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ST. NEOTS &amp; DISTRICT

# OPENING TIMES



Issue No 84 February 1995

BRANCH NEWSLETTER  
BI-MONTHLY CIRCULATION 1,000 COPIES

## WINTER ALE FESTIVAL PROVES AN ENJOYABLE SUCCESS

The 1st CAMRA, Winter Ale Festival to be held in St. Neots proved a success with all the 14 ales on offer being sold out by 10'0 Clock on the Saturday night and about 300 people coming along during the course of the festival.

Our special preview night on the Thursday proved so popular that it is probable that next year we will open to the public an extra night.

As it was our first ever event of this type, supplies were limited to just 7 kilderkins of beer as we were totally unsure of the response.

As it turned out his quantity proved just about right. There was a steady demand on each of the beers available, so that we were able to still

offer a choice of 14 beers early on Saturday morning.

The first beer to go was Nethergate Umbel Magna followed by Nene Valley Midas and then a gradual emptying of the other barrels.

Friday night was as is usually the case the most popular night for attendance with over 120 people coming through the doors.

We then had a very steady inflow of drinkers throughout the day on the Saturday, with a fairly quiet Saturday evening session not too down heartening as beer stocks were running low by then.

Even so another 120 attended in the course of the day, with

people staying for a few hours and not just popping in for a quick pint.

This meant a pleasant convivial, atmosphere in the hall at all times with people enjoying themselves accordingly in true CAMRA Beer Festival traditions. for that we thank all who attended and helping to make it so.

Thankyou also to all at St. Neots Town Football Club for the use of their facilities and thanks to all those CAMRA members for giving up their time and without whom the event would not be possible.

Here's to next year - roll on Winter!

# REAL CIDER NETHERGATE IMPORTED TO GET A are so B E E R PUSH UMBEL THREAT TO YOUR PUB

**CAMRA is to step up its drive to promote real cider and perry, with a revived Cider and Perry exhibition and a new Good Cider Guide also in the pipeline.**

**CAMRA are to include 'Cider Press' a quarterly supplement in their monthly newspaper What's Brewing in an effort to bring national exposure within the reach of even the smallest producers.**

**These are already promoted at CAMRA's Great British Beer festival and of course at many local beer festivals including our own 'Booze on the Ouse' where the ciders and perrys are always popular.**

## SWIFT HALVES...

CAMRA's national membership is bubbling around the 48,000 mark with the figure of 50,000 expected to be reached by Easter.

The number of Beer Festivals has risen too, from 100 in 1993 to 140 in 1994, and we have already boosted the figure for 1995 with our new, Winter Ale Festival.

Isle of Wight Brewer, Goddards is considering publishing the ingredients of its new beer, Fuggle De Dum, on beermats and pumpclips after listening to the local CAMRA branch. Will others follow?

Mansfield Brewery have re-opened the Leather bottle in Wellingborough as an ale house, giving them a tied house not too far from our area.


Ian Hornsey, Head brewer at Nethergate Brewery just over the border in Clare, Suffolk has hit on a winner with his 'Umbel Magna' ABV 5.5 %.

This is Old Growler Porter with added coriander, which existed in the original 1750's London recipe for the beer. The beer went on sale commercially in Christmas 1993 and caused quite a stir. Now to distinguish it from regular Old Growler it has been renamed Umbel Magna, the word Umbel comes from the Latin name Umbelliferae for coriander. The beer was available at our Winter Ale festival and proved so popular it was the first to sell out.

Nethergate have also introduced Umbel Ale ABV 3.8, which also uses coriander as a spicing agent along with the hops.

In the wake of the mini-budget it seems that British Brewers are cashing in on cut-price beer market in France. They are shipping vast quantities of beer to Calais, which is being bought by British drinkers and brought back home. Brands like Boddingtons, Fosters and Tennents and other major British brands are top sellers. This is hypocrisy of the highest order as the big Brewers complain about Britain's high levels of duty and then make a tidy profit from the bootleg market.



It is the Brewers as much as Government policy that threatens the British pub as they encourage drinkers to cross the channel, buy up cheap British beer and drink at home instead of in the traditional British pub. We are asked "why is what lager drinkers choose to drink the concern of CAMRA" Well our concern is a simple one - WE WANT THE BRITISH PUB TO FLOURISH. Without the pub, cask-conditioned real ale would disappear and become a footnote in the history books. That is why CAMRA are deeply bothered by duty-free imports.



## The Happy Brewer

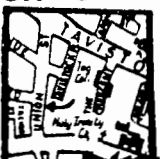
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9.30 - 5.30



# THE CHEQUERS, LITTLE GRANSDEN WINS CAMRA 'PUB OF THE WINTER' AWARD.

# LOCAL NEWS

Bob and Wendy Mitchell at the Chequers, Little Gransden were recently presented with their certificate for winning CAMRA's 'Pub of the Season' award for 1994/95.

