



the

Casket

Campaign for Real Ale



FREE

May 2018

EAST BEDFORDSHIRE

www.eastbedscamra.org.uk

casket@eastbedscamra.org.uk



Pub of the Year 2018 Awards - pages 12 & 13

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Issue number 2

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The Casket

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A word from the Editor

As we head into spring I would like to thank all the volunteers who were out during those cold winter months to judge which pubs should be included in the forthcoming 2019 Good Beer Guide, which is due for publication in August. The survey results also helped to shortlist the top pubs to consider for branch awards and congratulations go to Kevin and the team at the **Engineers Arms, Henlow** for getting the overall East Beds Pub of the Year 2018 and also to John Goodhew and his team at the **Admiral, Clifton** as it was named the "Most Improved" Pub of the Year for 2018. Details of these awards are on page 12-13, but since then the Bedfordshire county awards have also been announced.

The overall county winner was the **Black Lion, Leighton Buzzard** which continues to be an excellent alehouse with multiple community events. It is also a stronghold for CAMRA recruitment and its influence has helped make Leighton Buzzard a CAMRA hotspot and encouraged other High Street pubs to up their game and compete on the "real ale" front.. The second county award for Cider Pub of the Year went to the **Engineers Arms, Henlow**, which continues to showcase a range of ciders with different gravities, flavours and geographical sourcing, but always featuring some local cider producers. Their cider and sausage winter festival was a big hit and a great weekend of entertainment was twinned with the Six Nations Rugby. This award will be made to Kevin and Sharon at the branch AGM on Wednesday 16th May.

John Goodlet

AWARD WINNING BEERS BREWED IN HERTFORDSHIRE



Our 12 Monthly Specials for 2018 are themed around the heroic wartime achievements of the **Bletchley Park** codebreakers and are brewed as part of a fundraising campaign in support of **Bletchley Park** and **The National Museum of Computing**.



WEEKLY DELIVERIES IN YOUR AREA



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LOCAL PUB NEWS

George & Dragon, Potton

Following the retirement of Mick & Mavis Allen in December 2017, the pub had a temporary manager, whilst a new tenant was sought. We were happy to learn in late January that Steve Gurney had taken the tenancy with Andy Medlock as manager. Andy was previously manager at the New Inn, Biggleswade and played a key part in reviving the old alehouse and winning the local branch Pub of year in 2016 & 2017.



Plans are under way to build up the real ale part of the business, as it has always been a pub focused on "wet sales". Currently GK IPA and Abbot are on permanently, plus two guest ales. There is potential in the future for a fifth handpump perhaps with an ale supplied from SIBA.

It should be a busy summer at the pub with BBQs in the family friendly garden, a TV and Gazebo for the World Cup and occasional live music and DJ/Disco nights on bank holiday weekends as well as other special events. A regular quiz will be launched soon, probably on Thursday evenings. For details on opening hours see www.whatpub.com

The New Inn, Biggleswade

Sadly, much has changed at the New Inn in the last year and not for the better. This former award winning pub had become an established premium alehouse destination under Corri & Rodney's tenure. Even extending their business to oversee several local pubs did not seem to have as detrimental an effect as what appeared to be a large and complex refurbishment at the Greyhound, Haynes. Although, this project went well, inevitably they took their eyes off the New Inn, which went through numerous changes of management and trade dropped off dramatically.



The editor spoke with the couple several times about the business and the new Brewhouse but was left feeling perhaps incorrectly, that the on-site brewery was never anything more than a "marketing gimmick". Even so, with a good pub manager and a regular brewer in place brewing 3 or 4 house ales per month with one being offered at a more "competitive price" the pub should have been perfectly placed to compete with the Crown (Wetherspoons) but its decline seemed to have started before the Crown reopened.

No doubt several pubs took a 'hit' in the first few weeks as the novelty of a Wetherspoon outlet took hold but many licensees now accept the Crown has brought more customers into the town and some of them are visiting other pubs too. Quite frankly a visit to Biggleswade on a Friday evening makes one wonder where the Wetherspoon customers come from as the town centre's other pubs seem to be doing a very healthy trade.

