

CAMRA ST. NEOTS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

OPENING TIMES 105 - CHRISTMAS 1999/NEW YEAR 2000

INTRODUCTION

Well here we are with our last newsletter of the old Millennium and also our first of the new Millennium. We would like to wish all real ale drinkers, local publicans and our advertisers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. One of the first beer festivals of the New Year will be our very own Winter Ales Festival being held at St. Neots Town Football Club in their function room from Thursday 27th January to Saturday 29th January. We will be featuring some warming winter ales from some of East Anglia's craft brewers. Among them will be Elgood's Reinbeer, Mighty Oak Bingle Jells, Buffy's 9X, Nethergate Traditional Stout and some lower strength beers as well in Bateman's Mild and Highwood Tom Wood Best Bitter. We will also be featuring Cyclops a 5.3% beer from the new Milton Brewery in Cambridge, who only started up in September 1999, so a new beer to most drinkers will be available, we hope to see you there.

WINTER ALES AND MILLENNIUM ALES

It's once again the season of good cheer, cold dark nights on the outside and open fires and warming winter ales on the inside (inside the pub that is!). Each year the range of seasonal beers, particularly from the smaller breweries, increases, and this year with special Millennium Ales, the choice is even broader. So we thought we would give you an indication of some of the seasonal ales on offer in our local pubs over Christmas and New Year (apologies to any pubs that we have missed out):

Racehorse, Catworth, has Banks and Taylors Santa Slayer 4%, and is also serving Black Sheep Best Bitter 3.8%. Greene Man, Colne, has Adnams Millennium Ale, 4.3% Rivermill Tavern, Eaton Socon, has Fenland Rudolfs Rocket Fuel 5.5% over Christmas and Greene King MillenniHumBug 4.6% at New Year, along with Buffy's Pollys' Folly 4.3% and Wolf Best Bitter 3.9%. Royal Oak, Hail Weston, also has Charles Wells Noggin (a new Winter beer from Charles Wells), alongside Eagle, Bombardier and Marston's Pedigree. Prince of Wales, Hilton, has Elgoods Reinbeer 5.9%, alongside their regulars Adnams Bitter 3.7% and Elgoods Black Dog Mild 3.6%. The Old Bridge, Huntingdon, has at various times over the holidays Bateman's Rosey Nosey 4.9%, Castle Rock Snow White, Smiles Holly Hops 5% and Wychwood Missletoad. Also throughout Christmas and New Year they will have Old Bridge Millennium Ale, brewed specially by the City of Cambridge Brewery. The Pheasant, Keyston, has Potton No-Ale throughout Christmas and New Year, and Adnams Old Ale 4.1% and Hop Back Winter Lightning 5.5% at various times. New Inn, Kimbolton, has Noggin alongside regulars Eagle and Bombardier. *Green Man, Leighton Bromswold, has Nethergate Christmas Ale 4.8% and Mansfield Millennium Ale. Chequers, Little Gransden, has Mauldons Ten Percent (yes, that's 10% ABV!), Wye Valley Father Christmas Ale 6%, and Adnams Millennium Ale 4.3%. To complement these beers the Chequers also has Timothy Taylors Landlord 4.3%, Youngs Special 4.6%, Mauldons White Adder 5.3%. Swan, Old Weston, has Elgood's Reinbeer 5.9%, alongside their regular Adnams Bitter 3.7% and other beers. Dolphin, St. Ives, has Hardys and Hansons Rocking Rudolf 5.5% and Mansfield Millennium Ale 8.5%. Nelsons Head, St. Ives, has Adnams Millennium Ales 4.3% alongside Smiles Best 4.1%, Kings & Barnes Broadwood 4.2%, and Batemans XXXB 4.8%. Royal Oak, St. Ives, will have an ever changing range over Christmas and New Year, and the following are an indication of some of the beers they plan to be selling: Mansfield Millennium 8.5%, Tom Hoskins Double Zero 5.5%, Adnams Old 4.1%, Charles Wells Noggin, Greene King MillenniHumBug 4.6%, Fullers Jack Frost, Hop Back Winter Lightning 5.5%, Weltons Wenceslegless 4.8%, Bateman's Rosey Nosey 4.9%. Lord John Russell, St. Neots, has Bateman's Jollys Dome 4.4% alongside regular Bateman's Dark Mild and may also have Bateman's Rosey Nosey 4.9% and Winter Wellie. A note of caution: the best way to sample winter ales is to walk to the pub and walk (albeit wobbling) back; failing that when visiting country pubs elect a non-drinking

