

# Opening Times

ISSUE 180  
WINTER 2019



CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE

Huntingdonshire branch of CAMRA

[hunts.camra.org.uk](https://hunts.camra.org.uk)

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**A warm welcome to the winter issue of Opening Times, the magazine from the Huntingdonshire branch of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA).**



In addition to the usual Hunts pub news, this issue has a couple of features on trips further afield. This includes a visit to Bamberg in Germany for a 13-brewery walking tour and a report on cider making, brewing and distilling in southern Scotland. If you are taking a trip out of the Huntingdonshire area and are planning to visit pubs and or a brewery or two, we would love to receive a brief report, together with a few photos. Similarly, reports on local pubs and breweries would be most



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welcome. Please send them to the email address below (confirming they are for publication).

As I write this in early December, pubs are beginning to fill up with Christmas revellers and diners. It's great to see pubs busy, but please do think about visiting your local after Christmas, particularly in January and February which can be a difficult time of year for many pubs. A recent survey reported in the Morning Advertiser showed that in the year to September the number of licensed venues in the UK fell by 2%. This was a little lower than some years, but it does continue a worrying trend. It has become trendy to take up Dry January, but this is a time of year when pubs really need your support, so even if you are not drinking alcohol, please do still go down to the pub. There are plenty of different soft drinks available, along with several 0% beers and even mocktails for you to try. Your local licensee will really appreciate the trade!

If you have any pub, brewery or festival news, or would like to submit a relevant article for publication in Opening Times, please email to [news@hunts.camra](mailto:news@hunts.camra).

[org.uk](http://org.uk) or forward them to a member of the branch committee; contact details are shown on our website and below.

Thank you for picking up this magazine and reading it. Season's Greetings!

***Richard Harrison, Opening Times  
Editor on behalf of the Branch  
Committee, September 2019***



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# CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



As I write this, we are finalising the numbers from the St Ives Booze on the Ouse Beer & Cider Festival. I hope many of you managed to get along to sample some of the 60+ cask and key keg beers and 16 real ciders. I was only able to make the Thursday, but I certainly enjoyed my time serving behind the bar and tasting some new (to me) beers. It's a source of continual wonder how brewers conjure up such wide variations in flavour from the same basic ingredients of malted barley, yeast and water!

CAMRA is a campaigning organisation with a vision to have quality real ale, cider and perry available everywhere, and to have thriving pubs in every community. An important part of that is rewarding those who further our aims, so I welcomed the opportunity to present awards to:

- Most Improved Rural Pub - The Three Tuns, Guilden Morden
- Most Improved Urban Pub - The Exhibition, Godmanchester
- Mild/Dark Ale Pub of The Year - The Royal Oak, St Ives
- LocAle Pub of The Year - The King of the Belgians, Hartford

I also handed the "Pub Champion" award to the **Three Tuns** Community Group for their relentless efforts in re-opening the **Three Tuns** in Guilden Morden.

Lastly, I was able to present two special Lifetime Achievement Awards to Jerry Schonfeldt (formerly of the **Oliver Cromwell** in St Ives) and our own Paul Moorhouse for his many years of service to CAMRA, especially the Huntingdonshire Branch. Well done to all recipients.

Looking forward, we can start the process of planning for the St Neots Booze on the Ouse festival in March. We can also look forward to our Christmas Beer Shopping Social (see later for details).

Cheers!

**Gareth Howell**

**Chairman, Huntingdonshire CAMRA**

## HUNTS PUB NEWS

In the Hunts Pub News section of Opening Times issue 176 (Winter 19/20), we reported that the **Victoria** in Huntingdon had closed, and the premises was listed for sale. The item concluded with a comment that in the right hands it could have been a successful business. We would like to clarify that this should have read that in the right hands it could again be a successful business. The sole intention was to refer to the potential new owners of the premises and was in no way meant as a criticism of any previous owners.

This month's news comes from Fenstanton where a new micro pub is proposed. With the loss of the **King William IV**, this sounds like excellent news for the village. A February opening date is planned for the **Take 2 Alehouse**, although this will depend on the change of use application and a premises licence being approved. It is planned that real ales, cider and bottled foreign beers will be on sale. The proprietor has had

previous experience having opened another micro pub in Kent. We wish Pete Williams every success with his new venture and will report on the opening in a future issue.

