



the

FREE

Casket

Campaign for Real Ale

January 2015



EAST BEDFORDSHIRE

www.eastbedscamra.org.uk

casket@eastbedscamra.org.uk



Bedfordshire's 1st Micropub in Henlow see page 14

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The Casket

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A slightly longer word from the Editor

The autumn season gave me a chance to reflect on some excellent volunteer work by local CAMRA members. The first event was the Potton Apple Day cider stand on the last Sunday in September. The fine 'Indian summer' attracted more visitors, see page 12.

In September Jan & Les Gale at the **Stag**, Stotfold, asked us for advice about organising their first beer festival in early October. Tony Morris helped them to decide on the range and style of ales. The stillage and ales were provided by Punch Taverns. A few days beforehand I visited the Stag to lend them our festival glasses and I helped Les rack up six ales on the stillage, then I had go at being a drayman lowering the remaining two ales down the Cellar. They went on the 3rd and 4th hand-pump, in addition to the regular Adnams Bitter and Fuller's London Pride, plus 3 boxes of cider. The event kicked off on Friday lunchtime and I returned in the evening to help serve during their busiest spell. Tim Naisbitt also volunteered to do a stint on Saturday afternoon. Most of the weekend went very well and the majority of beer was sold, but Sunday proved rather quiet. So the stillage was kept up and the remaining beer sold off at a discount during the next week.

Finally, the biggest event by far was the Bedford Beer festival, where East Beds again ran the CAMRA products and tombola, with Alan Binnington overseeing the staffing and products. About a dozen members helped out over the 4 days of the festival. Once again, this event raised the lion's share of our branch annual fund-raising, in excess of £1,000. Well done to all our volunteers, keep up the great work. We shall be running a bus trip in 2015 as a special 'Thank You' to all our volunteers.

Congratulations to Corri & her team at the **New Inn**, Biggleswade for their first beer festival on the Halloween weekend. Over the last six months the range of regular ales has been extended to eight, four of which are 'free of the tie', plus there are a few real ciders. So the New Inn now joins our National Real Cider scheme, plus the LocALE scheme too as you can often find a local ale such as Buntingford.

Finally I want to mention the pubs that have been sold recently by Greene King as freehouses or to smaller pub chains. There is now a great opportunity for pub customers to have more say in the choice of ales in your local pub. Many pubs will now be '*free of the tie*' or have access to a '*guest ale list*'. So I would encourage all ale loving customers to start talking to licensees and other customers about what beers they like. Ask your local landlord to stock your favourite beer, or if certain ales are always on, ask him to rotate some ales or try seasonal ales. I know some pubs in Bedfordshire, where the licensee sits down with some regular customers once a month and gets their input into choosing guest ales. So go on — give it a go and get involved.

LOCAL PUB NEWS

Fox & Duck, Stotfold

This pub/restaurant re-opened on 21st November 2014 after an 20 month closure. The building, owned by Singh Construction has now been leased for 15 years to Martin & Maria Castleton from Pirton. It is now opening on Tue-Sat from 11am-11pm [closed on Mondays] and Sunday 12-6pm.



The outside is newly painted and inside the old public bar has lost its games but retains the flagstone floor and is now a cosy snug with comfy seats. The main bar area has wooden flooring throughout leading round to the restaurant section, all freshly painted and bright. At the bar GK IPA is still the regular ale, plus one changing guest ale such as Rocking Rudolph, Fireside or Wherry. There are European lagers and some bottled beer from GK and Belhaven.

The pub offers a mix of a la carte and other main meals all freshly cooked. Examples of their seasonal menus and specials should be on their website by mid January www.foxandduckstotfold.co.uk Service is 11.30-2pm & 5.30-9pm, plus 12-4.30pm on Sundays. In the coming months events will be launched in the Marquee such as Weddings, Anniversaries and Parties.

Red Lion, Potton

This pub closed down for the second time in five years in late August 2014. It was sold by Punch Taverns to a property developer who put a planning application in for 'change of use' to private housing in mid October. East Beds CAMRA with support from a Potton town councillor Adam Serny raised a petition of signatures from local supporters who want the Red Lion to continue as a pub.

Pubs Preservation Officer Les Ivall, an ex landlord of 35 years experience, wrote a robust reply to Punch Taverns statement that the pub was unviable. The petition if successful would result in the **Red Lion** being listed as a **Asset of Community Value** in Potton and the planning officers must take into account the views of the community when judging the application.

This leaves Potton with only four pubs, three of which are in the town centre. As we went to press, the planners were due to make their decision in mid January.

Coach & Horses, Biggleswade

Sadly this pub closed down a few months ago and was sold by Greene King. It was bought by Travis Perkins a local building firm who plan to expand their premises. It was a former 18th century inn, but had been neglected in recent years by Greene King. Its trade suffered during the last decade and there was little local interest in trying to save this pub.

Sugar Loaf, Meppershall

In the last issue we reported that the **Gardeners Arms and Wheatsheaf** in Biggleswade were two local pubs sold by Greene King to Hawthorn Leisure. At that time, we did not realise that the **Sugar Loaf**, Meppershall was also part of that deal and is technically a freehouse now.

The pub hasn't changed too much, although the opening hours are now Mon-Fri 2-11pm, Sat 12-midnight and Sun 12-11pm. The Greene King ales have gone and Sharps Doom Bar is now the regular beer, plus one guest ale. 275 pubs were sold to Hawthorn, so it should be no surprise that other Beds pubs were also sold. **The Noah's Ark & Musgrave Arms**, Shillington are two nearby examples.



