

# LOOK

# YEAST

ISSUE 1

OCTOBER 2024



Campaign  
For Real Ale

The Official East Beds CAMRA Magazine



## WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE

CAMRA, 50 Years in East Bedfordshire

Biggleswade Beer & Cider Festival Overview

[www.eastbeds.camra.org.uk](http://www.eastbeds.camra.org.uk)



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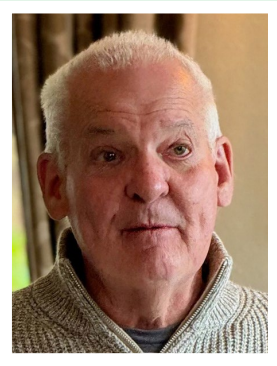
<b>Branch Diary (all dates and venues subject to confirmation)</b>		
<b>When</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>Where</b>
Monday 18th November 2024	Branch Meeting	Crown at Biggleswade.
Saturday 7th December 2024	Christmas Get Together	Engineers Arms at Henlow
Monday 20th January 2025	Consideration of GBG / POTY nominations	Cock at Broom
Monday 24th February	Assessment of GBG / POTY survey	
Monday 7th April	Branch Meeting	
Saturday 17th May	AGM	Engineers Arms, Henlow

<b>East Bedfordshire CAMRA Committee</b>	
Chairman	Barry Price
Vice-Chairman	Chris Overman
Secretary/Contact	Peter Josling
Treasurer	Rob Pullinger
Membership Secretary	Barry Price
Public Affairs Contact	Dave Strong
Pubs Data Coordinator	Barry Price
Look Yeast Editor	Peter Josling
Brewery Liaison Officer	Dave Strong
Cider Representative	Tim Naisbitt
Pub Protection Officer	Andrew McWhir
Social Secretary	Peter Josling



# FROM THE CHAIRMAN

East Bedfordshire CAMRA Branch



Welcome to the first Issue of 'Look Yeast', the new publication from East Bedfordshire CAMRA following the demise of the 'Casket' several years ago. The 'Casket' has been interred and in its place is a title whose name reflects, perhaps, the most important part of the brewing process – an ingredient the makeup of which some breweries are reluctant to share. As far as real ale is concerned, yeast is the essence of life.

Since we last had the opportunity to communicate with the East Beds pub-going community, significant changes have occurred in the Branch with new Officers and Committee members being elected, all of whom have helped ensure that the local Branch continues to exist – it was 'touch and go' a couple of years ago – as well as bringing a new perspective on the activities we pursue and the way the Branch is run.

The biggest change is that, for the first time in the Branch's history, we have held two Beer Festivals in association with Biggleswade Conservative Club, both of which turned out to be successful with visitors coming from near and far. On the other hand we are no longer providing a Games and Lottery stand at the Bedford Beer Festival which was always something those who volunteered to 'work' on it always looked forward to helping at, as well as the associated banter and repartee with the visitors on the days that it was functioning.

We ran a Cider and Perry stand at Potton Apple Day, this year on Sunday 29th September, which went very well thanks to the volunteers, and was a good example of the results of the cider-makers' art.

Finally, it would be remiss of me to ignore the fact that some of our pubs have 'closed' or reduced their opening hours while others, usually but not exclusively under new management, have stayed open longer to cater for their increased trade. I would like to take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the Branch, all of our publicans who generally serve ales which could be classified as 'very good or better' and all of you who are continuing to support them.

