

OPENING TIMES

ST. NEOTS & DISTRICT



BRANCH NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO 63

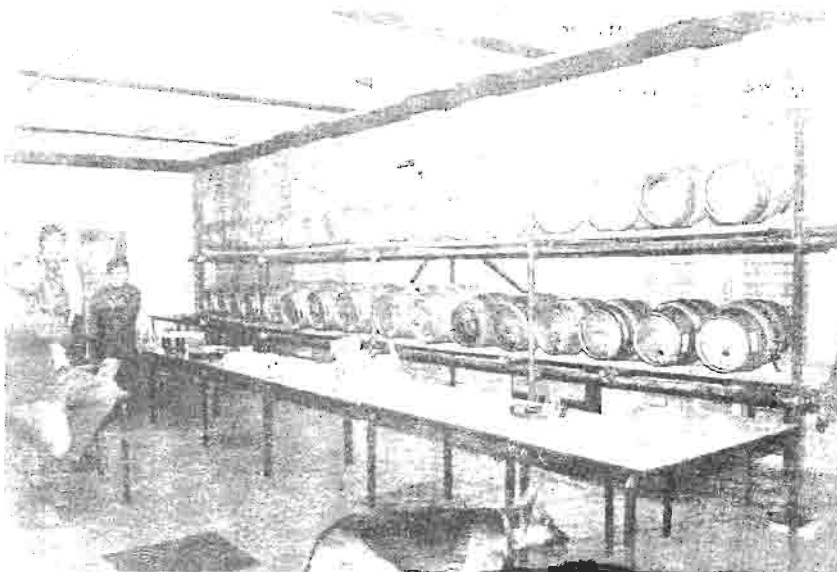
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ST. NEOTS 1987 BEER FESTIVAL

28th - 31st May
"The Coneygeare", Eynesbury, St. Neots

We are glad to report that after the success of the 1986 St. Neots Beer Festival that we are going to return in 1987. The venue remains the same - The Coneygeare, Eynesbury, St. Neots, with the Festival opening on Thursday 28th MAY and running to Sunday 31st MAY. Last years event saw 20 kils of real ale consumed by over 800 people, this was despite pouring rain on the saturday night of the festival that kept that nights attendance down.



Picture shows part of the stillage
at last years ST. Neots Beer Festival.

This years festival will again have over 20 real ales available plus cider and perry. It is hoped to have live music on the Friday and Saturday evenings, with also the CAMRA stall selling Festival T shirts and other CAMRA goodies. A special Festival programme will also be published - prospective advertisers, contact the editor for further details - note that last year we sold over 500 copies.

Local Pub News

Since our last newsletter, there have been many changes of Landlord in our area. Among those that have come to our notice are the following:

The White Horse, Tilbrook a former Manns house and a Grade two listed building has been sold for a figure in the region of £94,000 as a freehouse to a private individual we are told, but no firm details on how the pub is to be run are available to us as yet.

The Jolly Abbot free house at Abbotsley has been purchased by Adrian and Rosalind Grant, who run the pub with assistance from their son Simon. Ales currently available are the notorious Pullers ESB, Ruddles County, Greene King Abbot plus the less strong Wilsons and Websters Yorkshire Bitter.

Richard and Rose Smith are the new proprietors at the Robin Hood, Market Square, St. Ives a Chef and Brewer house, having taken over before Christmas.

New at The Woolpack, St. Neots a Charles Wells house are Brian and Melanie Cooper from Southend, who are running their first pub.

Ted Francis a familiar figure in our area, is currently temporary landlord at The Manchester Arms, St. Ives a Tolly pub which has been extensively refurbished and under the management of Travel pub Ltd. a local company specialising in outside functions of all types.

Tom and Betty Thompson, tenants at The Olde Sun, Huntingdon Street, St. Neots have won a certificate of merit in the Whitbread Pub of the Year awards for standard of service. As far as CAMRA are concerned, we would like the two fake handpumps to disappear, although the Flowers is fine from the authentic pump in the pub.

The White Horse, Kimbolton, a Whitbread house has been totally refurbished inside and out, to give the 15th Century pub, with its inglenook fireplace, what landlord Mike Ryan calls a cosy atmosphere.

The Coach and Horse, Huntingdon, now a free house is selling handpumped Adnams. Another free house - The Coneygeare, Eynesbury have installed an 'Enchanted Tree' believed to be the first of its kind in Cambridgeshire, as a attraction for people with children. If you are a publican and have special play areas and amenities for children, then write to the editor and I will publicise the fact - as long as you sell real ale of course!

Huntingdon town centre pub The Waterloo has a new landlord who hopes to turn it into a 'family pub run by a family' and to have regular live entertainment. Dennis and Brenda Murray have taken over recently and have already started renovations, with re-decoration, new furniture and renovating the kitchen. Every Wednesday will be Country and Western evening and it is hoped to have groups and cabaret acts on Friday evenings. Speaking of Country and Western, The Prince of Wales, Hilton has it on alternate Wednesday evenings.

