



the

Casket

Campaign for Real Ale

FREE

May 2016



EAST BEDFORDSHIRE

www.eastbedscamra.org.uk

casket@eastbedscamra.org.uk



Pub of the Year Awards 2016 - see page 14-16

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The Casket

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A word from the Editor

Campaigning continues to protect our local pubs and in January Central Beds Council accepted the **Kings Arms** and **Queens Head** in Sandy as **Assets of Community Value**. I would like to thank local Sandy CAMRA members Gareth Thomas and Richard Spencer for filling in the original online nomination forms. The branch is currently targeting more pubs which could be under threat of closure in the near future or need protection based on historical or architectural merit or if they are the last pub in the village. ACV forms have been submitted for the **Royal Oak**, Potton with the result due out in June. Also a community led ACV for the **Sugar Loaf**, Meppershall has run into difficulties, see Page 4.

The **Old Transporter Ale House** has joined the LocALe scheme. They regularly have ales in from the likes of Potbelly, Tring, Buntingford & Leighton Buzzard. We are keeping an eye on the **Chequers**, Wrestlingworth where locALes seem to have disappeared and been replaced by East Anglian ales from the Woodfordes etc. The sales of real cider and perry continue to grow in 12 local pubs with another pub likely to join soon. In the coming months the branch will be expand the data and use of **Whatpub**. We shall take more photos of interior rooms and garden areas to make the website look more attractive. We may approach more local clubs who serve Real Ale to offer them a place on Whatpub, even if they do not have an open policy for the general public to visit.

John Goodlet

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LOCAL PUB & BREWERY NEWS

Pubs News

The Crown, Stotfold

A recent chat with landlord Keith in April revealed that the owner had invested in a significant refurbishment of the pub during the previous autumn which suggests the future of the Crown is now secure. The development work at the rear is complete now with the larger section of the garden taken into the grounds of the two new houses. But a manageable patio area has been retained by the pub. At the front there is a new picket fence and inside there are new window shutters which contribute to a cosy atmosphere during winter evenings and help reduce the noise for neighbours. The toilets have also been completely refurbished to a high standard.



At the bar is GK IPA and two guest ales, a strong ale such as Abbot is served direct from the cellar, plus Weston's Old Rosie cider. Games remain popular with pool, darts and a Golf Society, plus TV Sports. There is a regular meat raffle and monthly live music (last Saturday). Sandwiches and snacks are available or a buffet for special events, Opening hours are now Mon-Thu 12-11.30, Fri-Sat 12-1.30am & Sun 12-11.

The Sugar Loaf, Meppershall

This pub may be under threat of closure as rumours of a potential conversion to a mini-supermarket (Co-op) arose before Christmas. The owners Hawthorn Leisure may try to dispose of the pub without putting it on the open market. In the last few months residents have got involved in a bid to secure the future of the pub. A resident as part of the Parish Council nominated the Sugar Loaf as an Asset of Community Value with Central Beds Council, but the lack of detailed information led to it being rejected.



Another attempt was made by Paul Smith for a community group of 45 members. But owners Hawthorn Leisure engaged lawyers to fight the ACV on the grounds that the pub is NOT the last pub in the village. It seems that the Airman Hotel at Meppershall Hoo is technically in the same postcode and parish as the pub, even though it is a 40 minute walk from the village centre on public roads with no footpath or streetlights. Hawthorn also argue that there are many other licensed premises in the immediate area and that the Sugar Loaf is NOT needed.

In turn the ACV process is highlighting that the village of nearly 700 residents already has one shop and a nearby licensed club is due to close down soon. In mid April the announcement came that this ACV had been **rejected** by Central Beds Council.

East Beds CAMRA have provided some feedback to the community about their ACV and offered to get involved if another nomination is launched, but time is running out.

True Briton, Arlesey

A warm welcome to new manager Kerry Kavanagh, who took the reins on 22nd December last year on a 12 year lease. She hails from Southend and is making her mark by redecorating the pub. An internal wall has been removed leaving a larger open plan area, recently painted and further work will be done to improve some of the furniture. The walls and ceilings have been decluttered, but will retain historical pictures. Pool is popular with a monthly competition, BT Sports on TV, a quiz, new jukebox, occasional themed evenings and a disco every six weeks.



The pub is open Mon-Fri 2-midnight, Sat 12 –midnight and Sun 12-11. At the bar the regular ale is often Adnams or Doom Bar, plus a second ale on busier weekends.

A happy hour promotion knocks 50p off a pint 6.30-7.30 Mon-Fri. Kerry hopes to get a small beer festival of six ales & 2 ciders ready for August bank holiday weekend.

Check the pubs Facebook page for upcoming events “THETRUEBRITON”.

