



the

FREE

Casket

Campaign for Real Ale

September 2018



EAST BEDFORDSHIRE

www.eastbedscamra.org.uk

casket@eastbedscamra.org.uk



New Tenants at the Royal Oak, Potton - see page 4

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<https://en-gb.facebook.com/EBedCAMRA/>

The Casket

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A word from the Editor

In spring the branch AGM was held at the Engineers Arms and I would like to thank Chris Foscett for his many years service as branch treasurer. He has stepped down now and Simon Reynolds is the new treasurer and vice chairman. At the July branch meeting we discussed our key goals for 2018/19. We will continue to develop the Whatpub website by adding more details of our social and sports clubs, plus we intend to move the branch website onto a CAMRA hosted server before April 2019. This will give us better backup facilities and reduce costs, the current domain name will change slightly.

There was an excellent mixed branch social in London on 28th July (see page 18) and a social pub walk from St Ives to Huntingdon on 18th August (see page 10). As summer draws to a close, we shall be busy volunteering at local fund raising events. If you would like to help us at the Bedford Beer Festival tombola stand or any of the three outdoor cider stalls in the late September/early October period (see Branch Diary on page 8) please contact branch secretary Barry Price to arrange your visit and time slot.

As we head into autumn, we will visit St Ives again to try their beer festival on Saturday 20th October. In mid-November we will shortlist pubs to be considered for the next Good Beer Guide and start pub surveys on 24th with a pub walk in Biggleswade. This task will continue into January, but before that there will be a Xmas social & buffet @ Engineers Arms on Fri 7th December to see in the Christmas period.

John Goodlet

41st Bedford Beer & Cider Festival

Wednesday 3rd to Saturday 6th October 2018
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
After 4pm: Wed £2, Thu £3,
Fri £4, Sat £2

CAMRA members free

No under 18s: ID required

Souvenir glasses £3 sale/rtn

Cloakroom by Bedford Lions



Tombola and pub game

Engraver

Chocolate matching stall

Short street pass-outs

Wheelchair access all floors

♫ Wed eve: Ukulele Bedford

♫ Sat lunch: Bedford Morris

♫ Sat eve: Pistonz



160 real ales + 50 ciders and perries
Draught and bottled international beers

Hot + cold food all sessions

Free soft drinks • Mead bar



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LOCAL PUB NEWS

Royal Oak, Potton

The branch extends a warm welcome to Trevor Manning and Helen D'Souza who took over the Royal Oak at the end of March on a five year tenancy. The couple are very experienced as Trevor has over 30 years in the catering industry mainly in London and Helen has a background in business accountancy. The pub has seen a few changes with more to come in the next few months. The pub will be repainted outside and also inside to give a much brighter atmosphere, plus new soft furnishings.



At the bar there are three regular real ales, GK IPA, Abbot and Taylor Landlord, plus 4 premium lagers. There is a eye catching array of new Gins, which may lead to future Gin themed events. The current opening hours Tue-Sat from Noon to 11.30pm (closed Monday) with food served up to 9pm most days and 6pm on Sunday.

The main food menu has been revamped and will continue to change frequently as it takes advantage of seasonal produce. The 40 seater restaurant has an A la carte menu featuring a few favourites, such as Mussels, Fish & Chips, Scotch Eggs and a range of Steaks (rump, fillet, sirloin, ribeye).

If you want to see the latest menu look for www.theroyaloak-potton.co.uk or try their facebook and Instagram pages.

Entertainment occurs twice a month, with one night being a DJ led Soul Night and the other is dedicated to live music. The staff will also be gearing up for a special Halloween party, before preparing for the Christmas season. The recent hot summer weather has inspired Trevor and Helen to make more use of the garden area. Currently it is partly gravelled with wooden seating, plus an artificial grass top section with garden chairs.

At the rear of the building is a barn like extension which had only been used for storage, but the couple plan to clear it out and upgrade it to a 60 seater function room to attract parties, celebrations and business lunch groups. A marquee may be erected to link the doorway to the lower garden area allowing all year round use.

