

CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

ST. NEOTS & DISTRICT

OPENING  
TIMES



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BRANCH NEWSLETTER  
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**20th  
BOOZE ON THE OUSE  
PACKS THEM IN AGAIN**

Despite being held at the same time as the fuel shortage, attendances at the 20th Booze on the Ouse' Beer Festival held by St. Neots CAMRA Branch almost held firm with previous years. Although slightly down in numbers, those that were there upped their consumption to make overall sales figures around the same with almost all 30 kilderkins of beer vanishing by closing time on the sunday lunchtime, just what we wanted.

**We now look ahead to our 7th WINTER ALE FESTIVAL which as usual is being held at St. Neots Town Football Club Function Suite. This will be from January 25th - 27th 2001, so make a date in your diary now, to enjoy the warming winter brews that we shall have available.**

**FAIR PINT  
FIGHT  
CONTINUES**

Shock figures in new CAMRA survey gives powerful weapon as fight for a full pint reaches it last stages. The Government is now ready to start the consultation exercise that will lead to a new weights and measures White Paper, with luck before the year is out.

And CAMRA's case for a pint to mean a pint - 20 fluid ounces of liquid, with the head as an extra - has been boosted by its latest survey of pubs in four regions: the North-east, the South-west, the West midlands and Wales.

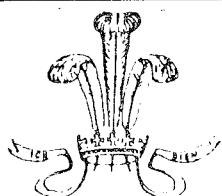
CAMRA's survey findings are in sharp contrast to many small-scale investigations carried out by local trading standards departments, which indicated that by and large pubs follow Brewers and Licensed Retailers association guidelines that say a pint should be at least 95 per

cent liquid and that a top-up should be given on demand and with good grace.

Armed with a defoaming agent which collapses the head on a pint so that the actual amount of liquid it contains can be accurately measured. CAMRA's survey findings indicate that the average pint of nitrokeg, stout or cask ale served through a tight sparkler fell well outside the guidelines. The average pint of nitrokeg or stout was found to be only 93.5 per cent liquid after the head has been collapsed.

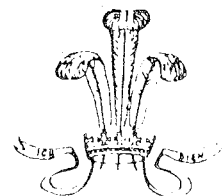
However, the average pint of real ale pulled through a traditional flat spout to give a looser head was well within the the Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association guidelines at 96.5 per cent.

With a pint of beer at £2 in many regions drinkers are being ripped off by anything up to 20p a pint with the trend towards nitrokeg beers exacerbating the trend - CAMRA believes that if you pay for a pint you should get a pint.



The Prince of Wales

'That nice pub at Hilton'  
(01480) 830257



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

# LOCAL NEWS

Three major refurbishments on pubs in our branch area are currently in hand:

The Kings Head, St. Neots is currently closed for major refurbishments costing £250,000. Work has commenced on a project that will completely revamp the Pubmaster owned outlet. The new design will allow customers to relax in a traditional British pub setting or to take advantage of its new sports bar. The pub is expected to re-open in December. Also closed is the Crown, Broughton which has been purchased by a group of locals from the village. More than 30 residents have joined together to raise the £180,000 necessary to purchase, revamp and renovate the pub after it had been put up for sale.

A tremendously well supported public meeting was held, following which a company - Interaspect - was set-up, consisting of five directors and 34 shareholder-investors. Their bid was the only one that offered to keep the pub as a licensed premises, and thankfully succeeded.

The 'heart of the village' had been saved and after the previous owner had failed to make any investment in the pub - probably because the village is not on the route to anywhere - work was necessary to improve facilities. Part of this is increasing the seating in the pubs restaurant to 45 from 18 in an effort to attract custom from outside the village. The company is interviewing prospective tenants who, eventually may be given the opportunity to purchase the pub from its local shareholders. The Crown is expected to re-open on

January 25th next year.

O'Reilly's in Huntingdon will close in January to re-open after refurbishment in February as The Samuel Pepys. It will change from being an Irish theme pub to a traditional ale house. It is hoped to offer several beers by gravity dispense from barrels situated behind the bar and several more by handpump. The landlord is also keen to offer a handpumped scrumpy.