In St Ives, new management should be in place at the **Oliver Cromwell** by the time that you are reading this. Joe Ovendon and his partner Gemma will be the new couple behind the bar from early December. Both have worked previously in several local pubs.



There is news of another new bar in the area; the **Olmo Lounge** cafe bar has opened on the High Street in Huntingdon. Unfortunately, there are no real ales on sale, but it is good to see a new venue opening locally. You never know one day they may stock a real ale or cider.

As we went to print, the leases on several pubs in the branch area were being advertised. El Pub Partnerships are currently advertising the lease for the **Vine** in Buckden (this pub has previously been operated by small local pub company Venture who are giving the lease up in the new year).



Other El pubs that were available for lease are the **Three Tuns** (see later report) in Huntingdon, the **Black Bull** in Godmanchester and the **White Hart** in St Ives available (the latter was previously advertised by the current leaseholder). In Huntingdon, the lease for the **Samuel Pepys** is being advertised by Admiral Taverns. The Wells & Co owned **Crown & Pipes** in Fenstanton and **Dragoon** in Brampton were available for lease, together with the Green King owned **Bulls Head** in St Neots.

As usual I have been out and about visiting pubs in the branch area, but because of holidays and the autumn weather these were restricted to the main towns. However, during the summer I took advantage of the fine weather to visit a few pubs in the south of our branch area; none of which I can recall visiting previously.

The first stop was in Waresley where the **Duncombe Arms** is situated opposite the village church. The former Greene King pub is now independently owned and has been refurbished to a high standard throughout. It is a popular destination for diners, but the beer range hasn't been overlooked. There are three real ales with two changing beers alongside Woodfordes Wherry. When I visited St Austell Tribute and Turpin's Meditation Pale Ale, I was told that they usually have a beer from a local brewery on sale. There is a large beer garden and car parks at the front and rear of the pub. Interestingly the rear car park has a charging point for electric cars.

A few miles away is the market town of Gamlingay, which used to have many pubs, but today there are just two. Both the pubs are what I would describe as traditional locals catering for their regulars, but also welcoming visitors as well. In the **Cock** (report in OT179) I was speaking to Ian, one of the customers, who remembered Roy and Andy from the branch when they cycled around local pubs delivering copies of Opening Times. The pub had obviously been his watering hole for many years!



In the shadow of the church is **The Wheatsheaf**; a regular advertiser in Opening Times. The two real ales are Sharps Doom Bar and Adnams Southwold Bitter. I spoke to Deryck the landlord, who together with Lorna, have been running the pub for the past two years and he informed me that he plans to change the Southwold for a rotating guest beer. Home cooked is available six days a week with booking required for Sunday lunch. At the rear is an extended garden area and there is outside seating at the front of the pub.

While in Gamlingay, I also called in to speak to the owner of **LJ's Bar and Brasserie**. This has been open for around a year and while there is no real ale on sale, they may be looking to have a cask on in the future. This is something to look out for when visiting the town and any reports would be welcome.

In November, the **Royal Oak** in St Ives (our current Mild & Dark Ale pub of the year) was selling the excellent Banks & Taylor Edwin Taylors Stout. A welcome reappearance was made by beers from Nethergate Brewery with their Venture Pale Ale. This was alongside beers from Oakham, Newby Wyke and Oldershaws breweries. Real cider is also available here.

The **Swan & Angel** has recently been selling locally brewed beers with Oakham Bishops Farewell and Elgoods Sweeny Cod on sale. Real ciders from Snails Bank and Cockeyed are unusual for the town. A visit to the **Nelson's Head** found Oakham JHB and Nethergate Stour Valley Gold on sale. The local **Cromwell Cider** is always on sale here.



Out of the centre, the **Slepe Hall** Hotel has two regular beers on sale. These are Timothy Taylor Landlord and St Austell Tribute. I wouldn't normally promote keg cider, but to me the Adnams Wild Wave cider is a very drinkable product.