We learned recently that Corri & Rodney were handing back their tenancy to GK and unconfirmed reports suggest that the inn was "up for sale". We believe that the brewery asked the couple to continue to oversee the inn until new tenants/owners can be found. Hopefully any new licensee will strive to restore the pub - and the brewery - to their former glory.

Bell, Sandy

Heather & Garvan are gently transforming the Bell from the community pub it is currently to become a venue which also aims to appeal to a wider audience. Live acts will be appearing most Saturday evenings until the end of Summer interspersed with the occasional Sunday afternoon session.

So if you want Rock, Acoustic, Swing, Rhythm 'n' Blues, Blues Rock or even ABBA (Saturday June 2nd) with your Greene King offerings then make tracks for the Bell. Details of all upcoming gigs can be found at the following website which I'm sure will be updated regularly:

<https://www.lemonrock.com/bellsandy?page=gigs>

Chequers, Wrestlingworth

It was quite surprising to hear that this wonderful old country pub was put "up for sale" in late March. Branch secretary Barry Price visited the pub to speak to licensee Dave Moore for the full story. Dave said that he couldn't develop the pub business any further without better support from the residents of Wrestlingworth. Although the pub benefited from numerous customers from further using the pub for a meal, he was disappointed that after several years, barely a dozen local villagers used the pub on a regular basis.

Whilst we wait for more news, Dave did report that it was his intention to sell the pub on as a "going concern", so there should be no worries about it closing down and it could take 6 - 12 months to complete a sale

Sugar Loaf, Meppershall

The pub has been painted inside and out and has new fencing around the garden. But this is a long way short of the £60k that Hawthorn Leisure said would be used for a refurbishment. Hawthorn seem to have reneged on their promise and so the pub will find it difficult to compete with the Village Hall Social Club which will be moving into new premises within the year as part of a new housing estate deal.

Other Late News

We have been told that Whistle & Flute in Biggleswade may be "up for sale", perhaps the licensees are retiring. We believe that there is a new licensee at the Royal Oak in Pottton and we shall give him a month or two to settle in before visiting and getting information for the September edition

Brewery News

The setup of the new brewery in Potton is on schedule, owner Richard Haigh reports that the main brewery equipment was installed and successfully commissioned over Easter. As we go to press, everything is progressing well and beers should debut at the Rising Sun, on the early May bank holiday weekend. Hopefully four core beers will be available: a best bitter "Nice Pint of Beer" 4.6%, a hoppy mid Atlantic style IPA 4.2%, a smooth porter "Black Cat" 4.7% and lastly a dry American red ale called "Squirrel's Nest" 5%. As well as selling casks to the pub trade, **The Potton Brewing Company** will soon be able to supply in bottles and minikegs to the home market and casks to small events, providing stillage, taps and cooling jackets. Rich can be contacted for orders on 07789 680049 or rich@pottonbrewingcompany.com

The **Amphill Brewhouse** changed ownership in March 2018 with Marisa & Chris taking charge. Marisa Kirchner has extensive chemistry knowledge and hails from South Africa, she will be the main brewster. Chris Kelly an I.T. Project Manager from South Bedfordshire is very passionate about beer, wine & cider making and will help out at the brewery. Initially, they will continue some of the Amphill Brewhouse beers, while they work on new recipes for the **Kelchner Brewery**. They will switch to this new trading name in the near future, the name comes from a combination of their surnames.

The first new beer will be 'Local is Lekker' a golden ale 3.9%. The name Lekker means nice/good in Afrikaans and the pumpclip has an African influenced design. Meanwhile they have arranged a deal with **White Park Brewery**, whereby they get to use a delivery van to get their beers into pubs and in turn they let White Park use their large storage/conditioning room in Amphill. White Park are currently in the process of moving their brewery from a farmyard near Cranfield into a smaller area in the Three Cups in Bedford.



