

# OPENING TIMES

ST. NEOTS & DISTRICT



BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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**FREE**

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## *James Paine - The CAMRA View*

With our local brewers James Paine having now somewhat 'come of age' under their new ownership, representatives of local and national CAMRA recently met with Tony Bevan, the Managing Director of the company, to take stock of recent developments.

The meeting was prompted by a critical article on the brewery and its products and policies, intended both for this newsletter and the local press circles, as a recent edition of 'The Trader' headlined.

CAMRA have felt for some time that all is not well at the brewery on a couple of counts. Firstly, we feel that the beers lack the body of years gone by and that in our view the whole range of real ales produced are very bland, with the once excellent E.G. a shadow of its former self. Secondly, we feel that consistency is another common fault, with the same beer tasting different from batch to batch. After discussions with James Paine at the brewery they appear happy with the products and were surprised to hear of local criticism, though Tony Bevan promised to investigate and try and improve on quality if drinkers were unhappy.

James Paine have been shedding tied houses, with only around a dozen pubs now left. Their local presence is likely to be further diminished by pub swaps involving the Queen Victoria in St. Neots and the Bell at Sawtry. Some of the pubs that have been sold continue to stock James Paine beers, and still others buy outside beers such as Boddingtons and Gibbs Mew through James Paine, but in our opinion, with quality problems still a major factor with cask products from the St. Neots brewery, the local future for James Paine must be in doubt.

The brewery's present commitment appears to be with the Free Trade, particularly in London where they have recently purchased the Robert Porter beer wholesaling business, and with keg and bottled beers which currently make up around 70% of total production. James Paine claim that around £150,000 has been spent on the brewery, though a recent CAMRA visit revealed that in our opinion much still needs to be done, a point they would concede, and claim to be supporting local drinkers by bringing a range of 'outside' real ales to local Free Houses.

Despite this, and despite cross trading agreements bringing James Paine beers into Tolly Cobbold tied houses in Cambridge and Ind Coope pubs in Burton-on-Trent the future of the brewery and of brewing in St. Neots in our view remains a matter for concern.

CAMRA locally would be only too happy to offer our support to a local independent brewery and its products on all counts - - if those products stand up as worthy of support. Paines' products once did, and in some outlets still do. Hopefully our meeting with Mr Bevan and the closer relations in the future to which it might lead will allow us to do just that!

# Two New Brews For East Anglia

Suffolk Independents, Adnams of Southwold have launched a new premium real ale called ADNAMS EXTRA with a gravity of 1044. Having been test marketed locally to the brewery for some time, it will make its maiden appearance at the Great British Beer Festival in Brighton in August. Adnams feel that they are fulfilling a consumer demand for a stronger bitter from them to add to their existing range of Mild(OG.1034),Bitter(OG.1036) and the seasonal Old(OG.1042). The new beer will probably find its way into the free houses in our area,where the ordinary bitter is currently available.

Also Greene King of Bury St.Edmunds are set to launch a new low gravity bitter in the Autumn, to be known as Simpsons Bitter.The cask only brew should be around the 1033 gravity mark and retail at two to three pence cheaper than the I.P.A.(OG.1035).The brew is still being finalised with test marketing expected to be carried out in 19 public houses in the Biggleswade area towards the end of August.The name Simpsons comes from the Baldock brewery taken over by Greene King in the 1950's.The beer will initially be brewed at Bury St.Edmunds, but, if the test marketing is successful it will switch to Biggleswade for production after about three months.

Greene King are also about to re-market their famous Abbot Ale minus the Greene King identity, as they rightly feel that the name is strong enough to stand by itself.This along with Simpsons and BBA from their subsidiary Rayments of Pelham will add a Free House look to some Greene King pubs.



