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May 2015

EAST BEDFORDSHIRE

www.eastbedscamra.org.uk

casket@eastbedscamra.org.uk



Bedfordshire Pub of the Year Awards, page 14-16

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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.

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EAST BEDS COMMITTEE 2014/15

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The Casket

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A word from the Editor

The sales of 'scrumpy style' cider continue to grow and we have another pub joining our National Real Cider scheme. The Old Transporter Alehouse, Henlow started to sell boxed cider before Christmas 2014 and over the last six months have increased their range to at least four ciders on a permanent basis. Sadly real cider has disappeared from the Rising Sun, Potton for the time being. Well done to David Moore and his team at the Chequers, Wrestlingworth as they now join our LocALE scheme. Since the change of ownership in the summer of 2014, the beer range has altered significantly. Greene King ales have disappeared and Wells Eagle IPA is now the permanent ale, plus up to three guest ales, often featuring Buntingford and Potton.

More pubs in East Beds have approached the branch for advice and publicity to help them run their first beer festivals. The Coach & Horses, Stotfold has their 1st independent festival in July 2015 (see page six), The Chequers, Wrestlingworth 22nd-25th May and the Bell, Sandy is planning a festival starting Friday 18th September during the Rugby World Cup. Please try to visit these events and give them your support.

John Goodlet



LOCAL PUB NEWS

The Plough, Langford

We hadn't initially realised that there were new tenants at the Plough last year, following a period of temporary management. But Gary and Tracey have now been at the pub for over a year and they adopt a customer orientated attitude. For example regular customers have an input to which of the Real Ales from the Greene King monthly "menu" will feature fortnightly alongside the regular IPA. The pub is open Mon-Thur 12-2 and 4-11; Fri-Sat 12-midnight and Sunday 12-11 with food available lunchtime Tuesday to Friday; 12-4 Saturday and the same on Sunday when roast dinner is available.



In the summer months barbecues are a feature and a floodlit petanque court alongside a large children's playground providing plenty of family fun.

LATE NEWS - there are unconfirmed reports that the Tudor Oaks, Astwick has gone up for sale again by auction and the White Horse, Broom may be temporarily closed. There may be new tenants at the Chequers, Stotfold and Kings Arms, Sandy. More details in the next issue.

Red Lion, Potton

A Council Planning Meeting was held in mid January 2015, to review the Red Lion. Branch Pubs Preservation Officer Les Ivall and independent local councillor Adam Serny, attended the meeting to support the branch Asset of Community Value Nomination. They opposed the planning application on behalf of a group of local residents & pub customers. But as expected, the planners granted a 'change of use' application for a single private house to the current owner, a property developer. However, we expect further applications to be made, as the owner may want to split the property into two or more flats. So it seems the Red Lion is a permanent loss and this leaves Potton with only four pubs, three of which are in the town centre.

An Apology

In the January issue of the Casket, the editor fell victim to the 'local rumour mill' inadvertently reported that and the Coach & Horses, Biggleswade had closed down and been sold to a local business. This is **NOT** the case, the pub remained open during the winter months and is still trading today. The editor offers his sincere apologies to the staff and customers of the Coach & Horses for this incorrect report. More thorough checks should have been taken to avoid this mistake and the editor will endeavour to ensure that this does not occur again.

White Horse, Arlesey

New tenants Mark Callow & Louise Copeland took over on 10th Nov 2014. We hope this will stabilise the pub in the wake of a brief closure in early 2014 followed by a period of temporary management. They are slowly making changes to rebuild the pub's trade. The back room is once again a public bar/games room with a pool table, darts and large screen TV and there are plans to re-introduce satellite sports.



The regular opening hours are Mon 4-11, Tue-Thu 12-11, Fri-Sat 12-midnight and Sun 12-10.30. Food is served from 12-3 daily, except Mondays offering traditional pub grub and a Sunday Roast. The pub opens early Thu & Fri at 10am as a coffee shop. There is a monthly Networking meeting to help promote local businesses. At the bar, GK IPA is a regular ale, plus two rotating GK guest ales.

