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Casket

Campaign for Real Ale

September 2017



EAST BEDFORDSHIRE

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Sugar Loaf wins Planning Application fight - page 3

WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE

Page 4 Local Pub News

Page 10 Du Pain, Du Vin, De Panne?!?

Page 6 Brewery News

Page 14 Local Pub Festival Reports

Page 7 Casket Cryptic Crossword

Page 17 Campaign Corner Report

Page 8 Diary Dates & Beer Festivals

Page 19 North by North-West or Go West Part II

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Issue number 3

Volume 13

2017

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The Casket

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CAMRA East Bedfordshire

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

Copy deadline for next issue 15th Dec 2017

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Printed by Portland Print, Kettering

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A word from the Editor

In recent months the impact of CAMRA listing over 2000 pubs as Assets of Community Value has had a positive effect on government legislation. The planning rules have now been tightened within the "Permitted Development Rights" scheme to remove a loophole allowing pub owners to close a pub and either convert into alternative retail premises or even demolish it. The new laws ensure that a pub owner must now seek planning application for any change of use. As a result, the local community will then be notified of such applications and objections can be made by local residents. Although this process does not go as far as the ACV Community Right to Bid option with the 6 month moratorium, it does address many of the reasons why ACVs were required.

As a result, the advice from CAMRA HQ is that branches no longer need to pursue any new ACVs unless there is a specific threat to a pub's future or in support of a Community Group who definitely want to buy a pub. So East Beds has suspended work on the ACV project for now, but we will continue to monitor existing ACVs. Talking of which, I made brief mention in the last issue that the Sugar Loaf Community Group in Meppershall had successfully defeated Hawthorn Leisure's planning application to convert the pub in a shop. Since then, the tribunal by Hawthorn to overturn the ACV status was also withdrawn and Paul Smith the community leader says that Hawthorn are now considering investing in a refurbishment to support the Sugar Loaf continuing as a pub. But, Hawthorn will still not entertain any discussions about the Community group's wish to buy the pub.

John Goodlet



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LOCAL PUB NEWS

Golden Lion, Clifton

The branch welcomes new tenants to the Golden Lion in Clifton. In early May Dan Willis and Sophie Hogan took over and are making a positive impact on the business. The new opening hours are Mon-Thu 11-11, Fri-Sat 11-midnight and Sun 12-11. Meals are being served daily from 12-9pm offering traditional pub fare such as fish & chips, burgers, salmon & pork belly dishes. Watch out for special offers like 25% discount on meals Mon-Thu 12-5pm.



At the bar, there are three regular ales from Greene King - IPA, Old Golden Hen and a Golden Lion House Ale 3.9%. Coffee and tea is also served and there is a variety of local events. There is a Sunday evening quiz 8-10pm, darts league on Tuesday evenings and the pub can cater for any requested events or parties. Outside, there is new seating in front of the pub and the garden at the rear is being revamped with new children's play equipment. We wish the new tenants all the best with their new venture. For current events and offers, see the website www.goldenlionclifton.co.uk or facebook Golden-Lion-Clifton-Bedfordshire-1402649703124648

Four Horsemen, Sandy

A new micropub opened officially on Sat 29th July in the High Street, Sandy. The Four Horsemen name reflects the collaboration of four friends in setting up this new outlet. The group are three brothers Liam, Daniel and Luke Brittany, plus a friend James Hailey-Law. It is open Tue, Wed, Thu 6-10.30pm, Fri 6-11pm, Sat noon-11pm and Sun noon-9pm.



There will regularly be two real ales (up to 4 on busier weekends) served direct from the barrel at £3.40 a pint, plus wines, spir-its, lagers and ciders (from Lilleys). Two pint takeaway containers are available for a tittle at home. There is also a craft keg Shipwright ale, a Revisionist lager and Kingstone Press cider, all keg products kept cool in a cellar below the pub. The micropub has a maximum capacity of 55 people, with 22 seated with a second room to open later in the year.

Crown Hotel, Biggleswade

This used to be a prominent pub on the High Street opposite the Market Square, but had been closed for four years. It was bought by J.D. Wetherspoons and finally re-opened on 8th August after a refit.

It will operate as a hotel with 9 en-suite bedrooms. There isn't too much to say about it, as it follows the same formula as other Wetherspoons pubs in terms of opening hours, food menu etc. The downstairs area has been opened up and feels somewhat cavernous during the daytime as the bar is way back in the rear of the pub. The outside seating area is the best feature and the bar can be accessed via two doors from the side alley.