Also, we learned that **Potton Press cider**, run by John Weekes has relocated over the border into Cambridgeshire. The business is now in larger premises in Steeple Morden although it will retain the Potton Press name, The new building has the potential to expand the business, but for now John is happy to continue operating within 7000 litres of cider and perry annual limit. Last September his Cox cider (medium 7.5%) was voted best cider at the Potton Apple Day event. It is still available, along with the award winning Sweet Spot (sweet 7.4%), Trip Hazard (medium 8.2%) and new for 2018 Grounds for Divorce (medium 8.5). Anyone wishing to purchase any of these regular ciders or other specials can contact John at pottonpress@hotmail.co.uk



Oakhamales.com



Defunct Pubs in Biggleswade

Cryptic clues to Biggleswade pubs that have gone to the Great Brewery in the Sky:-

1. Grizzly?
2. Red, Black or white varieties get away
3. Ascending Star
4. Majestic bird would stay here
5. Jump on one leg while smoking
6. Regal Tree
7. Not Black Beauty (Should this be "Not Ethnic Beauty"?)
8. Scatter this bird of prey
9. Not a sleuth or sloth of them, only one like coal
10. The Pachyderm & Stone Fortress
11. Wily Creature
12. Future King may rest his head here

Chris Bunyan challenges you to identify the old pubs from devious clues?
Check your answers on page 9

DIARY DATES

- MAY** 16th. Branch AGM, Engineers Arms, Henlow 8 pm
- JUNE.** 1st/2nd. Branch Social Weekend at Norwich City Ale (contact B. Price)
10th. Branch Social Bike Ride, meet Golden Pheasant, Biggleswade from Noon moving on to next pub at 1pm
- JULY.** 7th. Branch Trip to Nethergate Brewery (contact B. Price)
17th. Branch Meeting, John O'Gaunt, Sutton 8pm
28th. All Beds Branches Social - in London (route & time TBC) may join Peterborough Branch for walk around London SE micropubs
- AUG.** 18th. Country Pub Walk, (to be arranged—see next newsletter)
- SEP.** 18th. Branch Meeting, Arlesey Social Club 8 pm (TBC)

BEER FESTIVALS

- May.** 21st-26th. 45th Cambridge Beer Festival, Jesus Green, Cambridge **CAMRA**
25th-28th. Beer Festival, Chequers, Wrestlingworth
- June.** 7th-9th. The Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival, Hitchin Rugby Club **CAMRA**
9th-10th. Beer Festival, Admiral, Clifton
- July.** 5th-8th. Sir William Peel Cider & Gin Festival, High Street, Sandy
20th-21st. Beer, Cider & Gin Festival, Stratton House Hotel, Biggleswade
28th-29th. Broomstock Beer & Music Festival, Cock, Broom
- Aug.** 7th-11th. The Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, London **CAMRA**
21st-25th. The 40th Peterborough Beer Festival, The Embankment, Bishops Road, Peterborough **CAMRA**



Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival
Hitchin Rugby Club, Old Hale Way
7th-9th June 2018

Opening times
Thu 7th June from 5pm to 11pm
Fri 8th June from Noon to 11pm
Sat 9th June from Noon to 11pm

Casket Cryptic Crossword

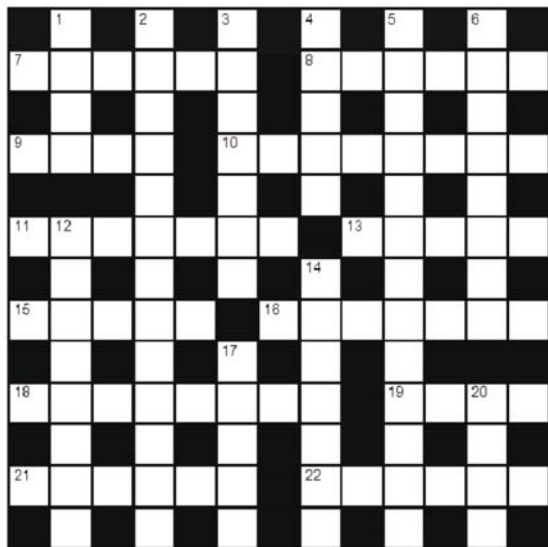
As before, all answers have been used as names of beers and/or breweries at some time somewhere in the world or have some other connection (however tenuous) with the wonderful world of beer