The Fox & Duck, Stotfold

Landlady Maria Castleton intends to run a summer beer festival. So far the most likely date is **17th-19th June 2016**. Maria is talking to Tring Brewery about borrowing a stillage and bar for 6 barrels of ales to be served in a marquee, plus some boxes of Real Cider. Two more ales will be available at the bar, plus an extra two to rotate as needed, so 10 ales in all over the weekend.



Maria is looking at running some events to attract customers, such as a barbecue, live music and children's activities. Further local advertising will take place nearer the time. CAMRA welcomes a new pub beer festival and urge local residents in Stotfold to support Maria and her team by attending the event and help make it a success.

CAMRA are seeking volunteers from the local membership who would like to help serve at the bar on busy sessions in return for a couple of free beers or a meal token. Please contact branch secretary Barry Price by 31st May if you are interested (secretary@eastbedscamra.org.uk)



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The Chequers



BEER FESTIVAL

REAL ALE | LIVE MUSIC | BBQ

27TH, 28TH, 29TH MAY

The Chequers Inn is a Grade I listed 17th-century public house, located in the rural village of Wrestlingworth on the east Bedfordshire border with Cambridgeshire.

Dave and Carin's focus is to maintain the feel of a "village local" where drinkers are encouraged to try the variety of real ales and quality wines, both local and from afar.

Whilst drinking is the focus, The Chequers also provide a good, wholesome pub meal with all meats sourced from local butchers chosen by you.

We hope to see you soon!

Casket Cryptic Crossword

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

Across

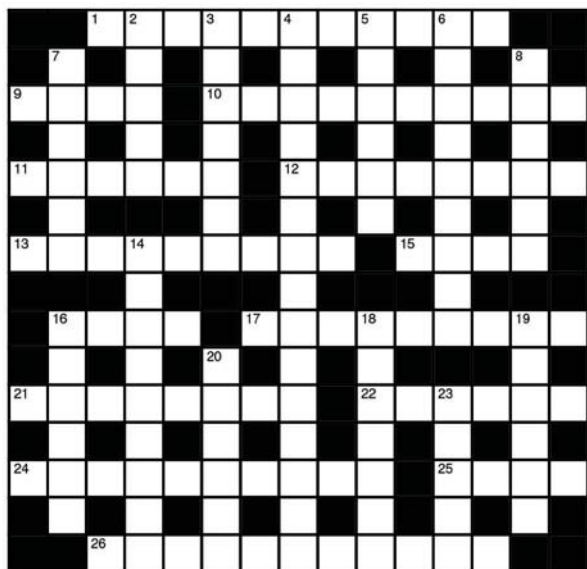
- 1 Cookware grand for half grand local brewer. (11)
- 9 Support for classy foreign brew. (4)
- 10 Entertainer's offspring, noted porcine rustler, unaggressive Yorkshire beer. (3,3,4)
- 11 When ice age is gone, genealogical pattern shows the measure of a man. (6)
- 12 Explosive yet inert for ages. (8)
- 13 Doctor Leonard was a character, but doctor Sylvester was the..... (4,5)
- 15 London without South Bank area is still a feature. (4)
- 16 Heard 23 reference to York waterway? Figures, I suppose. (4)
- 17 Picking up street map, disorientated had eyed an exciting bewilderment of a beer. (5,4)
- 21 Locked in we miss our ideal state (8)
- 22 Come hell and high water Yorkshire micro is there. (6)
- 24 Go tear into confused arbitrator. (10)
- 25 Revolutionary loud cook. (4)
- 26 Isle hid rare style of beer. (5,3,3)

Down

- 2 You and me and you said soft metal is common. (5)
- 3 Fairy without said tale gets a ton of Midlands beer. (7)
- 4 Former Worcestershire brew cold make minor brunette be tipsy. (6,3,6)
- 5 River rose. (6)
- 6 Dahl, perhaps, with a fruity change of heart finds a treasure of a beer. (5,4)
- 7 Ingredients added to this beer in 16s? (3,3)
- 8 Midlands brewer, in probably the best situation. (6)
- 14 Sailor Ron, all at sea, gets the call of the wild. (5,4)
- 16 Student finishes off baloney for Belgian beer. (6)
- 18 Burgundy maybe, showing communication, to the point, in action. (4,3)
- 19 Very drunk, last in the list rounds on many (6)
- 20 When followed by one said to be a grasper he's the noblest first of 6. (6)
- 23 Pub said to be for the diet conscious. (5)

