



the

Casket

Campaign for Real Ale

FREE

September 2014



EAST BEDFORDSHIRE

www.eastbedscamra.org.uk

casket@eastbedscamra.org.uk



The Admiral - One of 4 new free houses, page 4 & 5

WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE

- | | | | |
|---------|--------------------------------|---------|--|
| Page 4 | Local Pub & Brewery News | Page 12 | Tour de Bedfordshire Est Stage Four |
| Page 7 | A Trip to Leicester | Page 14 | Norwich City of Ale 2014 |
| Page 8 | Houses that used to be boozers | Page 16 | And now for something completely different |
| Page 10 | Diary Dates, Beer Festival | Page 20 | Pub Trips outside the branch |
| Page 11 | Unfair Beer Duty | | |

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

Issue number 3

Volume 10

2014

EAST BEDS COMMITTEE 2014/15

Chairman: John Goodlet

chairman@eastbedscamra.org.uk

Vice Chairman: Vacant

vicechairman@eastbedscamra.org.uk

Secretary: Barry Price

secretary@eastbedscamra.org.uk.

Treasurer: Chris Foskett

treasurer@eastbedscamra.org.uk

Social Secretary: Vacant

socialsecretary@eastbedscamra.org.uk

Cider Rep: Jo Freeman

cider@eastbedscamra.org.uk

Membership Secretary: Geoff Tilbury

membership@eastbedscamra.org.uk

Webmaster: Chris Freeman

webmaster@eastbedscamra.org.uk

Potton Brewery Liaison: Dave Young

breweries@eastbedscamra.org.uk

Pubs Preservation Officer: Les Ivall

pubs@eastbedscamra.org.uk

Casket Contact:

casket@eastbedscamra.org.uk

Branch Web Site:

www.eastbedscamra.org.uk

The Casket

Published and Produced by:
CAMRA East Bedfordshire

Editor: John Goodlet

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.

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

Advertising Rates

1/4 page: £15

1/2 page: £30

1/1 page: £50

Three adverts paid for in advance will get a
15% discount

Payment to East Beds CAMRA

Trading Standards

If you have any complaints about short measure, lack of price lists or misleading promotion of products, contact:

Bedfordshire Trading Standards,
23 Gadsby Street,
Bedford, MK30 3HP
Tel: 01234 228897



A quick word from the Editor

It seems that Greene King are finally releasing some of our local pubs. Some have been sold as freehouses and others to smaller pub companies. But GK are still behaving badly. The sale of one nearby pub had been agreed, but it would take 6 weeks to complete the contracts and hand over the property. Meanwhile the holding company's manager left and the new owner offered to help them by managing the pub for a short period, to avoid a temporary closure. GK then raided the pub shortly before the final handover date and fined the holding company for buying beer outside the tie, even though GK ales were still being purchased during this period. What was the point of that?

The deal where Greene King sold 275 pubs to Hawthorn Leisure has a contractual tie, all pubs must still buy GK ales for a further 3 years. This sounds just like the tactics used by Whitbread in the 1990s to avoid the maximum cap on number of pubs a chain can own as part of the Monopolies Commission review. Then, the government failed entirely to control the market as Whitbread spawned new companies and transferred thousands of pubs with tied contracts due to loopholes left by inadequate legislation. Greene King are trying to avoid the new cap coming into law with the Pub Co reform and 'surprise surprise' the Hawthorn Chief Exec is an ex Enterprise Inns managing director. Déjà vu yet again! Why can't the government stop these restrictive business practices that inhibit free trade. Right now that my little rant is over, if you have some spare time, please come along and volunteer at the Bedford Beer Festival or Potton Apple Day.

John Goodlet

37th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

Wednesday 8th to Saturday 11th October 2014
Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SL

Open 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 required

Entertainers:

Wed: Ouse Valley Singles Club

Sat lunch: Bedford Morris Men

Sat eve: Fishwife's Broadside



Souvenir glass £2.50 sale or return

Hot and cold food all sessions

Free soft drinks

Tombola, clothing, gifts and books

Engraver

Short street pass-outs

Wheelchair access all floors

More than 100 real ales + 40 ciders and perries
Wide range of draught and bottled foreign beers

 Find us on
Facebook

www.northbedscamra.org.uk



LOCAL PUB & BREWERY NEWS

Chequers, Wrestlingworth

On June 27th, Greene King agreed to sell the **Chequers** to Dave Moore as a free-house. Dave, his wife Carin and children Hayley, Leah and Joe took possession on August 13th and so far the pub appears to be doing well. The pub is now free of the tie but Greene King ales may still appear. A second handpump will feature a regular Buntingford ale, plus one or two guests will have beers such as Sharp's Doom Bar and Adnams Bitter.



The opening hours are Mon-Wed 12-3 & 5-11, Thu-Sat 12-11 and Sun 12-10.30. Food is available including the popular 'pies' from Mon-Fri 12-2.30 & 6-9pm, Sat 12-9, Sun 12-4.30pm. Please note the pub does not open on Monday lunchtime.

The petanque team is already competing in the Cambridgeshire league and the arrival of a dartboard is imminent. Bridge is played on a Thursday evening and the Ramblers set off regularly from the pub and return later for their lunch. It is good news to see another village pub being well supported and we wish Dave, Carin and family all the best for the future.