Over 150 real ales, ciders, perries and imported beers including London Draught & Bottled Beer Bars

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale proudly presents

LONDON DRINKER

Beer & Cider Festival

Home cooked dishes of the day including vegetarian options and a delectable selection of traditional favourites

Camden Centre, Baldborough Street, WC1H 9AU
(nearest tube: King's Cross St. Pancras)

Wednesday 11th March. 12-3pm; 5-10.30pm
Thursday 12th March 12-3pm; 5-10.30pm
Friday 13th March 12-10.30pm

Admission free Wednesday & Thursday lunchtimes: £3.50 other times
(£1 off for CAMRA members). Last admission 10pm. Over 18s only.

Organisers reserve the right to refuse admission.

Wednesday lunch: Launch of the American bottle beers on the imported Beer Bar
Wednesday evening: Free Pub Quiz
Thursday lunch: Announcement of CAMRA's Best Porter in London & the South East
Thursday evening: Announcement of CAMRA's North London Pub of the Year
Friday 12-5pm: Bring & Buy Second Hand Books in aid of children's charity, Bransmoor

For more details see:
www.northernlondon.camra.org.uk/
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The Orange Tree, Baldock

A 330 year old traditional pub with 8 real ales on sale at all times, and up to 13 at Weekends! Proper home-made food served 12-3 and 6-9 daily, and a fantastic selection of Chapman's Sausages, Pork Pies and Biltong. Traditional Sunday Lunches served 12-6pm
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www.theorangetreebaldock.com

Norton Road, Baldock, SG7 5AW

5 minutes walk from Baldock Station.

Dogs, Kids and muddy boots are always welcome!



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Two New Breweries for South Beds

The **Leighton Buzzard Brewing Company** was set up by brewer Jon d'Este-Hoare in July 2014 at Unit 23, Harmill Industrial Estate, Grovebury Road, Leighton Buzzard. The beer recipes have been designed with full-on flavour which may not suit everyone. The first four regular brews were:-

Narrow Gauge – 3.9% ABV

Named after the Leighton Buzzard's narrow gauge railway this golden ale brewed with 100% British Marris Otter pale malt uses plenty of First Gold and Citra hops to deliver a light refreshing beer with a dry bitter taste and crisp citrus finish.



Restoration Ale – 4.6% ABV

A mid brown best beer with similarities in colour and strength to a traditional best bitter but benefitting from the generous use of American Cascade and Perle hops to deliver a fruity refreshing beer.

Rebel Yell – 5.0% ABV

A black IPA offering that fantastic juxtaposition between the initial smooth richness of the malt quickly followed by the sharp dry hops. Brewed using five different malts and four different hops.



Smoking Angel—4.5% ABV

Using generous quantities of German Rauchmaltz smoked over beech wood in the Bamberg area of Germany this dark porter style beer offer a complex malty beer with a wonderful smoky aroma and taste.

You can visit the brewery on a Saturday and buy beer in quantities from bottles to casks which can be ordered, delivered and set-up. See www.leightonbuzzardbrewing.co.uk

The new **Ampthill Brewery** moved into their premises on Station Road, Ampthill in May. A six barrel brewery was installed in early September with their first brews coming out in late October. The brewery is operated by two local couples Dave & Jennie Thomas and Richard & Julie Wood.

The first beers produced in Amphthill since 1927 were:-

Bury Flyer—4.1%

A modern bitter heavily late hopped with American hops, providing a striking impact. The recipe came from Bury, Lancs along with the brewing equipment and most of the actual brewing. The pump clip shows a mid 19th century Bury 2-2-0 locomotive.

First Brew Summit—4.1%

IPA styled bitter with the distinct flavour of American Summit hops, due to extensive late-hopping. The first of our own brews to our own recipe.

First Brew Copper—4.3%

A beautifully coloured full-taste copper beer, with a smoothness from crystal malt balanced with English Goldings hops.

First Brew Gold—3.7%

A bright golden beer with an impactful taste resulting from twin-hopping with Goldings and Summit hops.

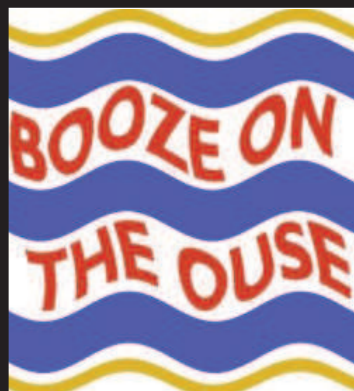
More recently, they have produced:-

Amphthill Gold—3.5%

A light and bright golden beer resulting from twin-hopping with English Goldings and Challenger hops.

Northdowner - 3.6%

A darker brown beer with the smoothness of crystal malt and single hopped with English Northdown whole hops.



ST NEOTS BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

Priory Lane, St Neots, Cambs, PE19 2BH

Thursday 12th - Saturday 14th March 2015

Around 70 real ales, plus real cider and perry

Entry Including Programme:

Thursday - 5-11pm £2

Friday - 12noon-5pm £1; 5pm-11pm £3

Saturday - 12noon-5pm £2; 5pm-10pm £1

Free entry to CAMRA Members at all sessions

The Micro-pub Revolution

We now have our first local micro-pub, The Old Transporter Alehouse in Henlow opened by June & Stephen Topham but how did the concept start?

The first micro-pub was The Butchers Arms, Herne Bay, Kent opened by Martyn Hillier and since then over 60 operate over the UK. The micro-pub association describes a micro-pub as '*a small freehouse which listens to its customers, mainly serves cask ales, promotes conversation, shuns all forms of electronic entertainment and dabbles in traditional pub snacks*'.

I opted for an overnight trip to visit 9 micro-pubs around the Margate, Broadstairs, and Ramsgate area. I travelled via Kings Cross and St Pancras for the Javelin fast service via Ashford and arrived at Ramsgate to visit my first micro-pub **The Hovelling Boat Inn**. It opened on 29th March 2013 at 12 York Street, a few paces up from Ramsgate Harbour. A lovely former shop now serving beer from the barrel in a temperature controlled cellar room, plus rolls and snacks.