Across

- 7 Rodent with a dog's body? (6)
- 8 He fell from high due to something toxic a Russian introduced. (6)
- 9 A growth area for the brewing industry? (4)
- 10 Funny peculiar mob with no ale, first seen in 9. (8)
- 11 Horse the whole lot back to the hilt. (7)
- 13 A soldier, a soldier - great! (5)
- 15 A bar where you may be waiting a while? (5)
- 16 Fond of beer but nothing to drink? (4,3)
- 18 Girl has a leaning to get drunk. (8)
- 19 Oddly abv proof of Lancaster's origins. (4)
- 21 Beer from here could be Pub Landlord's one (6)
- 22 Botanicals for Bookbinder's beverage ferment all (sic). (6)

Down

- 1 Beauty spot famously a problem for Jasper. (4)
- 2 Query about tech support to a steady degree for one in 9. (13)
- 3 Advertising that I'm disgusting. A way to sugar it? (7)
- 4 Point to measure of an old Biggleswadian. (5)
- 5 Unwelcome for some on the ocean, Atlantic one is terrible! (3,1,4,5)
- 6 A mutual disagreement over point of fall. (8)
- 12 Educational establishment shortly has nothing to dash back for society tipple. (5,3)
- 14 I predict after first craft it will be a small one. (7)
- 17 Could be a tank of it but still less to drink, I hear? (5)
- 20 Could be a stretcher to transfer beer. (4)



Compiled by Chris Freeman

The solution is on Page 21

Defunct Pubs in Biggleswade - Answers

1. Brown Bear
2. Grape Escape
3. Rising Sun
4. Swan Hotel
5. Hopbine
6. Royal Oak,
7. White Horse
8. Spread Eagle
9. Black Bear
10. Elephant & Castle
11. Fox
12. George Hotel



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Have You Ever Considered

Chris Bunyan kicks back and invites you to pour a pint of strong beer, perhaps Old Peculier and contemplate the important questions in life.

Why there's a "Best Before" date on bottled water that reputedly took millions of years to filter through organic rock?

Why people from Lisbon aren't called Lisbeans?

Why people from Goole aren't called Goolies?

If Dr Who can travel in time, why hasn't he won the lottery?

That Dwarves and Midgets have little in common?

Whether a cannibal could pass his friends in the woods?

Why it's easy to roast beef, but impossible to pea soup?

That if your nose was 12 inches long, it'd be a foot?

That a car can turn into a garage and a tractor can turn into a field?

Russian dolls are full of themselves?



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2014 CAMRA Award Winner

Pub of the Year 2018 Awards

On Saturday 24th February CAMRA members and friends from RSPB Sandy arrived at the **Engineers Arms, Henlow** for another fun filled day at the 8th Henlow Sausage and Cider Festival. The barbecue was fired up then Kevin and some of his pals were working up a good sweat as they kept the hungry customers satisfied. On offer were Old English Pork, Lincolnshire, Pork & Chorizo, Sweet Chilli and Vegetarian sausages in a bun, with a heap of fried onions and a choice of mustards and sauces, all at £3 a pop—great value.

Of course, to wash down the food there was cider and plenty of it, about thirty boxes. The ciders came from Cambs, Cotswolds, Hereford, Dorset, Cornwall and so on, and as usual the fruity flavoured lower gravity ciders proved popular. A cloudy Rhubarb (Saxby's), Cheeky Cherry (Purbeck), Strawberry (Green Valley), Plum (Saxby's) and later on the more adventurous tried Ginger and also Spiced Elderflower (Watergull Orchards) and Chilli (Lulworth Skipper). The evening crowd were left to tackle the stronger ciders over 7% Royal Berkshire (Tutt's Clump), Eastern Delight (146 Cider) and the mighty Gladiator (Lilley's)

By late afternoon, there was a lull in the crowd after the end of the first rugby match as Ireland beat Wales 37-27. Branch chairman John Goodlet took his chance to entice Kevin away from the barbecue and join partner Sharon and CAMRA members in the front bar. There he presented the **Pub of the Year 2018 award** to the couple and thanked them for maintaining high standards of service and a fabulous range of beers and ciders.