Compiled by Chris Freeman

The solution is on Page 26





POTBELLY BREWERY

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2016 Beer Festival

3RD, 4TH & 5TH JUNE

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DIARY DATES

- MAY.** 10th, Branch AGM, Engineers Arms, Henlow, 8 pm
- JUNE.** 19th, Branch Social Bike Ride, meet New Inn, Biggleswade, 12.30 pm
then pubs in Dunton, Hinxworth, Ashwell, Baldock, Stotfold & Henlow
- JULY.** 9th, Branch Social, Sir William Peel Cider Festival, Sandy, 3 pm onwards
12th, Branch Meeting, Kings Arms, Sandy, 8 pm

BEER FESTIVALS

- May.** 23rd-28th. 43rd Cambridge Beer Festival, Jesus Green, Cambridge **CAMRA**
27th-30th. Beer & Cider Festival at the Chequers, Wrestlingworth
- June.** 9th-11th. Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival, Hitchin Rugby Club, **CAMRA**
Old Hale Way, Hitchin
17th-19th. Beer & Cider Festival, Fox & Duck, Stotfold
- July.** 8th-11th. 5th Sir William Peel Cider Festival, High Street, Sandy
23rd-24th. Broomstock Real Ale & Music Bash, Cock, Broom [£8 fee on Sat]
28th-31st. Beer Festival, Coach & Horses, Stotfold
- Aug.** 9th-13th. The Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, London **CAMRA**
23rd-27th. The 38th Peterborough Beer Festival, the Embankment,
Bishops Road, Peterborough **CAMRA**
25th-29th. Cider Festival, Coach & Horses, Stotfold

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The 7th Sir William Peel Beer Festival

Due to the predicted rotation of the Cosmic Bodies, the Sir William Peel held its 7th beer festival in April as an homage to all things space, time and planetary, (Sci-fi to the populace in general) with all the 32 beers having a link (albeit some of them obscure/tenuous) with Sci-fi subjects, obvious names such as Moonraker (6.5%) from JW Lees and Star (4.3%), a universally enjoyed ale from Portobello Brewery, to the more ambiguous Allgate Brewery's Dry Bones (4%) - as in "Bones", Dr McCoy in Star Trek & Ghost Train (4.2%) to which, even ratted, I could find no astronomic link.

As usual, the pub and one of the old stables outdoors were decorated in keeping with the theme, including entrance through a Tardis, a Dalek in the bar (many customers choosing to drink behind the couches due to its presence), a challenge to find 25 Sci-fi quotes located round the pub and identify the films (Hoorah! - *films* not movies!) they came from, a barbeque and either a Disco, Karaoke or live music every evening.



The well-supported "6 of the best" – 6 thirds for £7.50 – gave the beer curious a chance to sample the varied styles of stouts, milds & bitters without suffering re-entry sickness. A special mention for Bexar County brewery who supplied "Mystique", a blue/green beer - it looked beer-coloured to me, but I was suffering from Inter-Galactic Hyper-Space disorder, aka imbibers excess – and was sold in aid of the pub's favoured charity, Clic-Sargent. The Sir William Peel set a target to raise £15,000 for its favoured charity, Clic Sargent, which is the children and young people with cancer charity. Lindsey Hehir, the Peel's landlady, initially chose Clic Sargent in 2012 in a roundabout way; her daughter, Katie, wanted to run the London Marathon for Clic Sargent, but there was an entry fee of £2,000.



Lindsey hit on the idea of doing some fee-raising events – quiz nights etc – to raise the funds and it proved so successful that the target was met with change to spare. This became the spur to carry on to a new target, which rose as time went by, to a magnificent £15,000. Following money raised at beer festivals, discos and other diversions that total was also surpassed and the new target is £20,000. I hope to be writing before too long reporting that this total has been reached!

Well attended by the well behaved, even the weather didn't stop another excellent festival blasting off. Enough with the puns, already.....

Chris Bunyan

By the time I got t'Phoenix.....

...I was gasping, but I hadn't passed a pub along the way... Not really, I wasn't "gasping" as I'd just hot-footed it from the Golden Ball with my old Trade Union mate, Mick, on a cold Friday night in March.

I was looking forward to trying a York pub which, in my thirty-five years of visiting the city, I'd never entered. I'd walked past it once or twice with my wife, Carol, when we were traversing the city walls but never called in.

We'd gone to York for a long weekend as I had to, amongst other things, deliver a couple of crates of Belgium's finest to Mick who I try to keep supplied irregularly as he can't drive to Belgium and back in a day as we can.

Carol and I had a busy few days as we also took the opportunity to have an amble around York and Harrogate with a snack at Betty's Tea Rooms in the latter; visit the North York Moors Railway to watch the Flying Scotsman making its way through the countryside after a break of many years; have a stroll around Whitby which included lunch at what we consider one of the best fish restaurants we've visited in the UK - "The Magpie"; and have a pint or two in between.