However, there was a strong turnout from the local community to check out the latest pub and see what was on offer. On the first two weekends it was reported that the pub was jam packed in the evenings and close to running out of beer. It was mainly a younger crowd drinking the latest trendy alcopops and the environment was so noisy that many other gave it a miss.

No doubt, the initial interest will drop in the coming months and the atmosphere at the Crown will settle down. There would have been an initial hit on the takings for other nearby pubs, but it seems that the Crown is bringing in new customers to the town. A good start for the Crown, but they need to improve Staff Training after reports of staff taking money before pouring drinks and not knowing which beers and on or off, resulting in awkward refunds.

40th Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

Wednesday 4th to Saturday 7th October 2017
Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SL

Open Wed 4-11, Thu Fri 12-11
Sat 11.30-10.30

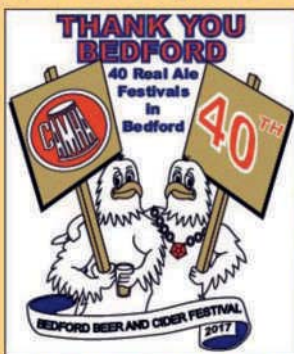
Admission before 4pm: £1
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Brewery News

We are pleased to confirm that **Buntingford Brewery** is operational again. A new company Buntingford Brewery Limited was formed by two North Herts based CAMRA members, Rob Scahill and Andy Rawnsley, who are also pub landlords in Baldock and Stevenage. They have taken on the lease of the Brewhouse at Greys, near Royston and purchased or leased all the brewery equipment, casks and ale recipes. Keith Bott, formerly of Titanic Brewery has joined the company as a non-executive director. Many favourite ales have re-appeared in local pubs such as Twitchell, Polar Star, Hurricane and Templar Gold. Other classic ales such as Royston Red, Britannia and 92 Squadron will be brewed later in the year and there may be smaller batch runs of single hop and special ales.

The new company was set up and registered for VAT with HM Revenue & Customs fairly quickly. However, the new team did find some difficulties with the amount of laborious administration required to seek approval under the recently introduced Alcohol Wholesaler Registration Scheme (AWRS) which the Casket covered in the May edition.

At the **New Inn**, there have been no new house ales from the Biggleswade Brewhouse for several months. Having gone through several managers in the last few months, we hope the New Inn will recover from recent inactivity and get brewing again. Over in **Potton**, local CAMRA member Richard Haigh has now submitted a Planning Application to convert a small industrial unit near the Market Square into a micro-brewery. Richard has a strong business plan to support his application and we hope he will get approval soon and maybe the brewery will come online towards the end of the year.



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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

- 6 In this town we do not rub the wrong way (6)
- 8 Former PM picks up a member, having gained nothing earlier, for North Eastern contingent. (4,4)
- 10 Man of marble goes to peices when captivated by a north American girl. (8)
- 11 Oi baldy! You lost awfully! What the Devil? (6)
- 12 Where to jump, middle to end, not certain every-one initially has this freedom. (12)
- 14 Point of support for an explosive rodent (6)
- 16 Oh, you said there are two ways round to market town. (6)
- 19 Was godly call misinterpreted by aged scoundrel? (3,9)
- 22 A symbol of cheer, as we are to Antipodeans, doubly so. (3,3)
- 23 More than pint size and bigger than us? (2,6)
- 24 Dire plot in knots you say? (4,4)

- 25 Monarch after next in line informally is after a pint. (6)

Down

- 1 Manoeuvres round the French, showing a foreign side. (8)
- 2 Intermediate bearing round strong drink is a source of power (6)
- 3 Green Day's frontman? Way to tantrum! (2,5)
- 4 Lodgings in disarray - hop it! (8)
- 5 Wise man gets his head round electoral system and turns nasty. (6)
- 7 At college sister meets revolutionary revolution-ary to go after a highball. (2,1,5)
- 9 Inoffensive noble address lacks alternative. (4)
- 13 Make economies over a better example. (3,5)
- 15 Abbey girl or boy, too wise it's said about damage to Grafton brew (4,4)
- 17 Commonly a pub will ruin a raw steak - YOLO, no sweat! (5,3)

- 18 Fruity tittle understood to be a relief to forward engagement? (7)