The next micro-pub was **The Conqueror Alehouse** situated in Grange Road run by Colin Aris. He is a really warm jovial and welcoming chap serving mainly local ales. The pub is named after a handsome two-funnelled paddle steamer which operated excursions from Ramsgate to France around the beginning of the 20th century and photos of the ship and crew decorate the walls.

I left Ramsgate to visit Broadstairs on the loop bus service which, as the name suggests, is a service which goes around Thanet on a loop. The first micro-pub was **The Yard of Ale House** in an old 10th century stable, it is my favourite establishment. The pub is in Church Street, St Peters and was on a corner of a fork road. Much of the old stable still exists and one could imagine a horse arriving at any time for its pint of beer. Again the beers were from a back room and sourced locally plus some local handmade pork pies and cheeses.

From there to **The Four Candles**, Sopwell Street, which was a hardware store for many years, then later a florists, delicatessen and exotic meat shop. So it's close enough to the original shop to pay tribute to one of Britain's best-loved comedy sketches. Mike the owner is hoping to open a one barrel brewery but at present is serving local beers. It was very busy during my visit, yet the pub opposite was closing down (perhaps due to the type of premises it was!).



After a handsome portion of Fish and Chips from a recommended local shop I visited the last micro-pub, **The Thirty Nine Steps** in Charlotte Street and it was my least favourite. It wasn't really a micro-pub as it was rather large and serving more commercial beers not local ones. So now off to my hotel room in Margate as Michael Portillo would say, looking forward to next days round of micro-pubs.

Next morning after a hearty breakfast and a walk along Margate seafront I caught a local bus to Birchington where I spotted Captain Alan of **The Wheel Alehouse** opening up for business. The pub was launched on 11th March 2013 and is larger than most of the micro-pubs in Thanet. It covers two floors, so events such as quizzes and live music are held on the upper deck, and do not detract from the micro-pub atmosphere downstairs.



Moving to the next pub, turned out to be a bit of an endurance course. As the Wheel Alehouse was near Birchington station and the next micro-pub was outside the next station along the line to Margate, I decided to catch the train only to find the train went through my station at Westgate On Sea and ended up at Margate. The next train back was 30 minutes away so I decided to catch the bus only to pass 2 buses on the way to the bus stop and no others expected soon, so back to the station to catch the train. (I bet this did not happen to Michael Portillo!)

Finally after going the wrong way up the street I eventually entered **The Bake and Alehouse**. This micro-pub is tucked away down a side alley and since it opened 3 years ago has sold over 350 ales from all over the UK. (Micro-pubs generally sell local beers). The next pub was easier to find, as I had asked the bus driver where it was and he dropped me opposite it in Westbrook. **Ales of the Unexpected** is a family run business in a former fishmongers. Four ales were available and again on my visit the beers were not local so along to my last port of call which happened to be on the harbour at Margate. **The Harbour Arms** is in an old store at the end of the harbour. I sat outside with a pint of local ale overlooking the harbour which with the tide being out was not very picturesque.



Now back to Margate railway station and the return home. My impressions of micro-pubs were that they were very friendly places to visit and being small you were always sitting next to someone who wanted to chat. The beers were excellent and staff very helpful and pleasant. I shall be returning again. If you are planning a visit to try micro-pubs in the Thanet area, do check the opening times and local transport schedules.

DIARY DATES

- JAN.** 20th, Special GBG Selection Meeting, Kings Arms, Sandy, 8 pm
- FEB.** 7th, Branch Social, March Hare beer festival, Dunton, 1 pm onwards
24th, Branch Meeting, March Hare, Dunton, 8 pm
- MAR.** 13th, Branch Social, St. Neots beer festival, 1 pm onwards
- APR.** 14th. Branch Meeting, Cock, Broom, 8 pm

BEER FESTIVALS

- Jan.** 22th-24th. Cambridge Winter Ale Festival, University, Social Club **CAMRA**
- Feb.** 6th-8th. 3rd Winter Beer Festival, March Hare, Dunton
19th-21st. The 32nd Luton Beer & Cider Festival, Hightown Sports & Arts Centre, Concorde Street, Luton **CAMRA**
26th-1st. 5th Henlow Cider & Country Wine Festival, Engineers Arms, High Street, Henlow
- Mar.** 12th-14th. The 40th Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival, Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St. Neots **CAMRA**
- Apr.** T.B.A.. The 7th Sir William Peel Beer Festival, High Street, Sandy
23rd-26th. The Half Moon Beer Festival, Queen Street, Hitchin

Chris Bunyan's Comedy Corner

A bloke came home from the pub to find his missus with the Camel for some reason (women need a reason?).....

"Been to the pub again?" she said.

"How many pints did you have?"

"How much did that cost you?"

"And you go to the pub every night and have three pints?"

"Do you realise that if you didn't go to the pub and put that £10 a time into a high interest account over the past 25 years you've been going to the pub, you'd have enough to buy an Aston Martin?"

"Good point. Do you drink beer?"

"Where's your Aston Martin, then?"