After that the main party piece was Scotland playing at a very high tempo putting their auld enemy England to the sword by 25-13. John apparently hasn't stopped smiling since (well it had been ten years since Scotland last beat England). Later on the group began to disperse and John was seen getting his coat to leave, before changing his mind and sneaking off for yet another sausage. Eventually, he left for a rather wobbly walk home —another great day at the Engineers Arms.

Later in April, Kevin indicated that he was going to refurbish the pub during spring and it should be complete by now. New wooden flooring was to be laid in the back room and there will new furniture for the middle bar and back room. All rooms in the pub will be redecorated and some fresh memorabilia hung on the walls. The rear garden area will get a makeover with some astroturf to become a Fanzone area with large screen TV for the World Cup.

On Friday evening 27th April, the second branch award for the **“Most Improved” Pub of the Year 2018** was presented to the Admiral in Clifton. Local members were highly impressed with the Admiral during their judging of pubs for inclusion in the 2019 Good Beer Guide. They commended the staff for the excellent quality of the five real ales on offer and in particular the service and welcome to customers. The staff are very knowledgeable of different beer styles and flavours and will encourage customers to have a “little taster” before they buy.

There have been many ales served in the last year with favourites such as St Austell - Trelawny, Harveys—Sussex Bitter and Brains—Rev. James, plus the introduction of a mild from B&T or Three Brewers. The landlord's link to the Northwest means that Robinsons ales often feature, with Dizzy Blonde & Double Hop very popular, plus mighty Old Tom was on for Christmas.



Landlord **John Goodhew** and manager **Devon Gardner** have been running the Admiral for four years now and the pub has continued to evolve and improve. There are new handpumps and sparklers, a revamped beer garden and food served daily from a new kitchen. A refurbishment of the pub has taken place including internal and external painting and an upgrade to staff accommodation.



The Admiral concentrates on its “Original Beer House” style with the focus on the clarity of “real ales” served with a northern styled head, accompanied by high quality traditional pub food. New for 2018 will be stone baked pizzas for summer weekends. Branch chairman John Goodlet presented the award to John and Devon just before an evening of live music, featuring Michael King.

Team Admiral have just taken on their second pub the **Cock** in Baldock. Devon is the new licensee and although remaining a Greene King tenancy; a deal has been struck to allow a 50/50 split between GK ales and other beers from local and national breweries. It is a double congratulations to Devon as he has become a father in recent weeks and he has been seen walking around the pub with “babe in arms”. He will be very busy while the Cock undergoes a full refurbishment during spring including a new kitchen, renovation of the courtyard & internal decorating. The Cock will be operated like the Admiral, as an “Original Beer House”. CAMRA members—take note the Cock now offers 10% discount, roughly 40p off a pint.

Good Beer Guide to Belgium

The latest version of the CAMRA Good Beer Guide to Belgium is now available and it follows the tried and tested, but highly informative, format of earlier versions.

The series started many years ago as the Good Beer Guide to Belgium and Holland, with Luxembourg included as well, but the 8th edition concentrates mainly on Belgium although it does include information on Belgian Beer outlets of note in the UK and various other countries.

It is, though, much more than a beer guide as it covers the range of Belgian Beer styles and methods of production; what foods to try; and a list of Belgian Breweries which is, of course, a bit of a moving “feast” in much the same way as the UK’s brewing landscape with breweries opening and closing or being taken over with predictable regularity. There is also comprehensive information regarding brewery “taps” with their opening hours as well as beer outlets where crates can be purchased for transporting back to the UK.

The bulk of the information regarding recommended drinking establishments is contained in an alphabetical list of provinces, their towns and the bars within the particular town and also contains maps of the provinces as well as the location of particular bars in cities and larger towns so there is little excuse for getting lost! Most entries also list the nearest railway station or give concise driving instructions with hotel recommendations nearby where available.

Unlike our own Good Beer Guide there are plenty of coloured pictures of towns, bars and beers making the Good Beer Guide Belgium feel much more like a travel guide than merely a guide of where to slake one’s thirst.

It may still be available, depending on when you read this, for CAMRA members at the pre-order price of £9.99 but, if not, the regular members price of £11.99 still gives a considerable discount from the retail price of £14.99.