They have run the Chequers for the past 21/2 years, since Bob's father, Syd died. Syd had run the pub for 42 years and Bob doesn't think he will manage to beat that. The Chequers is a two-bar village, free-house that you can easily miss, and indeed I was asked "is this a pub?" by a visiting darts player on the night of the presentation.

The pub is a throwback to by-gone days and although Bob has added the second bar himself to enlarge the pub, it is still in keeping with the pubs atmosphere. The Chequers doesn't open lunchtimes, but you will always find a warm welcome in the evenings.

The Chequers has just the one hand-pump from which Bob serves a different 'guest' beer each week, but always in good condition. For the excellence of its beer and its unique atmosphere the pub wins our award, presented by Branch Chairman, Kathy Hadfield.

Local regional brewers Greene King are about to introduce their next Seasonal ale following on from the success of Black Baron, the next ale for Spring, available at the end of February, will be Sorcerer at OG 1043.

**The Market Inn** in **Huntingdon** and the **Black Bull** at **Brampton** are both available leasehold at ingoings of £10,000 and £13,000 respectively through Erdman Lewis.

Richard and Elaine Bartram have taken over at the **Spread Eagle, Croxton** a Greene King house.



*From left to right:  
Bob Mitchell, his wife Wendy with the certificate and  
CAMRA Chairman Kathy Hadfield*

## 'Fake' Guinness tap arrives in local pubs.

**The new, Guinness fount appearing in local pubs does not serve real ale.**

The new fount is modelled on the one used in Ireland and comes at a time when a growing number of drinkers are making unfavourable comparisons between Dublin Guinness and London Guinness. £10million is being spent converting 70,000 stockists to the new founts before the end of 1996.

The fount incorporates a tap resembling a handpump complete with pumpclip-style badge which could fall foul of both CAMRA and trading standards officials. CAMRA policy is that pubs selling keg beer or cider by misleading dispense such as the notorious Scrumpy Jack "handpump" will not be included in the Good Beer Guide or local guides. The Trading Standards Office policy is against misuse of real ale imagery that may mislead drinkers and indeed have already received complaints about the new tap and are investigating.



# ST. NEOTS BRANCH CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

**The St. Neots CAMRA Branch had its inaugural meeting in The Blue Ball, Bedford Street, St. Neots in December 1974.**

This followed a good response to a 'test for support' meeting held there on 16th October 1994.

At this time there were only eight public house in St. Neots selling real ale and just one in Huntingdon.

Throughout the whole of the St. Neots Branch area - which stretches nearly up to Sawtry in the North and the Hertfordshire borders in the South - there were just 35 real ale pubs. Nowadays things have improved somewhat with 200 + pubs offering real ale.

**Huntingdon** remains the hardest of the larger towns in which to find a pint of real ale, but with the Bridge Hotel now offering superb beers to compliment the Victoria, things are picking up with the Waterloo offering the occasional guest real ale.

**St. Ives** is well served with amongst others, the award winning Oliver Cromwell and the Aviator with its changing array of beers.

**St. Neots and Eaton Socon** now have real ales a plenty with Good Beer Guide entry, The Wheatsheaf and its four Greene King ales, The Blue Ball and The Hyde Park in the town, with The Crown, The Millers Arms and The Rivermill supplying the Eatons.

At the time of the Branches' formation St. Neots had its own brewery, Paine and Co, who of course are now no longer.

An item of contention at that time was the use of 'top

pressure' in Paines pubs. This was the practice of 'drawing beer with the use of carbon dioxide' according to local press reports of the time. CAMRA was advocating the use of beer engine driven handpumps or gravity dispense, straight from the barrell.

Nowadays of course, a handpump is not always the sign of real ale as a cask breather can be fitted, adding gas to the beer, with some Greene King and Charles Wells landlords adopting the practice.

CAMRA marches on of course, with nearly 50,000 members nationally, with a few more signed up at our Winter Ale Festival.

**Hopefully some of those will be active members to enable the local branch to move forward as an effective voice or another 20 years.**

## JOIN CAMRA NOW

Just fill in the details below and send with a cheque for £12 or £14 for joint membership (Payable to CAMRA Ltd) to The Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 34, Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 3BW

### APPLICATION FORM

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....POSTCODE.....

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 £12 (£16 if overseas).

Signed.....

Date.....

## BRANCH DIARY

All are welcome to attend our socials and meetings, which are held every other Tuesday at different pubs throughout our branch area.

Tuesday 28th February - Social - **Cock, Gamlingay** (Greene King) 8.30pm and then **Hardwicke Arms, Gamlingay** (Free) 9.45pm

Tuesday 14th March - Meeting - **Queen Adelaide, Croydon** (Free) 8.30pm

Tuesday 28th March - Social - **Falcon, Huntingdon** 8.30pm and then **Bridge Hotel, Huntingdon** (Free) 9.45pm

For further details contact: Roy Endersby (Secretary) on 01480 473364