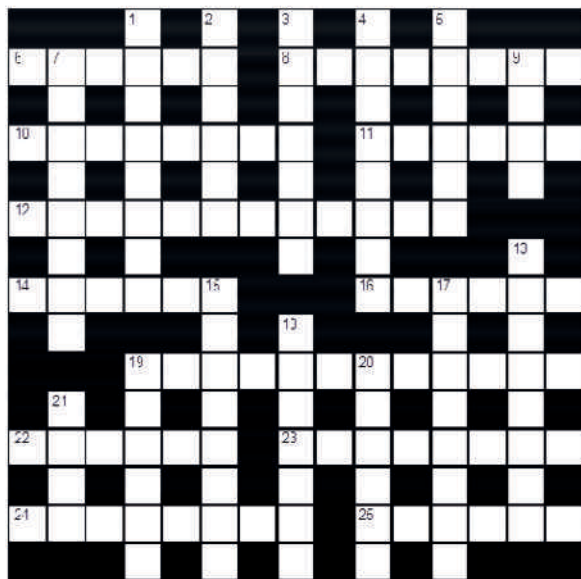
- 19 Flier has someone to map out their diet. (6)

- 20 Frilly edging for example bequest. (6)

- 21 Warm up for reported chemist. (4)

Compiled by Chris Freeman

The solution is on Page 20



DIARY DATES

- SEP.** 6th. Branch Meeting, Wheatsheaf, Biggleswade, 8 pm [Wednesday evening]
24th. Cider stall @ Potton Apple Day, St Mary's Hall, Potton 12-4 pm
30th. Cider stall @ Fairfield Apple Day, Community Hall, Kipling Crescent, Fairfield 12-4 pm
- OCT.** 1st. Cider stall @ Stotfold Apple Day, Brook Street Car Park, 1 pm
28th. All Beds London Social, meet Noon-12.30pm [Route TBA]
- NOV.** 15th. Branch meeting, True Briton, Arlesey 8 pm [Wednesday evening]
- DEC.** 1st or 8th. Branch Xmas Social & Buffet, Engineers Arms, Henlow 8pm
[to be confirmed]

BEER FESTIVALS

- Sep.** 27th-30th. St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival, Alban Arena, St. Albans **CAMRA**
29th-1st, 6th "Grin and Beer It" Beer Festival, March Hare, Dunton
- Oct.** 4th-7th. The Bedford Beer & Cider Festival, Corn Exchange, St. Paul's Square, Bedford **CAMRA**
21st-25th. Rochford Beer & Cider Festival, Freight House, Rochford **CAMRA**
26th-29th. Engineers Arms Beer Festival, High Street, Henlow
24th-28th. Norwich Beer Festival, St. Andrew's & Blackfriars Halls **CAMRA**
- Dec.** 5th-9th. Pigs Ear Beer Festival, Round Chapel, Powerscroft Road, Hackney



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Opening Times

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Admission Charges

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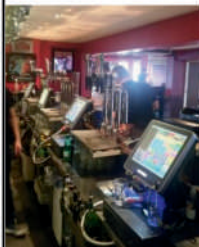
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Du Pain, Du Vin, De Panne?!?

On our day trips to Belgium, Carol and I usually start in Carrefour, Cité Europe just outside Calais where we get a few cases of wine, extra virgin olive oil, some fresh fish or mussels and a baguette and anything else which takes our fancy. Then we head for the Belgian equivalent of Dodge City (that's what it seems like anyway) where every saloon, sheriff's office, telegraph station, stabling yard and house of ill-repute has been replaced by tobacco shops, petrol stations, a cake shop or chippy. Welcome to **Adinkerke** the first town in West Flanders across the France/Belgium border. Actually it is not as bad as I make out as this part of Adinkerke is a bit of an outpost of the actual small town, the bulk of which can be found on the other side of the Kanaal Duinkerke-Furnes on the road from the Calais-Ostend motorway to the seaside resort of De Panne – and don't forget to stop in at Delhaize supermarket for your beer on the left hand side as you head toward De Panne.

Apart from the plethora of tobacco shops there is also a small Military Cemetery which was quite unusual as it contained 168 British & Commonwealth combatants from World War One and 55 from World War Two. There are also a number of graves for Czech, Russian and German combatants. As you walk through the gate there is one grave noticeably separate from the rest and that is of a Nafar (Private) from the Egyptian Labour Corps who was a casualty of WW1. Two graves from each of the World Wars commemorate RFC/RAF officers including Squadron Leader John Mungo Park whose name will be familiar to those still waving their hats and shouting "Hurrah!" every time a Spitfire, Hurricane or Lancaster "buzzes" Shuttleworth.



Later outside a tobacco shop we were approached by an English couple who asked if we could help the chap with them who didn't speak English. Now I'm quite well known for my linguistic *faux pas* (if I may slip straight into the vernacular!) having advised a waitress in a Boulogne restaurant "I am an apple tart" when I had been served the wrong order; explained very patiently to a young lady in a Saint-Omer chemists, "My wife's nails are dry" whilst pointing at my lips hoping to get something like Lipsyl; or amusing not only *le patron* but two gendarmes in a Calais café when I gleefully asked "Do you buy tea?" when, of course, I wished to know if it was possible to get *une tasse* or *deux* of said beverage. Don't get me on to Portuguese where *uma mista* is a mixed dark and light beer in a *cervezaria* and a cheese and ham roll in a café. Is it any wonder that some think the rest of the World should all bally-well speak English?

