

OPENING TIMES



BRANCH
NEWSLETTER

Issue No.1

December, 1976.

DO YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR BEER? Do you think that its not what it used to be? Then read on, because THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE is dedicated to improving the quality of your beer.

WHAT IS REAL ALE? This is rather like asking how long is a piece of string? The CAMRA definition of real ale is beer which is brewed only from malted barley, hops and brewing sugar, and is fermented by adding yeast. To ensure that it remains real ale when it gets into your glass it must be allowed to ferment in the cask, and be served by any means which does not require the use of carbon dioxide gas. Apart from the introduction of electric pumps, which are rare in this area, this is how beer has been produced and served for about a thousand years before keg beers and carbon dioxide pressure taps came onto the scene.

This newsletter is the first to be produced by St.Neots branch of CAMRA which is your local branch, and we hope you will become a regular reader. We meet regularly in pubs in the area, which is roughly represented by the old county of Huntingdonshire. If you don't like keg beer or are afraid that your local pub is about to switch to top pressure or are just concerned about your pint - then come along because these are the sort of things that we are worried about too.

- FORTHCOMING EVENTS -

Wednesday December 15th	Social Evening at the Cross Keys St. Neots
Thursday January 13th	Meeting at the Victoria, Ouse Walk, Huntingdon.
Wednesday January 26th	Social and Skittles Match St. John Arms, Melchbourne with North Beds. and Northampton Branches.

- COMING SOON -

Evening visit to Charles Wells new brewery in Bedford.

Coach trip to North Hertfordshire to sample a choice of eleven different real ales. Not all strong "big name" beers but a wide selection of strength and flavour.

Joint Social Meeting with St. Neots Folk Club.

Beer Festival at St.Neots Riverside Festival.

IS THERE PLEASURE IN PAINES?

If you are a native of the St.Neots area with memories of "Paines for pains", you may well be surprised by the growing popularity of this previously much maligned local brewery.

It was in 1831 that James McNish, great, great grandfather of the present chairman, Gordon McNish, first formed his commercial brewery in St. Neots developing it from a sideline to his farming business. The company has grown a great deal during the

last one hundred and forty years, and the interests of the organisation have expanded to include milling, malting and a very successful malt extraction business.

It is probably the concentration on malt extraction that led to some neglect of the brewing, and therefore to the general decline in the quality and reputation of the products.

In 1974 the St. Neots branch of CAMRA was formed at about the same time as Miss Fiona McNish joined the brewery. Miss McNish was convinced that she could only promote a product which she believed in, and she took a critical view of the business looking for means of fulfilling these beliefs in the local market. Backed by local real ale drinkers Fiona has set about satisfying public demand, increasing the range of draught beers and considerably improving the quality and reputation of the products.

The results of this policy can clearly be seen with the increasing popularity of Paines pubs, and now some 15 to 20 free houses are also selling Paines beer. It is evident indeed that there is pleasure in Paines.

- NEWS -

Newly re-opened pub sells real ale

The 'Oliver Cromwell' in St. Ives is now selling 'Ruddles County' and Greene King IPA from handpumps. This improves the availability of real ale in St. Ives by 100%!!! The other pub being the 'Manchester Arms' which is a Tolly house.

Real ale from Watneys??

Watney Truman Brewers Ltd., who control more than half of the pubs in Central Huntingdonshire, may offer Real Ale in some of their pubs in the area - BUT NOT UNTIL NEXT YEAR. A real ale brewed by Watney's Norwich Brewery - "Fined Bitter" - has been available in 150 London Pubs for several months. Watney's Midlands Region (who own the Watney's pubs in this area) have in the last few weeks, introduced this beer into 30 pubs in North Bucks. and South Northants. on a test market basis. A meeting between Watney (Midlands) Directors and CAMRA officials on 8th November revealed that, if the test market was successful, another 100 pubs in the Northampton/Kettering area would be supplied with Fined Bitter next Spring. Only after these test markets have been assessed will Watney's consider extending supplies into Cambridgeshire.

Fined Bitter has a distinctive flavour and is in the high gravity range with an O.G. of 1044. Always served by free-flow electric pump it could do well but beware of the price. Normally 30-32p per pint.

Another real ale pub in St. Neots

The Lord John Russell have had their hand pumps re-connected and are now selling Paines bitter and E.G. by this method.

REAL ALE PUBS IN EATON SOCON

The residents of the Eaton Socon district of St. Neots are fortunate in having no less than four pubs, either in the village or just over the border, offering Real Ale. Not only do these pubs between them offer nearly all the locally brewed draught beers, they also offer a nice contrast in pub styles.

The first of the four to be reached travelling south along the Great North Road from St. Neots is the Waggon and Horses, a Paine's house offering excellent hand-pumped E.G. The "Waggon" is an all lounge bar pub but darts and Bar Billiards are played at one end of the room.

Just across the road is "The Old Sun" offering Greene King I.P.A. Bitter, Abbot and Dark Mild (the only draught mild in the village). An old pub which once had its own brewhouse the "Sun" retains a 'village pub' atmosphere.

A couple of hundred yards further down the road and opposite the village green is The Wheatsheaf a Charles Wells pub offering Bitter and Fargo on draught. The Wheatsheaf has a large garden adjoining it.

The fourth pub is just across the county boundary in Bedfordshire. Another Wells house "The Bell" offers gravity fed Bitter and Fargo straight from the cask. The Brewery recommend this quiet pub for the quality of its food.

In short, the village of Eaton Socon, whilst now having only around half the pubs it had some years ago can still offer a variety of good pubs and very good beer in a relatively small area.

MORE ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

CAMRA is the only national organisation which exists specifically to speak for the beer-drinker and pub user. Except for a small staff in St. Albans, CAMRA relies on voluntary effort, and members subscriptions to promote and publicise traditional draught beer.

CAMRA tries to increase public awareness through such means as publications and beer exhibitions, and seeks to influence the brewing industry itself by making responsible and intelligent representations to the industry's bosses and the nation's legislators.

The Campaign is now accepted as one of Britain's foremost consumer and conservation bodies. Its views on a wide range of subjects connected with the brewing industry and the licensed trade are listened to seriously by the industry itself and by Government.

The Campaign publishes a monthly newspaper - What's Brewing - which takes a broad and critical look at all sorts of developments in the world of beer and pubs, and keeps members closely informed. What's Brewing is sent free to every member. The annual Good Beer Guide, listing the best Real Ale pubs in the country, has become a national institution.

Remember, most of CAMRA's activities cost money, and CAMRA relies on its members for financial support. Your help is needed now. If you do care about your pint and your pubs, join CAMRA. We will be delighted to see you at our meetings, socials and on the trips we organise from time to time. We will also welcome your views, and your help in our local ventures.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

I wish to become a member of Campaign for Real Ale Limited. I agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign, and I enclose £2 (£3 for overseas members) as my annual membership subscription. (Any additional amount will be welcomed as a donation.)

FULL NAME (Block capitals)

FULL POSTAL ADDRESS (Block capitals)

.....COUNTY

SIGNATURE.....DATE.....

Cheques should be made payable to Campaign for Real Ale Limited and sent to:- Derek Giles, 16, Merlin Close, Longsands Road, St. Neots. Telephone:- Huntingdon 74436

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