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CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

ST. NEOTS & DISTRICT

OPENED
TIMES



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR
TO ALL OUR READERS

Issue No 100 Christmas/New Year/January 1999

BRANCH NEWSLETTER
BI-MONTHLY CIRCULATION 2,000 COPIES

WINTER ALE
FESTIVAL

The Fifth WINTER ALE FESTIVAL will be held at St. Neots Town Football Club from January 21st -23rd when some splendid Winter brews will be featured. These are predominantly from our East Anglian breweries:

City of Cambridge True Blue from Cambridge, Elgood's Wenceslas Winter Warmer from Wisbech, Greene King Strong Suffolk '65 from Bury St. Edmunds, Woodforde's Norfolk Nog from Woodbastwick, Norwich Old Chimneys Winter Cloving from Diss, Nethergate Christmas Ale from Clare, St. Peters Porter from Bungay and Fenland Rudolph's Rocket Fuel from Chatteris being amongst them.

We shall also be offering a limited number of a bottled ale produced by Old Chimneys Brewery, Two Thousand Gear Ealu a special ale for the Millenium which is

OPEN
Thursday 21st Jan
7.00 - 11.00
Friday 22nd Jan
7.00 - 11.00
Saturday 23rd Jan
11.00 - 6.00

Featuring 11 Real Ales
over the Festival

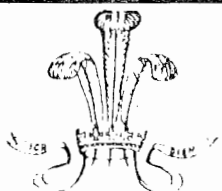


flavoured with the herb alecost, used in beer before hops arrived. The beer is a 9.5% gravity and the name is either Old English for Two Thousand Year Ale, or what you sound like when you try to say Two Thousand Year Ale after drinking a couple of pints of it. Only 1,000 numbered 500ml bottles have been produced and brewer Alan Thomson says it ought to be at its best on the 1st January 2000.

There will also be available a range of bottled Belgian beers for you to try.

To soak up the ale we hope to have some food available on the Friday and Saturday sessions at least.

Most of the ales available are strong, so the Football Club location is good, being adjacent to the St. Neots railway station and on main bus routes. If you live locally then grab a cab and please don't drive. In any case we hope to see lots of you there, so make a date now.



The Prince of Wales

'That nice pub at Hilton'

(01480) 830257



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

**CAMRA NATIONAL
WINTER ALES
FESTIVAL
Manchester 21st - 23rd**

If your demand for Winter Ales is insatiable or you just happen to be in Manchester on the weekend of our Winter Ale Festival then the good news is that the National Festival runs from the same dates as ours.

Held at The Upper Campfield Market, Deansgate there will be a huge range of the best winter beers as judged by CAMRA and also a hand picked selection of the best of the North West of England's beers.

One of the beers on offer will be crowned CAMRA's Champion Winter Beer.

LOCAL NEWS

The Crown, Eaton Socon, currently being refurbished, is expected to re-open at the end of January according to Hossey Saghri the new landlord. He also tells us that he expects to offer five real ales with two regular beers and three guests.

Just over the county border in Bedfordshire, **The Wait for the Wagon at Wyboston**, formerly a Charles Wells house is now open as a free house.

Also just in Bedfordshire, **The Royal Oak at Roxton** has been voted Bedfordshire's best pub by the county's Rural Communities Charity awards. The Charles Wells pub incorporates a post office counter an idea of the tenants Anne and Ray Gaines. Charles Wells real ales are also on sale!

Our local regional brewer, **Greene King** has bowed to consumer pressure and launched its **Strong Suffolk Vintage Ale** in cask - conditioned form as a winter ale.

At 6 per cent ABV it packs a kick and will be available until the end of January.

The beer is brewed to a method almost unique in this country. It is made by a blending process and one of its constituent beers is a 12 per cent old ale called 5X, which is matured for two years in 100 barrel oak tuns. Unfortunately Greene King only has two of the ancient vessels, so expanding production of Strong Suffolk would require the services of expert coopers.

It is an age-old brewing process that is still in use today, simply because it can't be improved upon. And yet Greene King is the only brewer in this country to use these methods.

The Rodenbach Brewery in Belgium is the only other brewery where anything remotely similar is practised. Greene King is still releasing its lower-gravity seasonal ale, Captain Christmas at 4.6 per cent, for those who find a 6 per cent beer too hard to handle.

If you can't find Strong Suffolk locally then come to our Winter Ale Festival. We'll have some there, but be early as it's sure to be popular!

THE CHEQUERS
71 Main Road Little Gransden
Tel: 01767 677348

Bob and Wendy Mitchell
wish all their customers
a Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year

ADNAMS BITTER
Plus a regular Guest Ale

Coming over Christmas

Churchend - Rest In Peace

Nethergate - Christmas Ale

Wye Valley -
Dorothy Goodbody's
Winter Wintertime

Wolf - Coyote

Skinnners

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

Opening Times
 100
 St. Neots

NAME.....
 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.....

AS WE ENTER 1999

CASTLE EDEN

SAVED!

The **Castle Eden Brewery**, formerly part of the Whitbread empire has been sold to a consortium of businessmen, led by brewery manager Jim Kerr, who have purchased not only the historic Nimmos site near Hartlepool, but also the Trophy Special keg brand and will brew Castle Eden cask ale under licence for Whitbread.

John Constable's craft **Butterknowle Brewery** near Bishop Auckland has closed and he will join the new team at Castle Eden and will continue to brew his brands there.

The rescue of Castle Eden is a major victory for hard pressed regional brewers and also preserves probably the best cask ale in the Whitbread portfolio. It means that closures are not always inevitable. Breweries can be saved from the axe, with local ales still brewed for local communities. Under Whitbread the brewery was not unsuccessful, brewing close to capacity. But Whitbread had problems at its flagship Boddingtons Brewery in Manchester, so the plan was to close Castle Eden and another cask ale brewery at Cheltenham and brew the

beers at Manchester.