Other News

It was no great surprise that the **Wrestlers** in Langford closed down again in the springtime. It had been operating for less than six months under the current owner, a token effort no doubt aimed at proving the pub was unviable as a business. The pub's community group are pursuing the issue with Beds Central Council as part of the Asset of Community Value status. We also heard in late July that the **Pembroke Arms** in Biggleswade had closed down, but we don't have any other details.

Potton Brewery News

Richard Haigh reports that he is now on his 25th brew and 9th different beer with deliveries reaching pubs on the north Kent coast. In terms of design all new hand-pump clips clearly state that the ales are unfinned and naturally hazy.

Bottles of Republic IPA and Nice Pint of Beer best bitter are finally back from the bottlers and starting to appear in local outlets. Also the recent brew of Lowland farmhouse style ale, a dry, slightly sour pale ale with peppery notes (4.0%) has gone down very well everywhere it went and will be produced again soon.

West of the Sun golden ale and Vampire Heart wheat beer were recently on at the Peterborough beer festival. Republic IPA has been at the renowned Fat Cat beer festival in Sheffield. Beers are set to appear at the Bedford, St Ives and Caldecote festivals in the next two months.

As the weather moves towards autumn, he will be working on a couple of new beers, starting with Hard Times, a full bodied 4.3% American brown ale, dry hopped with Centennial and Cascade for a big new world aroma.

We hope to have a more detailed report for the next edition including the technical specification of the brewery equipment and some photos of the brewery. We await news on the preparation of a mezzanine floor as a potential Visitors area.

Regional News

The regional round of Pub of the Year judging has been completed and by mid August the following announcement was made.

The overall **Pub of the Year 2018 for East Anglia is the Chequers at Little Gransden** in Cambridgeshire (see photo)

The Cider Pub of the Year 2018 for East Anglia was awarded to the **Woodbine Inn**, Waltham Abbey.

The Club of the Year 2018 for East Anglia was awarded to the **Caxton Club** in Beccles.



Congratulations to all the winners and well done to the many volunteers from Beds, Herts, Cambs, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk who managed to visit all six county winners and send their scores in to help the final decision. The three winners now go through to the Super-regional round of their respective competitions.

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Every Day
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The Incredible Dr Busker

Thursday Night

Caribbean Food

Friday Night

Hog Roast

Saturday Night

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The Admiral Pub, Clifton

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2018 & 2019**

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burner

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The Cock Pub, Baldock

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Greene King.

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kitchen is now open serving
traditional, good quality pub food.

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Devon and the team with the real
open fire burning hot.

Real ales, Real Cider, Real Food

DIARY DATES

- SEP.** 18th. Branch Meeting, Arlesey Sports & Social Club, Arlesey 8 pm
29th. Cider stall@ Fairfield Apple Day, Community Hall, Kipling Crescent 12-4pm
30th. Cider stall@ Potton Apple Day, St Mary's Hall, Potton 12-4pm
- OCT.** 6th. Cider stall@ Stotfold Apple Day, Brook Street car park from 1pm
20th. Social Trip by train/bus to St Ives Beer Festival from 1pm onwards
- NOV.** 13th. Branch Meeting, Rising Sun, Potton 8 pm (inc GBG nominations)
24th. Social Pub walk in Biggleswade for GBG surveys, meet Wheatsheaf at 1pm, then Stratton House, Golden Pheasant and Crown
- DEC.** 7th. Branch Xmas Social & Buffet, Engineers Arms, Henlow 8 pm

BEER FESTIVALS

- Sep.** 26th-29th. St. Albans Beer & Cider Festival, Alban Arena, St Albans **CAMRA**
28th-30th. 7th "Grin and Beer It" Beer Festival, March Hare, Dunton
- Oct.** 3th-6th. 41st Bedford Beer & Cider Festival, Corn Exchange, St. Paul's Square, Bedford **CAMRA**
22nd-27th. Norwich Beer Festival, St. Andrew's & Blackfriars Hall **CAMRA**
25th-28th. Engineers Arms Beer Festival, High Street, Henlow
- Nov.** 8th-10th. Watford Beer Festival, West Herts Sports Club **CAMRA**
14th-17th. Cambridge Winter Ale Festival, University Social Club **CAMRA**
21st-24th. Rochford Beer & Cider Festival, Freight House, Rochford **CAMRA**
- Dec.** 4th-8th. Pigs Ear Beer Fest, Round Chapel, Powerscroft Rd, Hackney **CAMRA**



Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival
Burgess Hall, St Ives
18th-20th October 2018

Opening times

Thu 18th October from Noon to 10.30pm
Fri 19th October from Noon to 10.30pm
Sat 20th October from Noon to 10pm

Engineers Arms Trip to Oxford

On the 15th May landlord Kevin organized a coach trip to Oxford, a city I knew very little about. As we arrived before most pubs had opened our first call was **The Swan and Castle**, a Wetherspoons pub where I had Black Beauty, a 3.9% mild from White Horse brewery. It was very enjoyable and served in good condition. General opening hours were now available so our next port of call was **The Royal Blenheim** at 13 St Ebbes Street, a classic 19th century pub with an ornate tiled floor serving mainly locally brewed beers. Nine beers were available including Grip brewery Yorkshire Ale 3.9%, White Horse Wayland Smithy 4.4% and Downton Chocolate Orange Delight 5.8% although it was hard to find the chocolate in the latter beer, but all very enjoyable.

Onwards to the next stop, **The St Aldate's Tavern**, A Victorian coaching house in the city centre. This pub had seven real ales of which Flying Monk Brewery Habit 4.2% and Prescott Brewery Grand Prix 5.2% were both tried and enjoyed. After that, we walked to **The Crown**, a Nicholson's pub. This pub was used by William Shakespeare who would visit Oxford on his way between London and Stratford. Again there were seven handpumps although three had signs '*coming soon*' on them. (A touch of Wetherspoons as we know too often). The Great Newsome Brewery Pigs Ear at 5.2% was quaffed and indeed proved very good.



The group then moved to 7 George Street to find **The Grapes**, a 100 year old pub with four real ales available and I tried Loose Canon Abingdon Bridge. The trip continued with a visit to **The White Rabbit** pub at 21 Friars Entry, which really was an Italian restaurant. However, they served three beers and I had Shotover OSB 4.5%.



Our penultimate stop at 12 St Giles was the **Lamb and Flag**, a 500 year old college pub which has a cosy open fire for when the weather turns cold. Six handpumps to choose from, so I opted for Lamb and Flag Gold 4.5%. Finally we went further down the street to **The Eagle and Child** which was the meeting place of The Inklings who were a group of writers who met there in the thirties and forties, the most famous being J. R. R. Tolkien. Three ales were available and I had Black Sheep Bitter. So ended a very enjoyable trip to Oxford.

Clifford Luff

Summer Pub Walk in Huntingdonshire

On Saturday 18th August seven intrepid CAMRA members boarded a train and headed north for a summer pub walk in Huntingdonshire. Simon, Meryl, John B, Dave, Barry, Ian and myself arrived in Huntingdon for the start of a summer pub walk. We popped in to the Wetherspoons pub to check out the beer range, but opted not to stay at that point. Instead we planned to finish there later in the day, so we walked to the bus stop and boarded bus B for a trip around the Huntingdon housing estates, before it dropped us in St. Ives. Our first port of call was the **Oliver Cromwell**, beside the river. This pub was a mix of old and modern with quite a good crowd enjoying a pub lunch. At the bar, we found five ales to sample Oakham JHB, Hop Back Summer Lightning, Adnams Southwold Bitter & Broad-side and I tried Woodfordes Wherry Bitter which was competitively priced at £2.75. It was nice to see a local Cromwells Cider on offer too.



Onwards to the **Nelsons Head**, which I thought was a free-house but actually is now operated by Greene King. The beers on offer were fairly standard, IPA, Abbot, Old Golden Hen, but there were two local ales from Nene Valley, an Australian Pale and a Bitter, the latter was at a reduced price of £2.70, great value. We sat outside in the patio area waiting to see if the sun would break through, but alas not yet. We should have started our walk to Huntingdon by now, but we were distracted (probably my fault) by the **Floods Tavern**. I knew they had Elgood's ales and a great patio garden overlooking the river, next to the rowing club. We sampled Elgood's Black Dog Mild, Cambridge Bitter & Golden Newt, plus guest ale Hydes Lowry. The rear patio did not disappoint, but still no sunshine yet.