Cheers for now,  
**Barry**

**DISCLAIMER**  
Look Yeast, East Beds CAMRA and CAMRA Ltd accept no responsibility for errors that may occur within this publication, and the views expressed are those of their individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the editor or committee

**ARTICLES & CONTRIBUTIONS**  
We welcome contributions that will benefit our readers, to submit an article, please email [secretary@eastbeds.camra.org.uk](mailto:secretary@eastbeds.camra.org.uk)

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**01462 41 42 65**  
[admin@livinglifemagazine.co.uk](mailto:admin@livinglifemagazine.co.uk)

# WHEN YOU THINK OF GREAT NIGHTS OUT, WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Andrew McWhir  
Pub Protection Officer for East Beds

I'm betting it was that little corner down the local where you and your mates piled in to analyse the latest failings of your football team. Or the boozier that shared your taste in music, with a postage stamp stage and just the right vibe to kick off your weekend. Or the landlady with a quirky taste in jazz who shared her record collection with the punters. Maybe it was that quiet refuge for all those times life got too crazy. Or maybe that pub on the corner was like a lifelong friend, witnessing your highs and lows, your kids growing up, the sad times and the celebrations.

Now let's imagine it's not there anymore. Where do you go? You probably drink at home because the nearest decent boozier is a bus or train ride away. And the buses never run in the evenings or on Sundays, and you don't fancy ending the night with the yahoos on the train. You might be spending a bit less on beer than before the pub down the road shut, but you hadn't realised how much you'd miss the crack and the real ale. And that couple that bought the old pub seemed nice.



Along with the green belt, the local pub is one of Britain's greatest gifts to humanity. We didn't invent brewing and hospitality, of course, but we refined it over many centuries. We put an indelible stamp on social drinking that continues to inspire imitators but that, at its best, has never been surpassed. The lineage of today's pubs can be traced in their walls and traditions to the kitchens tended by – the usually female – brewers of medieval times.

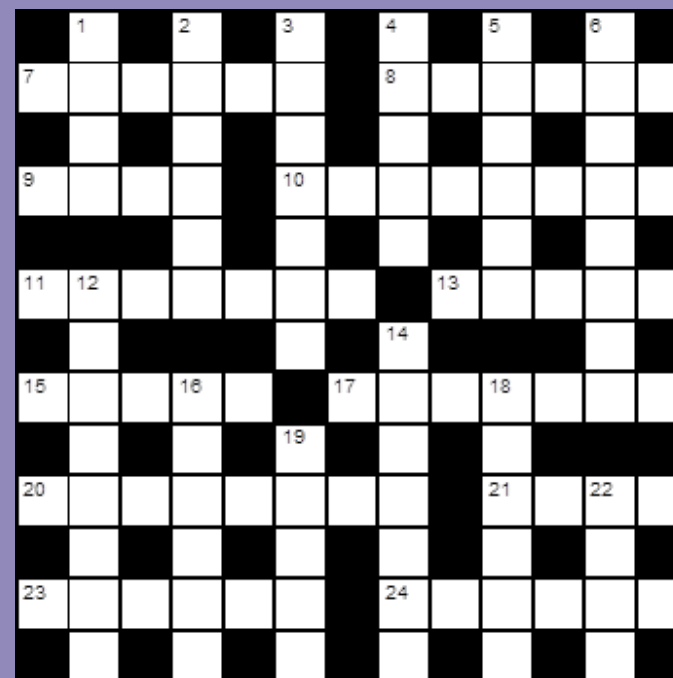
## So, why is any of this relevant to CAMRA today?

Simply put, the form and function of the pub that's been honed over centuries still maintains its essential societal functions. As the Pub Protection Officer for East Beds, my role is to monitor our historic legacy of pubs and intervene, where appropriate, to try and preserve them. Does this mean that CAMRA opposes all changes of use for pubs? No. Sadly, we can't fight to preserve all pubs, and to oppose all change in our communities would be counterproductive in any case. Some pubs have, frankly, passed their best before dates. But when we do identify a pub at risk whose loss would leave a hole in the fabric of the East Beds community, we intervene with the local planning authorities. As we've done, for example, over the Red Lion in Biggleswade. An historic, community pub that many of us have fond memories of.

If you'd like to join us in the campaigning fight to preserve our branch's pubs, please get in touch. You'll be doing your bit to avoid the reckless dismemberment of pubs for this and future generations.