But Whitbread had reckoned without Jim Kerr, manager of the brewery, a man in love with the plant and the region, and determined at all costs to keep the place open.

The Brewery started life as the Castle Inn in the 18th century and was bought by John Nimmo in 1826. The family reign lasted until 1956 when the Nimmos made the fateful decision to turn the brewery into a limited company and Whitbread swooped to turn it into Whitbread East Pennines and a lonely outpost of their empire and producing just keg beer. It wasn't until Jim Kerr arrived in 1991 and convinced Whitbread of the changing market and that Castle Eden needed to embrace ale drinkers with a cask conditioned beer. As a result the brewery achieved sales of 25,000 barrels a year. However, the dreaded 'rationalisation' word came into play and in December last year Jim was told that the Brewery would close.

To his eternal credit, he immediately sought business partners and eventually David Beecroft and David Soley came forward. With Whitbread giving him a seven year contract to brew Castle Eden Bitter and Best Scotch as well as handling

the distribution, leaving the new company to concentrate on brewing and selling, then things are not starting from scratch.

Castle Eden is alive and well, now all CAMRA members must back independent Castle Eden by drinking its cask ales. Its survival should put a smile back on all our faces and encourage regional brewers to face the future with confidence and enthusiasm. In our neck of the woods the beer is available to Pubmaster tenants, so ask them to try it, it's a wonderful beer.

WOLVERHAMPTON & DUDLEY CONSIDER BID FOR MARSTON'S

Troubled Marston's of Burton-on-Trent, brewer of leading cask ale Pedigree are the subject of a proposed bid from W & D Breweries. This would produce a 'super-regional' brewery with 2,000 pubs and only about 3% of the country's beer market. But it would also have three breweries - Banks's, Cameron's and Marston's - all of them unique, all of them vital to their local economies - and none of them working to full capacity.

It would give a national presence for its beers. As the brewing giants lose interest in cask ale, a merged W & D and Marston's would be a powerhouse, turning Banks's Ale and Bitter and Pedigree into national brands. However, the long-term effects can be a rapid decline in the number of beers brewed and a loss in breweries.

This knock-on effect, with other large regionals, our own Greene King in particular, forced to go on the same trail to defend their own brands and market share. Greene King failed to buy Morland in the early 90's, but this might not deter the company, with a new senior management team, from trying again.

"Progress", in the form of takeovers, mergers and closures, has wreaked untold damage on British beer and consumers choice.

A Warm Welcome Awaits At

The Lord John Russell

Russell Street, St. Neots

Tel: 01480 476833
 Behind Somerfield Car Park
 Greene King IPA

PUBMASTER **Hot Food**

Guest Ales £1.50 a pint **Daily Specials**

Opening Hours **£3.50**

Mon, Tues, Wed & Friday - 11am - 3pm & 5.30pm - 11pm
 Thursday, Saturday & Sunday - Open All Day

GOOD NEWS FOR GREENE KING AND OTHER REGIONAL BREWERIES

Threat to regional brewers' tie lifted

Britain's regional and family brewers will be allowed to keep their tied estates, the European Commission has ruled.

News that they were off the hook was contained in an EC ruling on Greene King's tie arrangements in which the Commission announced that brewers with a market share of less than 10 per cent would not be included in its review of tying arrangements in the European Union.

The judgement on Greene King was a written assurance that would help them plan their future investment. Without the tie many brewers would be forced out of business. It provides a traditional method for independent brewers to compete on the same stage with national companies.

Pub chains with multiple supply agreements are also excluded from the review of the tie. But the EC are still looking at national brewers.

CAMRA PLAYS KEY ROLE IN HOURS REVAMP

CAMRA is to represent Britain's beer drinkers in the Government's drive to introduce new, more generous permitted opening times.

Following Home Office minister George Howart's announcement in May that "the time is right to blow away the cobwebs" of the historic mish-mash of licensing law, CAMRA has already been consulted by the Better Regulation Task Force and the Parliamentary Beer Club, giving CAMRA a seat on the working party framing licensing reform legislation. It was hoped to produce a Green Paper by Summer 1999, with a new Licensing Act into force in early 2001.

We will still need local controls in place to protect residents from noisy or rowdy pubs. But what we want is a permissive system whereby pub landlords are free to choose their optimum hours, but where proper controls prevent disorder and noise.

At the moment our prohibitive system regulates every pub, taking account of the misbehaviour of the worst of them.

If pubs stagger closing times, there will be less pressure on police and the emergency services, and less public disorder, not more.

All-day licensing and Sunday afternoon opening has not led to more drunken behaviour than previously and neither will longer opening hours, so resistance to change on those grounds is not a valid argument.

BRANCH DIARY

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

Friday 8th January - **Mini Bus Trip to Cambridge Winter Ale Festival** - Entrance by Advance Ticket only - Contact Kathy Hadfield 01480 496247

Tuesday 12th January - Open Committee Meeting - **Millers Arms, Eaton Socon** 8.30pm

Friday 15th January - Late Christmas Party - **Green Man, Leighton Bromswold** Contact Kathy Hadfield 01480 496247 for details of Mini Bus

Thursday 21st - Saturday 23rd January - **St. Neots Winter Ale Festival** - St. Neots Town Football Club

Tuesday 9th February - Open Committee Meeting - **White Hart, St. Ives** 8.30pm

Friday 26th February - Pub Crawl, St. Neots - Commence Lord John Russell 8.30 - finishing at Bulls Head

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