A lunchtime visit was made to the **King of the Belgians** in Hartford; our current LocAle pub of the year. It was busy as always and was selling two locally brewed beers from Nene Valley and Grainstore. The Grainstore Triple B and Mauldons Mid Autumn Gold were both tried and were in good condition. The pub is another supporter of **Cromwell Cider** with eight of their products on sale.



A short visit was made to St Neots to check a couple of the town pubs. First stop was the **Olde Sun** where four real ales are usually available. These were Greene King IPA, Adnams Ghost Ship, Grainstore Ten Fifty and Mauldons Blackcurrant Porter. The Ten Fifty and the Porter were both excellent.

A quick walk along Tebbuts Lane brought us out near the **Pig & Falcon**. There were five real ales on sale here. Always present Greene King IPA was joined by Lacons Encore, Hop Back Citra, Bradfield Farmers Stout and Micro Brewery Golden Ale (I have no information on this brewery who I have never heard of before). The stout was sampled but the best beer of the day was the Encore which I thought was delicious even though golden ales are not my favourite beer style.

# VISIT TO BAMBERG

## The 13 Brewery Walk

Over the years we have made numerous trips to Bamberg in Germany, famous for its Rauch beer and breweries, but we have rarely strayed beyond the town due to time constraints and just not being able to leave the town because of its excellent choice of beers and breweries. After a brief previous visit, we discovered that we could do a 13 brewery walk encompassing some of the vast array of breweries around the area. So some initial planning took place for a visit around October / November last year, but we rapidly realised with the short daylight hours and the time of day we needed to be at in certain places we would possibly find ourselves staggering around in the woods in the dark after a few beers. Not a good idea! So, we agreed to defer to May, with the option of more daylight hours to get lost.



*Photo – Pig & Falcon*

In Huntingdon, the **Three Tuns** hasn't sold real ale for many years. However, a recent visit found a handpump on the bar. Although there was no real ale on sale when I visited, I was told that they have recently started selling real ale. Reports from here would be most welcome!

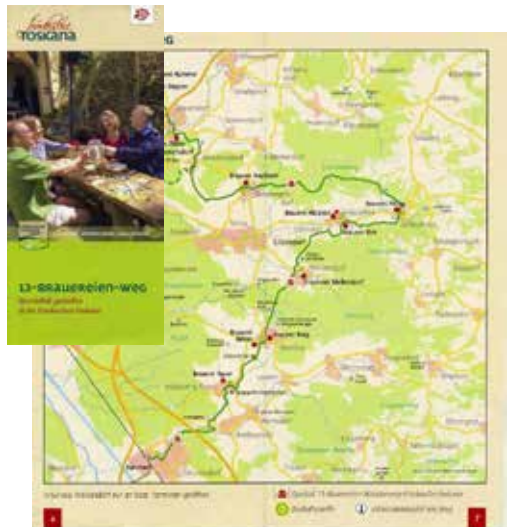


An early December visit was made to the **Old Bridge Hotel** in Huntingdon. Two beers were available, Parklife from Nene Valley Brewery and Old Ale from Lacons. Adams Old Ale had previously been on sale. I was told that Lacons have replaced beers from Hart Family Brewers (who unfortunately ceased brewing back in July).

Meanwhile, the **Falcon** had eleven real ales on sale. Alongside the regulars were two from Mr Grundy's brewery from Derby including Passchendaele pale ale 3.9%.

Well that's it for this quarter. Hopefully we will have some reports from the less frequently visited areas of the branch for the next issue.

*Pub news reports collated by Ian Baptist*



Whilst in the planning stage we discovered that two of the breweries had closed. Luckily one was in a village that had two so, at least we would get a chance of a break. We had to pass through the other village anyway.



After much agonising over planned a route and trying to figure out how we could achieve it and at the same time getting to and from Bamberg. We finally had a plan. Buses to outlying villages are a bit thin on the ground, just like in England, so we found a regular bus service to the start of the walk at Memmelsdorf and conveniently a bus from our last pub at 18.00 from Schammelsdorf. So Day 1 looked sorted, but then we needed to get to the mid-point to start Day 2 at Tiefenellern. This proved a bit more of a challenge, but we found a bus on Saturdays at 11.00 from Bamberg Railway Station. The rest was a straightforward walk to the end point at Strullendorf station for a train back to Bamberg.

