

# OPENING TIMES

ST. NEOTS & DISTRICT

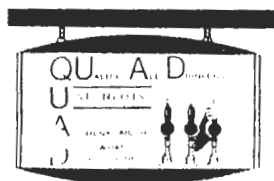


BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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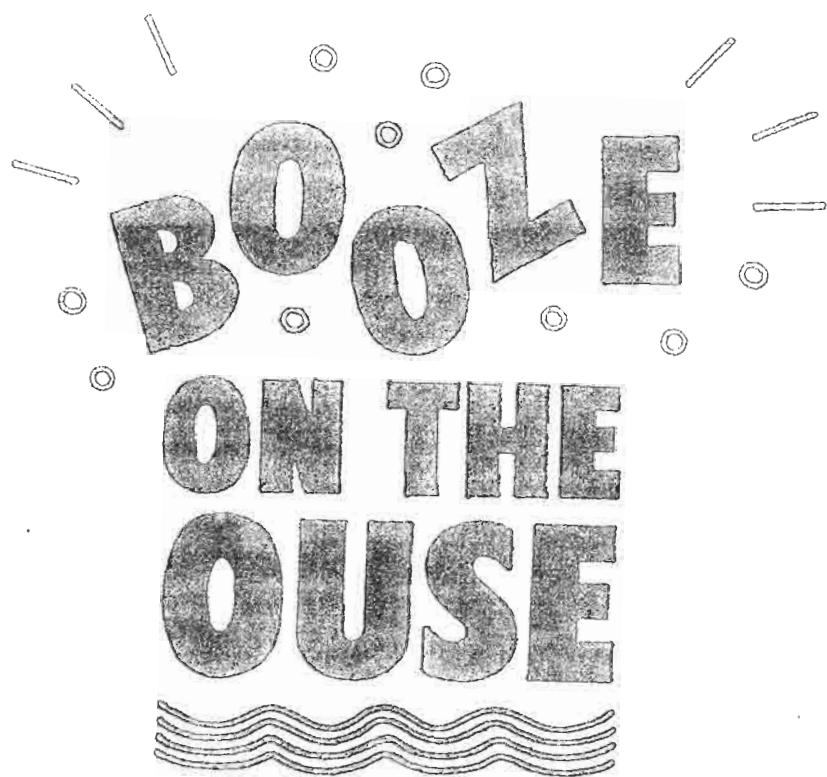
## ST. NEOTS 1986 BEER FESTIVAL



As you may have read in the local press the CAMRA Beer Festival is returning to ST. NEOTS. What will be our 9th Festival, is being held in the hall at THE CONEYGEARE EYNESBURY, ST. NEOTS from September 12th to 14th. It is being organised jointly and in conjunction with our friends from our other real ale group QUality Ale Drinkers. Sponsorship is currently being sought and positive re-actions have already been obtained from several sources. Any companies whether in the licensing trade or not, can contact either the editor or Mr QUAD, Chris Knowles (0480 77118) for further details on this. We will be publishing a special festival edition of OPENING TIMES in which advertising will be accepted from any interested parties- contact the editor on this for our charges.

It is hoped to have over 20 kilns of real ale and cider available at the festival from about 15 breweries. Being a small festival, we do not expect to have any local brews available. This is not in any way a knock at these breweries, just that we feel that a selection of beers that are not quite so readily on sale in the area will prove to be more of an attraction, and is indeed what people would expect to find. A full list of the proposed selection will appear in our festival newsletter.

We hope that you will all turn up at this smaller than usual event to enable us to make it an annual festival once again, after not appearing since the now defunct St. Neo Riverside Festival



NOTE: CAMRA and QUAD members, landlords and Press- Special Preview Night September 11th

## *Battle to save St. Neots pub.*



Following our article in the last newsletter, St. Neots Branch of CAMRA have taken up the fight to keep open the Charles Wells owned Nags Head in Eynesbury.

The Branch has appealed to Huntingdon County Council against the closure. We feel that having already lost three town centre public houses in the past few years, we are not over pubbed and do not need to lose yet another. Especially, as Eynesbury itself is a growing, thriving community. Also as there has been long time talk of Charles Wells themselves opening a new public house in Eaton Socon, it would seem totally illogical to close another.

If Charles Wells feel that The Nags Head is not commercially viable, then this does not mean they have to sell as de-licensed premises. Surely, it could be sold as a Free House - of which there are not that many in the immediate town centre area. Then, if what Charles Wells feel is correct then there would be no real competition to be afraid of for their other pubs.

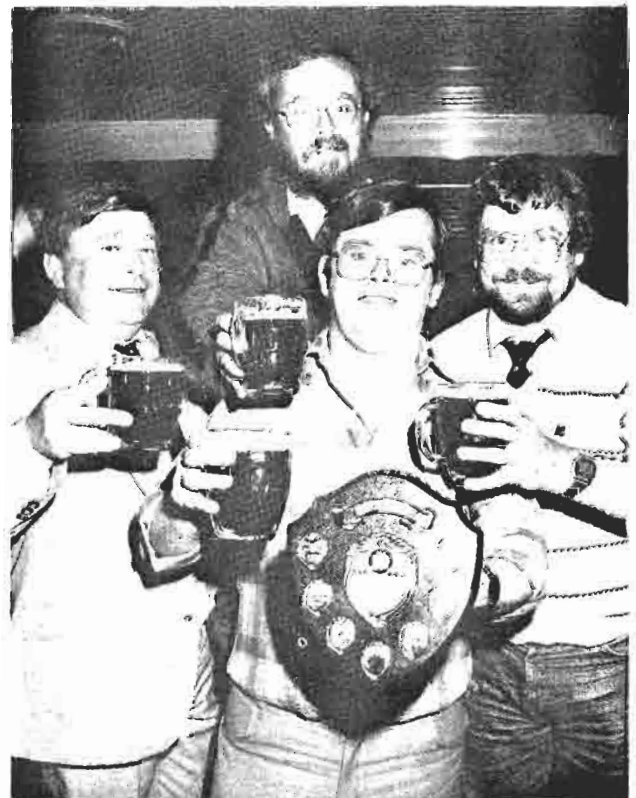
On a historical note, the pub dates back to the fifteenth century and has been attracting drinkers for five centuries. The present building was constructed in 1927 and replaced the original inn which stood on what was once the village green. The brewers plan to sell the pub for redevelopment into flats, which are surely not a major need with all the current new housing schemes going on in the area - and will certainly do nothing for the community.