Live music and karaoke feature on most weekends. In the spring and summer months the tenants aim to use their family friendly enclosed garden for barbecues and music festivals. The phone number has changed to 01462 621118 and events may be listed on their Facebook page 'thewhitehorse-arlesey'.

Arlesey Cross

We will keep an eye on the new Arlesey Cross Housing Project with plans to create 1,000 new homes and increase the village population by up to 40%. Many developers are involved, a new school & supermarket are being planned, plus a new main road to take traffic away from the narrow High Street. A large field/paddock behind the White Horse, owned by Greene King is already within the planning scope.

Although there is no direct threat to the future of the pub at this stage, plans can change and there are some concerns that the developers may target the pub garden or even the pub itself. As a precaution local Arlesey CAMRA member Jon Want, a prospective local town councillor, organised a petition of signatures to show community support for the White Horse. As a result East Beds CAMRA have registered the White Horse as an **Asset of Community Value** with the county planners. Should the pub be put 'up for sale' in the future, the planners will have to consider the views of the community.

Coach & Horses, Stotfold

Bar manager Karen has confirmed that the pub will run its first beer festival over the weekend of 16th to 19th July 2015 and will also have a cider festival later in the year. The beer festival will have three ales on handpump plus two more served direct from the cellar. A further 7 ales will be available to rotate as and when the first beers run out. There will be live music and a barbeque (see page six).

Pig & Whistle, Stotfold

Back in May 2014, the pub's owner **Just Pubs Limited** were seeking planning permission to demolish the pub and build 7 new houses. The application was initially refused, but after several changes, we can confirm that a new planning application was eventually granted. It seems likely that this pub will closed and be turned into housing in the future.



This ends 160 years of history at the Pig & Whistle. The current building was erected in 1937 by Simpsons Brewery, who were later taken over by Greene King in 1954. But there was an older building on this site, which became a beerhouse in 1855. It does not appear to have been named until the 1891 census. It probably obtained a full licence in the 20th century.

Crown, Stotfold

The second pub owned by **Just Pubs Limited** in Stotfold was also a target for development in the summer of 2014. An initial planning application was refused at that time, but we now hear an application has been granted to build two new houses on the majority of the pub's garden and that the land has already been sold.



Thankfully the pub continues to operate, although in the future the garden area will be reduced to a courtyard area. Landlord Keith is still building up the pub business nicely. At the bar he always has GK IPA on handpump, plus a guest ale such as Doom Bar or London Pride. He sometimes has a third ale served from the barrel in the cellar, often featuring stronger ales such as Abbot Reserve or Fuller's ESB.

Ask Keith for details of parties and events

Real Ale Weekend At The Coach And Horses Stotfold

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Friday 3pm – 1am
Saturday 11am – 1am
Sunday 12pm – 11pm





Prices: pint £3.40 Half pint : £1.70





Potton Brewery News

The Brewery is operated by Potton Breweries UK Ltd. This is essentially the company which took the brewery over from Franklins towards the end of 2013. The brewery is run on a day-to-day basis by James Turner who is also the brewer. James is currently brewing twice a week (8 bbl batches) and has capacity to increase output as required.

Their core products are old favourites, Shannon, Village Bike & Shambles backed up by Lion (4.4% pale), Pablo's Princess (3.8% bitter), Potton Gold (paler 4.1% bitter) and Phoenix (3.8% IPA). James believes beer quality is very good and I would agree with this on the basis of the Potton pints I have had lately.

Potton Brewery is active on Facebook.com/thepottonbrewery and Twitter (@PottonBrewery). Their website is now active and is currently being populated www.potton-brewery.com. Day-to-day information on latest brews etc. can be found on these links or by phone to James on 01767 261042.

And by the way, James also runs The Coach & Horses in Biggleswade so do try and call in to support him. (He is limited to selling Greene King only at the moment.) The branch will be visiting the pub on a social on 5th August.

