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ST. NEOTS & DISTRICT

OPENING TIMES



Issue No 74

BRANCH NEWSLETTER
BI-MONTHLY CIRCULATION 1,000 COPIES

'BOOZE ON THE OUSE' BEER FESTIVAL A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

ST. IVO CENTRE PROVES IDEAL VENUE

HUNDREDS FLOCK TO FESTIVAL

The first CAMRA organised beer festival in St. Ives proved a major attraction, with 1200 people attending over the four days and supping 25 kilns of beer in the process.

After a break of four years since our last beer festival, which was held in St. Neots, we were unsure as to what sort of response we would get at a completely new venue.

However, any fears we may have had were quickly dispelled, when on the traditionally quiet Thursday opening night, we had 150 people in. Among these were brewery representatives and local landlords, who we were very pleased to see.

HECTIC FRIDAY

This was then followed by a hectic Friday night when 400 people turned up to try out the ales and listen to the Home Brew folk band.

EXTRA SUPPLIES NEEDED

By late on Friday, we knew that extra supplies of beer would be needed, if we were not to run out early on Saturday evening.

A phone call meant that early Saturday morning we had another 5 kilns of beer to add to the original 20 kiln order, which had seen us offer 34 different beers from 25 breweries, plus cider and perry.

YET MORE ALES

The new arrivals of Mitchells Bitter, North Yorkshire Brewing Co's - Flying Herbert and Best Bitter, Yates Bitter, Banks & Taylors Mild and Edwin Taylor's Extra Stout, Titanic Best Bitter, Burton Bridge Summer Ale meant that we had offered 42 different beers from a total of 31 breweries at our festival, no mean achievement.

WELL DONE KATHY

The main thanks for that must go to our Bar Manager, Kathy Hadfield who did a great job in ensuring a regular flow of beer in tip-



Bar Manager, Kathy Hadfield busily tapping another firkin

top condition. She was aided here by a new beer cooling system, which was on one of its smaller trial runs before being used on a much larger scale at The GBBF, Olympia in August. Although we had initial teething problems with the system - whereby saddles are fitted over the outside top of the cask and water is fed through at correct temperature - they worked very effectively once operational. So when you see 650+ of these at GBBF, remember you saw them first at St. Ives.

Another two busy sessions on Saturday saw a further attendance in excess of 500 over the course of the day. This time, jazz with the Ouse Valley Jazz Band was the evenings entertainment.

Sunday lunchtime was predictably very quiet with only a couple of dozen hardy souls in attendance, but we unpaid staff didn't mind that too much, the beer was nearly all sold and it gave us a chance to wind down.

NEW MEMBERS SIGNED UP

With new members being signed up from local addresses and some from Yorkshire and Cumbria we certainly attracted both local people and those who had travelled a great distance to be there!

LETTERS WELCOME

Whilst some of you that came completed our questionnaire on what was good and bad about the festival we would welcome any letters appertaining to the festival.

Continued overleaf

'Booze on the Ouse' a resounding success continued...

BIGGER, NEXT YEAR

We are returning next year, with a bigger and better event, which in turn will need more helpers, so all you 'sleeping' CAMRA members out there come and get involved. We need you!

BEER FEST '92 BOOKED

The date has already been booked, it is Thursday 17th June to 20th June. So make a date in your diary.

PROGRAMME AVAILABLE

Our 32 page programme was very well received. It contains articles that are not dated now that the festival is over, so if you missed the festival and would like a copy, then write to the editor. Similarly, if any landlords out there would like to see a copy with a view to support advertising in next years production then please contact Mike Birch on 0480 474497.

Next years event will also see trade stands on site. We are offering space on the upstairs mezzanine floor, at a stand size of approx. 8' long x 6' deep at a cost of £40.00 for the

duration of the festival. Unfortunately as the food operation within the hall is on a franchise basis we are unable to accept bookings for food concerns. Similarly, whilst we are quite happy to accept bookings from Breweries, pubs etc. we are unable to allow alcohol to be available from these stands. We are also happy to accept bookings from non drinks related businesses. For further information, please contact either Mike Birch 0480 474497 or Paul Moorhouse 0480 496247

SUPPORT THE INDEPENDENTS

Hopefully, our support of the independent brewers, especially those based in East Anglia will have introduced some new beers to both drinkers and landlords. Perhaps this in turn will lead to some of those beers becoming available in local pubs. If you enjoyed a particular beer ask your freehouse landlord if he will give it a try. If they have any problems in obtaining the beer, get them to give the editor a call and we'll see if we can help.