Anyway said chap from the Netherlands wanted to know in which direction was the sea. I was quite surprised that the English people didn't know as it was only about three miles away so I could only assume that their visits to Belgium did not venture beyond the 'baccy shops. I was even more taken aback that the Dutch chap didn't speak English as they all generally seem to be fluent in many languages. Anyway I explained in my best Dutch sign-language (quite frankly, in my case, identical in every nuance to English sign-language)

"Up to the roundabout, cross the bridge and carry straight on" hoping that he had the good sense to stop before entering the North Sea unless he had an amphibious vehicle. We thought that might be the last we saw of him but it wasn't. He was a little down-at-heel – very dishevelled, worn clothing and looked like he needed a good shower – but pleasant enough. Carol and I opted, instead of our usual visit to St Sixtus Abbey (home of Westvleteren beers), to have a meal in **De Panne** as the weather was glorious and to sit outside on the beach front (see right).



The front at De Panne is quite distinctive – stepping from the beach you come across a wide pathway with one lane for cyclists and another lane nearer the hotel and bar entrances for pedestrians. I use the term “cyclists” loosely as most of the vehicles on it, with anything from two to four wheels, seemed to be piloted by four to fourteen year olds intent on causing harm to themselves or anybody who happened to be less than nimble - but all good-natured fun.



Carol and I stopped at the first restaurant's beach terrace and ordered a beer each and a fish lunch and sat and soaked up the atmosphere with kids playing on the beach, yachts bobbing on the North Sea, teenagers - and those who wished they still were - topping up their tans and a general sense of well-being. It was notable that nobody had their noses buried in a clever 'phone or equivalent but all were just enjoying normal conversation. While we sat there our acquaintance from the Netherlands turned up for a beer with about half a dozen of his mates so we were slightly relieved that my directions had proved infallibly accurate.

Additionally when we were parking on the road that runs parallel to the beach we saw the English people who had approached us in Adinkerke so we were happy in the knowledge that they seemed to have gone a little further than their target destination and may enjoy another part of Belgian culture other than cheap tobacco products. After relaxing for about half an hour Carol suddenly expressed surprise and said “Look what's just turned up behind you” (I was looking down the beach and out to sea) and there were two horses pulling a brewer's dray with a number of barrels on it which had stopped at “our” restaurant. One of the lads inside rushed out with water for the horses while the woman who had been serving us asked if we wanted some free beer.

I don't think we'll be criticised by readers of this august journal when I suggest that it would have been churlish...nay, contemptuous...to refuse such generosity and glasses of cold “Tripel Karmeliet” from inside the bar were offered to everybody drinking or eating. I took the opportunity to have a chat with the girl on the dray - advertising Bosteels Brewery in Buggenhout along with Kwak and Tripel Karmeliet beers - to ask if the brewery was nearby but she said it was some distance away but they did promotions at resorts all along the coast. This seemed to me an eminently laudable commercial undertaking and one which should be encouraged wherever drinkers gather. I also established from her that the barrels on the dray were empty so the horses weren't working too hard in the heat.



Before we'd even finished our free beers the waitress asked if we would like another but I had to refuse as I would be driving back home later. I did notice that the gentleman from the Netherlands and his colleagues felt forced to participate in the second glass and when the dray eventually left for the next bar they very sensibly followed. I hope they continued playing catch-up along the whole of the front as there were about five or six more bars and the Netherlands all appeared to be a little “down on their luck”. Perhaps now they'd discovered where the sea was situated they could follow the dray on a daily basis until they reached Knokke-Heist and the Netherlands border. Whether they'd be able to see it or not when they got there is, of course, a matter worthy of considerable conjecture.

Continued on next page

A few minutes after the dray had left an aged chap rolled up to entertain us with his accordion, not with renditions of popular hits by "beat combos" or even drum 'n' bass, techno or rap music but a little bit of classical and the theme from the Godfather...very restful. All in all an exceptionally enjoyable day out although I greatly regretted not having an handkerchief.

"Why?" you may ask, although I realise that most of you probably won't. Well I rolled up my strides and went for a paddle in the sea – the tide was out and I was almost exhausted by the time I got my toes wet - after manipulating my way through a throng of thongs, but as I wandered seaward it dawned on me that a knotted hankie on my head would help to popularise the image of the "Briton abroad" - perhaps even win a few more votes in the Eurovision Song Contest and what a coup that would be. I'm also fairly certain that it would also turn out to become a most popular sartorial statement as we leave the EU if only to enable us to recognise each other on foreign shores.