Kings Arms, Sandy

Another two East Beds pubs have been sold by Greene King, this time to Olly Reynolds, who also owns the White Horse at Eaton Socon, The Vine at Buckden and the Rose & Crown at Somersham. He has purchased the **Kings Arms** in Sandy and **White Horse** at Broom to run as freehouses. This is excellent news and the focus has been on refurbishing the **Kings Arms**, which was probably no mean feat, as this fine old coaching inn had been neglected under Greene King's tenure. It re-opened on the August bank holiday weekend. At present there is only GK IPA and London Pride on offer, but they hope to expand the range as trade picks up. The big bonus is a new concession of 30 pence off each pint if you can confirm you are a CAMRA member. Work continues on fitting out a new kitchen and food should be available from mid September. The pub is currently open from 11.30am to 11.30pm every day.

Admiral, Clifton

In the May edition of the Casket, we reported that **The Admiral** was in the process of being sold to a local builder. That deal fell through, but another buyer came forward and purchased the pub from Greene King in June. He is the current owner of the Club 85 music venue & club in Hitchin.



He is currently overseeing the Admiral until a family friend can take on the permanent tenancy in September. The pub has had a new coat of paint on the outside and the main bar area has been stripped back and tidied up. As well as the regular GK IPA, there are now 3 more handpumps. You can expect to find some national beers initially such as London Pride & Doom Bar, although a Potton ale was on recently. A refurbishment project is planned for the autumn, so we will feature the Admiral in more detail in the January 2015 edition.

Pig & Whistle, Crown, Stotfold

In late April, Greene King sold the **Pig & Whistle** to a pub company, which we thought was called Wishing Well, but that appears to be the name of a previous chain sold off by the new owner Terry O'Sullivan. His current pub company is called **Just Pubs Limited**. Sadly the first act of the new owner was to put in a planning application on the 10th May to demolish the pub and build 7 new houses. However the application was *refused*. So it is back to square one with the pub still open under temporary management.

Just Pubs also bought another Greene King pub **The Crown** on 20th May. Although the current manager Keith has been retained, local knowledge suggests that a planning application to develop part of the garden for new housing was also *refused*. Meanwhile the pub continues to operate and trade is improving. Further planning applications are expected.



Greene King sells to Hawthorn

Two East beds pubs were sold in June by Greene King as part of a larger transfer of 275 pubs to Hawthorn Leisure. The **Gardeners Arms** & the **Wheatsheaf** in Biggleswade are the pubs concerned. There is little change at the Gardeners Arms, with Chris & Jan Clark retained as tenants. However at the Wheatsheaf, tenant Rob Stimson was less than amused to hear about the sale from a phone call from someone 'he had never heard of' at Greene King. He said it was all handled very impersonally and no word of thanks for his 25 years award winning service. To make matters worse, the deal for all the pubs includes a '**contractual tie**' whereby Hawthorn Leisure must buy Greene King ales for a further 3 years. However, they do seem to be developing a 'guest ale' list, which is a positive sign.

Other News

A second handpump has now been installed in the **True Briton, Arlesey** and will feature an Adnams ale, while the other will have a guest ale. But, it is possible that the pub may be put up for sale soon. The new micropub planned for Lower Stondon ran into some difficulties agreeing the tenancy during the summertime, But it is sorted now and with refurbishment in progress, the couple are hoping to open the **Old Transporter Ale House** in September.

It appears that the **Red Lion, Potton** has finally been sold by Punch Taverns. The pub changed hands over the August bank holiday weekend, we should have more details on this sale in the next issue.

Finally, the former **Crown Hotel**, High Street, Biggleswade remains boarded and there is now further speculation about its future. Although Greene King have refused to comment, we confirmed that Wetherspoons had bought the building and that they were listed as the licence holders. However, a '*for sale*' sign is back up on the building, so has the pub chain run into planning constraints and decided to sell it on - who knows?

The merry-go-round of pub sales goes on unabated and nationally there are now 32 pubs closing every week. Where will it all end? **Use them or lose them!**

Potton Brewery News

Beer production is proceeding well to meet greater demand from a wider client base. Some personnel changes have been made but, nevertheless, production has increased to 20 barrels a week (80 firkins). Renovation and maintenance works are ongoing and will be for some time to meet the standards required by the current owners.

Following the successful sales drive to increase Potton outlets in the Peterborough area, a big effort to increase outlets in Hertfordshire is being spearheaded by John Facer. This is initially targeting the Welwyn and Hatfield areas.

Best sellers continue to be old favourites Village Bike and Shannon IPA, but the newer additions to the range reported in the last Casket, American Mistress and Buck Off, have been well received at a number of outlets.

Beer is being offered by the brewery in a range of polypin sizes from 3 to 20 litres. Interested parties should phone the brewery to check what beers are available at any particular time. For this and other current news, phone the brewery on 01727 682258.

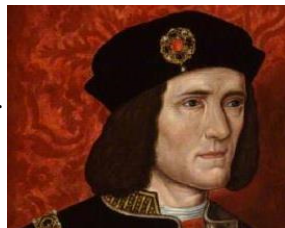
Trip to Leicester

Leicester is only a short train journey from Bedford and with 13 pubs listed in the GBG (Good Beer Guide), it was decided that we should spend a day there. The 10:06 train from Bedford arrived in Leicester just in time for the opening of The Parcel Yard bar, next to the station. We did have to wait a few minutes until the manager took pity on us. (Perhaps the sight of 7 people dying of thirst unnerved him). Originally the parcel offices of the station it now serves Steamin' Billy beers plus guests. We tried the 1485, Tipsy Fisherman and Bitter, plus a Bateman ale, all were superb.



