area.

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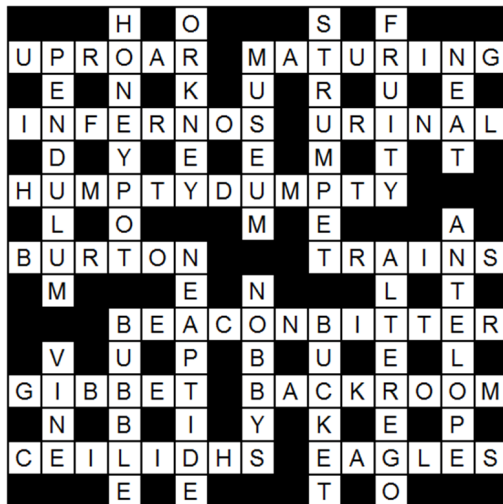
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