Dave Young



March Hare Beer Trips

Once again the area was fortunate enough to have trips organised by local pubs including The March Hare and The Engineers Arms. Unfortunately due to other commitments I was unable to attend the Engineers trips which included one to London, so I can only write about The March Hare trips.

The minibus trip to The Brown Bear, Braughing took place on Saturday 21st March 2015. The Brown Bear was originally a house, dating to early 16th century, it became an inn in 1740 and is the oldest surviving pub in Braughing. It has a timber frame roughcast with an old red tiled roof. It has wooden and tiled floors with real fires in each of two bars.





Steve and Catherine from Buntingford Brewery took the lease last year and were still renovating it when we visited. Steve is mainly running the pub whilst Catherine is now the Brewster at Buntingford Brewery. They were both there along with barmaid Hailey to welcome us on our arrival. Beers available were Crouch Vale Gold 4%, and Buntingford Beers Chinook 4%, Highwayman 3.6%, Twitchell 3.8%. Steve commented "not a Greene King beer in sight".

Several of our party had lunches there, which were very enjoyable and rather large portions, so good value for money. The public bar is a typical village pub with a roaring fire to welcome the quests on a rather cold day and a cosy snug area in the lower section. Another bar to the rear can also be used for dining. Well behaved dogs were also welcomed. I recommend anyone to visit Braughing and enjoy the atmosphere of this pub. A gem.





The other visit from The March Hare was our annual trip to The Chequers at Little Gransden run by Bob and Wendy, owners of The Son of Sid Brewery. The pub has been in their family for over 60 years. Some of Bob's beers on were The New One 5.6%, English Ale 3.7% and Bee Sting Bitter 3.9%, plus guest Church End Poachers Pocket 3.5%. Good hearty Fish and Chips and Steak Meals were available.

Bob commented that "the Haddock Fish was larger than normal". Normal is large enough! Bob then arranged a tour around his brewery. We all look forward to our next visit to this enjoyable county pub.

Clifford Luff

BREWING CO.



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DIARY DATES

MAY. 12th, Branch AGM, Engineers Arms, Henlow, 8 pm
 30th, Branch trip to Norwich Ale Trail, meet Sandy station for 8.33 am train

JUNE. 21st, Branch Social Bike Ride, meet Half Moon, Hitchin, 1 pm 27th, Branch Volunteers Trip, Rushden Transport Museum 12 noon onwards

JULY. 10th, Branch Social, Sir William Peel Cider Festival, Sandy, 3 pm onwards 14th, Branch Meeting, Fox & Duck, Stotfold, 8 pm

<u>AUG.</u> 5th, Branch Social, Biggleswade, meet Coach & Horses 8 pm, then New Inn & Golden Pheasant

BEER FESTIVALS

May. 18th-23rd. 42nd Cambridge Beer Festival, Jesus Green, Cambridge CAMRA 22nd-25th. Beer Festival @ The Chequers, Wrestlingworth

June. 11th-13th. Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival, Hitchin Rugby Club, Old Hale Way,
Hitchin CAMRA

July. 9th-12th. 4th Sir William Peel Cider Festival, High Street, Sandy 16th-19th. Beer Festival @ Coach & Horses, 95 The Green, Stotfold

Aug. 11th-15th. The Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, London 25th-29th. The 37th Peterborough Beer Festival, The Embankment, Bishops Road, Peterborough CAMRA



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In-Cider Dealings

Well – lots of news of the apples and pears variety this issue. We'll kick off with the launch of Franklins Cider: set up in Dunton by Simon Bailes in 2014, the first offerings were launched at the March Hare Beer Festival in February. Alongside the tried and tested Dunton Cider are two new labels, Franklins Fuddle and Franklins Gasper both at 6.4%.



The first, is a medium sweet cider made from Howgate and Crispin apples. This has a nice round finish and is enormously drinkable! The second, Gasper is a new personal favourite of mine. A dry cider made from Howgate and Crispin apples with a generous helping of Bramleys to give a sharp edge to the apple flavour. Both ciders were fermented for three to six months then matured for a further six months. I've been fortunate to sample both and I can see that I might even go out of my way to try more......