"Yes"

"Three"

"About ten quid"

"Yes"

"No, you know I don't"

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** Could be a micropub found in locale housed in an old shop. (8)
- 8** Only allow women as staff? Quite the opposite. (6)
- 10** Hostelry is turned around, welcoming king as an expression of satisfaction. (4)
- 11** Hallowed be reformed band of folk. (10)
- 12** A boy sternly guards a possible stout constituent. (6)
- 14** A minion's restlessness. (8)
- 15** Prepares malt maybe and puts it in the right storage houses. (6)
- 16** One of said mettle can provide a trooper, one superfluous will not have the runs. (6)
- 19** i.e. a poetic time of day. (8)
- 21** One drinking to health is losing nothing in getting an introduction. (6)
- 23** Review Goth in disarray and find to be far from light. (10)
- 24** If badger isn't right then get a different beer. (4)

- 25** It's old and worn if used too many times, but revolutionary after 151. (6)

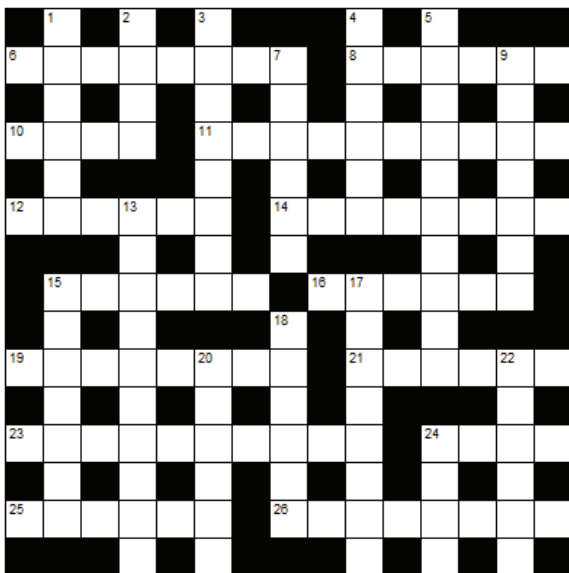
- 26** Ill omens hid 11's potbellied indulgence. (8)

Down

- 1** See why it's said going around at top volume may make a pint look unappealing. (6)
- 2** Quiet cheap pub. (4)
- 3** Runs bust out in a flash (8)
- 4** Head fryers said to be bats, batty about the smell of beers. (6)
- 5** As a principle it's a matter of weighing up the liquids. (10)
- 7** Islington home is a piece of cake. (6)
- 9** Point at crazy Latino for fun. (7)
- 13** A disaster in art. (10)
- 15** As ale should be, about five four gives 11 second wind with Harvey's help. (7)
- 17** Level achieved when a beginner gets into mind-set as model goes out. (8)
- 18** Murray takes fast car to hotel to get supine 17. (6)
- 20** Poorly enunciate when sister is away - must have a cool brew. (6)
- 22** It's the duty of the monarch to drop out of the running. (6)
- 24** Put a stop to backhander. (4)

Compiled by Chris Freeman

The solution is on Page 26



In-Cider Dealings

Well, we know Apple Month is supposed to be October, but we like to be REALLY punctual round here, so we started with Potton Apple Day on 29th September just to be on the safe side! Once again, East Beds CAMRA took on the Cider Bar – serving five different types of locally produced Cider and a locally made Perry. We offered up the delights of Apple Cottage, Potton Press, Dunton, Evershed's and Apple Dayz – a Cider produced from the fruits donated at last year's event.



[Tony, John, Jo, Trish & Chris]



[a relaxed atmosphere at the cider stall]

The addition of a live band during the day made everything go with a swing, and many people took the opportunity to enjoy the ambience, pint in one hand, hog roast in the other - Perfect.

Every producer represented on the stand was entered into the 2014 Cider Competition, and I'm thrilled to say that one of my personal faves came out on top: Ginger Whinger from Apple Cottage in Baldock. (I can reassure you that although it's one of my favourites, I wasn't able to influence the judging in any way! The panel contained both Clergy and Local Councillors – I wouldn't dare!)



[cider prize jug]

Moving on, work continues apace at new venture Franklin's Cider and we expect to see the first 'outpourings' in the next couple of months, although if this recent picture posted on a good old-fashioned social media site is anything to go by, it may be a good deal sooner than that and could have an explosive beginning!



There are 24,000 litres of apple juice sitting in the barn and the first batch of cider is made from Howegate, Crispin & Bramley apples sourced from Bluntisham in Cambridgeshire and pressed at Virtual Orchard in Milton Keynes. The cider has been fermenting for 6 months, then another 6 months of maturing and should finish at 6.5%. You can expect a range of 5 ciders in 2015, including Dunton cider, plus other products such as Calvados 40%, Pommeau liqueur 21% & cider vinegar.

By the time you read this, we will have once again attended the traditional Dunton Wassail on the 3rd January. An old English custom designed to ensure good orchard harvests, it has roots on the continent too. It seems everybody wants to make sure their apples wake up in time to grow, blossom, ripen and ferment. The event will be accompanied by Morris Dancing, music, age-old Wassail carolling and no doubt a retreat from the cold into the March Hare to check out if previous Wassails have had a beneficial effect on the local trees.....

That's all from me for now. I hope you had a good Christmas and New Year, welcome to 2015 – where I hope we'll continue to enjoy fabulous cider and perry, both locally and further afield.

Jo Freeman

Steamin' at the March Hare

On the final weekend of September 2014, I was making my way over to Dunton to visit the *3rd Grin and Bear It* beer festival at the March Hare. On route I passed a number of people hanging around the roadside with cameras poised. I wondered if they were birdwatchers or airplane spotters. But in the distance coming towards me was a large puff of what looked like smoke. A little later a small steam traction engine went past in the opposite direction, followed by another, then another.....



When I reached the pub, I realised there was an event on, confirmed by landlord Johnny P who said he was expecting over 200 steam vehicles coming past on a circular route around East Beds starting in Old Warden. Well I grabbed a beer and my camera and took up position in the beer garden. Over the course of the next two hours, all the steam vehicles went past and many took their chance of a pit stop at the pub resulting in a welcome rush for the bar. Apparently a parade of this scale only takes place every ten years. I am not very proficient with the camera and as usual had it on the wrong speed setting causing blurred images. However the landlord kindly gave me the two photos above.