After dropping Mick's beer off I arranged to meet him in Brigantes a bit later and Carol and I went into the city centre and visited the House of Trembling Madness which is a quirky little bar above a beer shop in Stonegate. It has the appearance of a small mediæval hall with stuffed animals and various other odds and ends decorating the walls. Both the staff and the various customers we shared our large alcove table with were very friendly and the bar serves three real ales on handpump and a small selection of food. The beers we tried were well kept, although a little expensive for York, but the biggest drawback was the interminable wait for service – not helped by people standing at the six foot long bar rather than moving away after being served. It was OK but not a bar I'd recommend for anybody in a hurry.

I then left Carol for **Brigantes** where Mick and I had a couple of pints before setting off for a couple in the **Ackhorne**. We were then going to visit the Swan on Bishopgate Street but decided to visit an old haunt of ours, the **Golden Ball**, which is now run as a co-operative. It was taken over by the local community after the previous owners considered closing it.



[Who owns the Golden Ball? - all the regular customers]

When we arrived there at 8pm the four rooms were all fairly full but it was a bit disconcerting to see so many small children in the pub running around although, as the community own the place, there was no reason why they shouldn't have whoever they like in the pub. At about 9pm most of the younger elements had disappeared with their parents, which left us to enjoy a sample of the seven real ales on offer including one of my current UK favourites, Timothy Taylor Golden Best.

We left and made straight for the **Phoenix**, crossing the river on Skeldergate Bridge then following the City walls around to the right then left before coming to a gap on the left leading directly to the Phoenix in George Street. The sound of live jazz being played on an electric piano came from the back bar and the serving counter in a broad passageway had a black-board listing five real ales. It was a pleasure to go into the cosy front room, heated by a roaring coal fire, given the temperature outside which was now almost freezing. Timothy Taylor Landlord, Wold Top Bitter and Abbeydale Deception were amongst the offerings.



Again, all the beers I sampled during the afternoon and evening were in good, very good or excellent condition and a brisk walk of a mile or so back to our hotel rounded off a thoroughly enjoyable little pub crawl which barely scratched the surface of the many great pubs which serve York's inhabitants and tens of thousands of visitors.

The following evening Carol and I visited the **Blue Boar** - previously the Little John (five real ales); the **Three Tuns** (six real ales); the **Golden Fleece** (four real ales) and finished the evening in the **Blue Bell** which, when I first visited the city in 1981 was a John Smith keg-only pub but now, thankfully, has seven real ales.

Even more interesting than the historical interior of the Blue Bell was the 1939 right-hand drive Citroen Traction Cabriolet (convertible) which pulled up outside driven by a very friendly York resident who also was called Mick. Quite unusually for somebody owning a classic car - there are apparently only sixteen of those built in Slough still in existence - Mick was more than happy to let anyone sit in the driver's seat, clamber into the "dickie" seat at the rear and even have a poke around under the bonnet - very refreshing.



My final evening was spent with Mick in **Brigantes** chatting about old times and old comrades we had lost in the last couple of years. We also did what most blokes do in pubs when they get together...put the world to rights!

York's a great place for beer drinkers once you get away from the popular areas and even where lots of visitors congregate there are enough pubs with well preserved historical interiors to create interest.

All in all a thoroughly enjoyable weekend - and many thanks to Jimmy Webb whose song of separation inspired the title of this piece.

Barry Price

Pub of the Year Awards 2016

In February and March 2016, East Beds CAMRA presented their annual awards in the Pub of the Year competition. The first presentation was to the **New Inn Ale House & Kitchen, Biggleswade** on Saturday 20th February during a beer festival. The New Inn won the overall East Beds Branch **Pub of the Year 2016** and there was a great turnout from the local community to see the award.

In order to let all the customers see the event, branch chairman John Goodlet got a rare invite behind the bar to present the award to licensee Corri Burke and her staff. John paid tribute to the fantastic journey undertaken at the New Inn in recent years and applauded their efforts to revive the traditions of old fashioned alehouse in keeping with the history of this fine old coaching inn.

This 'Local Heroes' themed pub has been completely transformed in recent years and follows in the familiar footsteps of the hugely successful Orange Tree, Baldock. The New Inn offers wide array of real ales, combining a mix of Greene King regular and seasonal ales along with a varied list of *free of tie* guest ales, often including a local ale. The bar staff are very knowledgeable about the ales and where possible will serve you with a branded glass to suit your choice of ale or the more European goblet shaped glasses to enhance the aroma of the ales.



Cider lovers too will enjoy a visit to the New Inn, a rare outlet in these parts for Thistly Cross ciders, served on handpump. These Scottish ciders vary using seasonal fruits throughout the year. The New Inn is gaining an excellent reputation for food and also opens early for the breakfast crowds.