Sales of the two milds produced by Greene King continue to disappoint, Biggleswade XX is down to a mere 15 barrels a week, but KK is now declining rapidly also. Only 2% of their customers are straight mild drinkers, with a further 8% drinking it with a bottled beer. Greene King still have no plans to withdraw either XX or KK but hope that the new Simpsons bitter will provide an alternative alongside mild and I.P.A. with some growth potential. We would hope that the coming of a new light bitter will not mean the end for either cask mild, their futures are in your hands - or should I say mouths, so get some in!

Still on the Greene King front, they are expanding their area of tied houses, the Kingfisher in Newport Pagnall is to open in August and the Barn Owl in Northampton in October or November. They will also have a new pub in the City of London redevelopment of London Wall.

Lastly, Greene King have entered a pub just out of our area, in the Pub Preservation award contest - this is the Harrier in Peterborough.

## Local Beer Festivals

CAMBRIDGE BEER FESTIVAL  
3rd - 7th September  
The Guildhall, Cambridge.

BEDFORD BEER FESTIVAL  
2nd - 5th October  
The Corn Exchange,  
St.Pauls Square, Bedford

PETERBOROUGH BEER  
FESTIVAL  
22nd - 25th August  
Wirrina, Bishops Road,  
Peterborough.

# Local Pub News

The Queen Adelaide, Free House at Croydon has a new landlord of fairly recent arrival - Kevin Rawlings Brown has been at pub for three months now and has added to the range of real ales available. He currently sells Tolly Original, Adnams and Greene King I.P.A. on handpump with Greene King Abbot on gravity dispense and hopes to add a fourth handpump for guest beers in the near future. He has also improved the cellar facilities, with a new cooler being put in. We wish him a belated welcome to our area.

In St. Neots we have a new couple in Steven and Susan Walsh installed at the Lord John Russell after completing a pub swap with the previous incumbents Peter and June Merrikins, who in turn have taken over at the Coach and Horses in Bedford.



**The Crown Inn**  
Eaton Socon Cambridgeshire

**FREE HOUSE**

**REAL ALES AND BAR FOOD  
AVAILABLE 7 DAYS A WEEK**

**GARDEN AND  
ROOM FOR CHILDREN**

The Bell in Huntingdon is changing hands with new landlord Brian Wood moving in.

The Bridge House in the market square, St. Neots has re-opened after its interior refurbishments. Although the actual bar area is smaller than it was, we now see the arrival of real ales to come into line with most of its 'Beefeater Steak House' counterparts. The range of ales available is Wethereds, Whitbread Flowers and a beer not generally available in our area - Fremlins bitter.

The White Horse in Eaton Socon, another Whitbread house is now selling the strong Samuel Whitbread bitter with Castle Eden bitter being taken out. Also selling Samuel Whitbread bitter is The Vine at Buckden.

There is a new couple behind the pumps at The Mermaid, Ellington where Tony and Elaine Cull have taken over. Although they have no previous experience of licensing trade they are being ably assisted by their son Gary, who used to be a pub manager in Hertfordshire. Hoped for changes at the pub are the addition of a pool room and the re-designing of the bar area. Certainly on the night of a recent CAMRA social at the pub, the new couple seemed to have settled in extremely well and created a lively and friendly atmosphere. Current real ale available is Springfield Bitter, with the addition of another handpumped beer in the not too distant future.

Other pubs to change hands are the Seven Wives and the Greyhound in St. Ives. Geoff and Liz Thompson having taken over as managers of the Hamden Host owned Seven Wives and Jon and Kim Blyth moving in at the Greyhound. The bad news though is that both pubs have taken out the handpumps and no longer sell real ale.

We meet with more bad news on the real ale front in Kimbolton. The Saddle has withdrawn its real ale because of lack of sales. The New Sun Inn has re-opened after its refurbishments. Now owned by local builders Hilson and Twigden, who bought it from Paines, it is being run as a Bistro type Free House. Don't be fooled by the handpump selling Paines EG however, because its not real ale as CAMRA recognise it. Because of a 10 metre pull from the cellar, gas pressure is being added to aid dispense. Other false handpumps in the area that spring immediately to mind are at The River Mill, Eaton Socon, where Paines XXX and St. Neots Bitter are served from handpumps with a little something added!