Also available – a cider brandy produced from Dunton stock and magically transformed by the English Spirit Distillery near Newmarket and a Pommeau (a traditional french drink made by mixing cider brandy with fresh apple juice) this is great as an aperitif or as an accompaniment to blue cheese.



You can keep up with further developments on the blog, make orders or contact Franklins for further product details via the website: www.franklinscider.co.uk



Another place where Franklins cider was on sale was the Engineers Arms 5th Cider & Country Wine Festival in February/March. On offer was a great range of cider & perry from as far afield as Dunbar in Scotland to Lyme Bay in the West Country and across the border to the wildest Wales. Watch out for the July cider festival at the Sir William Peel.

Jo Freeman



Chris Bunyan's Funny Animals

A Bear walked into a pub and said "A pint of bitter......and a packet of crisps". The barman said "Why the big pause?"

A Gorilla walked into a pub and asked for a pint. The barman duly served him and, thinking he was on a good thing, charged the Gorilla a fiver. The Gorilla drank the pint and ordered another, again the barman charged him a fiver. Intrigued by the Gorilla, the barman started a conversation. "We don't get a lot of Gorillas in here", he said. "I'm not surprised at five quid a pint" said the Gorilla.

A white horse walked into a pub. The barman said "There's a drink named after you!" and the horse said "What? – Eric?".

A Duck walked into a pub at lunchtime and asked for a pint and a sandwich. When he finished, he said to the barman "I have to get back to work, we only get half-an-hour on the building site". The next day as he walked into the pub, the barman said "I've got a mate who works in the Circus who wants to give you a job" and the duck said "Why would a Circus want a plasterer?"

Pub of the Year Awards 2015

In February and March 2015 East Beds CAMRA presented their annual awards in the Pub of the Year competition. The first presentation was to the **March Hare**, **Dunton** as the East Beds '**Rural Pub of the Year 2015**'. The award recognises the significant effort made by licensees John & Janice Pritchett to engage and support the local community. Their local community shop inside the pub has been running for over a year now and doing very well. It not only offers those key products that would normally require a trip to the super market, but also some choice goods made by local producers, such as old fashioned sweets & chocolate.



Landlord John has also been busy organising outside bars in support of the local church and many other worthwhile charitable organisations. He will soon be turning his attention to launching a microbrewery .Recently he has been assessing various pieces of equipment and planning the logistics behind the brewery installation. We all look forward to the first beers being produced later in 2015.

Also at the pub, the summer and winter beer festivals have again been popular and well supported by volunteers from the pub's *Hare Beer Bunch*, who also organise bus trips to regional pubs and breweries. The award was presented to John and Janice by East Beds chairman John Goodlet on 24th February.

Four days later on Saturday 28th February, the second presentation took place at the **Engineers Arms**, **Henlow** during their winter Cider & Country Wine Festival. This freehouse is a favourite amongst CAMRA members right across the branch and it deservedly won the overall East Beds **Pub of the Year 2015**. The certificate was presented to Kevin Machin by the branch chairman, who reflected on a great last 12 months at the pub, including the special 25th anniversary of the landlord's arrival at the pub. A series of events including live music were held last august marking the occasion and thoroughly enjoyed by all its customers.

The Engineers Arms continues to showcase a great range of ten ales and often two extra stronger ales served direct from wooden barrels. There is a ongoing commitment to real cider and perry too, with support for local producers such as Franklins and Potton Press. This was evident during their festival with 28 ciders, 3 perries and 2 pyders (a mix) on offer, plus 7 fruity country wines. There was a Friday disco, live music on Saturday from Gareth Icke and on Sunday it was Ireland v England at rugby (they lost, but Kevin didn't mind, as his beloved Derby County were top of the league - they lost too!).



The presentation for East Beds CAMRA's **Most Improved Pub of the Year** took place at the **Chequers, Wrestlingworth** on Saturday 21st March. Local CAMRA member Ian Popplestone gave the award to Dave Moore and wife Carin.