Finally by mid afternoon, we departed to walk alongside the river on a path well used by walkers, joggers and cyclists. The sun eventually broke through and within the hour, we came to the pretty village of Houghton and **The Three Horseshoes**. We popped into the snug bar and were happy to see four ales served direct from the barrel in a cool glassed off section. Oakham JHB and Citra were popular, plus they had Sharps Doom Bar & GK IPA.

As we started to head outside for a seat, we noticed a rather unusual pit in the floor of the room. We were initially puzzled until we realised it was an area behind an oche to throw darts. The ceiling was so low in that room, they couldn't place the dartboard at the correct height, so dug out a pit to stand in instead—clever wags. Again we moved on, presumably to leave Houghton, but Barry our group leader said there was another pub nearby if we wanted to try it.



So within 10 minutes we found the **Three Jolly Butchers**, which seemed fairly quiet as we entered, but we found quite a large crowd enjoying the vast garden area at the rear.

At the bar, we saw the usual suspects of Doom Bar, IPA and Abbot, but we spotted a guest beer called Fallout from the 3D brewery and gave that a go, it was very good.

We were a bit behind schedule, although no-one seemed to mind, but we opted to take the more direct route and some road walking to head east and into the village of Hartford. Here we bypassed the Barley Mow and headed straight for a pub that was a known CAMRA award winner in recent years, the **King of the Belgians**. We entered rather carefully due to low ceilings and spied a range of four ales and six real ciders.



Between us we sampled St Austell Tribute, Woodfordes Bure Gold, Nethergate Stour Gold and I opted for the dark and unctuous Egyptian Cream from Nene Valley, which was in tip top condition and took over as best pint of the day for me. We could have stayed longer, but with darkness falling earlier now that we were in mid August, we pushed on with the final stretch into Huntingdon and made for the **Samuel Pepys** on the High Street.



This was a pub that I had been in before and knew it had a good range of ales and a decent sized patio garden. At the bar, there was Doom Bar, Black Sheep Bitter, Robinson Dizzy Blonde, Taylor Golden Best and a house beer called Pepys Pipe brewed by Marstons and only £3.00, which again appealed to my Scottish upbringing. As dusk began to fall, we slipped out of the pub and across the road to Barney's Plaice.

We had been tipped off that it served great chips, so quite a few of us scoffed a fish supper (as we say north of the border) and it went down extremely well. It was time to move closer to the train station, so we popped in to the **Falcon**, which as always had too many beers to list, but I noticed some of the other members try Wainwright's Ale, while I could not resist a 6% robust porter Black Prince. Not sure it would go well with the fish supper, but I left them to fight it out in my stomach, as the beer slipped down far too easily.

We returned to the **Sandford House** (Wetherspoons), intending to have a swift half or so, but heard that the intended train south was cancelled, giving us extra time, so pints were ordered, although I opted for two halves from Rocket Ales - Atlas IPA and Bloodhound Bitter. I was flagging by this point and rather full so called it a night. We managed to catch the next train and reminisced on a very good day of walking and some new pubs. I owe a big *Thank You* to Sue, who collected three of us from Arlesey station to avoid a slow stagger home in the dark, our intrepid leader Barry and also to our initial route planner Geoff T, who couldn't join us on the day, but we hope to catch up with him again soon.

John Goodlet

Tour de Comte de Bedfordshire Est

Before you start reading please bear in mind that the following does not list any beers, their specific gravities, what they tasted like or their cost. It's about a bike ride by a diverse group of CAMRA members who happen to enjoy refreshment stops in pubs. It's not a bicycle propelled beer guide.