Yet more bad news!

The Three Horseshoes at Wistow no longer sells real ale.

Lets have some good news!

Brian Brocklehurst at The Three Horseshoes, Southoe has added Charles Wells Bombardier dispensed on gravity to his existing Eagle Bitter.

Also Tony Oaks at The Rose in Bassingbourn wishes it to be known that he sells Wethereds on handpump to complement his live music nights of either Country and Western or 60's sounds on fortnightly saturday nights.

LOOK OUT FOR THE NEW - HUNTINGDONSHIRE REAL ALE GUIDE - NOW BEING PRODUCED

# Local Pub News

We hear from our local Manns landlords that they have received notification from the brewery that Manns I.P.A. and Traditional Bitter have been withdrawn for about a month because of brewing problems. This would seem to be another reaction to the closure of the late lamented Norwich Brewery.

The Green Man at The Cinques, Gamlingay - a Greene King pub, has now closed.

Charles Wells have appealed to Huntingdon District Council against their refusal to allow a new pub at Great North Road, Eaton Socon. The decision has now gone to Public Inquiry and a result is awaited.

Ian Robinson, landlord of The Crown Inn, Free House at Eaton Socon will have available Tetleys Bitter from some time in October. A special agreement with the brewery forbids its sale elsewhere within a range of five miles. He already has Adnams Bitter on regular sale, plus at this moment in time a guest beer.

The Downing Arms at Tadlow - known to the locals as The Scratching Cat - run by Bob Callan, currently has Hall & Woodhouse Badger Best Bitter and Everards Tiger available on handpump.

The Kings Head, South Street, St. Neots a current Good Beer Guide listed pub has plans to renovate. The one bar pub hopes to extend the bar area over what is currently the entrance to the courtyard and 'Stables' bar. This would create a bigger split level bar area, the entrance to the 'Stables' and rear of the pub then being from the left hand side, inside toilet facilities would also be added.

Also to be refurbished is The Wheatsheaf, Eaton Socon - a Charles Wells house. Their application to extend the pub having now been approved by St. Neots Town Council, after the original plans were rejected.

The Duncombe Arms (Greene King) at Waresley, another Good Beer Guide listed pub, has plans to renovate. Tony Bygraves, who has now been at the pub for six months is about to commence work on making a restaurant and function room, now he has received planning permission.

The Brampton Mill is currently selling James Paine real ales and Adnams Bitter and is intending to add Greene King beers to its range.

The ex Waggon and Horses at Bassingbourn, which has been closed for some time, has now re-opened as The Antelope, but no real ale is available.

# Future Meetings

Wednesday 21st August - Green Man, Colne (Manns) 8.00pm onwards - Good Beer Guide Listed.

Wednesday 4th September - Trip to Ind Coope Romford Brewery.

Wednesday 18th September - Elephant and Castle, Woodwalton (Free). 8.00pm - 9.30pm then at the Stag and Hounds, Oldhurst (Manns) from 9.30pm onwards.

Wednesday 2nd October - Downing Arms, Tadlow (Free) 8.00pm - 9.30pm then at The Queen Adelaide Croydon (Free) from 9.30pm onwards.

Wednesday 16th October - White Hart, Bythorn (Free) 8.00 - 9.30pm then at The George, Spaldwick (Manns) from 9.30pm onwards.

## THE GOLDEN MILLER LONGSTOWE

(formerly The Three Horseshoes)

### BILL & BETH REED

Invite you to enjoy the Culinary Creations by our Professional Chef

Sample delicious whitebait, mussels, clams, scampi, halibut, turbot, salmon and rump, sirloin and fillet steaks, etc.... or our snacks such as curry, chilli con carne, steak and kidney pie etc.

(excluding Monday and Tuesday)

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