Next stop was the Ale Wagon at 27 Rutland Street, the only pub run by Hoskins Brothers Ales. The interior is from the 1930s albeit with a lovely Victorian ceiling and the landlord is the grandson of one of the original owners of former Hoskins Brewery. There are pictures of the old brewery on the walls. Hoskins Green & Gold 4.5% and an IPA were good quality session ales, plus a draught cider was available.

The Globe, 43 Silver Street is an Everards pub where we had lunch and a very good pint of Tiger. On route to the next pub we passed a car park made famous by TV programmes showing the excavation and recovery of the skeleton of Richard III. We went around the Richard III exhibition and also visited the wonderful mediaeval cathedral & Guildhall. Well worth the detour & very interesting.



All this culture had made us very thirsty so we moved swiftly on to The Criterion. At 44 Millstone Lane An uninspiring looking pub (inside and out) but with a wide variety of beers available including some micro breweries. A choice of Oakham ales included Mompesson's Gold and Scarlet Macaw; one from Wentworth & we tried Inclined Plane (Langton Brewery).

A short way along New Walk (200 years old), an amazing pedestrianised avenue of well preserved Georgian houses, brought us to The Kings Head. A wonderful pub serving Black Country Ales, guests and draught cider. Pig in the Hole Dark Mild (Black Country) was my favourite I also enjoyed Duck Dastardly (Green Duck). Beers from Magpie and Dartmoor were also excellent. The Hairy Ferret Cider was voted a hit by our cider expert. This is a wonderful pub and worth going to Leicester just to spend all day here. Try it, you won't be disappointed.

Houses that Used to be Boozers

On May 1st my wife Carol; my East Beds CAMRA mate Ian; Bob, a Union mate from Luton and myself visited the epitome of Middle Class England, Harpenden, to see John Cooper Clarke and hear his recitation of such unforgettable poems as 'Twat', 'Beasley Street', 'Evidently Chicken Town', 'Readers Wives' and others from his repertoire of various odes which are generally unsuitable for minors, anybody of a right-wing political persuasion or those of a nervous disposition.

Opening for the estimable Mr Cooper Clarke was another very good poet, satirist, observer of the human condition with its many frailties and comedian Luke Wright.

I must confess I'd never heard of Luke Wright as I tend not to spend much of my time in dank cellars listening to the turgid dirges of poetic philosophers. Luckily, neither does Luke who is usually to be found out on the road dispensing his acerbic wit to those lucky enough to catch him.

"What has all this to do with beer?" I hear my readers muttering into their pints.

Well Luke has written a very touching poem which sadly chronicles the passing of many of our wonderfully diverse pubs and he was very kind enough to give me permission to reproduce it in the Casket. It can be found in his collection *Mondeo Man*, published by "Penned in the Margins", which I would thoroughly recommend to any of you who tire of the increasingly anodyne media hype and celebrity hoop-la which surrounds us daily. The poem laments the fact that five of the ten pubs in his adopted home town of Bungay in Suffolk have been converted into upmarket homes but could apply equally anywhere.

Barry Price

Houses that Used to be Boozers

*This town has a stark share
of repossessed dark lairs,
of houses that used to be boozers.
Where once we were drinking
we're now slowly sinking
in sofas the colour of bruises.*

*Ex-sawdust saloons
are now minimalist rooms
where every night somebody chooses
to rest their behind
and half-silence their mind
in a slow death of sweaty-necked snoozes,
in a tap-drip of box sets and docs.*

*But these houses that used to be buzzing
they used to be busting and splitting and
spitting and ripe.
These places, they used to be tasteless,
they used to be graceless and legless and
feckless each night!*

*Down lop-sided streets
factory workers would meet
in these houses that used to be boozers.
They'd wash the week's slog
in the honey-dew grog
in their bawdy and dubious rouses.*

*Now ladies frizz hair
in the Glade Plug-in air
of these houses that used to be boozers.
So far from the funk
of the blood, sweat and spunk
when these houses were floozy-filled boozers.
When these houses were ringing with song.*

*And I long for the throng of the song when we thrived
in these dives with their ligging and frigging and
dirt.
These hell-holes where black-hearted arseholes
would pour souls, then sing and kick heads in till
everything hurt.*

*Farewell Rose & Crown
for The Ship has gone down,
and she's no more for rum-infused cruises.
The mad Horse & Dray
is not braying today
he's muzzled as McIntyre muses.*

*The clatter of pewter
now taps on computers
in houses that used to be boozers.
Hum-drum sobriety -
there's no society -
houses that used to be boozers.*

*In cordoned-off hush
we are turning to mush
in these houses that used to be boozers,
we're fingering phones
and we're drinking alone
in these houses that used to be boozers.*

Reproduced by kind permission of Luke Wright. Taken from 'Mondeo Man' published by Penned In the Margins (2013)



Lindsey and the team Welcome you to the

Sir William Peel P. H.