# THE YEAST CROSSWORD

Can you complete our tricky crossword? Answers on P13



## ACROSS

- 7 Academician goes round country to find assistant for doctor. (6)
- 8 Imagine one missing disturbance is a mystery. (6)
- 9 I'm told I'll find this was put in cask yesterday. (4)
- 10 Fool twice to get popular – it's a killer. (8)
- 11 Half a white stout? Quiet – a bit later, around noon. (7)
- 13 Ogres escape from freezing conditions. I don't believe it! (5)
- 15 Extra broadcast (twice) to get the point. (5)
- 17 Developing animated hunter is a nonstarter when crooner is about. (7)
- 20 One with plenty of 6 has scrambled egg with 19. (2-6)
- 21 Members clubs. (4)
- 23 Yellow river? Endorse it you say? (6)
- 24 Headline feature one should aim to avoid with a 23. (6)

## DOWN

- 1/4 To a yokel's drunken musings on beer it seems you have it in hand! (4,5)
- 2 Pub has 25% reduction in capital following rise in duty. (6)
- 3 Drink comes up after a knock back. A fine example! (7)
- 4 See 1
- 5 I hear you leaving windy after said bar snack – what a mess! (6)
- 6 Intent is to lose legs from metabolising concoction. (8)
- 12 Captivating joint doesn't extend credit according to auditors. (8)
- 14 First thing in the morning I run amok, to a point, in the home counties. (7)
- 16 A plan cooking, a plan. (6)
- 18 A devil of a bad punch by the sound of it. (6)
- 19 This beer is warmer for a Londoner. (5)
- 22 Spuds come by the ton reportedly. (4)

# APPLES (AND CIDER) ... APLENTY by Mel Draper

29th September dawned a little cold, but remarkably dry compared to the torrential downpours we'd suffered the previous week.

It was just as well, as that was the day of the annual Potton Apple Day, held in St Mary's Church field. Stands, both inside the hall and outside in the field, provided live entertainment, hot and cold food, displays on the amazing varieties of apples, bee keeping and the work of the RSPB. Visitors tall and small could try their hand at apple pressing. Those bringing their own apples could sample the resulting juice. For the real apple connoisseurs there were bottles of the cider produced from the pressing made at last year's Apple Day.

As usual, East Beds CAMRA were present with a cider stall to ensure participants were kept happy throughout the day. Eight different ciders were available, nearly all from local producers, and all top quality - by the end of the day, there was barely a drop left.

The award for the best cider at the show went to Dr John Weekes of Potton Cider for their 8.2% Trip Hazard.

And the sun even came out in the afternoon! A good time was had by all, including the Town Crier. Potton Apple Day is usually held on the last Sunday of September each year. If you're looking for a friendly and different day out, come along to next year's event. For more information see: [www.facebook.com/PottonAppleDay](http://www.facebook.com/PottonAppleDay)



# Be part of the CAMRA story

*Real ale is just the start...*

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Real stories, real people, real ale



# CAMRA 50 YEARS IN BEDFORDSHIRE

by Peter Argyle

CAMRA was formed in 1971 by four brave founders to campaign against the increasingly concentrated ownership of pubs and brewing by "The Big Six". It was something of a surprise both to the founders and to the pub and brewing industry when this upstart organisation campaigning for good quality cask beer in good pubs took off and expanded rapidly in its first few years. The need to campaign effectively soon outgrew what CAMRA could achieve centrally and branches were formed to take key campaigning to the local level.

The first CAMRA Bedfordshire branch was launched in August 1974, after a meeting of active members from across the county at the Sow & Pigs in Toddington (pictured).

“CAMRA members from across the county met again to celebrate the 50th anniversary on 17 August this year

After a couple of years, as CAMRA continued to grow, the original branch split into North and South Beds, based on the major population centres of Bedford in the north and Luton and Dunstable in the south. Members in the east of the county who felt their local campaigning priorities were being overlooked, eventually formed the East Beds branch in the early 1990s.

