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CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

ST. NEOTS & DISTRICT

OPENING  
TIMES



Issue No 96 March 1998

BRANCH NEWSLETTER  
BI-MONTHLY CIRCULATION 2,000 COPIES

**WINTER  
ALE  
FESTIVAL  
WELL  
ATTENDED**

Our 4th, Winter Ale Festival held at St. Neots Town Football Club in January was again well attended by real ale lovers with nearly around 1,000 pints of warming winter ales being consumed and Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild getting the vote for Beer of the Festival.

Around 250 people came through the doors to sample the special atmosphere of the festival with all of the 16 beers selling steadily. We are now of course planning for our main event of the year - The 18th 'Booze on the Ouse' which will once again be held at the St. Ivo Centre, St. Ives. For your diary the dates are 17th - 20th September.

**TIME TO ACT ON TAX**  
CAMRA urges Chancellor to get tough on unfair beer tax

The Campaign for Real Ale is calling on Chancellor Gordon Brown to make March's Budget a day of celebration for Britain's 15 million beer drinkers by cutting beer duty.

CAMRA has called for:

A staged reduction of beer duty down to the EU median level, starting with a 5pence cut in March.

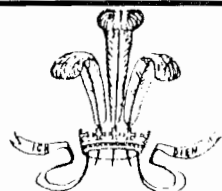
The introduction of a temporary maximum indicative limit (MIL) until moves towards beer tax harmonisation with the EU are complete.

Each year the problem of personal cross-border shopping and smuggling gets worse, but the Government is failing to act. The beer and pubs industry supports some 900,000 British jobs, but Britain's high beer tax policy is putting thousands of

these at risk. In 1998 one in twenty pints drunk in Britain are shipped in from France - that's a staggering 1.4 million pints a day.

CAMRA is urging Mr Brown to become the beer drinker's champion and do something about this problem. The Treasury's own economic model has been used to show that a 20% reduction in beer tax would be self-financing over two years. There is no economic argument against cutting tax. The industry would gain, the consumer would gain and the Government would gain.

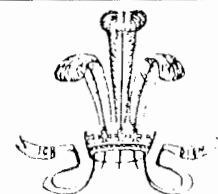
Now is the time for action. Our streets are flooding with cheap French beer sold illegally on housing estates from the back of vans. This high tax policy is no doubt leading to increased problems with street drinking, underage drinking and other alcohol related problems. Pubs provide a socially controlled environment where adults can enjoy drinking, but they don't have a level playing field on which to compete.



The Prince of Wales

'That nice pub at Hilton'

(01480) 830257



ADNAMS BEST BITTER ELGOOD'S BLACK DOG MILD GUEST BEERS GOOD FOOD ACCOMMODATION

# EAST ANGLIAN BREWERY NEWS

## BOTTLE- CONDITIONED OLD GROWLER

**Nethergate Brewery** of Clare have switched production of their bottled Old Growler to King and Barnes, Sussex from McMullen of Hertford. King and Barnes are arguably the major producer of naturally-conditioned bottled ales in Britain and Old Growler will now appear as a bottle-conditioned beer.

The other good news is that head brewer Ian Hornsey is planning to brew a mild in April and May. Something we always ask him to do.. glad he's eventually succumbed. It will be a separate brew- not a coloured-up version of their IPA and based on an old mild recipe and knowing Ian it will be superb.

## ADNAMS MILD

This good news is countered by the word from **Adnams** that they are discontinuing brewing mild, except as a possible occasional brew. However some tied houses are being allowed to stock a mild from another brewer.

## GREENE KING - NOT CLOSING PUBS!!

Evidence is emerging from East Anglia that the closure rate of country pubs in the region is beginning to slow. Regional brewer **Greene King** - which has closed several country pubs, and the Blue Ball in St. Neots- has sold one of its tenancies as a going concern, with talks in progress on a second, a third on the market

and a fourth which was turned round by a tenant and is now to be re-let when he leaves. A brewery spokesman said that the reason for the survival of the four pubs - all in East Anglia - was that closures in their areas had reduced the density of pubs to one for every two villages.