Find us in the Good Beer Guide
Cask Marque Awarded
Five Minutes Walk from Sandy Station

Batemans XB Cask Bitter

3 Ever changing Guest Beers

'Oakademy Of Excellence'

Real Ciders

Bottled Belgium Beers

Gales Fruit Wines



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

DIARY DATES

- SEP.** 23rd, Branch Meeting, Stag, Stotfold, 8 pm
28th. Cider stall at Potton Apple Day, St. Mary's Hall, Potton 12-4 pm
- OCT.** 8th-11th, Branch Members running CAMRA tombola & products stand at Bedford Beer Festival
- NOV.** 1st, All Beds Branches Social in London, meet Parcel Yard, Kings X 11am
11th, Branch Meeting, Vicars Inn, Arlesey, 8 pm [& shortlist GBG2016 survey]
- DEC.** 12th. Branch Xmas Social, Engineers Arms, Henlow, 8 pm

BEER FESTIVALS

- Sep.** 24th-27th. St. Albans Beer Festival, Alban Arena, Civic Centre **CAMRA**
26th-28th. "Grin and Beer It III" Beer Festival, March Hare, Dunton
- Oct.** 8th-11th. The 37th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival, Corn Exchange, St. Paul's Square, Bedford **CAMRA**
9th-11th. "Booze on the Ouse" Beer festival, St. Ives **CAMRA**
17th-18th. Cambridge Oktoberfest, University Social Club, Mill Lane **CAMRA**
16th-19th. Trafalgar Beer Festival, Half Moon, Queen Street, Hitchin
22nd-26th. The 19th Henlow Beer Festival, Engineers Arms, Henlow
- Nov.** 27th-1st. Norwich Beer Festival, St. Andrew's & Blackfriars' Halls **CAMRA**
18th-22nd. SE Essex Beer Festival, Freight House, Rochford **CAMRA**
- Dec.** 2nd-7th. Pigs Ear Beer Festival, Round Chapel, Powerscroft Rd, Hackney **CAMRA**

St Albans Beer & Cider Festival 2014

24-27 September, Alban Arena, AL1 3LD

Wednesday 24th Sept - Friday 26th Sept 11.00am - 11.00pm £3.00
Saturday 27th Sept 11.00am - 11.00pm £4.50
(CAMRA members free entry to all sessions)

Live Music Swanvesta Social Club on Thu 9-10.30pm
Billington and Quinn on Sat 12.30-2pm
Climax Blues Band on Sat 9-10.30pm



Unfair Beer Tax - there's a novelty

I assume that most of us know the meaning of the term “**Loss Leader**” and how supermarkets sell cheap beer, wines and spirits to the detriment of pubs. However, I am much obliged to Mr Tim Martin of the Wetherspoon Chain for his permission to reproduce the following missive from a Wetherspoon magazine. It highlights another rather large and somewhat unfair anomaly which adds to the enormous pressure on pubs trying to make ends meet and how supermarkets have another advantage due to the tax system.

Remarking on the unfairness of VAT levies on pubs and supermarkets and the effect it has had on the closure of 10,000 pubs (yes – ten *thousand*) in 10 years, he states:- “.....supermarkets pay no VAT on food sales, whereas pubs pay 20%, allowing supermarkets to subsidise their drinks prices with this huge ‘tax break’. Another huge factor relates to the business rates disparity between pubs and supermarkets. The average pub pays around 6% of its sales as rates. This amounts to about 15p per pint, believe it or not. Supermarket chain Morrison’s chief executive, Dalton Phillips, told the *Financial Times* (11th July 2013) that his company paid £240m of business rates in the previous year. Morrison’s accounts for the year in question (to February 2013) show sales of £18.116 billion. Supermarkets, therefore, seem to be paying rates somewhere in the region of 1.32 per cent of their sales. So, a pint purchased in a supermarket for about £1.25 will have a business rate cost of roughly 1.65p. This analysis clearly demonstrates that each pint purchased in a pub has approximately 9 times the level of business rates as a pint purchased in a supermarket”.

Succinct and to the point, Mr Martin also highlights that the increased tax levy on fruit machines & the ‘late night levy’ are also detrimental to pub income. Who’d run a boozer?

Chris Bunyan

POTTON BREWERY



Other ales available including; Shambles, American Mistress, Buck Off and more

**SUPPLIERS OF CASK AND BOTTLED BEERS
TO THE LICENSED TRADE AND GENERAL PUBLIC
BEERS AVAILABLE ALSO IN 3, 5, 10 AND 20 LITRE POLYPINS**

10 SHANNON PLACE • POTTON • SANDY • BEDS • SG19 2SP • CALL US ON 01767 682258

Tour de Bedfordshire Est Stage Four

The fourth stage of the Tour de Bedfordshire Est, the unofficial warm-up for the Tour de France, started at the **Golden Pheasant**, Biggleswade where, had we been the “Unspeakable in Pursuit of the Uneatable” we would undoubtedly have had a Stirrup Cup but we partook of a “Pedal Pint”.

The “we” in this instant comprised of Mike Coombes, the Secretary of South Beds Branch, seven from East Beds – Chris Freeman (whose cartographic skills had been paramount during the planning stages), Archie Campbell, Phil Hutson, Ian Lemin, Al Britcher, Steve Mead and myself – along with Barry Giddings whose membership had lapsed at the moment but will hopefully rejoin.

Four or five of us had cycled across Biggleswade Common from Sandy while Steve had decided to go for a bit of a detour *en route* as he didn't think the ride was quite challenging enough. As we set off from the station railway bridge at Sandy I didn't realise that there was some muttering behind me as I set off at what I considered to be a reasonable pace. On the quiet I think wagers were being placed on how long I would last – no, not the whole route...just to the Pheasant. I'm pleased to say that I arrived slightly flushed, to find Mike and Chris already in the patio area enjoying their first libation.



As I've pointed out in previous reports on the stages of the “Tour” this is not the page to stay on if you wish to know what beers we drank, what hop or yeast varieties were used in the brew process, whether or not the barley was grown on a north, south, west or east facing field (or indeed any other compass point from 1 to 359 degrees) or whether or not the “liquor” came from a tap, a well or a spring. It's really about a few pints and a bit of banter, usually at my expense.