The 8th Stage of the East Beds CAMRA cycle ride took place on June 10th when most of the participants assembled in balmy weather on the patio at the rear of Biggleswade's renowned hostelry the "**Golden Pheasant**" where we ensured that enough "fuel" was on-board before setting off for the more bucolic charms of the Cock at Broom. Patrick's choice of beers was as eclectic as those of the previous landlord of the "Pheasant", his father and long-standing CAMRA Branch member, John Walsh.



Having prepared myself for the criticism of some of my fellow cyclists that my jeans weren't exactly the recommended outfit for the forthcoming exercise I knew that, had I worn shorts, the ribaldry would have been even more intense so I ignored their jibes. We weren't joined at the start by Alan Bates and Steve Mead as they had decided to take a slightly more circuitous route from Sandy which encompassed Gamlingay, the Hatleys, the Mordens and Dunton before returning to Biggleswade for cake before catching us up at the Engineers Arms. We did, though, have the pleasure of the companionship of three members of South Beds CAMRA - Mike Coombes, his dad John and Mike's mate Alex from Westoning. Mike's dad had taken the sensible option of using his electrically assisted bike for the trip whereas I had made the misguided decision of not being John's "best mate" for the day nor bringing a short tow-rope.

Leaving Biggleswade behind us the peloton sped along to the **Cock** crossing the River Ivel Navigation Canal's 1823 Biggleswade to Shefford extension near the site of Holme Mills - now Jordan's Mill. Some of us took the time to admire the navvies' work and the ancient lock while others, I suspect, were on an headlong dash to the beer in the Cock. Apparently the canal extension was built by Bristol men who were paid the princely sum of three-and-a-half pence per cubic yard of earth removed (about one-and-a-half "p" in today's coinage).



Their graft ensured that the canal was a financial success until the railways arrived about three decades later. We encamped in the garden of the Cock and enjoyed the pleasure of being served our beer at the top of the cellar steps as has probably been the case for both locals and travellers for many years. Trade was good and the kitchen was busy as we supped to the sound of birdsong, banter and bike chat.

The next leg from the Cock to the Engineers Arms was the longest and involved a short stretch along the Sandy-Shefford road as far as Stanford. Not everybody took this option as the more sensible, as it turned out, went toward Southill after leaving Broom before crossing the main road at the Green Man and then catching up to the rest nearer Clifton. Unfortunately it was between the Cock and the Engineers that some of us encountered a thoughtless driver who seemed to think that the distance between a car and cyclist when overtaking should be around fifteen centimetres rather than the generally accepted one and a half metres. It was little surprise that we had to get to another beer stop to settle our collective nerves.

The **Engineers Arms** offered the usual wide range of beers and ciders which is, perhaps, sometimes taken for granted by East Beds CAMRA members when one considers the pub's small town location, lack of reasonable public transport and the proximity of other beer outlets. The back two bars had sport on the big screens but the relative calm of the front bar was welcome and for some...well, in truth, just me...it would have been the ideal opportunity to carry on drinking then head to Arlesey Station and catch the train home.



Alas, peer pressure prevailed and pushing pedals was paramount to my pals. We remounted and set forth to the **Old Transporter Ale House** in Henlow where an array of dark, medium and summer beers were on offer - and very enjoyable they were too as they were again direct from the barrel – not that the method of dispense is of great importance as long as the beverage isn't tampered with between the brewery and one's palate.

Our next stop was the **Sugar Loaf** at Meppershall and it was a pleasure for me to visit for the very first time. It is an Asset of Community Value and the determination of the villagers to stop the disappearance of their pub is an inspiration to any group faced with a similar issue and the friendly atmosphere spoke volumes for the spirit which saw off the naysayers who said it wasn't viable.



Continued on page 14.....

Although it was something of a trial to see my colleagues disappear into the distance through Lower and Upper Stondon on the way to Meppershall (thanks for hanging about, Chris) I was so far behind that, on arrival, I claimed that I'd stopped at the Upper Stondon Church fête to have a shot on the bouncy castle. Even so, the destination was well worth the effort expended.

The road to the **White Hart** in Campton was mainly downhill and it was most pleasurable to sit in the pub garden with our refreshments swapping tales of derring-do on the journey which some considered a bit of a sprint whilst others seemed to think had been a cycling marathon. The beer was in good nick and the leisurely stop soon gave way to the last leg of the journey to the Admiral although Mike, John & Alex left us and headed for home in Maulden and Westoning.