Bedfordshire's 1st Micropub

On 19th September 2014, the **Old Transporter Ale House** opened in Henlow Camp. It is located in the former Blockbusters video store near the Lower Stondon roundabout. It makes good use of a former retail outlet which had lain empty for some time. It is the brainchild of Stephen and June Topham, who live nearby. Stephen is a an engineer by trade and a particular fan of ‘real ale’ and likes stronger darker brews. June is also a fan of real ale and already had bar experience before starting this project having worked regular shifts at the Golden Pheasant, Biggleswade in recent years.



The pub is being run along the same lines as the micropubs which sprang up in Eastern Kent over the last decade and are now spreading throughout the UK, at the last count there were over sixty such businesses. Whilst the idea may seem relatively new, it is actually reviving in part an old style approach popular in Victorian times.

In the second half of the 19th century, half of licensed premises were beerhouses, rather than Inns and Public Houses. Beerhouses were only licensed to sell beer and most licensees plied their trade from a front room in their house or a small shopfront. They were popular with working classes and also used for off-sales.

Some of those principles exist in modern micropubs, in that they aim primarily for the wet sales and specifically ‘real ale’. The Old Transporter Ale House, chooses not to serve spirits or keg lager. This is a low cost approach ideal for these turbulent financial times, where most pubs have a lot of money tied up in the stock of a vast array of spirits which are only sold occasionally.



I asked June what other products would be on offer at the micropub. She replied that some bottled lagers were available, but only reputable European or World brands. A range of wine and bottled beer & cider is served, supported by old fashioned soft drinks, plus tea and coffee. Fresh rolls served on Friday afternoons and Saturdays are becoming more popular. It appears that bottled cider was selling extremely well and June has now introduced two boxes of scrumpy style cider and hopes to increase to four at a later date.

Stephen has a clear view of what ales he wants to serve. But he says you can't always start with your ideal target, you need to build up the trade. So he opened up with two real ales served direct from the barrel, supported by five boxes of bright beer from Tring Brewery. For a month this approach offered a wider range of ales to gain customer interest and allow more time to set up the stillaging & cooling systems.



Trade has increased now and Stephen has settled on a core range of 3 or 4 beers direct from the barrel. Boxed beer remains an option to increase the range of ales but only for holiday periods. Stephen is keen to maintain a variety of beer styles and colours. Typically you should find a bitter, a golden ale and a dark beer, plus a lower gravity session ale. Today there are two prices with beers below 5% at £3 per pint and stronger ales at around £3.20. It is important to Stephen to offer affordable ales and show that when 'free of the tie' beer does not have to be as expensive as it has been recently from large brewery and pub chain owned pubs.

The name Old Transporter Ale House has a good feel to it and it has a variety of memorabilia in the shapes of a Station clock, highway lamps, vintage number plates and old advertising plaques. I must admit I had made an incorrect assumption about the choice of the name. I assumed that the name was chosen to reflect the history of the former Truck Stop Café and Milk Bar businesses which stood at this junction until the 1970s. But June assures me that it was just a coincidence and the theme came from Stephen's love of old forms of transport.

At present both Stephen and June are investigating longer hours for 2015, but for now the opening hours are Tuesday to Thursday 6.30-10.30, Friday 2-11pm, Saturday 12-11pm and Sunday 12-7pm. Do visit this micropub to try their ales and ciders. Children are welcome up to 7.30pm, dogs are allowed and you can have a game of darts, dominoes, cribbage etc. There are occasional live music events, raffles or a quiz. Check their facebook page for upcoming events and beers.



If you want to get there by public transport there are regular buses from Hitchin to Bedford (71/72) and Sandy (188/190) which stop 200 yards from the micropub. I would advise visitors to check local timetables as some buses stop operating after 6pm. I can see this pub being popular with local people visiting the many takeaway outlets in the village. Why not order you Chinese or Indian meal and have a drink while you are waiting. Stephen and June would welcome any donations of vintage items related to old forms of transport.

John Goodlet

York Steam Trip

(Dedicated to the Memory of OG - see text and footnote)

An historic event occurred on 4th December 2014 – a steam locomotive stopped at Sandy for the first time in many a year and picked up passengers to whisk them away for a day of unbridled glee in the fair City of York – the place of birth of my wife, Carol.

Unfortunately I don't have the poetic skill of Edward Thomas who, on a glorious summer day in June 1914 less than three years before his death at Arras, wrote 'Adlestrop' after an unscheduled stop at the Cotswold station of the same name. But, had I shared his talent, I could undoubtedly have written a poem in praise of the countryside around Sandy. At 0845 on an overcast December morn Sir Nigel Gresley's A4 '**Bittern**' appeared through the gloom on the bend from Biggleswade much to the excitement of those about to board its coaches and the pleasure of the many who had turned up with their equipment to film, sound record and photograph it.



Once we'd found our places and settled we soon became comfortable in the perfectly heated carriage and slowly began to appreciate the gentle rhythm and sway of the train. Had it not been for the very friendly couple sitting opposite us, who got on at St Neots, it would have been easy to have sunk into our armchair-like seats and gently dozed the one hundred and fifty-odd miles to York after the initial excitement of seeing steam passing our window.

We arrived in York fifteen minutes ahead of schedule, at 1.00pm, quite surprising as we had to stop twice to refill with water provided by Fire Brigades parked near the main line. I mused on how much quicker the journey would have been, even at the maximum permitted seventy-five miles per hour, if the old troughs were still located between the tracks to allow the scoops to pick up water whilst the locomotive was in motion.