The most exciting news coming out of the New Inn, is the birth of a new micro-brewery. The garage at the rear of the inn has been transformed into a small 4.5 barrel plant and will provide a house beer to the New Inn and Chequers. The first brew was prepared on April 12th and expected to be available to sample towards the end of the month.

If you get the chance check out Corrie's other pub, the **Chequers in Stevenage**. Corrie used to run it directly, but now has friends running it on her behalf. It too has increased its real ale sales, offering a range of eight beers, a mix of Greene King and guest ales, ciders and some Craft keg beers. We have just heard that Corri is now overseeing a third pub, the **Greyhound at Haynes**. We will keep you posted on further developments.

The 2nd presentation was held on Saturday 12th March at the Old **Transporter Ale House, Henlow**. Here, the branch chairman John Goodlet gave the **Most Improved Pub of the Year 2016** award to licensees Stephen and Jay Topham.



What a fantastic start to life at the Old Transporter, which has only been open for 18 months. They have very quickly become a destination pub for ale lovers and since Christmas they have expanded their range of ales served straight from the barrel. You can find between four and eight ales covering a variety of beer styles with regular mini beer festival held every season.

For the presentation weekend there was “dark beer” festival with porters and stouts, including Titanic Porter 4.9 % and Chocolate & Vanilla Stout 4.5%, plus the heavy duty, but easy drinking Marcus Aurelius 7.5% from Milton Brewery.

The pub was rammed for the presentation and more importantly the evenings entertainment provide by the St Albans based band “**Deaf Shepherd**”. This three piece covered a variety of song styles from pop to punk to rock across five decades. One minute they are “Turning Japanese” [the Vapors], then “Whole Lotta Love” [AC/DC], “Take Me Out” [Franz Ferdinand], plus a bunch of classic rock songs from Thin Lizzy, Fleetwood Mac and Deep Purple.



Across the County

Elsewhere in Bedfordshire the South Beds branch presented the **Black Lion, Leighton Buzzard** with its second Pub of the Year award. This is a fantastic alehouse, part of the Burlison Inns estate, hosts many beer and cider festivals and supports local food producers, selling a variety of snacks and sweets. They also awarded the **Bald Buzzard, Leighton Buzzard** with the Best New Pub of the Year 2016, yet another successful new Micropub for Bedfordshire.

Further up the road, the North Beds branch went a little crazy this year with five awards. **The Castle, Bedford** scooped the top award as the branch Pub of the Year. It is a Charles Wells pub located on Newnham Street that has been tastefully refurbished in recent years and alongside the regular Youngs ales, there are two guest beers and some emerging keg craft ales from Charles Wells.

Continued on next page...

The **Fox, Carlton** was named the Country Pub of the Year with the current owner, who has only been there a year, making a big impression with quality Eagle, London Pride and two guest ales. The “Most Improved” Pub of the Year went to the **Bell, Odell**. Again, a wonderful old thatched country pub.

North Beds also awarded the **Polhill Arms, Renhold** with the first branch Cider Pub of the Year prize. The pub features two real ciders during winter and up to four in summer months. Likewise the first branch Club of the Year was awarded to the **RAFA Club**, Ashbunham Road, Bedford. Card carrying CAMRA members are allowed free access, whilst other non-members can pay a small daily fee.

LATE NEWS—

In April the three Bedfordshire branches met up and after much discussion, they decided the 2016 County Awards. Congratulations to the **Black Lion**, Leighton Buzzard as it becomes a back-to-back winner of the **Bedfordshire Pub of the Year 2016** and goes on now into the East Anglian heats of this competition.

The Real Cider competition is gaining in recognition, now that we have a record number of outlets in Bedfordshire selling “bag in the box” style scrumpy cider. It was a very tight contest, but the award goes to the **Engineers Arms, Henlow**. No doubt their successful cider & sausage festival in late February, tipped them over the winners line - see a review on page 21. The presentation will be held during the East Beds branch Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 10th May.

FLYING HIGH

FOR 2016, ALL OUR MONTHLY BEERS ARE NAMED AFTER DE HAVILLAND AIRCRAFT

FOR 2016 WE'VE TEAMED UP WITH THE DE HAVILLAND AIRCRAFT MUSEUM, HELPING TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THEIR NEW HANGER PROJECT. VISIT THE TRING BREWERY SHOP FOR THE CHANCE TO WIN TOURS AND A DE HAVILLAND BI-PLANE FLIGHT.



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HUMMINGBIRD DRAGON RAPIDE QUEEN BEE HOUND GYPSY MOTH DRAGONFLY SEA VIXEN VAMPIRE

In-cider Dealings

Greetings of a fruit based nature to you all!