All in all a great festival. Thanks to one and all for supporting us, Many thanks to Robin Stanley, Roger Stokes and Robert Steadman at the St. Ivo Centre for all their assistance and for inviting and having us, in what

everyone must agree was a superb venue. How many beer festivals could offer the seating we had available, adding to the superb atmosphere of the festival.

BLACK DOG BEER OF THE FESTIVAL

Results of voting forms filled out at our Booze on the Ouse Beer Festival gave a boost of first place to the trial brewed Elgoods Black Dog Mild.

The dark mild, which is being test marketed in their tied houses and selected free trade outlets is brewed in their newly installed mini-brewery plant which can turn out just five barrells at a time. However, despite its success here and it's general popularity elsewhere, no decision has been made as to its long term future.

The full 1, 2, 3 of beers was:

1. Elgoods Black Dog Mild
2. Woodforde's Wherry Bitter
3. Morrells Graduate

LOCAL NEWS

The **New Sun, Kimbolton** has closed. The bistro style free house shut its doors in early July, it remains to be seen whether it will re-open as a pub.

The **Black Bull, Somersham** currently closed, but rumoured to be re-opening was still closed when I passed it at the end of July.

The **Victoria, Huntingdon** is now selling Tetley and Flowers Original as the Pubmaster effect moves on, with Tetley replacing Tolly Original in a lot of their pubs.

The **Manchester Arms, St Ives** has new landlords in, perhaps CAMRA will be a little more welcome now!

Still in **St. Ives**, The **White Hart** in the town centre now also stocks Tetley, plus a guest which was Wadworths 6X last time we were in, with also Boddingtons putting in an appearance. Out of our branch area, but as they supported our beer festival programme, I'll give them a mention, The Prince Albert at Stow-Cum-Quy has managed to clock up 550 different beers, since Ian Henderson took over the pub five years ago.

He thinks only ten pubs in the country have beaten 500, and would love to know if he has the record.

GREENE KING'S BID FOR MORLAND FAILS

Morland's delightfully named chief executive Jasper Clutterbuck, was delighted to announce the failure of Greene King's hostile £104m takeover bid for his Abingdon, Oxfordshire based brewery.

Despite extending their bid to a third attempt expiring on July 24th, GK were only able to muster 45.95% of the share capital.

Morland boosted confidence by buying 72 pubs from Courage/Grand Met. and predicting profits of 28% to £7.6m in the current year, and were pleased to say it was 'back to business as usual' with great joy and relief.

CAMRA found the prospect of takeover very unwelcome, and against the best interests of beer drinkers. Greene King had already stated that they would close the Abingdon brewery and turn the site into a depot, with Greene King beers going into Morland's pubs. There would be loss of product choice, plus price rises to pay for the takeover, with the local drinker losing out all the way down the line.

It is gratifying that the small shareholders and financial institutions have held onto their shares to preserve the identity of Morland's and to ensure the future of the breweries country/rural pubs which given Greene King's renowned poor attitude towards them would also have been closed.



JOIN CAMRA NOW

Just fill in the details below and send with a cheque for £10 or £12 for joint membership (Payable to CAMRA Ltd) to The Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 34, Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 3BW

APPLICATION FORM

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....POST CODE.....

I wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association. I enclose a cheque for £10 (£14 if overseas).

Signed.....Date.....

CHARLES WELLS RE-SHAPES TIED ESTATE

LOCAL BREWER TO SELL 49 PUBS

Local brewer, Charles Wells of Bedford is carrying out a "rationalisation" programme of its tied estate, which stretches from London to Lincolnshire.

A total of 49 of its 353 pubs are being shed in an effort to upgrade the quality of the estate. Pubs which are too costly to run, or simply do not sell enough beer are being disposed of.