## WHERRY ON TOP

Wherry Best Bitter from **Woodfordes** in Norfolk has been selected as the 1997 Champion Beer of East Anglia. 9,000 CAMRA members in the region were asked to vote for the best beer from the 80+ real ales brewed by the 33 breweries with the 6 top beers being 'blind tasted' by a CAMRA panel.

Hertford Brewer, **McMullen's** has celebrated serving the 2,000,000th pint of Gladstone since the 4.3% ABV beer was launched in May 1995. The lucky pint was contained in a firkin delivered to the Cowper Arms in Welwyn.

## ELSEWHERE . .

## BREWERS STEP UP ALE QUALITY DRIVE

**Britain's regional brewers are adopting a new and more aggressive attitude towards cask ale quality in the face of the threat from nitro-keg.**

Adnams have unveiled plans to install new cooling pythons throughout its tied estate after finding that its ales were often above the recommended 54F at the point of sale even with cellar cooling. Beer lines - the plastic tubes that carry beer to the bar - and pipes filled with ice-cold water are wrapped together inside an insulated tube.

Meanwhile Shepherd Neame are launching a quality initiative based on cellar card systems, Fullers are trying to correct quality problems with some wholesalers and Mansfield are launching a Cellarmen of the Year competition among 100 of their free trade accounts.

## 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 10th March - **George, Huntingdon** 8.30pm Open Committee Meeting

Friday 27th March - Pub Crawl, St. Ives starting at **Seven Wives** 8.30pm

Wednesday 8th April - Joint Social with East Beds CAMRA Branch - **Brown Bear, Biggleswade** - 8.30pm

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

# NATIONAL NEWS . . .

## INDEPENDENT BREWERS OUTLETS TO REDUCE?

**Due to pub chains and regional brewers buying up the cream of the country's free houses when they become available, there is a shrinking market place for the small independent brewers to sell their wares.**

Firms such as Marston's Inn Business and the Old English Pub Company are snapping up these pubs, leaving small brewers in a double squeeze.

Not only are some of their best customers being bought by companies which will not stock their beers, but the competition for prime pubs is driving up prices and preventing small brewers from building up tied estates of their own.

CAMRA has unconfirmed reports that five micro-breweries went into receivership over Christmas, with a sixth laying off workers to reduce overheads, that equates to a projected loss of 30 breweries in 1998 compared to 24 in 1987, a deeply worrying statistic.

**The industry needs micro-brewers, not only because of their excellent beers, but also because of their role in developing new beer styles, aka wheat beers in the UK and golden ales, and reviving old traditions such as bottle-conditioning. If micro's are squeezed, diversity and choice will diminish again.**

**Across the border, a campaign by locals to save a Bedfordshire pub from conversion to a private house has had a double success.**

The Drovers Arms in Steppingley, whose campaign was featured on Anglia News, has re-opened for business after a two-year struggle. Also Beds CC has been persuaded to adopt a new policy which will make change of use permission even harder to get in future.

Similar to the other recent success story at the Pig and Abbot at Abington Pigotts, a campaign was started to raise enough money to buy the pub and re-open under community ownership, but the pub has been purchased by new owners and Adnams beers are available.

As with the Pig and Abbot, the fact that effectively the Drovers was the only pub in the village (the French Horn being virtually a restaurant) has preserved its existence. A welcome triumph against pub closure.

## WHITBREAD TO CLOSE CASTLE EDEN AND CHELTENHAM?

The growing turmoil at the top of the brewing industry intensified with mounting rumours that Whitbread was about to axe its cask ale breweries at Castle Eden near Durham and Cheltenham with a spokeswoman for the company refusing to confirm or deny the stories.

Bass is planning to close its Stones and Welsh Brewers plants in Sheffield and Cardiff, and have also announced the death of the much vaunted, bottle-conditioned Worthington White Shield.