The main area of ribaldry this year was with regard to my knees as this was the first time they had been exposed to the public gaze for many a decade. Well not just my knees, as Ian kindly pointed out that my knee-length shorts were exactly the same style as those of one of his daughters. Luckily I'm always ready for his sarcasm so, with a ready riposte, pointed out that the buttons “did up the other way” – no euphemism intended. Unfortunately the support staff and official photographer, Steve Nakoneczny, had to have his two-penn'orth as well, by apologising for the quality of the photos taken as my knees were playing havoc with his camera's exposure meter.

“*C'est la vie*” as they probably say at the end of a two hundred kilometre stage of the “other” Tour.



Anyway after some excellent ales served by landlord John Walsh, we eventually set course for the **March Hare**, Dunton to visit another “John” - Mr. Pritchett. There ex-Branch Chairman Cliff Luff was partaking of a beverage and greeted us as we filtered in. To be honest I sent “my man” Ian in to get the beers & a refreshing glass of water while I tried not to collapse in the garden.



There were two other enthusiastic cyclists at the pub who I had a brief chat with as they were leaving. They'd done about one hundred kilometres and told me they had about forty to go. I said “We're on a pub crawl as well but we don't feel the need to go quite so far”. I don't think they quite “got” what I thought was a fairly humorous remark as they pedalled off towards Biggleswade with a look of condescension on their faces.

John's beers were up to his usual high standards and talk turned to two of the “new” bikes on the run – Steve's fixed wheel job and Mike's brand new cyclo-cross type machine with which he was still getting to grips. Much debate took place on the sensation Steve must get in not being able to free-wheel & also how easy or difficult it was to use the pedals as part of the braking mechanism. Steve N had turned up at the March Hare (or “Funny Bunny” as some call it) and laid out his plans of where he thought he could get the best photo opportunities.

We then set off for the **Chequers** at Wrestlingworth and passed Steve N hard at work on his camera on the route between Dunton and Eyeworth, where the old Ongley Arms still stands, notable for being one of the first pubs I had drank at in the Branch Area which was subsequently converted into a house. Steve popped up at other locations along the way and took many photographs of the peloton.

At the Chequers – a first for Mike as he had not visited the pub before – I had the good fortune to meet Dave Moore who had recently bought the pub. We had a chat about how his trade was going and what sort of beers he would have on and it certainly seems as though guest ales will feature regularly in the future.

We assembled in the yard with our respective drinks for the group photograph at which Chris announced a change of route – instead of going directly to Potton we would skirt the southern side of Cockayne Hatley. After dragging ourselves up the hill it was pretty exhilarating to exceed 30 mph, according to Mike's on board computer, down the other side.



The Rising Sun, Potton was as busy as usual on a Sunday afternoon but I was surprised to note that Les Ivall, former custodian of the John o' Gaunt, Sutton, was missing. Unable to entirely give up the “trade” even though retired, Les was helping out in the George and Dragon if my memory serves me correctly. Choice is always a problem in the pub as there is so much available and all ales are very well kept by the Dunkley family but after a few minutes in the sunshine it was time to cross the border into Cambridgeshire and the Cock at Gamlingay.

After getting our drinks, all from the Greene King range or its proscribed “guests”, it was a pleasure to sit in the back garden and contemplate the previous leg and the fact that we only had a couple more to cover.

Onward to the **Thornton Arms** at Everton where Mike came across one of his old work colleagues, with whom he had a good chat, while the rest of us looked forward to getting to our last stop in Sandy. Again the beers in the Thornton Arms were in good condition, if I remember correctly there were four real ales on offer along with a hand-pulled cider.

The short trip to the **Sir William Peel** ended another excellent afternoon helped again by the lovely beers on offer and the great company. Although most of us only had to pedal home, Mike still had about twelve miles to ride back to Maulden so great kudos to him for cycling the furthest on the day.

May I just take this opportunity to thank all of the licensees and their staff for the quality of their beers, their courtesy, helpfulness and occasional banter; their customers who made us feel welcome at each pub; my fellow cyclists as we all, I think, had a good laugh; and to Chris for again designing an interesting and not too demanding route. My shorts may be exposed to daylight again next year!

Barry Price



Norwich City of Ale 2014

After the great success of the trip last year, on Sat May 25th 10 members from East Beds CAMRA boarded the train to visit *Norwich City of Ale 2014*. Now in its 4th year, this enterprising 11 day event encompassing over 40 of the city's finest pubs, is billed as "a beer festival with a difference". As well as showcasing the pubs, it acts as a celebration of real ale and micro-brewing in the east of England. Over the course of the event, the pubs serve around 250 beers from 40 breweries within a 30 mile radius of Norwich. With just over seven hours in the city, one can sample a fraction of the many available pubs and beers. But the beauty of the strength and depth of what's on offer is that you hardly ever need to repeat where you go or what you drink. Only one pub on this year's route was included in our 2013 itinerary. Having picked up our local guide (in the shape of my brother Colin), we started with visits to outlets of the city's micro breweries.