Although the presentation was due to take place fairly early in the evening one section of the pub was enthralled by the talk given by the farrier for the Shetland Pony Welfare Trust, a Cambridgeshire based Charity (No. 1093364) dedicated to ensuring that Shetland Ponies do not suffer at the hands of those ill-equipped to care for them and rescuing those that are abandoned.

Additionally the evening had a live performance from harpist Armande Fryatt as the occasion was also the launch party for her new album, *Reflections of the Harp*, proceeds from the sale are being donated to Shetland Pony Welfare Trust.

When Ian finally took the stage — well, in reality, 'the fireplace' - he gave a very well received speech outlining the pleasures of living in Wrestlingworth now that Dave, Carin and their family have taken over the Chequers and provided much needed stability to a pub which had, only recently, seemed to be entering a slow period of decline from which some pubs never recover. The quality of their beers and food were all first class and the pub had, once more, become the heart of the community with many local groups, associations and teams using it as their base. This was illustrated by the warm welcome which everybody received on arrival.

Dave, in turn, thanked everybody who had supported the pub in its first few months and expressed genuine surprise that East Beds CAMRA had awarded Most Improved Pub of the Year to the Chequers as he felt that there were still improvements to be made.

At the Mauldons Mole Trap, Wells Eagle, Adnams Southwold Bitter and Buntingford Royston Red were all available and slices of sponge cake too. Dave has taken to the task of Landlord with some panache and has no hang-ups about experimenting with the beers he offers. On a previous visit in early April he had just received his first barrel of Greenjack Trawlerboys and had ordered the next. You never know...something one day may even replace his beloved Adnams Bitter as his favourite beer ever!

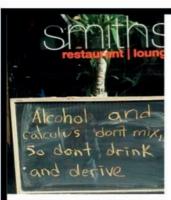
I'm sure Branch members visiting the Chequers recently will agree that the award is well deserved and we wish Dave, Carin and the team all the best in the future.

Further awards across the county on next page

The overall North Beds **Pub of the Year 2015** was awarded to the **Sun Inn**, **Felmersham**. This is now a freehouse offering a range of ales including guests from local micros. A second award was given to the **Three Cups**, **Bedford** as the **Best Town Pub of the Year 2015** and nearby in Castle Street you find the **Castle Inn**, which picked up the **Most Improved pub of the Year 2015**.

The overall South Beds branch **Pub of the Year 2015** was awarded to the **Black Lion, Leighton Buzzard**. Congratulations to owner Gary Burlison, whose small chain of pubs include the Merchants Inn, Rugby and our own Sir William Peel, Sandy. The pub offers eight ales and eight cider or perries too. A second award was also presented for the **Best New Pub of the Year 2015** to the **Cuckoo, Toddington**. This is a real surprise package, not a small micro-pub as originally thought, but a fully fledged public house with eight real ales on handpump and it is now a thriving business.

LATE NEWS—In mid April, The Black Lion, Leighton Buzzard was awarded the overall Bedfordshire County Pub of the Year 2015. Also the Engineers Arms, Henlow picked up a Bedfordshire county award for supporting Cider & Perry. Congratulations to both pubs, they now go forward into the East Anglian heats of both competitions.



Would You

Adam & Eve It

Pub Signs from around the World

By

Chris Bunyan











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Pizza, herb potatoes, Italian salad and a bottle of wine for 2 - £25.00. Bookings between 18:30-20:30.

Paella Night — Saturday, 20th June:

A choice of 2 paellas and a bottle of wine for 2 - £25.00. Bookings between 18:30-20:30.

Pop Quiz — Sunday, 21st June: £1.00 entry, 8pm start.

Live Band — NJGHTFLJGHT — Salurday, 27th June: 8pm start.

Bingo Night — Sunday, 12th July: £5.00 a book, 8pm start.

Pop Quiz — Sunday, 19th July: £1.00 entry, 8pm start.