Wouldn't it also ensure that our European neighbours know exactly who they're dealing with and that we're not having any truck with their peculiar habits – enviable though some of them may be - like forcing customers to drink beer without paying for it whether they want to or not? Which, by the way, is surely something else we wouldn't have entertained being foisted upon us by the EU some time in the future if we'd voted to stay "In"...or would we?

Barry Price



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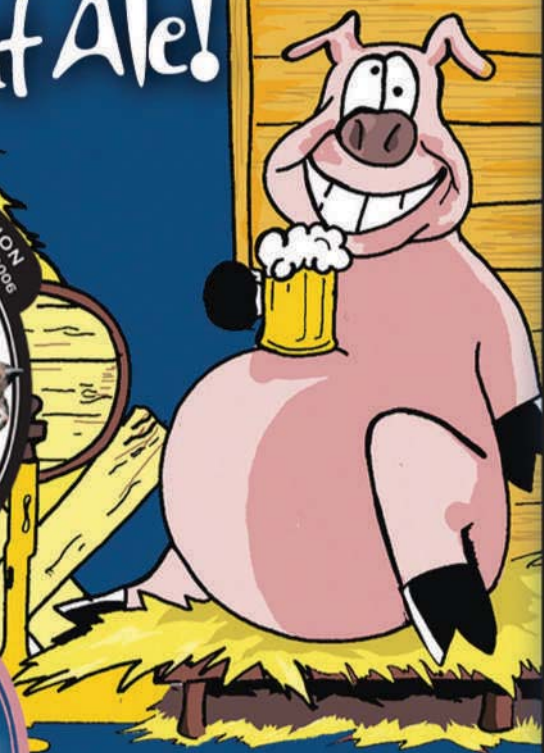
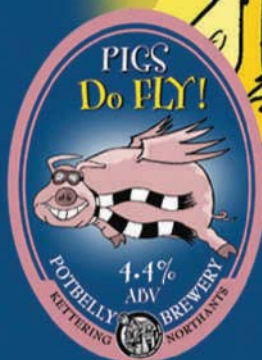
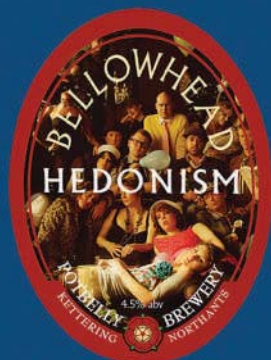
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Local Pub Festival Reports

Chris Bunyan and John Goodlet round up some local events—John starts with:-

After the success of the *Spooktacular* Sir William Peel festival in late April, we now round up some other pub based beer festivals in the spring & summer months. On the early May bank holiday weekend **The True Briton**, Arlesey held their 2nd beer festival, this time indoors with a stillage holding eight firkins of ale. The most prominent brewery was St Austell, Cornwall with Tribute, Trelawny, Proper Job and HSD (Hicks Special Draught).

The other four were Blackjack Shuffled Deck, Stonehenge Ales Pigswill, Bath Ales Gem & also Golden Hare. At the bar were three real ciders, Lilly's Mango Cider 4%, Abrahalls Lily the Pink 4.5% and rather strong Westons Old Rosie 7.3%. A busy weekend of entertainment featured two singers, a Disco night and plenty of BBQ food.



The **Admiral** in Clifton held its second beer festival on the weekend of 10th & 11th June. There were 4 ales at the bar and a further 10 outside in the garden area. Some Classic ales such as Broadside, London Pride, Bass and Bishops Finger were supported by some locally brewed beers from Ampthill, Leighton Buzzard and Tring, plus a dark ale which is fast becoming a favourite with me, Blind Poet Porter from New River Brewery in Herts.



For customers with a sweeter tooth, four fruit flavoured ciders were popular, plus a range of Gin based long drinks with various fruit mixers, ideal for washing down some street food from Ped - Piri Piri Pork, Chilli Dogs and Chicken Fajitas. The East Beds social bike ride dropped in on the Sunday afternoon to try some ales. The group started at the Vicars Inn, Arlesey, then cycled to the Admiral and then Green Man, Stanford - Cock, Broom - Crown, Northill - Guinea, Moggerhanger—Kings Arms, Sandy and ended at the Sir William Peel, Sandy. Well done to John Goodhew and his team for an excellent event and the Admiral is a welcome new addition to the Good Beer Guide 2018 edition.

