

FREE

FREE

FREE

FREE

FREE

FREE

ST.NEOTS & DISTRICT

OPENING TIMES



Issue No 86 Jan/Feb 1996

BRANCH NEWSLETTER
BI-MONTHLY CIRCULATION 1,000 COPIES

ITS 'WINTER ALE FESTIVAL' TIME AGAIN

Our second 'Winter Ale' Festival will be held in January, once again at St.Neots Town Football Club.

St.Neots CAMRA Branch this year celebrate 21 years since their formation and as part of that are holding their 2nd 'Winter Ale Festival' from 25th to 27th January at St.Neots Town Football Club, Cambridge Road. There will be 17 different ales available from 12 breweries based predominantly in East Anglia being strong ales associated with the Winter months and also some ordinary strength bitters.

St.Neots & District CAMRA Branch covers an area that includes not only St.Neots, but also Ramsey, Huntingdon, St.Ives, B a s s i n g b o u r n e ,



St.Neots Town Football Club

Cambridge Road, St.Neots

January 25 - 27

Thursday 25th 7.00 - 11.00

Friday 26th 6.00 - 11.00

Saturday 27th 12.00 - 10.00

This newsletter is published by the St.Neots branch of the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd. (CAMRA). The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor, CAMRA Ltd or its branches. Articles or letters for consideration for publication are always welcome. Advertising rates £5.00.psci (column width 21/2"). Artwork can be made up. Series discount 6 insertions less 15%. 3 insertions less 10%. Editor: Mike Birch, 10, Squires Court Eaton Socon, St.Neots Cambs. Tel: 01480 395505

Gamlingay, Warboys and Somersham of the larger populated areas and receives unpaid help at the festival from CAMRA members from all over its branch area.

The local branch celebrated its 20th anniversary last year and is now in its 21st year is going from strength to strength with an increasing number of local members getting involved in its activities..

CAMRA nationally has 50,000 members providing a powerful voice as Europe's most successful consumer group and Beer Festivals are always a good recruitment medium for new members and it is hoped that we can continue to do so from the expected 300+ visitors to this years event following on from the good attendance at last years inaugural event.

The Football Club is situated on the outskirts of the town just

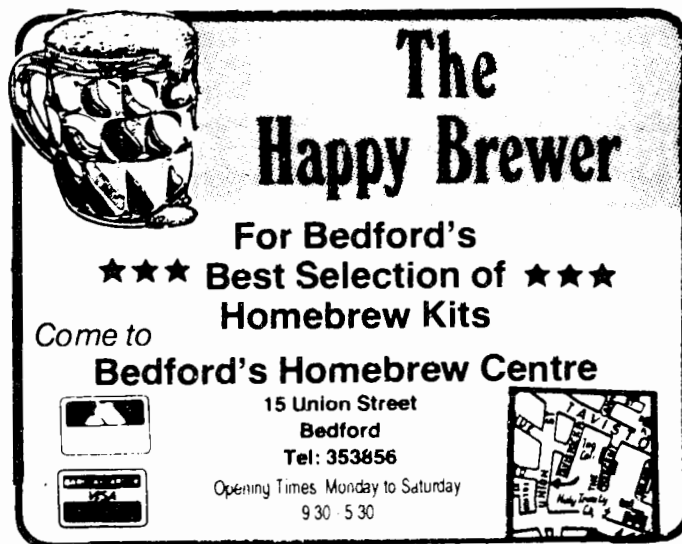
500 yards from the railway station, so is easily accessible from points north and south.

Traditional ales represented this year will include ales from the County's only brewery -Elgoods Wenceslas Winter Warmer and North Brink Porter, Woodfordes Mardlers Mild and Nelsons Revenge from Norfolk, Mauldons Christmas Reserve and Midwinter Gold, Nethergate Umbel Magna and IPA and Adnams Tally Ho

and Old, Tolly Old Strong and Greene King Winter Ale all from Suffolk, McMullens Stronghart from Hertfordshire, Squires Paddock Bitter and Wells Fargo from Bedfordshire, Smiles from Bristol and Goddards from the Isle of Wight.