As campaigning experience developed, CAMRA branches across the country launched members' newsletters and branch magazines that friendly pubs helped distribute, to take CAMRA's message to the wider, beer-drinking public. South Beds launched Beer in Bed(s) back in the late 1970s, to be joined by Firkin Weakly in North Beds, later renamed The Firkin in 2000 when the format changed from A4 size to A5.

East Beds later joined the party with The Casket, but sadly only The Firkin is currently still published and distributed through local pubs across North Beds.

As the 21st century arrived, branches turned to the new internet and launched local websites for local campaigning, soon to be joined by Facebook and other social media platforms. Although much has changed in the pub and brewing industry, CAMRA's original campaigning message still stands: to promote good cask beer (and now also real cider) in good, well-managed pubs. Campaigning is always needed campaigning to be done in a country with so many other concerns. CAMRA nationally does its best to influence government and the major pub owners and brewers, while local branches are often more effective at making the case at local level.

All three Bedfordshire branches take time and effort to select an annual Pub of the Year and other awards for the most deserving pubs - North Beds branch has made five awards in 2024. The three branches work together to select the very best pubs for CAMRA's national Good Beer Guide and work together, often out of the limelight, to make sure our campaigning message is heard.

All three Bedfordshire branches have invested time and effort in local beer festivals, as a powerful way of showing the public the best real ales and ciders. South Beds ran the excellent Luton Beer & Cider Festival for many years until the venue in Hightown became unavailable, while the Bedford Beer & Cider Festival continues, reaching its 46th year in 2024. East Beds recently launched a smaller festival in Biggleswade, in partnership with the local Conservative Club.

Members from the three Bedfordshire branches met again in August 1984 and August 2004 to celebrate the 10th and 30th anniversaries of launching the Campaign in Bedfordshire, on both occasions at the Sow & Pigs where it all started. There was also a popular 25th anniversary party, but this time hosted by the former B& T Brewery in Shefford in August 1999.

CAMRA members from across the county met again to celebrate the 50th anniversary on 17 August this year, returning to Toddington where it all started. Sadly the Sow & Pigs is no longer a pub, but the recently reopened Griffin across the road offered an excellent venue and was even running a small beer festival at the time. Where could be more appropriate? Guest ales from Belhaven, Mad Squirrel, Oakham, Tring and XT were quaffed and old colleagues reunited in fine August sunshine. About 30 members of all vintages were there to raise a glass of ale to

the foresight of those who decided to launch CAMRA in Bedfordshire all those years ago. Although the founders may not have realised it at the time, CAMRA is still badly needed 50 years on if a choice of decent cask ales and ciders is to continue.



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# GOOD BEER GUIDE & PUB OF THE YEAR

by Peter Josling

One of the main functions of the Branch is to decide which Pubs in our area are going into the Good Beer Guide (GBG) and which Pub in our area is our Pub of the Year (POTY).

The GBG is published yearly by CAMRA and lists Pubs all over the UK that are judged by the members to be worthy of a visit. East Beds Branch has 10 entries in the guide. The GBG for 2025 this year it comes in 2 versions, either Coronation St or Emmerdale and it was released on the 26th September and is now available from the CAMRA website.

The process begins with the Branch in January at a Branch meeting where a list of Pubs is compiled to be surveyed,

“ Congratulations to The Engineers Arms. Henlow for winning Pub of the Year 2025

if you wish to be involved email me on [secretary@eastbeds.camra.org.uk](mailto:secretary@eastbeds.camra.org.uk) Once the surveys are completed the 10 entries plus a reserve are picked at a Committee meeting in February and a description is then written and the list passed to CAMRA HQ. This meeting is done behind closed doors as Pubs are not allowed to know if they have been chosen until the release date. The Pubs for the area in the 2026 GBG are: **The Cock, Broom. The Crown Hotel, Biggleswade. The Golden Pheasant, Biggleswade. The Admiral. Clifton. The March Hare. Dunton. The Engineers Arms. Henlow. The Plough. Langford. The Rising Sun. Potton. Sir William Peel. Sandy. The Stag, Stotfold.**

Using the same Surveys and additional statistics the POTY is chosen. This is for the Area it then goes onto the County POTY then if lucky to the Regional POTY from

the Regional POTY a POTY for the UK is chosen. The Area POTY this year was **The Engineers Arms. Henlow** (see cover) unfortunately it was not chosen as the County POTY this went to **The Stone Jug, Clophill**. The CAMRA UK POTY will be announced in January 2025. The Engineers Arms also won Cider POTY both for the Area & the County. The Branch can also award for other categories that are only relevant to the Branch.