Chris continues with:-

The **Sir William Peel** was the first pub in Sandy to hold a cider festival and they continue to march on, this time over the long weekend of 6th to 9th July. Unlike the beer festivals there is no theme, real cider being still a bit of a rarity, so a cider festival – which advertises the real stuff - is to be applauded. 24 different brewers (Do you *brew* cider?), not a hint of Stella Tortoise and its “Chalice”, Kopparberg/ alcoholic Ribena or the near-frozen fizzy apple-juice from the Emerald Isle watered down by a glass full of ice (those Marketing bods have a LOT to answer for), no, 35 ciders and perries, not a bottle or gas energised tap in site. To be pedantic, there were 31 ciders, 2 perries plus 2 “Pyders”, a mixture of Perry & Cider reputedly; the fruit orchard's answer to light & bitter?

There were 8 fruit ciders and I confess that I'm not sure if they're apple cider plus fruit or fruit alone. Extremely popular with the ladies, several were sold out by Saturday evening. The tasters I had of those left were extremely moreish if, like me, you have a taste for fruit juices; this is not a derisory comment, more a note to the hardcore cider fan who holds anything but apples to be a blasphemy.

I tried 6 different ones, 3 all apple medium dry to medium sweet and they were faultless. If I hadn't been driving....! I also had sippers of Her Maj's fruities, rhubarb, sloe berry and cranberry and cherry, again all superb. The only fault I can aim at most of these brews is, like the hideous “Alcopops”, they are dreadfully drinkable and unalcoholic in taste, so be careful how you indulge! A Disco on Friday & Saturday, a barbeque in aid of the pub's charity, Clic Sargent and take-home cartons available made for a jolly time for all - even the weather was nice!

Back to John for:-

On Friday 21st July there was a branch social in Biggleswade starting in the early afternoon with a pub walk and ending with a beer festival visit. John, Barry & Ian met up at the Gardeners Arms for a pint or two, then walked via the back streets to the Yorkshire Grey where we met Geoff & Carol for a nice pint and a sit outside in the spacious garden area. We tried a GK seasonal ale and a Belhaven summer beer, both pretty tasty. After soaking up the sunshine (lucky really as the forecast had been for rain most of the day) we ambled back into town and another beer at the White Hart [GK seasonal ale again], followed by a quick visit to the Golden Pheasant where I spotted a dark ale to finish our pub walk.

The small group then moved to the **Stratton House Hotel**, where a beer festival was kicking off in a marquee in the car park. About a dozen more CAMRA members joined the group, no doubt many coming straight from work, plus a table of friends from RSPB Sandy. By mid evening the marquee was filling up with revelers keen to start dancing to the tunes of a local DJ. The beer list was fairly safe mainly national ales, but very good quality. Pick of the bunch for me was Timothy Taylor's Landlord and Titanic Plum Porter, but there were positive comments from members sampling many other beers.

Continued on next page.....

A few days earlier Barry had been notified that a local CAMRA stalwart, John Powell from Langford who could usually be found imparting his Welsh wit in the Engineers Arms, had passed away and we considered cancelling the social as the funeral had been arranged for the same day. In the end we went ahead and the group in Biggleswade raised a glass or two in honour of John knowing that his friends attending the funeral & wake in Bedford would be doing the same.



Finally, a small group of members managed eventually to visit Peterborough Beer festival in late August. There had been some disruption to services following a derailment the week before and the turnstiles at Peterborough weren't working. But we got into the festival mid afternoon on the Friday and started to explore the bars with far too many beers to mention. The weather was fantastic so we managed to top up our tans as we sampled some ales. I was most impressed with Lucaria from Thornbridge a 6% ice cream porter—fantastic. Peterborough remains my favourite festival not just for ales, but for food too.

John Goodlet & Chris Bunyan



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Campaign Corner Report

Village or Town, Pub	LocALe	Real Cider	ACV	Festival	Discount
Arlesey, True Briton				Apr	
Arlesey, Vicars Inn	Wells				
Arlesey, White Horse			Yes		
Biggleswade, Golden Pheasant	Wells +	Yes			
Biggleswade, New Inn	Wells, Brewhouse	Yes		Several	Yes 20p
Biggleswade, Stratton House		Yes		July	
Broom, Cock		Yes		July	
Clifton, Admiral		Yes (spr/sum)		Summer	
Dunton, March Hare	Wells, B&T	Yes		Sep & Feb	
Everton, Thornton Arms	Wells	Yes			
Henlow, Engineers Arms	L. Buzzard, Tring	Yes		Oct & Feb	
Henlow, Old Transporter	L. Buzzard, Tring, Potbelly	Yes		several	Yes 20p
Langford, Plough			Yes		
Langford, Wrestlers			Yes		
Meppershall, Sugar Loaf			Yes		
Potton, Coach House	Wells, Buntingford				
Potton, George & Dragon			Yes		
Potton, Rising Sun	Wells	Yes		May & Aug	
Potton, Royal Oak			Yes		
Sandy, Bell			Yes		
Sandy, Kings Arms			Yes		
Sandy, Queens Head			Yes		
Sandy, Sir William Peel		Yes		Apr & July	
Stotfold, Coach & Horses	Wells	Yes		July & Aug	
Stotfold, Crown		Yes			
Stotfold, Stag		Yes		Sep	
Sutton, John O'Gaunt		Yes			
Wrestlingworth, Chequers	Wells	Yes	Yes	May	