At the **Admiral** the Beer Festival was in full swing and almost impossible to get a seat inside or out - and as well as the beers at the bar there was a well stocked stillage in the garden. There was an atmosphere of fun with everybody enjoying themselves, just how it should be and it's another little pub which has made strenuous efforts to swim against the tide of closures and the inevitable customer despair which follows.

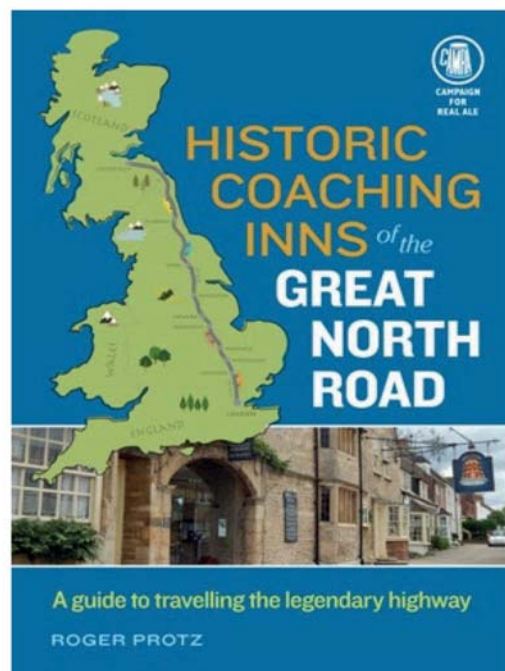
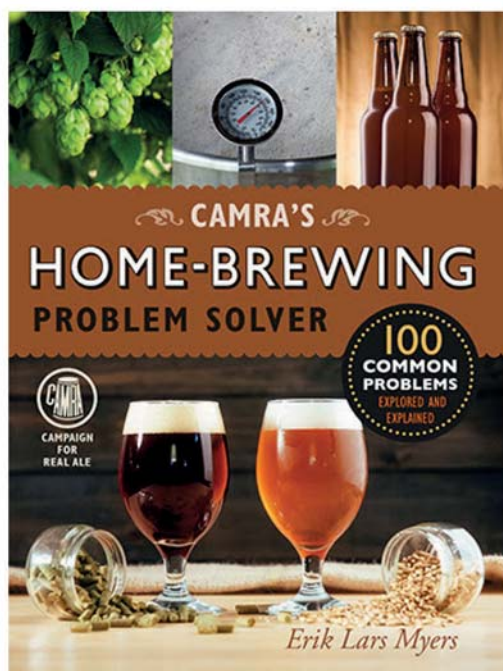
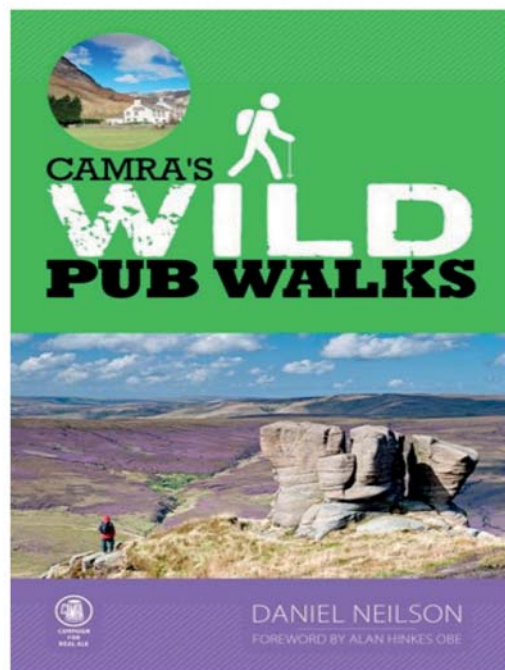
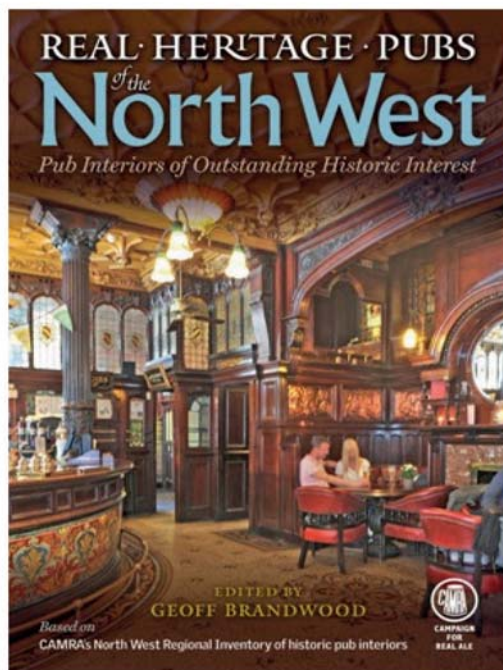
Although nothing at all to do with beer or pubs I am always slightly concerned about Clifton duck pond as there is always a distinct lack of ducklings in the spring-time. The ducks lay eggs as they can be seen on their little artificial floating islands but it is many years since I've seen a single hatchling. There were a few moorhen or coot chicks - but none from the duck division. I can't help but wonder if somebody goes out in the middle of the night each spring and oils the eggs to stop the embryos getting oxygen to develop. Can a Cliftonian shed any light on this mystery?