## *Real Ale gives you brainpower!*



The Wheatsheaf, Church Street, St. Neots has again excelled itself in the Greene King Quiz League. The team, this year made up of all CAMRA members - pictured from left to right (and getting progressively uglier) are Mark Slater, Owen Mountford, Steve Leader and our beloved St. Neots Branch Chairman Geoff (have I already said that once) Parsons, won their area competition and thus qualified for the Greene King Champion of Champions contest of which the pub are the current holders.

This year's contest was held at Churchill College in Cambridge - where we are pleased to say real ale was made available to the thirsty team. Sadly, this time though the lads couldn't quite make the winning post and finished in a very creditable second place, for which they have our congratulations. Perhaps next year the partaking of a larger quantity of the revered Eric Ale will enable them to win once again.



# Vaux Brewery Trip.

## VAUX TRIP

The members of St. Neots CAMRA are known as keen brewery visitors, even so, it required the more intrepid among us, along with some of our friends from British Rail Guzzlers Society, whose enthusiasm for travel seems to know no bounds, to make the long trek up north recently to visit Vaux of Sunderland.

Although hardly a household name in East Anglia, Vaux are one of the largest regional breweries in the country, and like their neighbours in the North East, their reputation is largely founded on a bottled brown ale—in their case 'Double Maxim'. Indeed their commitment to real ale is somewhat limited—as we were to find when we were offered 'keg' beer in the sample room.

They do, however, produce five cask ales, and we had been able to try one of these—Sunderland Draught Bitter in the brewery tap pub before our visit. The Brewery itself covers a large, impressive site in the centre of Sunderland. The ale brewhouse itself seemed the oldest part on our visit, though as readers of 'Whats Brewing' will know a new ale and lager brewhouse is to be installed this year.

The most impressive sight from an ale drinkers point of view was the row upon row of open fermenters—used by the brewery for ale production in preference to the conicals they use for lager.

An interesting comparison was also provided with our recent trip to Youngs when we were shown round the shire horse collection.

All in all an interesting day—Vaux's commitment to cask ale is not perhaps as great

as CAMRA would like—though they do now feature 'guest ales' in their pubs—and they are a major part of England's brewing industry, as such, their independence is only to be welcomed.

PAUL HACKETT

Other recent brewery trips have seen us visit Youngs, Charles Wells, Batemans and Lorimers in Edinburgh (another long hike). A future trip is planned for Trumans on September 24th.

## Future Meetings

Wednesday 6th August—White Horse, Tilbrook  
8pm–9.30pm then at  
Three Shuttles, Tilbrook 9.30pm onwards

Sunday 17th August social, Longbow, Sapley from  
12.00. onwards. Bring the family.

Wednesday 20th August Talk on the history of  
Greene King Brewery by Ken Page. All welcome at  
The Wheatsheaf, St. Neots commence 8.00pm.

Wednesday 17th September—The Crown, Eaton Socon  
Beer Festival De-brief 8.00pm.



# Local Pub News

Since our last newsletter there have been a few landlord changes in the hostelrys covered by our area.

Stuart and Maureen Smith have taken over at the Three Shuttles in Tilbrook, a pub where there have been more than a few different faces behind the bar in recent times. Despite it being their first pub, the couple were keen to get this specific house and are optimistic of building up the trade to a good level. Bar snacks, a new pool table and the forming of a darts team, allied we hope to good ales are some of the ways they hope to achieve this.

Good Beer Guide listed, The Bell at Southoe now has Derek and Marion Corben to serve you. Both have previous experience of the trade and intend to make it a good beer with good food pub.

Alex and Marion Pitt are leaving the St. Neots town centre pub The Cannon after nine years. The probable incoming tenant here will be John and Sadie Raines from the seemingly doomed Nags Head in Eynesbury- see our main story.

On the subject of quiz leagues, mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, the Three Horseshoes at Southoe has topped the Charles Wells pub quiz finals in what is to become an annual event. There certainly would appear to be something in the beers available in St. Neots pubs that adds to the brainpower!

"OPENING TIMES" is published by the ST. NEOTS AND DISTRICT BRANCH OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE (CAMRA)

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Alex and Marlene Johnston are the new incumbents at The Harrier in Brampton, having previously been at The Golden Lion at Stanground. Again bar snacks and food, new darts teams and good ale are the order of the day.

The Caxton Gibbet, owned by Paines PLC is still up for sale at an asking price of £200,000 having been on the market for about 18 months.

New landlords at The White Hart, Great Staughton are Peter and Val Boyd, this particular pub having been closed for a time since the last landlord left.

Eaton Socon Free House, The Crown is presently undergoing refurbishment. Landlord Ian Robinson tells me that when the work is shortly completed, to give him a bigger bar area, there will then be six handpumps in the pub. Two will serve Adnams, two the not too widely available Tetleys Bitter (Tykes where are you?) and the other two reserved for guest beers.



**The Crown Inn**  
Eaton Socon Cambridgeshire

**FREE HOUSE**

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

**GARDEN AND  
ROOM FOR CHILDREN**