

# OPENING TIMES



BRANCH  
NEWSLETTER

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April 1977

## NEWS FROM THE EDITOR

The St. Neots Branch of CAMRA are beavering away with the arrangements for the Riverside Festival, that is taking place this summer. It is planned that the Beer Exhibition, run by our good selves, will take on a slightly different format. More beer will be available with an emphasis on local brews. A wide range of soft drinks, lager, spirits and cider will all be available to quench the Festive thirsts. Plans have been made to introduce a special souvenir glass with a crest printed on it.

It certainly has been a successful year for CAMRA, converting many pubs to real ale. A few notable additions to the real ale scene locally are:- The Royal Oak, High Street, St. Neots a Paines house, recently taken over by Graham and Jean Hale recently moved from the Isle of Wight, Hants. The bitter and E.G. are in first class condition served by handpumps. The quality of the beer is thanks to Allan King, a relation, who runs the bar efficiently and takes a great interest in serving beer in a perfect condition. A very inexpensive and tasty lunch can be obtained every day to help soak up the ale. Sales have improved dramatically since CO<sup>2</sup> gas was phased out on the two bitters. Mild is also planned for a come back which will most likely be served from a "Pin" on the bar.

Everyone was pleased to see the Golden Lion, Market Square, St. Ives, install three handpumps to serve Ruddles and Greene King beers. Although all credit is due to the Golden Lion it would be nice to see more village pubs converting to unpressured beer, which could offer competitive priced drink to real ale drinkers.

The Oliver Cromwell in St. Ives in maintaining a good turnover with Greene King IPA and Ruddles County served by handpumps. If you have not visited this friendly pub to date, you will find it near the Quay in a quiet back street.

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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| Friday 22nd April  | Joint Social with Peterborough and Cambridge branches at White Swan, Conington (Greene King) at 8.00 p.m. |
| Wednesday 11th May | Branch Meeting at Blue Ball, Russell Street, St. Neots (Greene King) at 8.00 p.m.                         |

## Visit to Charles Wells Brewery - Bedford

The St. Neots branch of CAMRA recently visited Charles Wells new brewery in Bedford. The company have now mastered the art of producing consistent beer due to the latest equipment installed in the brewing, fermenting and conditioning departments. The brewery has a tremendous brewing capacity, of which only one third is being utilised.

We were accompanied on the trip around the brewery by "Percy" a female cat, who is a salaried member of the brewing team. She lead the way and showed great agility in negotiating some nasty staircases.

The sales staff insisted that CO<sup>2</sup> did not alter the taste of their beer providing that the pressure was not on too high. A point for some disagreement! However they are showing their keenness to promote Real Ale by installing handpumps in most of the new pubs opened recently.

A nine gallon cask of ordinary bitter was quaffed in no time at all in the testing room. Many members had to swallow their pride and switch to drinking top pressure beers in order to quench their thirst. However a good time was had by all and many probably nursed a hangover the next day. - Cheers Charles!

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Is Ruddles County an Aphrodisiac?

Mr. Simon Nicol, guitarist in the Fairport Rock Folk Group, was recently presented with a son, by his wife Roberta - thanks to Ruddles. After a rather heavy session at the Pheasant, Keyston, Simon and Roberta found that County was more potent than they imagined. The Couple's new addition has been named Rupert Ruddles Nicol. There was the traditional celebration over Easter, attended by many celebrities from the music world. Morris dancers were called upon to add the necessary distraction from the festivities. The proud father and mother have in the past toured many real ale pubs in the Good Beer Guide. Perhaps they will now stick to Grotneys and Twitbreads.

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Gentlemen, that reminds me: -

A man went into a pub and ordered a pint of bitter. After drinking it, he walked over to the fireplace and relieved himself. The Landlord was enraged. "How dare you do that sort of thing in my bar" he shouted. "The place for that is outside. If you cannot control yourself, then get out!" The poor chap couldn't have been more apologetic. I say, I'm desperately sorry," he said. "I really do not know what came over me. I'm dreadfully embarrassed about this. I promise it won't happen again." The landlord accepted his apology and the chap left.

A few days later, the same man went back to the pub and ordered a pint of bitter. As soon as he had drunk it he urinated into the fireplace. The landlord, who had not seen him being served, was extremely angry. "Clear off!" he cried "and don't come back. If I see you in here again I'll call the police!"

The poor fellow was very sorry. "I honestly don't know what came over me," he mumbled, " I am very embarrassed about this and I promise it won't happen again". The landlord was somewhat mollified by his obvious embarrassment. "Look here," he said, "There is clearly something wrong with you. Why don't you have some treatment, go round to your doctor and get it cleared up".

The man brightened at this. "Yes, you're quite right", he said. "I'll have it seen to immediately".

Some three weeks later, the landlord was busy polishing glasses when the man came back into the pub and ordered a pint of bitter. But he is recognised: "Aren't you the chap who pees into my fireplace?" asked the landlord. "Yes", the man said, "But it's all right now. I took your advice and I'm completely cured".