Three pubs in our Branch area, that are affected by the decision are:

- The Three Horseshoes, Southoe**
- The Cannon, St. Neots**
- The Bell, Stonely**

All but four of the pubs involved in the sell-off are run by tenants, who will be given first refusal of the freeholds in each case. In some instances, Charles Wells are prepared to lend landlords the money to buy their pubs, but on condition they still sell the brewery's beer.

Pubs will remain as Pubs!

We have spoken to tied-trade director Laurie Clarke, who says that "where buyers can be found the pubs will remain as pubs. If put in

the hands of enterprising freeholders, they have potential".

Novelty effect, attracts

Quite often when a pub changes hands, the novelty of new decor and beers can lead to increased trade. It is then up to the pub to retain that trade. Although, the pubs would probably be sold with a tied barreallage agreement, good sales would enable guest beers to be brought in.

The **Cannon**, in particular if refurbished in the right style, ie. in the style of the Banks & Taylor houses, could provide St. Neots with the type of Town centre free house the town just does not have at the present time.

Change of use applied for

As regards **The Three Horseshoes**, it would be a very sad day for the only pub in the immediate village to close down, as is threatened by the breweries application for 'change of use' to a private dwelling. Existing landlord Gerry Camborne-Paynter and his wife Shirley are moving to another pub and not taking up the offer to buy the pub.

Certainly, **The Bell**, the other pub in **Southoe**, is on the edge of the village, but that pub's future could always be threatened by the widening of the A1 to a three lane motorway.

Choice lessens

As for **The Bell at Stonely**, it is the only pub in the village and with the closure of **The New Sun** in nearby Kimbolton, the choice is lessening for drinkers in that area.

So it imperative that local drinkers support these pubs whilst they are still open, to make them more appealing for any prospective buyers. If people do not support the pub, they cannot complain when it closes.

Pubs which are not bought by the sitting tenants will be offered for sale through Chestertons of London. Hopefully, suitable buyers can be found and no losses will be incurred.

1980's surge

Charles Wells started buying pubs in the late 1980's, increasing an estate which had been at 280 since the the 1960's.

Some of the pubs being sold were those bought as apt of a batch, when Wells took less successful houses along with those it really wanted.

The batch of pubs Wells bought in the Midlands in 1991 from Bass, Mitchells and Butler are proving a runaway success.

Trade had initially dipped at the 15 transferred houses, but it now appears that Charles Wells has gained a following in the region.

Novelty value proved

They themselves are proving the novelty value theory. With their beers relatively unknown, prior to the deal, people have been going into the pubs to try them and returning.

Wells had bought the particular pubs because they had a great throughput of beer, and are very pleased with the results as customers had been drinking Bass brands for many years, but now publicans and drinkers alike were happy with the change.

As some of the ex-Bass tenants were negotiating to buy their houses at the time of the block sale and were now happy with the deal, it seemed the integration of the pubs into the Charles Wells estate had worked well for everyone.

Also 38 of Wells managed pubs had recently been returned to tenancy, with most managers having been found jobs elsewhere in the estate.



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RUDDLES BREWERY TRIP

St. Neots CAMRA Branch travelled up to Ruddles Brewery in Langham, Oakham in July.

Having arrived early, because of train times, several of the party ventured into the nearby Noel Arms, a Ruddles tied house until 1984, and indeed the last one in the previous tied estate of 38 houses to be sold off.

After a swift pint of Theakstons, it was off to the brewery, where we were greeted by our two lady guides, who escorted us to the cellar hospitality suite. Here we were invited to sample either of the two beers brewed by the company, Best or County, before watching the somewhat dated, company slide show.

This featured Tony Ruddle and strongly emphasised the things Ruddles were noted for in its Independent days. We then set off in two parties for the guided tour. Being a highly modernised plant, 1984 saw a staged rebuilding and updating of the processing plant, until by 1986 the brewery capacity had risen to 100,000 barrels a year. The following year a further £8m was invested in the brewery's production and racking operations, enabling 250,000 barrels of ale a year to be produced.