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Old Transporter Beer Festival

Although I had visited the Transporter Inn once or twice before, it was well worth travelling over from Sandy for their first Beer Festival on the weekend of 14th & 15th March. We managed a short visit on the Saturday evening to try their dark beer & porter festival. When we arrived it was immediately obvious that it was going to be tight for space as they had organised a 7 piece band "Outnumbered" to play!

So, just a brief resume of Bedfordshire's first micropub, which is based in the former blockbuster video shop located at the roundabout near RAF Henlow. It's a one room pub, run as a beerhouse with no spirits or draught lager. At least 4 ciders are sold as well, although I am sure there were more during the festival!

Soon after we arrived it became very busy with punters sampling the superb choice of dark beers on sale of which I am very keen on these days. I started with a pint of Titanic Cappaccino Stout 4.5% which was very smooth and subtly flavoured with a Coffee finish. My friend went for Binghams Vanilla Stout 5% which was different to say the least! Then I went on to the Cumberland Corby Noir 4.5%, a beer I have been trying to sample for some time now, with an exquisite smoky aftertaste. I may add that all the beers were

Sadly, as my friend was driving we finished with the Titanic Plum Porter 4.9% and we bade farewell to the Transporter, a pity as the band were really firing up by 9pm. Basically this is an establishment that deserves to do well in the future, especially with the different beers the owners bring in from the local Breweries.

being sold at £3.20 a pint, very reasonable considering the overall strength.



Other beers I missed out on included two from Potbelly - Pigs Do Fly 4.4% and SOAB 5%, RCH Old Slug Porter 4.5% and Rudgate York Chocolate Stout 5%. The Opening Hours which are important if you are using Public Transport to visit the Transporter Alehouse are currently:-

Tue-Thur 6-30 to 10.30pm, Friday 2-11pm, Sat 12-11pm and Sun 12-7pm (closed on Mondays), but these may change as we move into the spring and summer months.

Stephen Nakoneczny





East Beds have selected breweries within 30 miles of Biggleswade. The pubs listed sell at least one local ale of good quality on a regular basis. 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 & an increase in local identity and pride.

Breweries in the scheme

Potton, Potton, Beds.

B&T, Shefford, Beds.

White Park, Cranfield, Beds.

Red, Gt. Staughton, Hunt'don Buntingford, Royston, Herts. Wells & Youngs, Bedford.

Alehouse, St Albans, Herts.

Red Squirrel, Potten End, Herts. L. Buzzard, L. Buzzard, Beds

McMullen, Hertford, Herts. Milton, Cambridge, Cambs. Concrete Cow, Milton Keynes. Cambridge Moonshine, Cambs. Hopping Mad, Olney, Bucks.

Ampthill, Ampthill, Beds

Potbelly, Kettering, Northants. Copper Kettle, Rushden, Nhants Tring, Tring, Herts

Pubs in the scheme

Vicars Inn, Arlesey

Golden Pheasant & New inn, Biggleswade

March Hare, Dunton

Sir William Peel, Sandy Coach & Horses, Stotfold

Chequers, Wrestlingworth Thornton Arms, Everton

Coach House & Rising Sun, Potton

Engineers Arms, Henlow

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'.

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

Golden Pheasant, Biggleswade REAL CIDER New Inn, Biggleswade Cock, Broom March Hare, Dunton Thornton Arms, Everton Engineers Arms, Henlow Old Transporter, Henlow Sir William Peel, Sandy Coach & Horses, Stotfold



Apple Cottage, Baldock, Herts Millwhites, Boxmoor, Herts Cassels Cider, Cambridge Franklins Cider, Dunton, Beds Hereward Cider, Elv. 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

Yorky Bars - part one

I recently visited York with Carol and fellow CAMRA member Ian from Eaton Ford. We met an old comrade of mine and gave him a couple of crates of Belgian ales, one had been maturing at home for a year, as it was bottle-conditioned. As we were staying overnight it would have been churlish not to have had a pint or two so we met Mick, a native of York, on the Friday afternoon. Carol dropped Ian and I off near the top of Alma Terrace where we walked down to the **Wellington**, one of several Sam Smith's pubs in the city.