Despite my desire to then cycle to Arlesey and get the train, I was persuaded by Archie that a brisk ride back to Sandy would be more beneficial so we bade farewell to our companions. Finally, I must say that it was another thoroughly enjoyable day out with Archie, Phil, Steve, Chris, Alan Britcher, Alan Bates, Marc, Mike, John and Alex. Thanks to the publicans, their staff and customers who all made us feel very welcome and well done for serving beers which were at least "very good" as far as quality goes. Shorts for me next year? No, it'll be beer again.

Barry Price

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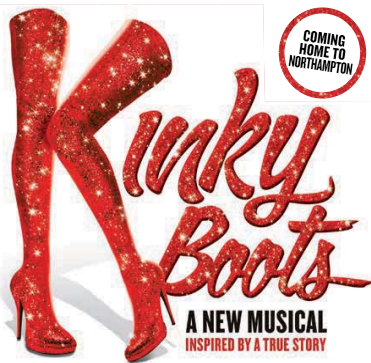
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Campaign Corner Report

Village or Town, Pub	LocALe	Real Cider	ACV	Festival	Discount
Arlesey, Vicars Inn	Wells				
Arlesey, White Horse			Yes		
Biggleswade, Crown Hotel					Yes 50p
Biggleswade, Golden Pheasant	Wells +	Yes			
Biggleswade, New Inn	Wells	Yes			
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			
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

London Summer Social

Each year the Bedfordshire Branches have a social visit to London which usually takes place in the autumn on the Saturday nearest Halloween. However, this year some precognition led us to switch the event to the summer time. This was just as a Mass Lobby has been arranged for CAMRA members to meet their local MPs in Westminster on Tuesday 30th October to discuss key national topics such as The Beer Tie, PubCo Reform and Beer duty.

Instead we opted for Saturday 28th July not realising the intense heatwave was about the break. North Beds chairman Roget Stokes suggested we join another group visiting London to ensure a better mix of members so we joined a planned itinerary aimed at activating Young Members from London and nearby counties. Indeed when we turned up at the first venue, the **Tap East Brew Tap** in the Westgate Shopping Centre at Stratford International station, there was a mix of members from three Beds branches, plus some from South Herts and Cambridge.



The Brew Tap was modern and tucked away in the NW corner of the shopping centre. The brewing equipment was visible through large glass walls and the bar offered real ales, craft keg ales, plus a range of bottled and canned ales. This would be the recipe for the rest of the day, a mix of cask and keg ale tasting. There were three house cask ales, a Session IPA 4%, JWB 4.1% and Smokestack Porter 6%, plus three guest ales from Yorkshire breweries.