A short walk took us to the **Fat Cat & Canary** the Thorpe branch of the **Fat Cat Brewery**. Of course, their own beers were the staple here, with the Bitter, Stout and Honey Ale all proving to be equally popular choices. Retracing our steps back towards the station, the next stop was the **Coach & Horses**, home to **Chalkhill Brewery** with CHB, Flintknappers Mild and the powerful Old Tackle among the excellent beers on offer. Next, up the hill to the **Ketts Tavern**. This sprawling pub served a variety of light-coloured ales from the **Norwich Bear Brewery** and provided an opportunity for some solid sustenance, and a quick beer with my parents.

A short walk via the back streets took us to the **Cottage** on Silver Road: I think a new pub for most on the trip. Here there was a chance to enjoy some sun in the large beer garden, along with beers from **Golden Triangle**, **Humpty Dumpty**, **Shortts Farm** and others.



Onwards to the city outskirts and the **Plasterers Arms**. Despite many changes in layout and ownership over the years, this has always been a fine pub. Now a true free-house it stocks a great range of ales including on the day beers from **Green Jack**, **Jo C's** and **Redwell**. Also a surprise, a welcome encounter with Steve and Catherine from Buntingford Brewery. For many, the pub of the day.



A quick step across Magdalen Street and into the **Kings Head**. This fine old two bar pub was the pub on this year's route also visited during our NCA 2013 trip (although not all made it that far!). It remains hugely popular, serving a very wide range of beers and cider from Norfolk and Suffolk breweries including **Beeston, Elmtree, Grain, Winter's and Wolf**. The plan had been to stop at **Take 5**, a modern cafe bar in a very impressive old and architecturally interesting building, but the range and quality of the beer at the previous two pubs meant it was taxis back to our final stop of the day.

The **Compleat Angler** is a large open plan pub on the river bridge. It has an increasingly interesting range of beers and is also a stones throw to the station and our chariot home at 7pm. Just time for a couple of quick halves from a range that included **Norfolk Brewhouse, Ole Slewfoot, St. Peter's and Woodforde's**.



Back to the station, and the train took the strain back to Sandy without incident. Another fine day out with fine ale in a fine city. Roll on 2015.

Tony Morris

CAMRA
CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE

WHAT?PUB

whatpub.com
Featuring over 35,000 real ale pubs

Thousands of pubs
at your fingertips!

Over 96%
of Britain's
real ale pubs
featured

Information
updated by
thousands
of CAMRA
volunteers

Created by
CAMRA who
produce the
UK's best beer
& pub guide

.....And Now for Something Completely Different

Passing through Ely on our way to Norwich for the Branch's excellent City of Ale outing (thanks for organising it, Tony) Carol and I both liked the look of the city and decided to return at a later date with our fold-up bikes. We parked at the Sports Centre cycled down Forehill and Waterside then along the bank of the Great Ouse to Roswell Pits at the East of the city then back into town to admire the Cathedral and its surrounds. Later on back in the river area the pubs were heaving and a band was playing on the bandstand in Jubilee Gardens. Everyone was soaking up the atmosphere and envying those lucky narrow boat owners.

On the way back up Forehill I spotted a chalk board outside a building which looked more like a shop with the message "Friends of Real Ale" above a drawing of a penguin in a top hat holding a pint in its flipper. Beneath was the script "Follow the Penguin In Support of the Penguin Liberation Organisation". Along the top of the shop-front was, in gold lettering, "Liberty Belle Ely's Micro Pub". Giant penguins and old film projectors adorned the windows. Who could resist?



Access to the micro pub was through a recessed doorway – the normal shop entrance for those of us of a certain vintage – and the pub was at two levels with a tiny bar at the higher level with no handpumps. Unlike the rest of the pubs we had passed there were only one or two customers and we were welcomed fulsomely and allowed to put our fold-up bikes next to us at the table. The lower level of the pub had five or six tables and was decorated with old railway memorabilia like the "header" off of "The Fenman" along with lovely framed posters of some of the resorts and places which the Eastern Region used to visit. There was also plenty of reading material if you visited the place on your own and were in search of a little solitude.

7 beers were listed on a blackboard ranging from 3.8% (Jo C's Norfolk Kiwi) to 6.5% (Poppyland Evolution Saison IPA) and in price from £3.50 to £4.20 per pint. Another board had 5 ciders and a perry all at £3.90 – Pickled Pig's Nickerfella Perry, Old Spot and Porkers Snout; Virgin on the Ridiculous, Monk & Disorderly and Cromwell's Oliver's Sweetheart. The beers we tried were all in superb condition and sadly we could not have any more as one of us was driving.



The lower half of the pub has a complete Peel PSO single seat car which may be familiar to those who watched Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson drive one out of the lift in Broadcasting House and through the offices. You can sit in the car for your picture but you are asked to donate a pound towards a Prostate Cancer charity.

A few steps up leads to an area where the walls are decorated with sheet music from a bygone era together with radios and a very early black and white TV which has a diagonal screen width of about nine inches (22 cms in new terms). There are another three or four tables here. At the side of the steps is an attractive brass bell in its frame and a note underneath *“Welcome to Liberty Belle. If you cannot see me I am pouring some of our delicious real ale in our cellar. Please ring the bell, I will know then that you are waiting.”*



At the very back of the pub is the “cellar” where all drinks are dispensed directly from the cask. The method of dispense is gravity and there are no lagers or pseudo stouts available as they normally depend on chemicals for their journey to the glass. Another regular journey is done by the owner, Martin McKeever, as he serves all drinks to your table, very civilised. Signs in the pub advise “Mobile Phone Free Zone. Please Switch Off” which fits in with Martin's philosophy that friendly chat and conversation are the preferred forms of communication.