The beer range was limited, but we had a couple of Old Brewery bitters at a very reasonable price of £1.80 per pint, certainly a bit of a surprise for Ian who is sometimes forced to frequent London pubs where £4.00 a pint is fast becoming the norm. The Wellington is a lovely little pub in the middle of a terrace of Victorian houses and was bought by the brewery in 1887 and hasn't changed much since.

As you walk off the street the bar is on the left of the entrance passageway with another room directly opposite and a Snug at the back where the garden and toilets can also be found. The landlady had a sense of humour and the locals were very friendly so, to be quite honest, what more could one want in a pub – clean, friendly, historic, inexpensive – only a better beer range. On the wall in the corner of the bar is a typewritten history of the pub. It was quite interesting, so we had another pint to allow more reading time.

Turning left outside the Wellington takes you down to the riverside walk leading you to the city and eventually past the Kings Arms on Kings Staith(e) which is the pub always shown on the television when York floods, which is fairly regularly. Real Ale drinkers shouldn't get too upset about the place being flooded as only keg is sold – perhaps something to do with the cellar being underwater at certain times of the year although I suspect that even keg drinkers may notice the slightly different flavour of their normal poison and the Ouse water which flows past the outside terrace.

Turning left when you reach the top of the Ouse Bridge steps takes you across the river and eventually up the slight hill which is Micklegate. About two-thirds of the way along Micklegate on the right hand side (next door to the York Brewery) is **Brigantes** which always has an interesting range of beers which, in my experience, are always in excellent condition.



The pub wasn't too crowded unlike how it would have been, perhaps, thirty years ago when most pubs in cities and towns were busy on Friday afternoon as it was POETS day - "P**s Off Early, Tomorrow's Saturday" – another worthwhile British tradition which has, sadly, fallen by the wayside. When Mick arrived we thought we'd have a bit of a wander through York rather than spend the whole evening in Brigantes. After all, Ian wasn't a frequent visitor so we thought we'd show him some of the other pubs in town so after finishing our pints we retraced our steps back down Micklegate.

The "Micklegate Run" is a traditional feature of York where, apparently since time began and boys thought they were men, it has been the habit for gangs of lads to have at least one drink in every pub down the length of the thoroughfare. In 2002 the Falcon, a name which had served the pub for several hundred years, became Rumours and was apparently an integral stop-off on said Micklegate Run.



Now Rumours has become the **Falcon Tap** with six hand pulled beers making the most of the space afforded by its fairly narrow frontage. There is a front bar which perhaps has room for a dozen people at a pinch & a corridor leads to the more spacious rear bar.

After a pint or two in there we crossed Micklegate and turned to the right into the cobbled St Martins Lane to the **Ackhorne**. It's a very friendly boozer with a half a dozen beers including the regulars of Rooster Yankee and Deuchars IPA. Unlike the Falcon, the Ackhorne has a broad street frontage but is not deep, although they still manage to accommodate a small garden/terrace at the back. Although there are two entrances – one virtually at each end of the pub - close inspection reveals that there was a third doorway where there is now a window to the right of the left hand entrance.



Years ago I chatted with the landlady, as she was trying to discover the complete history of the building, but never found out the whole story. Even if the architecture doesn't interest you it's a great pub for having a few pints in and more laidback than other Micklegate pubs nearby. We left and returned to the Micklegate with four more pubs still to find. You will have to wait for the next issue to see how we got on.

Part two in the next issue

Barry Price



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BEDFORD'S BEER FOR THE BEDFORD BLUES

A few little gems by the water

It is often said that the slow relaxed pace of a narrowboat holiday marries well with the enjoyment of fine ales. After several years of extensive self-funded research into this theory I have yet to find any evidence to the contrary. But we like to maintain an ongoing study and so, provisioned with his 'n' hers supplies of Hecks dry cider and Rebellion Poop Deck, accompanied by George the ship's cat we collected our craft, Little Gem, and set off from Rose Narrowboats in Stretton-Under-Fosse on a somewhat drizzly Monday afternoon with an objective defined with the military precision that these enterprises demand as "going some way up the Ashby canal and turning round when we feel like it".