Bob and Wendy Mitchell are about to celebrate the Chequers at Little Gransden being in the family for 50 years. Bob's parents took over the pub on March 2nd 1951, renting it from J.W. Green for £10 a year. Bob says at that time beer was 1/1d a pint and his mums wages were £1.6.0d. The pub, now a freehouse stocks a changing guest beer to be Adnams Broadside followed by beers from Nethergate, Church End, York and Wye Valley.

The Black Bull, St. Ives is now closed and being converted to an indian restaurant. No objections can be made as such changes do not need planning permission - but CAMRA is campaigning for use classes to be separated as they used to be - this would enforce planning applications for pubs to restaurants conversions.

## SYMPATHETIC NEW OWNERS REQUIRED FOR ONE OF THE AREAS FINEST FREEHOUSES

One of our Good Beer Guide listed pubs is up for sale. The Prince of Wales, Hilton is available at £269,000. Mine hosts Robin and Judith Doughty are looking to retire after successfully building the pub up into a thriving concern after nearly fifteen years at the pub. The pub has been listed in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide for 14 consecutive years and still boasts a separate Public Bar as well as a comfortable lounge bar and

four en-suite letting rooms. Judith and Robin would like to see the pub continue to trade as a pub rather than revert to housing as so many other local village pubs have done and are confident that this will happen given its proven profitability and inherently high bricks and mortar value.

The Lord John Russell, St. Neots has stopped serving Batemans Mild due to poor sales. It will now stock Batemans XB and XXXB, Greene King IPA and a guest currently Cosey Tosey from Batemans Jollies Follies range.

The Bulls Head, St. Neots (Greene King) has Badger Tanglefoot as its current guest which changes about every fortnight.

## WHITE SHIELD SURVIVAL FIGHT

The famous White Shield may have been saved and returned to its spiritual home of Burton-on-Trent, but it still has an uphill struggle to win back national distribution. Flagship who have marketed the beer since it was brewed by King and Barnes say if drinkers fail to buy the bottles it will be turfed out by all its stockists and this time disappear for ever. The beer is brewed at the Museum Brewing Co. based within the Bass Museum where 5% of its output consists of bottle-conditioned brews.

Sainsburys have been persuaded to restock the beer in the light of it being awarded CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain award in the bottle-conditioned section at the 2000 Great British Beer Festival. At the moment this is only in a few stores in the Nottingham and Derby area. If every CAMRA member bought just one bottle a month from a supermarket or off-licence White Shield's future would be assured. Let us know if you see it stocked anywhere.

# REAL ALE REVIVAL

Cask Ale's revival has been confirmed by the latest industry report in the licensed trade newspaper *Publican*.

Headline figures show cask still in overall decline as national brewers and pubcos promote keg.

But most independent brewers report healthy increases in cask sales. And now the revival is showing in the pub trade too. The report finds that even though real ale has been in decline for some three to four years at the hands of the dreaded nitrokeg, it is increasing in importance for many licensees and performing well in pubs where the licensee chooses to specialise.

For some licensees, cask beer is among their fastest growing products and is getting faster. The explanation can only be that cask ale can be a success if the publican gets it right. This is supported by the success of some of the country's regionals and micro brewers who are reporting increased sales. In some cases to

such an extent that increased capacity has been installed.

One Midlands brewer whose future had looked in doubt is installing new conditioning tanks. At Highgate, now owned by Aston Manor, business is brisk and it also plans to introduce new brands to its range.

Adnams Chairman Simon Loftus said "Regional brewers that are doing well brew some of the classic beers of England, they have terrific products. There is no point in thinking that a mass market can be recaptured. But there is a market for beers of quality."

Real ale fans will also be cheered by the report's finding that nitrokegs, which were rated of more value to pubs than cask in last year's report, have flopped. Licensees now regard cask beer as more valuable to their business than nitrokeg.

Quality will out and although some of the bigger names of British brewing have got out of the business over the last few years it would seem that the regional brewers and the smaller craft breweries have either continued to brew or have started to brew fine products to fill the void which offers

fresh opportunities for dedicated real ale brewers.

The big three- Interbrew (who purchased both Whitbread's and Bass's brewing operations in Summer 2000), Scottish Courage and Carlsberg Tetley - now brew only about 1.6 million barrels of real ale a year as they continue to convert their leading ale brands to heavily advertised nitrokeg versions.