I begin (as I always must this time of year), with a round up of the Engineers' Arms Cider Festival on 25-28 February. Although, this time billed as the *first* Engineers' Cider *and sausage* festival. Once again a huge range of different styles and tastes in this broad church of apples and pears. With 30+ varieties on offer, there was something for every palate: sweet to dry, fruity to spicy and sensible to scary ABV! As mentioned on this page before, many people have raised the issue of cider strength - especially for drivers, and it was heartening to see lower alcohol levels available alongside the eye-watering versions!

All complimented beautifully by the apron-adorned Kevin at the barbecue preparing a selection of sausages, burgers (and ultimately hot dogs when stock proved too popular for demand!) Another lovely festival, clearly a contributory factor to this being awarded the **County Cider Pub of the Year**. The presentation for this will take place at the AGM on 10th May (details elsewhere) and if it's already passed by when you see this, look out for photographic evidence in a later edition.....



In other news - plans for this year's Potton Apple Day continue, and once again CAMRA have been asked to provide a Cider Bar. In fact our reputation precedes us - as a result of our collaboration with the lovely people at PAD we've been approached by another event to run a similar facility in early October. No details yet but watch this space. If you'd be interested in helping us out at an Apple Day event, by publicising or taking a turn behind the bar do let me know. Time commitment isn't necessarily huge - if there are a few people who can do even an odd hour to give others a break that would be fantastic.

Finally, a word about CAMRA's Cider Month this May. This is in addition to the traditional October promotion, and seems to make a good deal of sense. Autumn may well be the orchard harvest time, but anyone who has enjoyed a refreshing pint of cider during Spring and Summer months can testify to its suitability as a 'warmer weather drink'. Why not try it as an alternative if it's not your usual tippie? We'd love to hear of any discoveries you make. Until next time.....

Jo Freeman

THE THORNTON ARMS

01767 681149



The Thornton Arms would like to welcome you to try our great food nights and superb selection of fine real ales.

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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

B&T, Shefford, Beds.	White Park, Cranfield, Beds.	
Red, Gt. Staughton, Hunt'don	Buntingford, Royston, Herts.	Red Squirrel, Potten End, Herts.
Charles Wells, Bedford.	Alehouse, St Albans, Herts.	L. Buzzard, L. Buzzard, Beds
McMullen, Hertford, Herts.	Concrete Cow, Milton Keynes.	Amphthill, Amphthill, Beds
Milton, Cambridge, Cambs.	Cambridge Moonshine, Cambs.	Tring, Tring, Herts
Potbelly, Kettering, Northants.	Copper Kettle, Rushden, Nhants	

Pubs in the scheme

Vicars Inn, Arlesey	Golden Pheasant & New inn, Biggleswade	March Hare, Dunton
Chequers, Wrestlingworth	Thornton Arms, Everton	Engineers Arms & Old Transporter, Henlow
Sir William Peel, Sandy	Coach & Horses, Stotfold	Coach House & Rising Sun, Potton

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 New Inn, Biggleswade
 Cock, Broom
 March Hare, Dunton
 Thornton Arms, Everton
 Engineers Arms, Henlow
 Old Transporter, Henlow
 Rising Sun, Potton
 Sir William Peel, Sandy
 Coach & Horses, Stotfold
 John O'Gaunt, Sutton



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

Apple Cottage, Baldock, Herts
 Millwhites, Boxmoor, Herts
 Cassels Cider, Cambridge
 Franklins 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

Admiral, Clifton [spring/summer only]

ASK YOUR LOCAL PUB TO STOCK A REAL CIDER OR PERRY

A busy winter for festivals

There was an abundance of festivals to attend during the winter months, some run by CAMRA and others run by local pubs. The season kicked off with a new CAMRA festival at the **Arts & Leisure Centre in Stevenage** over the weekend of 4th-6th February. This welcome addition replaces in part the former Letchworth festival which lost its venue a few years ago. The new location is ideal for bus and train travellers and was situated on the ground floor in the section normally used for Indoor Bowls. The main room was spacious with plenty of nearby facilities, food service etc. A large selection of about 70 ales covered a variety of styles, plus there were 14 speciality “key keg” ales and about 30 ciders. I visited on Saturday afternoon and started with a few halves of lighter ales, before falling into a darker mood, sampling some stouts and porters.

Sadly the Brazilian coffee and vanilla porter from Colchester Brewery had run out, but I did try Hawse Buckler a Black IPA at 5.8% from Oakham Brewery. Then I spotted one of my favourite local breweries, Milton from Cambridge and I tried Nero a 5% oat meal stout and finished with the strong Imperial Roman Stout Marcus Aurelius weighing in at 7.5%. The last beer would normally result in a snooze on the train home, but I had to stay alert as I was only going 2 stops back to Arlesey, I did not want to wake up in Peterborough. Well done to North Herts CAMRA for running this new festival, I am sure it will become a regular event.