"Marvellous", said the landlord, and by way of celebration gives him a pint on the hose. However, as soon as the man drank it he walked over to the fireplace and relieved himself. The landlord lost his temper and grabbed him by the lapels. "I thought you said you were cured", he roared. "So I am" said the man. "I'm not a bit embarrassed any more!"

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Spotlight on Fenstanton

Although the village of Fenstanton has six public houses only two of these serve Real Ale, but the village is fortunate in that both of these pubs serve

excellent beer and are both worthy of inclusion in the national "Good Beer Guide".

On Chequer Street you will find a Charles Wells house, appropriately named the Chequers where Peter and Jeannette McCormick are sure to give you a warm welcome. The pub has two bars, a tidy public bar where the locals revel in conversation, darts and dominoes and a small but comfortable lounge equipped with modern jukebox. A big garden at the back, complete with swings makes the pub an ideal place to take the children during the summer, while the adults can sample the delights of well-kept Charles Wells Bitter and Fargo, both served by handpumps.

On the High Street, opposite the Clock Tower stands the King William IV, a picturesque pub, steeped in antiquity. It was built in the 16th century using oak beams, recovered from sailing ships at Huntingdon breakers yard and floated down the Ouse to Fenstanton and again put to good use. The chimney was the first part of the pub to be built and a pleasing log fire ensures it is still put to good use. The pub is decorated with an enormous collection of antiques including an array of old keys which are cleverly pinned to the low beams. An antique collector could spend many minutes admiring the range of exhibits from the past. A dart board is much used and in addition live music is a regular Sunday night feature, in this excellent and interesting pub.

Peter and Marjorie Boughall can offer full meals and snacks both lunchtime and evening including some interesting sea food dishes.

Tolly Cobbold is the brewery represented here and another unusual feature of the King William is that the complete range of Tolly's traditional beers is available. Cantab, Bitter and Mild served through handpumps, and Tolly Old Strong, a winter brew, is available direct from the cask.

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Did you know:

The term "Indian Pale Ale" often seen printed on beer-bottle labels is a survival from the terms when brewers used to put a certain brew of ale into casks and ship it to India and back. The reason for this extraordinary procedure was that the long sea voyage together with changes in climatic conditions gave the ale a maturity and quality superior to other pale ales.

Modern brewing techniques are supposed to produce the same effect, but we wish we could have sampled the original!

#### A King's Choice?

The Biggleswade Brewery has been quenching the thirst of beer drinkers since 1764, when Samuel Wells purchased his first house on the present site.

In 1899 the Company of Wells & Winch Ltd was formed to take over 109 Public Houses in the area, and thus started the period of expansion which has stretched stretched over the early part of this century.

The Company has owned houses in the St. Neots area since the 1900's; and in 1920 they aquired the firm of Day & Sons, a St. Neots brewery.

In 1961 Wells & Winch merged with Greene King of Bury St. Edmunds, who also had several houses in the town, including one which had belonged to Simpson's of Baldock. Simpson's joined the Greene King Group in 1954.

All of these houses are now controlled by the new 'Greene King (Biggleswade) Ltd.

There is little doubt that Greene King's image has improved over recent years, and a great deal of this can be attributed to the education and selection of tenants and managers. They also believe that their top-pressure policy has also helped.

Whilst they agree with CAMRA that Cask Conditioned beer is in greater demand than their King Keg, they differ in that they believe that only 25% of their customers prefer beer served by traditional means. Perhaps you have been wrongly classified in the 75% preferring gassy beer.

If this is so, you should ask yourself if you are drinking your choice, or the choice of Greene King.

DON'T DROWN IN A SEA OF FIZZ!

Part of Chris Bruton's report, as Chairman of CAMRA, drawn up for this year's A.G.M. in Blackpool, praises the advances made by the Campaign. However, he paints an even blacker picture reminding us all that the "Big Six" are continuing to push keg beer in preference to Real Ale.

He continues:- Courage insist on perpetuating the inane suggestion that there is no demand for real ale in the Midlands and the North. Their Barnsley brewery is now totally dead. They have bought forward the opening of their all-bright factory of Worton Grange and are already starting the phasing out of their excellent Reading bitter. Director's bitter is not available outside the South East.

Whitbread are still burying their heads in the sand by ignoring the demand for real ale with their highly advertised lager and keg beers. Although Whitbread's Marlow brewery is supplying real ale to a few pubs within the group, very little effort has been made to make their palatable beer available on a wider scale.

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If you like real ale, and are concerned about your pint, send £2.00 to Mr. D.Giles at the below address, to enrol as a member of CAMRA. 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, keeping members closely informed. What's Brewing is sent to every member FREE OF CHARGE. As a member you are able to purchase the Good Beer Guide at a reduced price. Many discerning drinkers use the guide as their Bible. Remember CAMRA's activities cost money. We rely upon financial support from the members enabling us to further our beer drinking aims. JOIN CAMRA NOW! Your help is needed.

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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