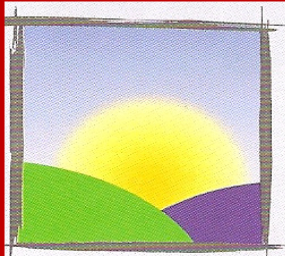
Food is available - hand made pork pies and cheeses from the Cambridge Cheese Company. An Indian restaurant across the road will tempt those wanting something more substantial. A very enjoyable visit, where Martin and his customers were good company making us feel welcome from the minute we arrived. It was a pleasure to be no more than a short distance from the busy riverside but in much calmer surroundings.

If the call of the river is as strong as the call of the sea was to John Masefield in his poem “Sea Fever” then your pleasure can be enhanced. Martin owns the “Liberty Belle” cruiser five minutes walk down the hill which sallies forth along the river at regular intervals. So what are you waiting for?



The Liberty Belle is not in the 2014 Good Beer Guide as it hasn't been open very long, although there are another couple of pubs in Ely which are in it which we didn't visit. If I was a member of the local CAMRA branch I would certainly consider recommending it for the 2015 GBG. I have no doubt that I shall visit again soon, but I shall go by public transport next time! For those of you who didn't “get it” straight away, the “Liberty Bell March” by Sousa was the theme tune of Monty Python's Flying Circus although in Ely, of course, nobody would expect the rear view of a naked man sitting at a piano ... or, indeed, the Spanish Inquisition.

Barry Price



the
**Rising
Sun**
Potton



11 Everton Road, Potton SG19 2PA

Tel: 01767 260231

"Something for Everyone"

EAST BEDS CAMRA PUB OF THE YEAR 2010

**BOOK NOW FOR CHRISTMAS MEALS
LARGE PARTIES CATERED FOR
BEERS FROM LOCAL BREWERIES**

**WE ARE IN THE CAMRA 2014 GOOD BEER GUIDE
AND PARTICIPATING IN THE "LOCALE" SCHEME
SUPPORTING LOCAL BREWERIES
CASK MARQUE ACCREDITED**



REGULAR BEERS

**9 handpumps featuring Wells Eagle, Bombardier, an Oakham ale,
a Youngs beer, plus 4 Guest Ales & 1 Real Cider**

**Food served Seven Days a week with weekly specials and
Sunday Roasts**

Monday – Friday 12.00-14.15 and 18.00- 21.30

All Day Saturday and Sunday

**Upstairs restaurant and soft seating area available for private
functions large parties catered for**



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, Potten End, 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
 Thornton Arms, Everton

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
 Cock, Broom
 March Hare, Dunton
 Thornton Arms, Everton
 Engineers Arms, Henlow
 Rising Sun, Potton
 Sir William Peel, Sandy
 Coach & Horses, Stotfold

Locally produced cider can be ordered from the following outlets:-

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

ASK YOUR LOCAL PUB TO STOCK A REAL CIDER OR PERRY

Pub Trips outside the branch

Luckily we have two landlords from local pubs that organise outings for their customers. I recently went on two trips with Kevin Machin at The Engineers Arms and one trip with John Pritchett at the March Hare.

The first trip was to **Burton-upon-Trent** and took place on Tuesday June 6th in conjunction with Kevin's and Dave Young's birthday bash. It did not start well as the designated driver was in Lister hospital and a replacement coach and driver arrived 30 minutes later than arranged (and judging by the state of the coach probably after a school run). So off we travelled to Burton only to find that the first pub the Burton Bridge Inn was busy cleaning their lines.

After a hasty phone call by Kevin we opted for a spirited walk to The Old Museum Brewery bar. Available beers were George Gales Spring Sprinter, Tomos Watkin's OSB (which I sampled and was in lovely condition), Sharps Doom Bar, Worthingtons Red Shield and Worthington E. We then went back to The Burton Bridge Inn, a lovely little two bar town pub, the brewery tap for The Burton Bridge Brewery and the line cleaning had been completed.



There Kevin had arranged for his two wooden casks to be filled with their beers, to take back to the Engineers Arms. On offer at the bar were Golden Delicious 3.8%, Sovereign Gold 4%, Bridge Bitter 4.2%, Gold Medal Ale 4.5%, Festival Ale 5.5% and Damson Porter 4.5% were all on. I had the Bridge Bitter & Damson Porter which were very enjoyable.



Our next visit was to The Elms, a two roomed pub with a small bar at the front and a larger bar at the back. The lay out seemed food orientated, but it had a good garden laid out with seats and tables. Beers available were Wadsworth St George, Marston Pedigree, Wells Bombardier and I had the Bass which again was enjoyable. We had a brief visit to The Wetmore Whistle a modern pub run by Castle Rock brewery. But with only Marston Pedigree on, it is not worth visiting next time.

The next pub was the Brickmakers Arms at Newton Solney, a lovely small village pub that is run by Kevin's cousin Tracey who made us very welcome and supplied a buffet. The ales were Burton Bridge's Golden Delicious, Bridge Bitter, Stairway to Heaven, Burton Porter plus Timothy Taylor's Landlord. Other pubs visited were The Coopers, a lovely little side street pub, The Roebuck which was Burton's area pub of the year and The Devonshire Arms, another Burton Bridge pub.

The second trip with the Engineers was to **Buntingford Brewery** on June 21st and what an enjoyable day it was with great beer and food from a barbeque, plus it was so sunny that even Kevin had to seek some shade (see right). Brewer Steve Banfield has since built a small bar where he hopes to sell his beers to the general public on visits to the farm where the brewery is sited in a conservation area. Beers available were Junga 4%, Highwayman 3.6% and Hurricane 4.3%. Steve said that his business was expanding to cope with increased demand. He and wife Catherine made us very welcome and we look forward to future visits.