The next beer festival took place on 12th-14th February at the **March Hare, Dunton**. An excellent mix of four winter ales on stillage, supported by four further ales at the bar with another 4-6 ales rotating as required. My Saturday afternoon visit by local bus gave me a nice 3 hour window to sample the dark ales. I bought some tokens for half pints and started to sample the Plum Mild from B&T. It went down rather quickly, too quickly in fact as I realised it was a third not a half, a top up was requested and promptly received.



Later I sampled Buntingford's Oatmeal Stout, Church End's Gravedigger's Ale, and a recent arrival in Herts the New River Brewery at Hoddeston with Blind Poet, a smoked porter, before moving to the bar for Digfield's Old Crow Porter. The quality of the ales sampled was superb, as we have come to expect at the March Hare. I decided to have one last pint of the ale I had enjoyed most that day and so I returned to the Plum Mild. A lucky coincidence as I bumped into John Pilling, the new brewer at B&T. We had met before in the Brewery Tap, Shefford and it was good to see John out and about checking out the local pub scene. He expressed an interest in local CAMRA activities and so we might see him a future meeting or event. Well done both John's on that Plum Mild—absolutely gorgeous.

Back to CAMRA events with my first visit to the **Luton Beer festival** in nearly a decade. I was a regular visitor when the event was in the old Drill Hall, but in recent years it has been held in the Hightown Community Sports & Arts Centre on Concorde Street. Sadly, in the intervening years local bus services have been reduced further from the Henlow area and you can't get back out of Luton in the evening towards Hitchin easily. So I drove over to Luton and restricted my visit to a few halves. The festival was split across several rooms.

The Theatre Hall had LocALe & regional ales, the Main Hall hosted a New Ales bar and one for ales from UK National Parks. There was a further room set aside for extra seating away from the hubbub of the main bars. I started out on the Scottish National Parks [quelle surprise] and sampled Inveralmond's Fair Maid, Fyne Ales Jarl and across to the New Ales stand for Strathaven's Old Mortality.



Last Christmas I had received from a pal, a bottle of Milk Stout from a Bristol Brewery, Wiper & True which was fabulous. I noted some other milk stouts at the Luton festival and sampled Gun Brewer Parabellum and one from the Bristol Beer Factory, then I finished with a late entry on the National Parks bar—Great Orme Welsh Black a fine mild. I shall return for a longer visit next year, well done to South Beds CAMRA.

A week later I was lucky enough to find a festival closer to home, in fact in the **Engineers Arms, Henlow**. They held a cider & sausage over the last weekend in February and it turned out to be most enjoyable and extremely successful.

The atmosphere was buoyed by the rugby internationals, plus some live music. There was about 30 ciders and 5 perries across a range of gravities. When I arrived on Friday evening, some young ladies [they all look young to me now] had pretty well demolished the 4% lower gravity raspberry, strawberry and marmalade flavoured ciders. But I found solace in Fanny's Bramble cider and Sandford Orchards Ginger cider, a couple from Dorset Nectar, then a perry or two to finish.

Continued on next page.....

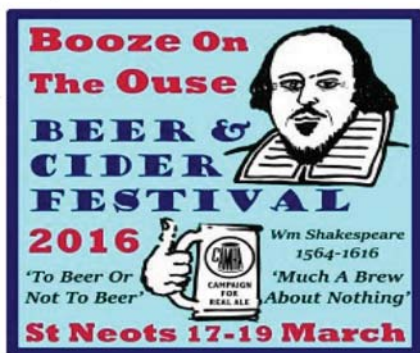
I returned on Saturday and met the lads from RSPB Sandy, they sampled the cider, whilst I went back to beer. But as furtive glances were cast outside, I knew they had their sights set firmly on the sausages served in a bun with onions and mustard—yummy. We took turns at the sausages which were selling well at only £3, fantastic value [we all went twice]. The variety of sausages included spicy beef, Lincolnshire, veggie & several pork varieties.



The cider and sausage festival was a tremendous success. By the end of the weekend, there were only a handful of boxes with any cider left and they went back to the cellar, everything else was sold out. No doubt this event was a pivotal part in the decision to award the Engineers Arms, the 2016 Bedfordshire Cider Pub of the Year award, see pages 14-16. Well done to Kevin and all his team and especially to Claire Sturgeon who has since left the pub and we wish her the very best for the future and thank her for contribution to running such a successful pub over the years.

Back on the road again and a visit north to the **St Neots “Booze on the Ouse” Beer & Cider festival** at the Priory Centre on 17th-19th March marked the end of the Winter season. Just a small but beautifully formed contingent from East Beds CAMRA attended, mostly from the Sandy (sans Temperance Society bicylettes). But in my mind, this is one of the best mid size festivals in East Anglia, I have been mightily impressed in recent years by the variety of beer styles on offer and even in my darkest of moods, I can always find a porter, stout or mild to wash away the ills of the world.