This is outstripped by the regionals, who between them brew nearly 2 million barrels. Added to this micro-breweries are estimated to contribute 1% of the total market about 400,000 barrels. This multi-national disinterest in producing quality cask ale leaves the market place open for regionals to step in.

Strong independent brands will survive and prosper, the likes of George Gale, Horndean, Hants earning record profits, in Cumbria Jennings of Cockerthorpe showing increased profits of 73 per cent and Timothy Taylor of Keighley, Yorkshire brewing more beer than at any time in its history. More locally Greene King reports IPA volumes up by 16% and Abbot Ale up 13%. There's life in the old cask yet.

## 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.....  
ADDRESS.....  
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Opening Times  
109  
St. Neots

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

I enclose a cheque for .....

Signed.....

Date.....

## Contact the editor by E-Mail

If you wish to contribute to  
Opening Times you can  
E-Mail to:

[mike@rowleypark.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:mike@rowleypark.freeserve.co.uk)

# NOGGIN RETURNS

The latest ale from Charles Wells seasonals range is to be Noggin Warming Winter Ale 5% ABV, which is one of Charles Wells most traditional beers, has returned as a new stronger cask variant.

The name is derived from a quayside mooring for a ship carrying forward the nautical theme of Wells' seasonal ales - Charles Wells was a Chief Officer in his seafaring career before taking up brewing in 1876.

Noggin is 'a full flavoured mature ale with a malty pallet and a hoppy aftertaste' and will be available from December through to January 2001 throughout the Wells tied estate as well as in the national free trade.

On the subject of Wells, we were glad to receive some bottles of Bombardier from the brewery for our tasting.

The bottled version is at 5.5%

**Visit St. Neots CAMRA  
Branch website:**

[www.stneotscamra.co.uk](http://www.stneotscamra.co.uk)

**News about your local pub  
for inclusion in  
Opening Times is always  
gratefully received.**

**Write or E-mail the editor:  
[mike@rowleypark.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:mike@rowleypark.freeserve.co.uk)**

considerably stronger than the 4.3% cask version and lives up to the description on the attractive bottle it is available in - deep copper colour with persistent cherry fruitiness.

## C A M R A M E M B E R S H I P H E A D S F O R 6 0 , 0 0 0

CAMRA'S annual recruitment drive has started, with £2.00 off the membership fee for all new members signed up between 1 October and 31 January. It is hoped to increase the current 58,000 membership to over the 60,000 mark by the time the drive ends.

## 2001 GOOD BEER GUIDE LAUNCHED

The 2001 GOOD BEER GUIDE has been launched and is now available

at £11.99 from all good bookshops or alternatively CAMRA HQ, 230 Hatfield Road, St. Albans AL1 4LW. Even better join CAMRA and get it at the special members price of £7.50.

The Guide lists 5,000 pubs chosen by CAMRA members, offering the finest pints of cask ale, plus a breweries section tracing all the dramatic changes in the brewing industry, including the sale of Bass and Whitbread to international lager brewer Interbrew.

There are other features on topics such as a Green Beer Report on organic beer, beer advertising or the lack of it aimed at women, the campaign to save rural pubs - six of which close every week, the delights of bottle-conditioned beers and Cask Marque on the fight for the perfect pint, all in all a beer drinkers must if you like quality ale.

## BRANCH DIARY

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

Wednesday 22nd November- **Trip to Milton Brewery, Cambridge**- Limited places phone Kathy Hadfield 01480 496247 to book places

Friday 5th December- Open Meeting - **Prince of Wales, Hilton** - 8.30pm

Tuesday 9th January- Open Meeting - **Millers Arms, Eaton Socon** - 8.30pm

Friday 12th January - Minibus to Christma Social at - **Green Man, Leighton Bromswold** - Ring Kathy Hadfield 01480 496247 for travel details.

Thursday 25th - 27th January- **WINTER ALES FESTIVAL** - **St. Neots Town Football Club, Cambridge Road, St. Neots**

Tuesday 6th February- Open Meeting - **Oliver Cromwell, St. Ives**- 8.30pm

Saturday 17th February- Social, **Oakham Brewery visit and Peterborough pubs tour**

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