driver. ANDY SHAW

LOCAL NEWS

The Fox, Catworth, Free House is up for sale. If you want to know about the new Milton Brewery then log on to their excellent Web page on www.miltonbrewery.co.uk. The brewery is currently brewing five beers and we will have one of them, Cyclops at our Winter Ales festival. Charles Wells is to supply the beer for celebrations marking the revival of the RAF's 600 Squadron. Company vice-president Oliver Wells' brother, Squadron Leader Jimmy Wells, was killed in operations with the squadron in May 1940. B & T Brewery of Shefford, who have their own bottling plant are able to test brew just a firkin at a time, enabling them to experiment with different bottle-conditioned beers until they are happy they have a winner. Their current range is headed by Old Bat, alongside are Dragon Slayer and Edwin Taylor's Extra Stout and seasonal brews. the upsurge in interest in bottle-conditioned ales has opened new outlets for B & T and other such breweries

OTHER NEWS

"Mr Mac's" Retires. Dennis Ruttledge, he of the mutton chop whiskers and flamboyant personality has retired after 42 years in the drinks business. Dennis was personally known to the St. Neots CAMRA Branch as Public Relations Manager for McMullens of Hertford and was always a pleasure to meet in our dealings with him. Marston's Bitter has been withdrawn by Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries to make way for the very different Banks' Bitter in a second wave of rationalisation. Earlier, Wolves had announced a drastic trim in its range of seasonal specials, including the withdrawal of cask Owd Roger and the replacement of Bateman's Dark Mild in the Marston's estate with Banks' Original - a much stronger light mild. Still with Wolverhampton & Dudley The Office of Fair Trading has cleared their £253m bid for Mansfield. Elsewhere Sussex brewer, King & Barnes, are confident of victory in its battle against a hostile £15m takeover from neighbours Shepherd Neame.

CAMRA LIFELINE FOR RURAL PUBS

CAMRA is set to launch its long-awaited Public House Viability Test as saving country pubs moves to the top of the political agenda. The plight of country pubs was highlighted by the Countryside Agency's claim that six close every week. The story hit national headlines and TV screens, acting as a curtain-raiser for a number of developments which could see Government action to help country pubs. A White Paper on rural issues due out in the spring will lead to a new Countryside Act which may extend the mandatory business rate relief enjoyed by village shops to country pubs. The government is also working on plans to put computer terminals in pubs which would take over some functions of sub-post offices such as renewing tax discs and applying for driving licences. CAMRA Pubs Group has been working on the Public house Viability Test for three years. It is an objective test designed to help councils and appeals inspectors eliminate variables such as the calibre of previous landlords when deciding change of use applications. CAMRA has had terrific feedback from bodies such as the Department of the Environment, Transport, and the Regions and hope they will recommend its use to appeals inspectors. CAMRA feels that the test should do two things: identify which pubs have a future and which should be allowed to close; and it should take the heat out of planning disputes. At the moment these cases aren't presented in an unbiased and impartial way and can get very emotional.

LOCAL MILD OUTLETS

Mild outlets as we know them: Eaton Socon, George & Dragon, Greene King XX Dark. Hilton, Prince of Wales, Elgoods Black Dog. Huntingdon, George Hotel, Theakstons Mild. St. Ives, Black Bull, Ansells Mild. St. Neots, Lord John Russell, Batemans Mild. Gt. Staughton, White Hart, Batemans Mild. If you know of any other local mild outlets not listed, let the editor know.

BRANCH MEETINGS

All are welcome to attend our socials and meetings, which are held at different pubs throughout our branch area. Wednesday 5th January - Meeting - Prince of Wales, Hilton - 8.30pm. Friday 14th January - Post Xmas Social, Green Man, Leighton Bromswold - 8.30pm Transport will be provided from St. Neots, Huntingdon, and St. Ives. Contact Kathy Hadfield-Moorhouse 01223 496658(W) 01480 496247(H). Thursday/Friday/Saturday 29th January - WINTER ALE FESTIVAL - St. Neots Town Football Club. Tuesday 8th February - Meeting - Exhibition, Godmanchester - 8.30pm. For further details contact: Roy Endersby (Chairman) on 01480 473364