However, the recession is certainly biting here, our guide informing us that the production was down to only seven brews a week, and

certainly the only beer we saw was in our drinking glasses. So with 18 fermenting vessels standing empty, all is certainly not well.

After the trip, we returned to the hospitality suite, where we were treated to a splendid cold buffet and flagons of Ruddles Ale, for which we are extremely grateful to our hosts.

As regards the brewery, we couldn't help wondering in what direction they will head. Tony Ruddle had sold the brewery and brand names to Grand Met's Watney brewing division in 1986 for £14m. It was then of course taken over by Courage as part of the 'pubs for breweries' deal with Grand Met.

GROLSCH, NEW OWNERS

New owners Grolsch of the Netherlands, only purchased Ruddles in February of this year, but obviously did not buy it with a view to making losses. It would seem the Brewery is currently in limbo until future policies become clearer.

An expansion to the beer range perhaps, or 'properly' brewed UK Grolsch? Certainly, the beer quality needs to be restored to its former glories, with neither of them worthy of their once great reputation amongst beer drinkers.

Our next branch trip is to Elgoods on October 6th.

INDEPENDENT BREWERIES TOUR A SUCCESS

The three day tour of East Anglian Independent Breweries by CAMRA representatives from all over the region proved to be very successful in achieving its main objectives.

Firstly, you may have seen the excellent TV coverage with both Anglia and BBC reporting the event. Several radio interviews, local press items and a mention in the trade newspaper the Morning Advertiser meant that CAMRA's name was to the forefront.

Secondly, it helped to forge closer links between CAMRA and the independents, all of whom were grateful for our support and appreciative of CAMRA's efforts.

CAMRA members from Bedford, Cambs, Essex, Herts, Suffolk and Norfolk visited a total of 20 breweries over a four day period



Sampling the delights of Adnams at the Southwold brewery L. to R. Paul Ainsworth (CAMRA Regional Director, John Adnams, Paul Moorhouse (CAMRA Technical Director & St. Neots Branch Member)

from the 1st - 4th July. These included our large regional breweries, small independents and pub breweries.

The intrepid party left Cambridge, on the Wednesday with first call Elgoods of Wisbech. Then it was back across country to Charles Wells, Nix Wincott, Banks & Taylor, McMullens and last call of the day to the Ancient Druids home-brew pub in Cambridge.

Thursday saw the refreshed party depart from Cambridge to Ridleys, Essex Brewery. This was then followed by Crouch Vale, Mauldons,

FUTURE



EVENTS

Thursday 20th August ♦ Social ♦ Greenacres, Longsands, St. Neots 8.30pm

Wednesday 2nd September ♦ Meeting ♦ Queens Head, Needingworth 8.30pm

Tuesday 15th September ♦ Ramsey Crawl ♦ Three Horseshoes 8.30pm Jolly Sailor 9.30pm

Friday 18th September ♦ Joint Social ♦ with North Beds CAMRA Branch, Biggleswade Crawl, commence Red Lion 8.30pm

Tuesday 29th September ♦ Social ♦ Hare & Hounds, Eynesbury 8.30pm (With Tolly representative in attendance)

Thursday 8th October ♦ Bedford Beer Festival ♦ Mini-Bus for CAMRA members from St. Ives, Huntingdon, St. Neots Further details contact: Steve Leader 0480 475095

Thursday 22nd October ♦ Joint Social ♦ at Mini Beer Festival at HRC Club, Hartford 8.30pm

Nethergate, Greene King (Bury St. Edmunds), Earl Soham and finally Tolly Cobbold in Ipswich.

After a night in Ipswich, renewed with fresh vigour or something stronger perhaps, it was all on board once more for the new days travels, which led in the first instance to Adnams Southwold Brewery. After this, it was on to the Green Dragon in Bungay, Reepham, Woodfordes, Forbes, Scotties and a weary ride back into Norwich to spend the night.

Saturday morning saw the final port of call, when all concerned met up at the Reindeer, Norwich where you can see the pubs own micro brewery whilst having a restful pint at the bar. All in all, a good time was had by all and the tour achieved what it set out to do.

CAMRA members talking to Ian Hornsey, Head Brewer at Nethergate Brewery