All in all a veritable choice of ales to delight the taste buds.

Entrance to the festival is just 50p to include a programme.



The Happy Brewer

For Bedford's
★★★ Best Selection of ★★★
Homebrew Kits

Come to
Bedford's Homebrew Centre

15 Union Street
Bedford
Tel: 353856

Opening Times Monday to Saturday
9.30 - 5.30



'STALE OLD GROWLER'

(an experiment in brewing)

An interesting experiment has been carried out by Nethergate Brewery of Clare, Suffolk and The Green Man, Free House at Leighton Bromswold.

In the 18th century, Porter Beer was aged before being offered for sale to the public, this process was known as 'Staling'.

This matured porter cost twice that of ordinary beer and drinkers used to blend it with the cheaper variety to suit their taste.

Dave Hanagan, the landlord of the Green Man was asked to age a firkin of Old Growler in his cellar for six months by Nethergate, in fact it was seven months when the barrel was opened on 5th December and a few CAMRA members went along to sample the ale.

So how did it fare?

It was served straight from the barrel, placed on the bar. Its colour was an intense, deep rich ruby red and had a beautiful aroma not dissimilar to christmas pudding. And taste?, when

you took a sip there was a flood of malt followed by chocolate and spice with a long peppery finish, accompanied by a hint of citrus which seemed to go for ever.

So, did the experiment work? Well, if the reaction of those in the pub that night that tried the ale was anything to go by, then the answer is a resounding "yes, it was a great success. Ian Hornsey of Nethergate, one of our most inovative brewers is to be congratulated for reviving this old brewing tradition and we look forward to his next 'experiment'.

The Green Man always has Nethergate IPA and Golden Gate on handpump, which can be relied upon for its good condition and the pub is well worth a visit.

Geoff Parsons

An occasional feature on some of the pubs in our branch area

The Blue Ball, St. Neots

The Blue Ball in Bedford Street is run by Martin Spencer and his partner Linda Knowles who have been tenants at the Greene King pub since June 1993.

A friendly, back street local, catering for a cross section of clientele, with two bars, the larger, busier front bar and the smaller and quieter back bar, both of which lead out into the pleasant patio garden, resplendent with garden furniture and a canopy for those warm but wet days.

At the front of the pub is the gazebo, overlooking the petanque pitch. Inside the usual range of Greene King real ales are on offer, Abbot, IPA, XX Mild on handpump with the 'Greene King seasonal ale' replacing Abbot from time to time. The Blue Ball was refurbished between June and August 1994 but 'we never

closed' in that time says Martin. The pub was in severe need of renovation and it was pleasing to see the brewery showing committment towards the pub when they could have so easily closed it down. That they didn't was due to the enthusiasm of the landlord and its customers for using it. Apart from putting in new ceilings, a new oak floor was added and a previously hidden fireplace uncovered, giving the pubwo fireplaces, only one of which is operational, a real fire is always a welcoming sight on cold days.

Certainly the Blue Ball is a very pleasant watering hole, catering for all. Among its regulars are members of one of our local press, which is shown in the amusing, dummy front pages of the paper adorning the pubs walls among the plentiful bric-a-brac that is collected by the couple on their travels.

BREWERS MOVE FOR A FULL PINT

The Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association have released new guidelines on draught beer dispense.

They say that a 'pint' must be at least 95 per cent liquid before it is handed over to the customer, who can then request a top up and expect to get it with good grace.

The guidelines also say that licences should make sure that their staff are trained to fill the pint to at least 95 per cent before handing it over, so there is no get out for naive staff.

The gas in the liquid should have time to clear and the bar staff should have an opportunity to complete service by topping up prior to completion of the transaction.