A full list of LocALe Breweries and Cider Producers can be seen at www.eastbedscamra.org.uk/locale www.eastbedscamra.org.uk/cider

North by North-West or Go West—Part II

Following on from my article in the May edition of the Casket featuring pubs in Manchester—my trip continued this time out west before returning again to York. In February my East Beds CAMRA and Communication Workers Union comrade Ian and myself went West to our old mate Ernie Purkis' funeral which was held in the church in the little village of Harvington in Worcestershire a few miles north of Evesham. He had died on the very day of our Retired Members Conference in Manchester – a Conference at which it was announced he would be unable to attend but would definitely be in Bournemouth for our General Conference in April. Ernie, a native of Manchester, was a remarkable man who spent the vast majority of his life trying to improve the lives of anybody who he could help. He was a great orator although even he would accept that sometimes his vocabulary was not up to the standard of his delivery. I remember him speaking at a union conference years ago when he got a little flustered and pronounced something incorrectly which caused slight mirth amongst some of those listening to him. Ernie's immediate riposte, "Don't listen to the words – listen to what I'm saying!" summed him up perfectly.



Our arrangements were slightly complicated as the funeral was in Harvington, the cremation in Redditch and the post funeral gathering for mourners was in Kings Coughton so we stayed in an hotel in Broom, Warwickshire which seemed reasonably equidistant. Our first stop after arrival, far too early for the funeral, was the hotel in Broom where we would be staying – the **Broom Hall Inn** – which we were pleased to find had hand-pulls although we didn't sample any as there was a fair amount of driving involved before we could relax with a drink. We then wandered into Alcester, the nearest town, which seemed to have plenty of pubs and may warrant a visit at some time in the future.

After the funeral and cremation service we dropped the car off back at our hotel and got a taxi to the **Kings Court Hotel**, Kings Coughton where we had the opportunity to meet some of Ernie's relatives, including his wife, who Ernie always called "My Ella". At the funeral service we learned that Ernie had lied about his age to get in the Royal Navy and his ship, on which he was a gunner, had been torpedoed and sank during the D-Day landings. Oddly, the same fate had befallen Ian's Dad who was a Stoker and only survivor from those in the boiler room because he'd fortuitously gone up top for a smoke. Were they possibly on the same ship?



The Kings Court has a downstairs bar called the Twisted Boot with three hand-pumps. The bar appeared to have some of the original Tudor brick and wood-work preserved among the more modern features. There were two Marstons beers and a guest ale the name of which eludes me. What we tried was fine although the bar lacked a bit of atmosphere – hardly surprising given the occasion. We returned to the Broom Hall Inn which had three ales – one from Wye Valley, plus Sharps Doombar and Atlantic – although we only tried one, despite the live musician performing, as the other pub in Broom, the Broom Tavern seemed to be better and was only a short walk away.

The **Broom Tavern** didn't disappoint with Purity Pure Gold, Wye Valley HPA, Church Farm Brewery Ren's Pride and for some reason I find difficult to understand given the plethora of nearby breweries in Warwickshire and Worcestershire, the final ale was Sharps Doombar. Ciders were listed as Old Rosie, Hogans Wild Elder, Lilley's Colider and Apples and Pears with Perry in the shape of Hogan's Lonely Partridge. The beers we tried were all excellent. The pub itself is typical 16th Century with a timber frame and red brick exterior – similar in architectural fabric to Elstow's Moot Hall – and it possibly once had a thatched roof which is now tiled.



The interior also has much timber on display and the place is presided over by two experienced chefs. It was originally the Broom Inn, later the Bowling Green Inn in the 19th Century, then the Broom Inn again before adopting its current name in the 1970s – possibly to avoid confusion with the Broom Hall Inn. We were the last customers to leave but luckily managed to squeeze in another pint or two back at our billet. We visited three pubs and drunk to Ernie in each one but the Broom Tavern was the one worth seeking out if you are ever in the proximity of Stratford-upon-Avon/Alcester/Evesham.