The authors, Tim Webb - who wrote the previous seven editions - and Joe Stange who co-authored the seventh edition, are both extremely knowledgeable on all matters relating to Belgian breweries, beers and bars and the 8th edition of the Good Beer Guide Belgium is highly recommended.

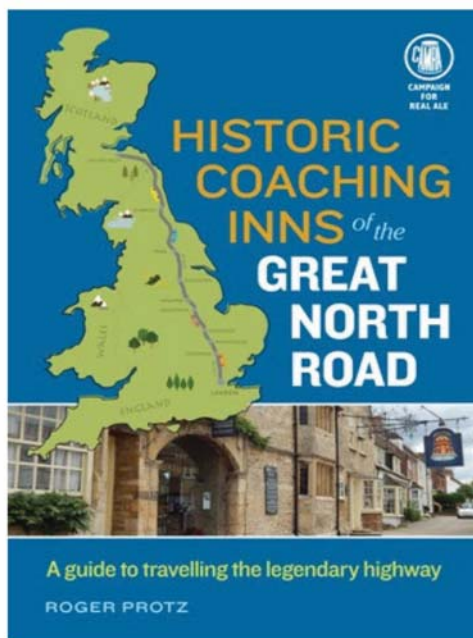
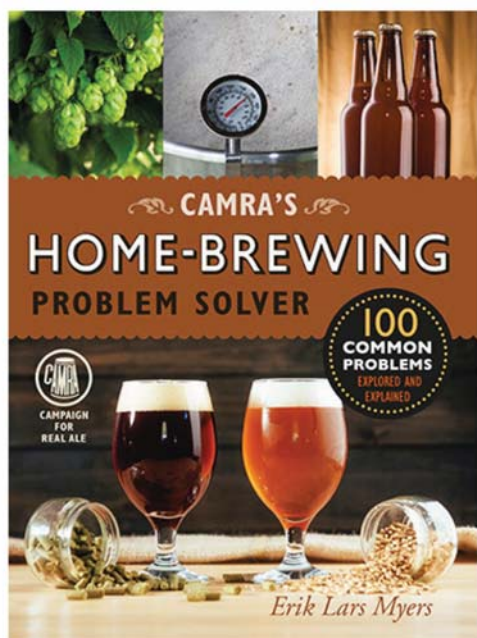
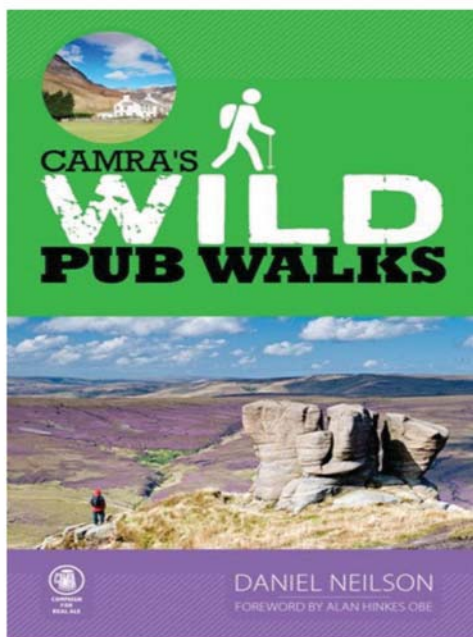
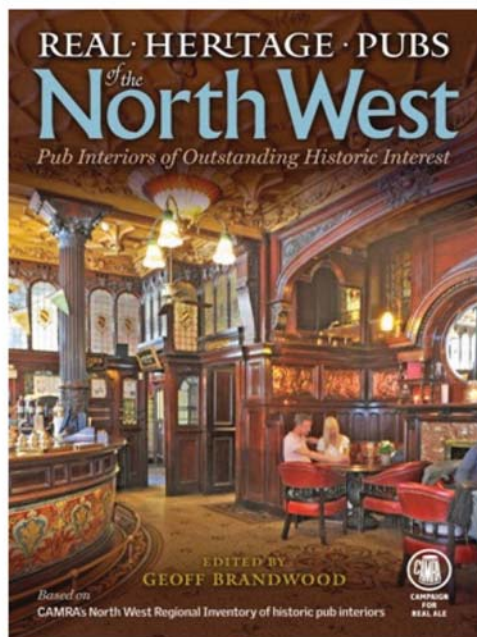
Depending on whether you are in the Flemish or Walloon speaking part of Belgium may I just add “Op uw Gezondheid” or “À votre Santé” - or “Cheers” to you and I.