I had chosen the route for selfish reasons as it took me through an area that I used to live in some 25 years ago and I thought that it would be nice to see it from the canal perspective and check out any changes. Oh how the God of irony was smiling when I made this decision, but more of that later. I had sold the route to my crew, your cider rep, on the basis that there were a good few real cider pubs en route plus only one lock to get through.

This was at Hawkesbury Junction, also known as Sutton Stop after a former lock keeper and our first overnight stop. The pub here is the Greyhound, a recent local POTY. So far on my aquatic travels I have found that people have thankfully resisted the temptation to call similarly located pubs the "Lock Inn", but I'm sure someone will be able to inform me otherwise.



The rain had stopped before we arrived so we tramped our way down a slightly squelchy towpath to the hostelry. I fancied a Damson porter which alas had just finished, so still wanting something dark I went for a very well kept Theakston's Mild. After a pleasant meal and second pint, we returned to our boat to prepare for the next day's voyage.

Tuesday morning saw a marked improvement in the weather so after a slick transition through the lock we cruised briefly up the Coventry Canal, before executing a perfect but unobserved turn into the Ashby. Our journey timing for the day worked out well enough to invite my old friend and colleague Dave, who originally introduced me to CAMRA, to join us for a lunchtime stop at the Lime Kilns. This pub, situated at the point where the A5 crosses the canal, with customer moorings available it is a popular haunt with boaters and locals alike. I indulged in the pleasures of Ringwood 49er and Jennings Cocker Hoop then the lighter Marston's Burton Bitter, leaving the Pedigree for our homeward leg and the home-made pies for a visit by more conventional transport later in the year.

A short but pleasant afternoon cruise in the sunshine saw us mooring up at Stoke Golding. Our intended destination here was the George and Dragon, a short walk up the hill into the centre of the village. This pub was revitalised in 2011 when it became the brewery tap for the nearby Church End Brewery.



As such it regularly stocks four core Church End ales, plus three seasonal ales and a guest. This was a local branch pub of the month in June 2012 and well frequented by CAMRA members. As such, whilst working my way through the Goat's Milk, What the Fox's Hat, Vicar's Ruin and Stout Coffin we overheard said 'C' word in a conversation between the landlady and one of the customers. It turned out that he was a member of the Hinckley and Bosworth having a quick tipple before the minibus arrived to take him on one of their regular mystery tours. Shortly after the bus arrived it transpired that there were spare seats available and we were welcome to come along as their guests.

Jo elected to stay with the cider but suggested that I go and try somewhere a little further afield. It wasn't long before the bus pulled up at our destination, a walking tour of Barwell, the place where I used to live before moving down here and the reason for my previous reference to ironic circumstance. Still, it gave me an opportunity to see how my old haunts had changed and discover a new brew to me, Grand Slam from the Wood Farm Brewery near Rugby. After a while I received a message from Jo that finding the way back to the boat was proving rather tricky. I made the short taxi journey back to the G&D where we then both had a pleasant stroll which took us safely back to our mooring. Wednesday was a steady cruise up to Shackerstone, where we had elected to make our turn around. We were too early in the season for the steam railway, which is I have it on good authority a worthwhile way to explore the Bosworth area and associated hostelries.

Indeed, Hinckley and Bosworth CAMRA run a Rails and Ales festival, this year to be held 24-26 July. For our part we took a short stroll down to the Rising Sun, where I had a jar of Old Friend from the Derby Brewing Company. And so, back the way we came.



As we had made good use of our stops on the outward journey, for the return we elected to find other quiet places where we could sit and enjoy our on-board provisions. We stopped at a water point near the Lime Kilns on a very damp Thursday lunchtime and decided to supplement the tea for the tillerman with an extra pint. On Friday we returned the boat on time and gradually got our land legs back, but only temporarily as we will be out again on another boat in the summer.

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