The third trip a week later was to **Buntingford Brewery** again, this time with the March Hare. Sadly the weather was not so kind with heavy showers, so the barbeque was moved and food cooked under a lean-to beside a barn and brought into the brewery. Steve gave a talk on the brewing process. Hertfordshire is a very good area for growing barley for brewing and the malting is done by the Ware system and known as Ware Maltings. He explained that Coppers were made from copper because wooden ones didn't last long due to the fire underneath them for boiling the water. He uses hops mainly from England but occasionally from other countries including Ethiopia.



Steve [pictured on left] said that the process was done *back to back* as the plant is warm so saving the planet. (Laughter could be heard from the gathering as well as thunder in the background). Steve explained about yeast cells and stated that there were more cells than people on our planet and they did not need looking after. He also stated that to send his brewery waste to farms he would need sterilized vessels and loads of paperwork, so he opted to feed horses instead. Beers available were Polar Star, Twitchell and Junga.

Once again it was an enjoyable visit and four weeks later Catherine and Steve came to the annual barbeque held at The March Hare where they notified us they have taken on the running of The Brown Bear at Braughing.



Clifford Luff





ENGINEERS ARMS, HIGH STREET, HENLOW, BEDS.

www.engineersarms.co.uk 01462 812284

Wednesday 22nd – Sunday 26th October
Wednesday Night "The Incredible Dr Busker"
 Featuring over 100 Traditional Real Ales, ciders
 & Perries.

Open All Day from 12pm - Free Admission
Snacks Available Daily, BBQ Thursday, Friday &
Saturday Evening.



Local Hotel offering Special Festival Rates - Call
The Airman Hotel, 01462 850853 Quoting Ref: Ref Fest. 19
Nearest Train Station:- Arlesey (Kings Cross - Peterborough)
For Camping or caravanning facilities - Henlow Bridge Lakes,
Arlesey Road, Henlow - Call 01462 812645



"The Pub with No Bar"



The Cock at Broom

Close to Jordan's Mill, between Shefford & Biggleswade

A Range of Local and National Real Ales Straight from the Cask.
Traditional Games Room.....perfect for a fun night out with
family, friends or work colleagues. Clubs and Societies welcome

Book our Front, Middle or Dining Room and
even our Unique Games Room for your event

"We are proud to support local business"
Seasonal Specials, includes locally farmed meats
Specials for the over 55's incl gluten free options.
Join us for Sunday Lunch! Served 12-4pm from £8.95

23 High Street, Broom, Bedfordshire, SG18 9NA
Phone 01767 314411 www.thecockatbroom.co.uk
2014 CAMRA Award Winner

THE HALF MOON

FOR OUTSTANDING ALES

OUR BEERS

6 EVER CHANGING GUEST ALES
ADNAMS SOUTHWOLD & YOUNG'S SPECIAL
FINE SELECTION OF CIDERS & PERRIES
TWICE YEARLY BEER FESTIVALS

OUR FOOD

GREAT VALUE HOME COOKED PUB FOOD
FANTASTIC TAPAS MENU SERVED TILL LATE

CAMRA NORTH HERTS
PUB OF THE YEAR 2014



Special Food Nights
3RD THURSDAY EVERY MONTH
SEPT 18TH BEST OF BRITISH
OCT 16TH BEER FEST CURRY NIGHT
CHECK WEBSITE FOR DETAILS



LOG FIRE. BEER GARDEN. PATIO. CAR PARK. DOG FRIENDLY & FREE WI-FI
THE HALF MOON, 57 QUEEN STREET, HITCHIN, HERTS, SG4 9TZ
THEHALFMOONHITCHIN.CO.UK @HALFMOONHITCHIN 01462 452 448



The Orange Tree, Baldock

North Herts CAMRA Pub of the Year 2013

August Bank Holiday Beer & Cider Festival

Friday 22nd to Monday 25th August

**36 real ales, 16 local ciders & perries, and
5 Belgian fruit beers plus music and food!**



Open all day, every day in the summer from 12. Large beer garden and Pétanque piste.

Proper home made food served 12-2 and 6-9 Mon-Fri, 12-9 Sat, 12-6 Sun.

Function room with full AV facilities available for meetings, parties etc. of up to 100 people.

Call Rob on 01462 892341 for more details

or visit www.theorangetreebaldock.com

Norton Road, Baldock, SG7 5AW

5 minutes walk from Baldock Station

Dogs, Kids and muddy boots are always welcome!



Follow us on [twitter](#)

@Orange_Tree_BDK

Follow us on [facebook](#)

[Facebook.com/The.Orange.Tree.Baldock](https://www.facebook.com/The.Orange.Tree.Baldock)

the march hare



authentic freehouse, dunton,
presents its



third BEER fest:

"GrIN and Beer It 3" BEER festival

friday 26th ~ sunday 28th
september 2014

16 to 20 BEERS

8 on at any one time via 8 hand pulls
plus dunton cider

festival times:

friday: 4pm~midnight

saturday: noon~midnight

sunday: noon~10:30pm

all festival beer & cider £3 pint
pint, half pint and third pint glasses
available

Dunton
Cider

Dunton
Folk

East Beds CAMRA Branch Pub of the Year 2013

Real Ale Real Cider Real Music Real Pub