After leaving the station our first stop was Micklegate Bar as Carol wanted to buy something from the Museum shop. For those unfamiliar with the terminology I should perhaps point out that "...gate" in York (and other parts of the North East) is "street" in common parlance and "Bar" is "Gate" i.e. one of the historic gates into the walled city. A short step down Micklegate toward the city takes you to what is, in my mind, the best pub in York – **Brigantes**.



I'm sure that others have their favourites such as the Blue Bell for its tiny rooms, corridor bar and Edwardian charm; the Maltings (formerly the 'Lendal Bridge') on Tanners Moat - spoil some time ago for me by the vagaries of the person running the pub although I wouldn't question the quality of the ales; The Minster Inn – a CAMRA National Inventory pub slightly out of the city centre in Marygate which is just off Bootham; perhaps one of the York Brewery 'hanging' houses in the city such as the Last Drop Inn or the Three Legged Mare; or you could stroll along the east bank of the Ouse to Alma Terrace, The Wellington which is Grade II listed and recognised by CAMRA as having a Pub Interior of Outstanding National Historic Importance. Just off of a turning down Micklegate is the Ackhorne and a couple of streets away is the Golden Ball in both of which I've had some good times in the past. So if you don't find Brigantes to your taste then York offers plenty of choice.

Brigantes had its usual fine selection of ales, mainly from the North of England. The real ales on offer were: Sky's Edge - Thirst Aid (4.0%); Great Heck – Mount Mosaic (4.5%); Durham – White Stout (7.2%); Thornbridge – Made North (3.8%); York Brewery – Terra Nova (3.8%); Black Sheep – Brew 11 (5.0%); Dark Star – Art of Darkness (3.5%); Double Top Brewery – Golden Arrow (3.9%); 4T's – Celeia (3.7%). One cider Orchard Pig – Hogfather (7.4%) was listed but that didn't really do the range justice as there were on a nearby table, about twenty-five polypins in various states of emptiness, the remnants of a recent cider festival.

Carol's eyes lit up at the Durham White Stout as she now has a bit of a penchant for the flavours of some stouts (but the good sense to avoid the chemical laden offerings in most pubs) and a small 'taster' confirmed this as her choice so an half was ordered while I opted for a pint of the Black Sheep. A gentleman came in and after the mildest amount of persuasion from Carol he ordered a pint of the White Stout. After a short chat it transpired that he was also on the same steam excursion as ourselves; was a member of the Sandy Historical Transport Society; and knew East Beds CAMRA Committee member Steve Nakoneczny. He said "Let Nakkers know that you bumped into OG" which I did in the Sir William Peel the next evening. Apparently the "OG" is "Old Git".

I then tried the Great Heck ale while Carol stuck with the stout. The lad behind the Bar, Andy, the Assistant Manager turned out to be a very knowledgeable host with time to chat with everyone – as the pub wasn't too busy. It's a bit different on weekend evenings when the local lads partake in the age-old tradition of the 'Micklegate Run' (a pint in every pub in Micklegate although they usually avoid Brigantes as it's too laid-back) and girls on hen-nights squeal past the front door.

We decided to have a little stroll as we only had three and a quarter hours in York, it was important to see as much as we could in the limited period and we wanted to find some chocolate mice for another local CAMRA member. We wandered through St Nicholas Christmas Fayre which seemed quieter than I remembered it from a past visit. We also walked around some of the city centre – Stonegate, the Shambles, etc and all of the shops were festively decorated and we did find the mice!

Our return to Brigantes, revealed the disappearance of the 4T's and the appearance of Kirkstall Dissolution IPA (5.0%) and Waen Pamplemousse (4.2%). I had a pint of the Kirkstall but Carol had no intention of sticking to anything but the White Stout on which she had started the day so had another half. There was a reasonable selection of foreign bottled beers as well and I was regaling Andy with a tale of drinking one of my bottles of Kwak, which was ten years past its sell-by date. It was still quite delicious and would have been even better had I passed it through a tea-strainer as the yeast in the bottle had grown and coagulated into three or four lumps.

We chatted about various beers we had tried and I asked him how well the £10 per bottle Goose Island Bourbon Stout (15%) from Chicago, advertised on the mini blackboard, was selling and he said it was remarkably popular. When I suggested that it was a fairly potent ale he told us that he'd got something rather special in his private collection, which he bought for £60. A few seconds later he appeared with a bottle of Scotland's Brewmeister Snake Venom at a potentially explosive 67.5%! He told us he intends to share it with a few of his mates in shot glasses. A later check on the internet revealed general cynicism about the beer's strength. I believe it has been independently tested at just over 40% and the Advertising Standards Agency have spoken with the brewery about its claims.



As time was now pressing I had the Thornbridge ale as my last pint while Carol had a final half of the stout. All the beers in Brigantes were in excellent condition with prices ranging from £3.12 for the York Brewery to £4.50 for the White Stout. The journey home was as pleasant as that going although there was one slight incident of note. We arrived for water at Retford station, which afforded a good photo opportunity. Unfortunately we were in the last carriage which hadn't quite reached the platform, as I realised when I jumped out. Luckily the four pints I'd had in York had relaxed me somewhat and I landed without incident—thank goodness. In conclusion I'm sure Grommit would have agreed that it was "A Grand Day Out".

Barry Price

(Footnote – 'OG' was Ken Bayley a well-liked train and bus photographer who lived in Hertford. He was found dead beside the railway line at Roydon two days after Carol and I had met him and I sent our condolences to his son when we found out. Apparently he was an avid diarist and list maker and his son emailed me to say that his Dad had noted that he had enjoyed his Durham White Stout and that we should raise a glass to him. He'd gone to Roydon to photograph some steam locomotives which were on an excursion from Southend to Cambridge.)