This year **The Sir William Peel. Sandy** was awarded Most Improved Pub of the Year & **The Stag. Stotfold** Community Pub of the Year.



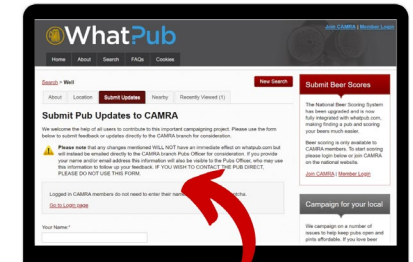
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# BIGGLESWADE BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL:

## A LIVING CELEBRATION OF BREWING AND COMMUNITY by Mark Knight

**T**he Biggleswade Beer & Cider Festival is an annual May event that brings together beer enthusiasts, local breweries, and the community for a week-end of fun, flavour, and friendship.

The festival is a joint venture between East Bedfordshire CAMRA and the Biggleswade Conservative Club. The Club is a family-friendly social club with a large function room and garden that provides an ideal venue. Located in the centre of Biggleswade, the festival is easily accessed by rail and bus services.

Planning for the 2024 festival started six months before opening day, with a ten-strong team of volunteers meeting regularly to discuss plans. Early tasks included preparing a CAMRA-approved business plan, meticulous planning to ensure everyone's safety, and carefully selecting a compelling menu of local ciders, real ales, and craft beers.

Real ale cannot be rushed and needs time to settle and complete its second fermentation before it can be served, so setup started the weekend before the festival opened. Racking for the casks (known as stillage), chillers, and bar equipment were all borrowed from CAMRA HQ. As this is warehoused in St. Albans, this led to the festival's single most significant expense and a great point of stress: van hire. Rental vans never seem to be delivered on time, and this year, the first van arrived without a tail lift, which meant urgent phone calls until a replacement van could be sourced.

On opening day, a short queue started to build just ahead of the grand opening before the doors were unlocked. The Mayor of Biggleswade (Cllr Mark Foster) opened the event and presented the first pint to the first customer in the queue.

The festival is set up and staffed with the support of around 30 volunteers wearing the festival's signature turquoise polo shirts. The shirts make it easy to find help and the atmosphere was warm and friendly throughout.

Each day, the festival had a unique character. On Thursday, the attendees were mostly CAMRA members from far and wide, eager to sample the full range before any sold out and benefiting from the more frequent weekday public transport services.



Visitors tended to arrive in small groups timed around the arrival of buses and trains. As Friday evening approached and Saturday came, the festival had a more local feel, and the number of families increased.

All drinks were available in a range of measures from 1/3rd to a whole pint. Smaller servings enable visitors to sample unfamiliar beverages without fear of getting stuck with a pint they don't enjoy and allows sampling a wide range of products without getting drunk. You couldn't be more wrong if your image of a beer festival is a room full of rowdy drunks. Nearly all attendees stayed well within their limits, and no one was asked to leave.

Beer festivals usually operate cashless bars to make service quicker. Visitors purchased vouchers that were used to buy drinks. The "welcome desk" greeted visitors, explained how the bars worked, and sold the (refundable) beer vouchers and glasses. It was apparent that Biggleswade was the first beer festival many had attended. Promoting quality real ale to a new audience is essential to CAMRA's mission, so seeing a diverse range of attendees was excellent.

In addition to some wonderful ales, attendees were rewarded with a surprise treat just after last orders on Friday evening as the Northern Lights were visible throughout the UK, including Biggleswade. Everyone rushed into the garden to witness the stunning display. Many attendees remarked that they'd never seen the lights before.