Barry Price



More New Books available from CAMRA

If you like to read books about countryside walks, brewing and pub history. Check out these new publications and contact CAMRA and order at <http://www.camra.org.uk/camra-books>



Beer Abroad

Going on holiday? Prepared for all those "Traditional Beers" and delicious lager? I talk, of course, about the sun traps of the Med: Spain, Portugal (OK, it's in the Atlantic), Greece, Egypt and Malta to be exact. If you're in Western Europe, (Holland, Belgium, France and Germany) it's a lot easier: Belgium brews *hundreds* of beers, from low gravity sweet fruit beers to real bowel-bashers in the double-figure abv bracket and all freely available in a variety of outlets.

Holland, from my experience, is, like France, a lager destination, although in November *Bok*, an old, dark beer is available and a great flavour improvement on the run-of-the-mill common beers – I quote Amstel for one. France also is a lager-wallow in general, but decent Belgian beers are available up near the border; I've never been to the South of France, so reserve comment. I find Germany a beer enigma. On a trip to Berlin I found a bar with its own microbrewery, and the extremely proud and friendly owner showed Her Maj and me his brewery and went into orgasmic contortions when I (genuinely) complimented his beers, but on the other hand there's Beck's...say no more. If you drink in a German bar abroad and the Staff twig you're a Brit, be prepared to be served when the staff decide to serve you. Germans also have a mortal fear of filling a pint glass up, especially if you visit one of their beer festivals abroad; at a recent festival in Spain they were advertising "2 for 1" pints; cunningly I tipped from one glass to the other and actually got 1 and a bit pints. I left after the one and invaded Poland.

Now, to the Med; in Spain, find a German or Belgian bar or British bar in a British residential area, buy bottles from the supermarket or get lucky and find a Spanish non-tourist bar selling either dark or specially brewed Spanish beer or one of the growing number of beers from microbreweries. On my last trip to Majorca I had 3 local micro-beers, all rather good, all very different and all freezing cold unless you specifically ask for a warm one. Microbreweries are flourishing in Spain and if you avoid the obvious Tourist bars, chances are you'll get lucky and find a decent beer and a lot more easily than it was a few years back.

Portugal is a beer desert unless you happen to find a bar selling Belgian or German beer. Greece is weird. If you find an Ale house (Zythion in Zakynthos is one), the choice is phenomenal, or a British-owned bar that sells bottled beer you can escape the ubiquitous lager, but the opportunities are few and far between. In southern Cyprus, Greece's close cousin, Keo.lager is everywhere, but I did find a bar selling draft Leffe brown in Paphos and there used to be a pub called "The Fishing Hut" that brewed Pendle Witches Brew under license, so all is not lost. I paid a fleeting visit to Cairo so I'm no expert here, but I did note they sold a lager called "Stella", which was neither Artois nor stellar.

Even in the most touristy destinations - yes, even Benidorm - there are oases in the beer desert. Avoid "Geordie's", "Taffy's", "Jocks" and "Paddy's" bar, "The Crown", "The Queen Vic" or similar and seek out the backstreet boozers the locals use. Some will still be crap, but it's amazing what you can find, especially if you try to talk the lingo.