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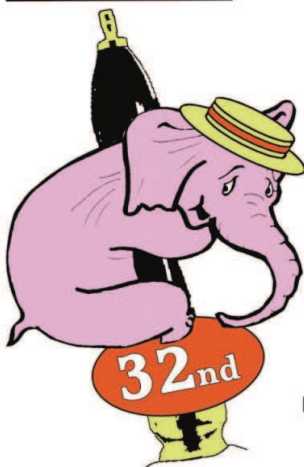
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Clubs in the Community

Many pubs have closed in East Beds over the last decade, along with thousands across the UK. I contacted three local clubs to ask them if they had been affected by the loss of these venues and whether they had gained new members or widened their role to help the community. All of them have 'Real Ale' at the bar and although membership driven, they have a reasonably open policy towards guests.

Down at the **Mount Pleasant Golf Club**, Lower Stondon the sales of cask ale have continued to be strong, particularly the Fullers London Pride which is the permanent offer. This is usually supported with a seasonal ale from Fullers or one from the B & T range. The Fairway Bar and Bistro with its vaulted ceiling has a Full licence and is open to everyone. Breakfasts, Bar snacks and meals are available from 9 am every day. If you haven't visited the Club, you should. There is a beautiful view onto the course from the bar (or veranda in the summer time) and it is a relaxing venue for a pleasant drink and snack or meal.



I asked owner David Simkins to give an update on activities at the Club and its role within the local community. He replied that various local organisations make use of the facilities. There are weekly judo classes, a Pilates class, and the local BNI (Business Network International) meet every Thursday.

The function room, which can seat up to 70 for formal meals, is popular for business meetings, parties, weddings and wakes. The club hosts a number of charitable fund raising events. For more details about the Mount Pleasant club check the website mountpleasantgolfclub.co.uk or phone 07762 126468.

The **Ivy Leaf Club**, Station Road, Langford allows non-members in for £1 for up to 6 visits in a year. After that single membership is £17, joint is £25, while over-65s and under 15s are £8, all per year. At the bar the regular ale is Greene King's IPA with a 2nd ale appearing occasionally. There is a wide selection of lager and cider, both draft and bottled, and a good range of bottled beers. The club is a popular venue for live music events and is also popular with sports fans who can watch football and rugby on the large screen TVs. Snooker, darts, dominoes, cribbage, skittles and pool are all played regularly on the premises.

I asked Sharon Simmonds, stewardess and Lynn Reynolds, secretary, to describe life at the club and its role in the community. They replied that the club is very popular with those within the village, and further afield, who enjoy the opportunity to join in watching or playing the various sports and games on offer.



The local Welcome Club meets there on Wednesday afternoons; Slimming World meets on Monday evenings. An indoor boot sale takes place every 2 months on Saturday mornings. The club also has a room that is available for any event other than 18th birthdays; recently these have included anniversaries, birthdays, wedding receptions, funeral receptions and christenings. There is also an upstairs room available to hire which is an ideal storage area. To find out more about the Ivy Leaf, Club check their Facebook page or call 01462 700868 after 6.30 pm.

The **Potton & District Club**, Station Road, Potton recently joined our national Whatpub website. It has one varying 'Real Ale' and runs a mini-beer festival. The club is popular for traditional pub games and has large screen TVs for the sports fans. Standard membership is £15 per annum and £7.50 for OAPs, but guests are welcome. I asked club secretary John Christmas to tell us about the club and its role within local community. He replied that membership was stable at the club and in line with other local businesses within the trade, a sign of the times.



The club has two full size snooker tables, a pool table and two dart boards and their darts team play in League 1 of the East Beds Invitational League. The club is very family and community oriented and promotes their facilities for local groups and organisations.

There is a Thursday evening Whist Drive & after 10pm members of the Shannon Express local barber shop group are welcome. The club holds regular weekly Live Entertainment, plus on holiday weekends there may be a disco or open mic night, bingo, race days, raffles & charity events, see website (www.pottonclub.co.uk)

East Beds has other clubs and some sell 'Real Ale', but they may be stricter on membership policy, but you might get signed in as a guest to check out the place.

In Arlesey, I visited the Sports and Social Club, signed in by a member for a £1. They had on Timothy Taylor's Landlord and sometimes have a second ale on busy weekends. There is regular 'live music' and a summer music & beer festival in the garden. In Sandy, both the Conservative Club and the Village Hall are members only. There is no 'Real Ale', just keg John Smiths Bitter. The Roundabout Club does appear to serve two 'real ales' but has a rather strict membership policy.

Stotfold has a Conservative club on Regent Street and in Biggleswade, the Liberal Club has Marston's Pedigree and nearby on St. Andrew's Street, the Conservative Club has 'real ale', I shall have to check them out. So if you have lost your local pub and are looking for a new haunt, do not forget to try the local clubs. They all have a variety of community activities and sell a proper pint at a decent price.



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East Beds have selected breweries within 30 miles of Biggleswade. The pubs listed sell at least one local ale of good quality on a regular basis. The benefits of the LocAle scheme are to improve consumer choice, enable local breweries to sell more ales so they can expand and benefit the local economy & an increase in local identity and pride.

Breweries in the scheme

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

Pubs in the scheme

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

Please visit these pubs and enjoy locally produced ales.

Real Cider & Perry in Bedfordshire

Pubs in East Beds branch permanently selling at least one 'Real Cider or Perry'.