These are all signs that the national brewers are interested solely in big volume and heavily-advertised brands and no longer want to bother with smaller brands of cask-conditioned ales despite their popularity with discerning drinkers unless it is a big seller.

## JOIN CAMRA NOW

Just fill in the form below and send your remittance (Payable to CAMRA) to The Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 230, Hatfield Road, St. Albans, Herts. AL1 4LW

Rates are Single £14, Joint £17 (at same address)

Student/OAP/Unemployed/Disabled £8 Joint OAP £11 (at same address)

Under 26: £8 date of birth .....

For Life/Overseas rates please ask for details

NAME.....

Opening Times 96  
St. Neots

ADDRESS.....

.....POSTCODE .....

I/We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Rules.

I enclose a cheque for .....

Signed.....

Date.....

# MIXED PREFERENCE ON SPARKLERS

## BREWERS AND PUBS IN A FROTH OVER FOAMING PINTS

**A second sparkler tasting in a local pub has produced a mixed result after an earlier survey at CAMRA's St Ives beer festival showed a clear preference for beer served without a tight head.**

Pail Moorhouse reports:

At a tasting in January at the Crown, Eaton Socon, the use of a tight sparkler was preferred by 35% of tasters, 42% preferred the beer dispensed without a sparkler and 23% expressed no preference. If the results for CAMRA members are removed from the figures, a tight sparkler was preferred by 42% of tasters, 32% of non-members preferred the beer dispensed without a sparkler and 26% expressed no preference.

In the St Ives survey, a resounding 86% of non CAMRA members preferred the beer served without a tight head and only 1 in 12 CAMRA members preferred a tight head. The latest survey was conducted to gauge opinion amongst a different set of customers in a pub normally using tight sparklers for all its beers.

Although the St Ives organisers had avoided informing visitors of CAMRA's views before the tasting it was recognised that people visiting a CAMRA festival may tend to prefer beers with more intense flavours. The

tasting at the Crown was conducted under CAMRA supervision using a cask of Fullers London Pride set up by licensee Ian Robinson for service via two lines.

The Crown normally serves a range of four or five cask beers. All cask beers are always served using a tight sparkler to produce a large head and requests to serve particular beers without a sparkler are normally refused.

Against this background it is significant that nearly a third of Crown customers would prefer their beer served without a sparkler. It could also be argued that this figure could have been higher were it not for other potential customers who choose to drink their beers in competing pubs which do not use the devices. On the other hand, could it be that the Crown's regular custom is swelled by a disproportionate number of drinkers attracted by the prospect of beer with a large foam topping?

Whilst preference may be mixed, the fact that tight sparklers change the taste of beer is clearly shown by the surveys, and is not disputed by brewers. Complaints about the non sparkler beer by tasters who preferred the use of a sparkler included: "Too gaseous", "more prominent bitter flavour". Tasters who preferred the beer without a sparkler in many cases recognised the same flavour difference, but expressed a different preference: "More bitter and full of taste", "a fuller bitter taste".

The message for licensees remains as ever: PLEASE OFFER A CHOICE. And new twin-head dispense spouts are under development in the trade which will make this easier.

## LOCAL NEWS

The **Merry Boys in Eynesbury, St. Neots** is a recent real ale conversion with Greene King IPA and Abbot on handpump.

The **Bulls Head, St. Neots** continues to lead the way for real ale drinkers in the town. The Greene King house is now serving Greene King XX Mild on gravity and as well having a monthly guest beer, which in February were the excellent Old Horny and Hobgoblin from Wychwood. March will see Trelawny's Pride from St. Austell.

Just down the road in Biggleswade, the **Brown Bear** is now serving a range of independent brewers' ales in the town otherwise dominated by Greene King and Charles Wells.

## GUEST WRITERS NEEDED

How about sending in an article on anything about real ale. It could be about the pubs in your village. A short description and report on your favourite pub or an interview with the licensee. How the pub scene has changed in your area in the last ten years. We can't be everywhere, so if your local has some different beers on, then write and tell us about it and give them some free publicity.