Finally to York with more supplies of Belgium 75cl bottle-fermented ales for my old Trade Union mate Mick. I rang him a day or two before I was heading on a day trip to Belgium to tell him that I'd got a couple of crates for him in January and that we'd be bringing them up to him in a few days time and asked him if he'd like any more. "No, that'll be lovely," he replied. I went out for about an hour and by the time I'd returned he'd rang Carol and felt compelled, obviously due to my power of persuasion, to have another crate...never one to look a gift horse in the mouth is Michael!

WhatPub again came in handy as, just up the road from the Fox which we'd visited in the autumn, was – the **Volunteer Arms**. Michael knew it well but again it had been some years since he'd been in there so we set that as our location to rendezvous a little later on Friday evening.

I was pleased when I arrived and found that a Blues duo had been booked for the evening before a forthcoming appearance at Scarborough Blues Festival. The choice of beers made the visit worthwhile even without the Blues – Taylor Landlord; Brass Castle Cliffhanger; Bradford Farmers Blonde; Leeds Yorkshire Gold; and Brown Cow Thriller in Vanilla with guest ale Wold Top Spring Fling; Bradfield Irish Dexter; Roosters Rude Boy and Thistly Cross Cider for those who like something fruity. The duo, amplified acoustic guitar & harmonica with both taking on the vocals – were excellent...almost on a par with the beer so we had a great night.



The following morning Carol and I sought advice from hotel reception about when the Blues Festival was on and luckily it was that weekend. Unfortunately there were no tickets left so our luck rapidly ran "out". We had a wander around York and visited the Treasurer's House for our cultural "hit" before repairing to **Ye Old Shambles Tavern**. Although a little "kitsch" - like most of the retail outlets on the Shambles - it had a fairly respectable range of six ales, including The Great Yorkshire Brewery's Yorkshire Blackout, Ridgeside Brewery Black Night, Pennine Hair of the Dog, Shambles Light and Shambles Dark (although I can't find out who brews them for the pub) and another.

The food and the beers we tried were fine and the shop/bar also sells over one 100 bottled ales. We did intend having a quiet evening when we got back to our hotel but our peace was disturbed by the good-natured enthusiasm of an 18 year old's birthday party so we got up and joined in! The single real ale offered was in good condition so it turned into an interesting and enjoyable evening.

Continued on page 20

On Sunday we had a pleasant day at the coast with a short boat trip around the bay at Whitby and excellent fish in the "Magpie" before returning to York across the North York Moors via Pickering.

Sunday evening I'd arranged to meet Michael in the **Blue Bell** and while awaiting his arrival started chatting with a bloke who, like Carol and I, had just returned from the coast. It turned out that he'd been at the Scarborough Blues Festival and I told him I couldn't get tickets but I'd been lucky enough to see a great Blues duo on Friday night in the Volunteer. Unbelievably he was the guitarist and had been playing at Scarborough the previous night but another couple of incredible coincidences were to occur that evening!

After leaving the Blue Bell we wandered down to the **Walmgate Ale House and Bistro** where we had a couple of pints before heading for our final destination, the **Phoenix** where five hand-pumps greeted us. We'd not been in there for more than a few minutes when a couple came and sat next to us and started discussing the pub and the beer. I said to the bloke that I could tell he wasn't local and asked where he was from and he told us he was originally from the Shepherd's Bush area of London and asked where Mick and I were from and how we knew each other. Well when we told him that we used to work for Post Office Telephones/British Telecom/BT plc he said that he had done so too and when I asked what Union Branch he was in it was the one next to Ian's in London and the Branch Secretary was a bit of a mentor to Ian and also an acquaintance of mine as well – Ian had once cycled with him to and from West London to a Union Conference in Bournemouth. Our new companion now lived in Manchester with his Mancunian wife who still worked for BT. Although she now worked from home she told us that when she worked in the city centre everybody used to drink in a pub called...the "Pev"!

What a small, interesting and interlinked world we live in, don't we?

Barry Price

Cryptic Crossword Solution

	S	E	S	G	S				
B	U	R	T	O	N	T	O	O	N
P	E	G	P	L	V	I			
A	N	G	E	L	I	N	A	D	I
U	L	N	D	I	G	D			
I	N	D	E	P	E	N	D	E	N
D	R		Y	G		C			
W	E	A	S	E	L	S	T	R	O
R		A	S			O	T		
		O	L	D	S	C	A	L	L
B	S	Y	R	E	A	B			
P	O	M	P	O	M	U	K	G	A
I	R	A	M	A	O	V			
O	L	D	E	T	R	I	P	C	H
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	K				



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