The Bridge, a Beefeater Steak House in High Street St. Neots has new managers -- John and Jan Sherlock having now departed and Alan and Joanne Rogerson moving in.

The Nags Head in Eynesbury is now provisionally sold, but at this moment in time we don't know what as.

Brewery Trips

St. Neots CAMRA branch members have again been active visiting breweries, near and far, reports on a couple of these trips are coming up next:

Carlisle Brewery Visit

A number of local CAMRA branch members were included in a party which recently visited the Carlisle Brewery, now belonging to Theakstons.

The visit, organised by Dave Cox for the Brewery History Society, gave what is likely be the last chance to see this particular plant in action, as it has been doomed to closure by Matthew Browns, Theakston's parent company.

The plant has an interesting history, being the only brewery in the country to have been nationalised, as part of the Carlisle State Management Scheme, an historic attempt to regulate the drinking habits of workers at a local munitions factory. When that scheme was 'privatised' in the early 1970's, the brewery passed to Theakstons, famous for their 'Old Peculiar' ale, who needed extra plant for their bitter production. Now however, it seems that extra production can be absorbed at the nearby Matthew Brown's Workington brewery and Carlisle is to close.

The plant has, sadly, had little money spent on it in recent years, by the look of it, though it does seem a pity, to say the least, that yet another working brewery is to close, especially where the product, if evidence of the sample room is anything to go by, is so good. Still, thanks are due to Theakstons, and Matthew Browns for a last look, and taste.

PAUL HACKETT

Trumans Brewery Visit

Another trip by ST. Neots Branch was to Trumans, Brick Lane Brewery in London. Here we spent a very pleasant three hours being shown around the Brewery and enjoying the brews in the sampling room. The brewery itself, is a mixture of the old and the new, with automation and traditionalism side by side. A recent trip to Watney's Mortlake plant showed that to be a 'factory' where the product being manufactured could have been anything, as it was out of sight in a fully automated unit. At Trumans however, one did feel that you were in a brewery and could actually see the product. Once again, as in all the bigger breweries, lager was taking up the biggest percentage of capacity, but the brewery still managed to retain a sense of consciousness towards real ale by its methods and attitude. A personal viewpoint is that the range of Trumans beers is very much better than the Mortlake beers, could this have something to do with the process. Certainly the threat of Trumans losing its identity and being swallowed up by Mortlake is there and would undoubtedly change the flavour of the beers. The only sad note of our trip was that the excellent Samson was not available for tasting on the night. Apart from that a very enjoyable evening and thanks to Trumans.

MIKE BIRCH

Save Rayments Campaign

Local brewers Greene King have decided to close Rayments Brewery, Furneux Pelham, Hertfordshire in October. The brewery, which dates from the 1860's is one of only two established breweries in Hertfordshire, the other being McMullens of Hertford. It passed into the hands of Greene King directors late last century, before being fully absorbed in the 1920's. It now has a small estate of 27 pubs, and brews just the one beer, the reputed cask-conditioned Rayments BBA-1036 gravity.

It is intended to brew 'Rayments BBA' at Greene King's Bury St. Edmunds plant, where they will try to match the present recipe, but a close match to Rayments distinctive and consistent hop taste would be very difficult to achieve. BBA will, then be available to the free trade as well as in selected Greene King houses, with Rayments pubs changing to Greene King livery as and when they need redecoration. Greene King say that it is no longer economically viable to brew one low-volume beer, when they have the spare capacity elsewhere in the group. However, as Furneux Pelham is to become a distribution depot, retaining 80% of current jobs the savings made would appear to be minimal. Indeed if the beer was pushed harder into the free trade and made more available in the tied estate—including St. Neots area pubs, it would appear that a higher production level would be achieved!

CAMRA has set up an action group to urge a rethink by Greene King, and hope to get across that more could be made of this superb little company—it needs a boost not closure. We hope to demonstrate that people do care about Rayments and BBA. We are told that in future, pubs will only be offered BBA if it is in addition to Greene King IPA. Rayments small rural pubs will not be able to support two similar gravity beers, and sales will suffer.

This is one of the very few classic traditional breweries left in the South East, brewing a classic traditional beer. CAMRA values Rayments very highly. The nearest tied outlet to our area is probably The White Horse, Newport, Essex, so if you are in that area give it a try. The beer will be available at The St. Neots Beer Festival and also there will be a petition to sign, and we would like to get as many signatures as we can get.



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1987

BEER FESTIVAL

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**"The Coneygare", Eynesbury,
St. Neots**

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

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Future Meetings

Wednesday 13th May Social at The Pheasant,
Keyston 8.00pm-9.30pm then at
White Horse, Kimbolton 9.30pm onwards.

Friday 12th June - Hare and Hounds, Eynesbury.
Beer Festival De-brief 8.00. onwards.

Sunday 21st June - Jester, Ashwell.
Family social from 12.00. onwards.

Tuesday 24th June Social at Cross Keys, Upwood
8.00pm-9.30pm then at
White Lion, Bury from 9.30pm onwards.