I had a half of the Porter, even though it was quite strong, I had already resigned myself to sticking to 'half pints' that day in order to last the distance. A quick glance at the four craft keg ales revealed a range from 4.6% through to a heady double hopped IPA at 9%. I knew I couldn't have the IPA this early in the day, but the barman took pity on me and let me have a taster, it was awesome (a mental note was taken to rearrange a longer visit to this pub). I opted to finish with a half of Chocolate & Orange Stout which was good.

Onwards, we walked east, over a few very busy roads and into Hackney Wick for my first visit to the **Crate Brewery & Pizzeria** based in a former printworks. It was a lovely spot with long tables laid out overlooking the River Lea Navigation, but it was quite crowded. Instead we found extra tables at the rear inside Queens Yard. At the bar, I tried Golden Crate 3.9%, which was, I think, their only house beer on handpump. The other guest cask ales were from Marble, Thornbridge, Oakham and Burning Sky, plus a Seacider real cider.



Most of the house ales were in keg format, too many to list but I did try a half of Stout, which was pretty tasty. The only disappointment was the prices, with little difference between cask and keg, all from 4.50 to 5 pounds. As we sat outside, many members had spotted that Howling Hops had moved their brewery into the same yard, just next door. This prompted a bonus visit and here we found a large brewery with a cavernous 'beer keller' area called the **Tank Bar**.

Here the main house ales were dispensed from large cold tanks and served in 2/3 of a pint tankards, but smaller tasting panels for five ales were also available. It was here that we fell behind schedule, the quality was exceptional and worth the extra time. We sampled Pudding Ale Chocolate Stout 4.8%, East End Hefeweizen 4.5%, Dinner Ale Red 5.2% and Das Koolsh 4.6%. There was four more beers that we missed, so a longer visit is required.



A short walk to the north took us to the **Beer Merchants** in Wallis Street and it proved most unusual. It was a craft beer and bottle shop with only two cask ales, but up to 20 keg ales mainly from the Tiny Rebel Brewery, part of a tap takeover weekend. We surveyed hundreds of bottles and cans and chose to share a large bottle of Kriek beer from De Ranke, Dottignies in Belgium — good choice. Sadly we ran out of time to try the BBQ.

After this, as expected the main group split as the Young Members and pals were heading for Hackney to visit the Cock Tavern and Pembury Tavern (which we had visited on a previous trip) followed by a pre-arranged tour of Five Points Brewery.

Instead we sought some local advice and we were told to walk further up the canal side and try **Mason & Company**, located in a new row of shops as part of the post-Olympic Park regeneration. The bar served a wide range of keg ales, so we tried Cold Brew Coffee 5% and Zapata Ale 5%, plus we had a couple of hot open sandwiches and chips from their Italian-American street food menu. We planned to rejoin the main group later in Old Street, but first we jumped on a bus for Bethnal Green.



Continued on page 20.....



Here our next stop was the **Old Street Brewery Tap** (not exactly close to Old Street?) The ales were keg dispensed and the three house ales were all in the 6-7% range, so we carefully tried a half of A Month in Vegas and My Bro is a Man (strange names indeed). There were a few IPAs and several guest ales from Bohemia, Chorlton, Kernal and Vibrant Forest.

Time was against us, so some members made a swift visit to the Long Arm Pub & Brewery on Worship Street and we went to the final pub, the **Old Fountain**, 3 Baldwin Street, with a good mix of cask and keg ales. We found London Pride, Citra and one from the Moor Brewery, but we had Five Pints XPA and Burning Sky Plateau. Again more members joined us so we had another swift half of a keg ale to finish.



We had been very lucky with the weather, it had been extremely breezy but at least there were no heavy thundery downpours. Also, the trains were (unusually) running on time as we left Kings Cross and headed north for home.

John Goodlet

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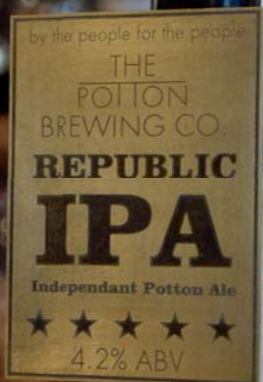
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