While the weather wasn't always hot, it was dry throughout, and this encouraged visitors to enjoy the garden, where food was available. Benny G. Smith performed a brilliant acoustic music set in the garden on Saturday afternoon.

By the end of the festival, the choice of drinks started to become more limited and by closing time, we had sold all the cider, all the craft, and nearly 90% of the real ale. At that point, all that remained was to carefully disassemble, drain, and return all the borrowed equipment. Festival teardown is never quite as popular as set up, so this fell to a slightly smaller group of volunteers.

The festival's charity for 2024 was the Biggleswade History Society, which provided a fascinating display showcasing pub and brewing history in Biggleswade and who were on hand to answer questions throughout. Attendees generously donated £580 to the History Society.

Thank you to all the volunteers, sponsors, and attendees. The third festival is in the diary for 8-10 May 2025, and further information will be published early in 2025. In the

meantime, if you want to get involved please contact: [media@eastbeds.camra.org.uk](mailto:media@eastbeds.camra.org.uk)



### CROSSWORD ANSWERS FOR THIS EDITION

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

# WHEEL ALES by Chris Freeman

Sunday 9th June saw the latest incarnation of the East Beds annual cycle ride. With the obvious exceptions of 2020/21 this has been held every year since 2011. This year the Grand Depart was from the Golden Pheasant in Biggleswade. The peloton began to assemble at the appointed time, though it soon became apparent that as later arrivals got their first drink in, those who made an earlier start were getting low.

Having another to keep them company may have caused problems getting our sinking in sync as it were. We therefore decided that an advance party would set off for our first fuel stop, the March Hare in Dunton. John brews several of the beers on site and I made the sensible choice of going for his Brown Owl, full flavoured but coming in at a responsible

3.2%. We were only a few sips in when the rearguard began to catch us up, uniting the groups to a party of 8 (fortunately not a Party Seven).

As with the Tour de France going out of France, our Tour de Bedfordshire Est usually takes a route through a neighbouring region. In this case we dipped down into North Herts territory, calling in at the Three Horseshoes in Hinxworth. Here we sampled some very good Timothy Taylor's in preparation for the mountain stage of the trip. I say mountain, it was actually the long steady climb up to the bridge over the A1, which was followed by a nice long downhill stretch into Langford and our next stop at the Plough where we were welcomed by the landlord Andy. Since Andy took over at the Plough it has won our most improved pub award and



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*The Engineers Arms*

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made it into the GBG. Here I opted for some of his well kept 6X. At this point we also met up with my wife Jo, who offered to take a group photo. Al had already taken one at the previous pub but this meant we could all be in one.

In previous years we have been well served by Steve Nakonecny acting as official photographer, taking each group poses at the watering holes and action shots along the route. Sadly, he passed away last August and was much missed on this occasion, though we made sure to have a drink to him and his contribution to the ride over the years.

Following the Plough, our penultimate pedal was to the Cock at Broom. Alas, by now I forgot to make a note of what I was drinking but it certainly went down well. Here the peloton split again, with a strong homing instinct kicking in for one who lived nearby, and several Sandy based riders who realised

that this was their nearest point to home. So, it was, that the original advance party re-formed and headed for the Admiral at Clifton, where our finish line awaited and the beer festival, by no coincidence, was in full swing.

Here we sampled further excellent ales, noting that some of the proceeds of one cask went to Clifton Hogs do LeJoG, which involved a group of regulars riding from one end of the country to the other on Honda C90's to raise funds for Bedford MS Therapy Centre and Herts & Beds Blood Bikers. I'm pleased to add that they competed the trip raising over £9000 in the end, I'm sure we didn't drink that much on the day so well done to all those who supported with other donations.

So, to sum up (or maybe sup up) we had a very pleasant Sunday afternoon cycle taking in some gentle exercise, chewing the fat and talking toot over good ale in good company. Wheel meet again, same time next year!

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