This time I had a very busy weekend, so only a short visit allowed me time to try a few lighter ales such as Old Cannon Best Bitter, Lyme-stone Pounamo (using those weird hops from the land of the long white cloud), Abbeydale’s Dr Morton’s Alphabetti Forgetti (what a mouthful), Charnwood Salvation and finally Three Legs Pale Ale, which was the best of the bunch in my humble opinion



The beer quality as always was excellent and the company was good. Anyway, there endeth the winter season of local pub and CAMRA festivals and we look forward to Spring and Summer with more pub festivals including new events at the Fox & Duck, Stotfold and the True Briton, Arlesey.

John Goodlet

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Enjoyable Days Out

A visit to St Ives in Cambridgeshire (not Cornwall) was an enjoyable day out by public transport. We left Biggleswade and Sandy stations to Huntingdon on the 25th November 2015 and from Huntingdon Station caught the B bus service to St Ives. After going along every street in Huntingdon it seemed we eventually got on the main road to St Ives. This was my first visit to this market town and what a lovely town it is as most traffic is now diverted from the main street by a bypass.

Our first port of call was the **White Hart** on Market Hill, where Sharps Doombar and Fullers London Pride were available. After ordering 6 pints of London Pride these were all returned as *undrinkable*. As only Doombar was available we had our money refunded and left. Not a good start to the day and things could only get better.



They certainly did as we visited **The Oliver Cromwell** in Wellington Street, a lovely backstreet boozier. Available beers were Adnams Broadside and Southwold Bitter, Theakstons Old Peculier, Oakhams JHB, Nene Valley Blond Session Ale, and Long Man Best Bitter. We tried a variety of the beers and they were excellent.

Next pub was **The Royal Oak** at 13 Crown Street, which is an old pub with a lovely environment. Available beers Robinsons Trooper Oakham Tranquility, Car Thief and Inferno. Hobgoblin and Sharps Doombar. All tried in good condition



The last Pub was **Nelsons Head** at 7 Merryland which is a lovely town pub which has a long bar with alcoves. Beers available Nene Valley DXB, Oakham Inferno and Car Thief, Greene King Abbott, Golden Hen, and IPA.



It was now time to catch the bus back to Huntingdon where of course a visit to The Falcon has to be made before returning to the station and back home. So after a poor start things certainly got better.

Another day out was to Downham Market and Ely on 4th December 2015. We caught a train from Sandy, via Biggleswade changed at Hitchin and Cambridge to arrive at Downham Market station where a café/micropub is situated on Platform One. **The Railway Arms** was recommended to me and they must have been having me on as they had only one beer Skinners Betty Stoggs, although they did have a craft beer from Black Wolf Brewery called Gold Digger.

The beer was very enjoyable and there were many Ciders for which they have won CAMRA awards. The Fenland Express café which was the old waiting room is a time warp and has a model train going around the wall although not running on our visit due to them putting up Christmas decorations.



So off to the town and **The Crown Hotel**, 12 Bridge Street, which is a 16th century freehouse with an open fire which was a welcome sight on a chilly day. Beers available Greene King IPA, Abbott and St Edmunds. Woodfordes Nelson and Adnams Southwold Bitter. The beers we tried were excellent and the food coming from the kitchen looked delicious and reasonable priced. We had decided that on our return home a visit was required to **The Drayman's Son** at 29a Forehill in Ely.

What a lovely genuine micropub run by a very pleasant couple Andrew & Jo Pearson who had taken it over in July and changed the name from The Liberty Belle. The new name was chosen by Andrew in honour of his father Ronald, who was a drayman at the old Steward and Patterson brewery at the bottom of Forehill.



It is in a lovely 16th century building which has lovely old signs and has been a ladies' fashion and an antique shop. Beers available were Moonshine Heavenly Matter and Trumpington Tipple, Brandon Oakshield, Moongaze Gold IPA, Turpins Cambridge Black, 8 Sail Oat Malt Stout, Norfolk Kiwi Joe's Norfolk Ale, Tinished Old Smokey Special and Humpty Dumpty The King John. Well worth a visit and they open from 5pm Mon-Wed, 11am Thu-Sat and from noon on Sundays. Back to the station and homeward bound.

Clifford Luff



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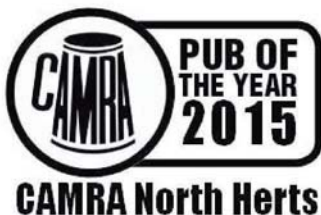
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