U-TURN ON FULL PINTS

These guidelines follow on to the decision to recommend the use of lined glasses for some beers, which CAMRA sees as a major breakthrough in the full pint war. CAMRA have long said that you cannot serve a full pint of liquid in a brim glass. The Brewers say it is not a retreat, but accepting that there are people who wish to have their beer in a different style of glass!

THE WHITE HART,

Sheep Market, St. Ives
Tel: 01480 463275

REAL ALES AVAILABLE:
Fullers London Pride
Fullers Chiswick
Flowers IPA
Boddingtons Bitter

Outside Bars Catered For

BED & BREAKFAST
Discount to CAMRA Members

SWIFT HALVES...

Guinness's giant Park Royal keg plant in West London is about to make history by brewing the first cask conditioned ale in its 60 year history. Harwood's Porter at 5.2 per cent alcohol will be unveiled in March.

The little gem of a pub just out of our area - The Cock at Broom has a new landlord. However, Gerry Lant says that the Greene King pub, well known for its lack of a bar, the ale is served by gravity from the cellar, will not be changed.

A new 88 page CAMRA guide to the pubs of Bedfordshire has been launched. Beer Inn Beds is the first countywide guide for ten years. Price £3.40 inc post from John Walsh, 3A, Common Road, Stotfold, Hitchin Herts. SG5 4BX. Cheques to CAMRA East Beds.

Charter's Bar boss Paul Hook has purchased Oakham Brewery from founder John Wood who was finding running the one man business too much of a struggle. New brewer will be John Bryan

TIED ESTATE SYSTEM UNDER THREAT

The New Year marks crunch time for the future of the British tied estate system.

The European Commission starts its review of the tie but a final report is not expected until 1997.

Its findings are causing grave concern among Britain's regional brewers.

If regionals lose the right to tie then many may get out of brewing. Medium sized independent family owned companies could not survive in a market dominated by the nationals with their deep discounts and low-interest loans.

While those with annual production well below 120,000 barrels need not lose sleep as they will probably be allowed to

continue to tie pubs, those companies whose production is above that limit might well be concerned.

Some of the companies that could be affected include our own local brewers Greene King and Charles Wells plus some other well known and popular breweries: Banks, Burtonwood, Cains, Eldridge Pope, Fuller's, Hall & Woodhouse, Hardy's & Hanson, Joseph Holt, Mansfield, Marstons, Shepherd Neame, Thwaites, Ushers, Vaux, Wadworth and Youngs.

Tenanted pubs are the ones most likely to be affected by the cross-Channel flood of cheap beer. They are also the pubs that will be hit if the Block exemption that allows Brewers to own tied pubs is not renewed. To compensate for this brewers are trying to push-up their take home trade and sales volumes through other brewers, plus their managed estate. There is nothing to prevent a brewer continuing to own pubs and run them under management even if the Block exemption is not renewed.

Locally, Greene King have more than 600 tenanted pubs and would be one of the biggest sufferers if the EC decided against a renewal.

Despite this the company is spending more than 80 per cent of its budgeted investment of £30.8m on pubs. you can be sure that Greene King will be making its views heard in Brussels!

NIX WINCOTT ON THE MOVE

Just over the County border, Nix Wincott Brewery formerly based in The Three Fyshes in Turvey, Beds has now moved and resides at Priory Farm a couple of miles away.

The pub which is in need of refurbishment has been sold to Brian Reid and his wife Barbara who is a partner in the Brewery.

This will ensure that the brewery's beers will still be available at the pub.

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,
230, Hatfield Road, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW

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.

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

BRANCH DIARY

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

Tuesday 6th February - Meeting- **Prince of Wales, Hilton** (Free) 8.30pm

Tuesday 20th February - Social - **King of the Belgians, Hartford** (Manns) 8.30pm. followed by **Barley Mow, Hartford** (Wells) 9.45pm

For further details contact: Geoff Parsons (Secretary) on 01480 350260

Landlords Book Your Advertising Space Now for inclusion in our next issue. Ring Mike Birch 01480 395505 Rates are on front cover