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New Inn, Biggleswade
Cock, Broom
March Hare, Dunton
Thornton Arms, Everton
Engineers Arms, Henlow
Rising Sun, Potton
Sir William Peel, Sandy
Coach & Horses, Stotfold



Apple Cottage, Baldock, Herts
Millwhites, Boxmoor, Herts
Cassels Cider, Cambridge
Dunton Cider, Dunton, Beds
Hereward Cider, Ely, Cambs
Harrold Calvados Society, Harrold, Beds
Eversheds Cider, near Odell, Beds
Pickled Pig, Stretham, near Ely, Cambs
Potton Press, Potton, Beds
Virtual Orchard, Wolverton Mill, Bucks

ASK YOUR LOCAL PUB TO STOCK A REAL CIDER OR PERRY

Whitechapel Social

On Saturday 1st November 2013, six East Beds members set off on the south-bound train for London to join in with other members from North & South Beds on a social tour of Whitechapel pubs. It was a busy day on the trains, standing room only due to large crowds heading in to the city to view the ‘poppies’ at the Tower of London and show their support for remembering ‘The Great War’. There were some delays and we arrived about 20 minutes late at Kings Cross where we headed to the meeting point at the **Parcel Yard** pub. We all managed a swift ‘half pint’ and I had Moorhouses—Black Cat, although there was a full range of Fullers beer on offer, plus two from the Windsor & Eton Brewery.

There was no sign of other CAMRA members there, but as we were running a bit late, our organiser Malcolm Lloyd said we would need to catch the others and led us to Bus 205 for a 40 minute trip to a stop on Mile End Road. We alighted and went into the first pub on the tour, **The White Hart**. A group of South Beds members greeted us on arrival and a few more drifted in a bit later, this brought their numbers up to 10, plus our 6 making a reasonable group of 16 members.

At the bar, we were faced with a choice of three ales from London’s Redemption brewery. I tried Rock the Kazbek, a light and fruity beer made with Czech hops and the hoppy Big Chief IPA with citrus overtones. There was also Trinity ale, plus from Purbeck Cider - Dorset Dabinett on draught. However, my eyes were drawn to some keg fonts, as I slowly realised this pub was also the brewery tap for One Mile End Brew Company’s craft beers.

There was an impressive range of 6 ales Pumpkin Pie, Hefeweizen, Farmhouse Pilsner, Snakecharmer IPA, Simcoe Saison and an Old Imperial Stout, but little time to try them all. I noticed some members had ordered a tray of small tasters and they were kind enough to let me sample some. I was just about to order a half of the Pilsner, when the group stood up and headed off. Rats, I will have to come back another time to sample those craft ales again. What a great start to the tour.



A short way down the street we went into the **Blind Beggar**, made famous for the shooting of George Cornell by Ronnie Kray. We bypassed the rather common Courage Best and Doom Bar and instead tried the Beggars Belief, a house ale brewed by Castle Rock, probably their HPA. Clearly a tourist haunt at £4.40 a pint, We sat outside in the pleasant back patio section, where there was a tank full of rather large and friendly carp. I was starting to feel hungry.

Next up was another **White Hart** on Whitechapel High Street. On tap were Fullers London Pride and Seafarers, plus Doom Bar and Hog's Back T.E.A. This was a quick stop for most of the group, but I was last out as I tried the Thai food menu having a nice 'Pad Thai' noodle dish with chicken & veggies. I caught up with the group in the side streets off Brick Lane, where they had found the **Pride of Spitalfields**.



This was a traditional back street boozer with two Fullers ales, Doom Bar and more interestingly Crouch Vale Brewers Gold and Truman's Bold as Brass. The group fractured here as some members wanted to stay longer. This is definitely a comfy, feel at home English pub in the heart of a multi-cultural area.

I left in the first group and we headed west through the lanes towards Liverpool Street station. There we found the **Kings Stores** on Widegate Street where some members tucked into a scotch eggs for a snack. At the bar, apart from Redemption Trinity and GK IPA, there were two ales from Sambrook's - Battersea Rye and Pumphouse Pale Ale, plus Knot Just Another IPA from Jo's Norfolk Ales.



Sadly our visit here was cut short when water starting pouring down through the ceiling above the bar and into some light fittings. The staff asked us to drink up as they had to close the pub for a couple of hours to allow for repairs. We texted the rearguard and advised them to give it a miss and meet up at the next pub The **Woodin's Shades** on Bishopgate.



The unusual name comes from a licensee William Woodin who bought the pub in 1863. It included a wine tavern which was either in a cellar or perhaps covered by an arcade, hence the name. It is now run by the Nicolson's chain and had seven ales on offer. I tried Hilden's Irish Stout from Northern Ireland and their house Porter brewed by St. Austell. Others had Purity Rivet or Saddle Black, Bath Ales Forest Hare or Itchen Valley Dark Solstice.

The advance guard left out the **Shooting Star** on Middlesex Street. Although it was on our list, it was closed and not likely to open for another hour or two.

Onwards to the **Hoop & Grapes** on Aldgate High Street, another Nicolson's pub with seven ales. This time I sampled Café Phoenix Porter and then ordered Wild Beer Scarlet Fever. The latter beer was supposed to be malty and tasting of caramel, but all I could taste was grapefruit suggesting it was an Oakham ale. So either I was served the wrong ale or I set my glass down and picked up someone else's beer—whoops.



This should have been the end of the tour, but as we had missed out a pub or two, an advance group went ahead to see if the East London POTY, **The Dispensary** on Leman Street was open. A text was received saying it was closed and that group were heading home. The rest of our section broke up but some headed towards Liverpool Street station and into **Dirty Dicks**. It had been at least 20 years since my last visit and if this trip is anything to go by, it will be another two decades before I return. I was charged £2.50 for a half pint of London Fields Porter. *Oh the horror*, I heard my wallet scream. On this note I left and jumped back on Bus 205 to Kings Cross, where I knew that I would end up with a 'pasty' to munch as I waited for the platform number to come up on the board. My thanks go to Malcolm Lloyd for organising the trip, I wonder where we will end up next year?

John Goodlet

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East Beds CAMRA Branch Pub of the Year 2013

Real Ale Real Cider Real Music Real Pub

NOTICE OF CORRECTION

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

John Goodlet - Editor