Chris Bunyan

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, Crown Hotel					Yes 50p
Biggleswade, Golden Pheasant	Wells +	Yes			
Biggleswade, New Inn	Wells	Yes			Yes 20p
Biggleswade, Stratton House		Yes		July	
Broom, Cock		Yes		July	
Clifton, Admiral		Yes (spr/sum)		June	
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	Several	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, Four Horsemen		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			
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

N Nobby's

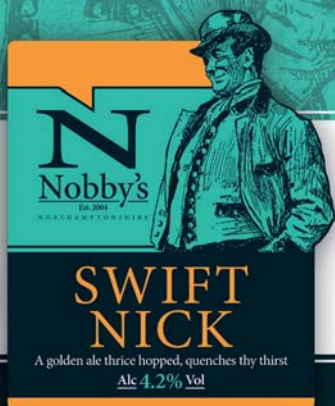
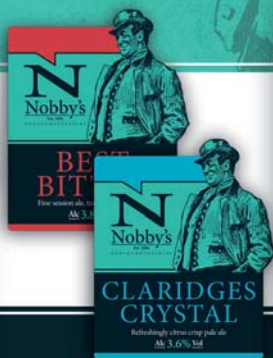
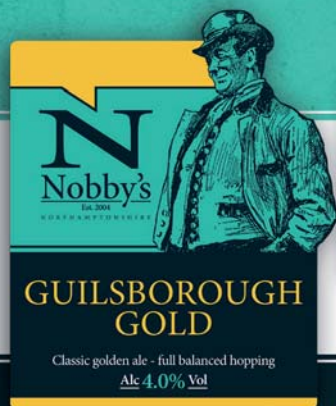
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A DRINK ON THE DARKSIDE

(with apologies to Lou Reed!)

The Stevenage Beer & Cider Festival 2018 & The March Hare Winter Beerfest the Sixth.

This was my first visit to the Stevenage Beer & Cider Festival. I joined Al Britcher on the Saturday at the Gordon Craig Theatre, which is an excellent venue with very good access by bus or train. We found there was plenty of room and seating even when it was busy! There was good service by the CAMRA members dispensing beers and ciders. We never waited more than a minute for our beers.



For me it was Dark Beer heaven. Using my £10 of tokens, highlighted beers for me were **West by 3 Breweries 'Chocolate Milk Stout (Lactose) 5%**, the mix of Lactose and rolled oats gave it a sweetness overlaid with bitter chocolate. Another stout of note was **Eight Arch Breweries Bobolink 5.6%**, a jet black stout with strong Coffee notes.

Porters were led by **Dark Revolutions Voodoo 6.2%**, a mix of Cherrywood and malts mixed with spicy chipotle peppers made for an interesting taste! However both Alan and myself agreed the **Boss Black Stout 5%**, a seriously silky Stout was the star of the show. Alan decided to try one of the “in-vogue” keykeg beers on offer.



This was **Wild Weather Shellfish Basterd 6%** (great name!) apparently a cockle and seaweed oatmeal stout (sounds fishy to me). Alan thought it was cold in comparison to the normal barrel beers, but it did warm up. Keykeg seems to be an interesting concept and worth a try. The beer is inside a bag, which is inside a barrel and gas is used inside the barrel to compress the outside of the bag so it pours better. Alan observed that other persons using the facility there were fitness and sports freaks. The sight of them mixing with the usual CAMRA fraternity was amusing to say the least!

Two weeks later I visited the **March Hare, Dunton** for their **Winter Beerfest the Sixth**. Sadly, I was forced to drive there due to the ever-diminishing bus timetable, which meant I couldn't follow the theme, 'because Beer won't drink itself! However, I did sample a few Dark ales, the most unusual for sure was **Naylors Brewery Toffee Mild 4.2%**, the notes state; a mild made with black & chocolate malts, plus Black treacle to give a toffee aroma. Definitely a 'Marmite' beer. I liked it! Also, in the frame was **Titanic Brewery Plum Porter 4.9**. Probably one of my favourite dark beers, it didn't disappoint. I ended with **Xtreme Ales Smoked Porter 6%**. A superb porter using German smoked malt and Tettnang hops with subtle flavours.

As usual an eclectic mix of beers at the March served from the Bar, Stillage and Cellar by "mine host", John. Another highlight was the 3 guys singing Sea Shanties (I'm sure watered down for the younger members in the bar!). So, an excellent two weekends sampling Dark and Mild Beers. It is also heartening to see many of our local Pubs serving dark beers.



Steve Nakoneczny & Alan Britcher

Cryptic Crossword Solution

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M	U	S	T	A	N	G
N	A		G		C	N
L	I	M	B	O		L
O		L	T		R	T
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