The duly appointed day arrived, and we all met at Stanstead on very wet Wednesday in May. We duly engaged in a few beers and breakfast to wait for our plane. Unfortunately, on check-in we found our flight was delayed due to the bad weather, so it was back in the bar for more beer! After 90 minutes we were eventually on the plane, only then to be told we would have a further delay due to a local thunderstorm. By now, our planned 3 h break in Munich was rapidly dwindling before our eyes; would we even catch the train to Bamberg, let alone get a beer?

We arrived at Munich Flughafen with no further delay, and despite a couple of heart stopping moments on the S-Bahn, we made Munich Hauptbahnhof with 30 minutes to spare. So it was a quick dash into a station shop for a baguette and a beer. Surprisingly the bottle of beer was cheaper than the water, about 2 Euros, and a good selection to boot. On arrival into Bamberg it was a quick dash to check in then out for a beer or two before everywhere shut for the night. Our first stop was the famous Schlenkerla bar for a Rauch beer. Then at closing time it was around the corner to the Hofbrau for another.



Thursday was our only full day in Bamberg, so we wanted to visit some bars that we don't normally get to. However, the first stop was the tourist information office to stock up on guides and information on the planned walk (which proved very helpful).



Another bus ride took us to Brauerei Gasthof Kaiserdom. Bamberg's biggest brewery. Back on the bus again to visit the now open the Brewery Museum. On three floors, it has lots of breweriana for old and defunct breweries around the area. Well worth a visit, but make sure you check the opening hours first they are limited.



27 Main Street, Hartford, Huntingdon, PE291XU.  
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From here we walked down the hill to Ambrausian, a Brewpub, then on to Klosterbrau nearby. A surprise here, we found they were also producing a Rauch Beer and very nice it was too. From there, we had a long walk (in the rain) to Brauerei Greifenklau, only to find yet another new Rauch beer available. The local breweries seem to be cashing in on the trend!

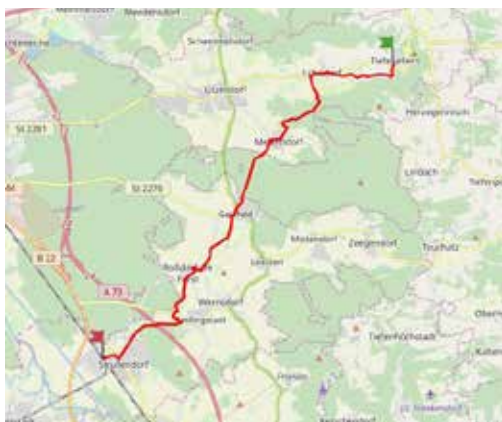


The next morning was Day 1 of our walk. We caught the bus to Memmelsdorf, the start of the walk, and opted for a quick refreshment break in Brauerei Hohn to set us on our way. With the help of maps, we navigated out of town following what we thought the was route. However, we quickly realised that we had diverted from it. Not to be deterred, we carried on and eventually found a waymark.

We arrived in Merkendorf, our first stop, where there are two breweries; Brauerei Wagner and Hummel. We had allowed more time for lunch at the latter and because they produce a wide selection of beer that we had to try.



Next stop was Brauerei Goller on the outskirts of Drosendorf. Another swift beer followed before moving on to Schammelsdorf and Brauerei Knoblach this was a bit of a trek and we needed to get here and have a beer in time to catch the Bus at 1800. Back at Memmelsdorf had have one more Brauerei to sample before the bus back to Bamberg. This was Brauerei Drei Kronen, just a couple of doors down from Hohn. A splendid first day and we were looking forward to Day 2 already.





The day dawned cloudy and rainy; not a great day for a walk. However, the forecast didn't look too bad, so we opted to carry on. We found the appointed bus stop to Tiefenellern, which only runs on Saturdays. It was deserted and didn't look promising. Then, as if by magic, five minutes before the bus was due, dozens of people appeared from nowhere to join the queue. The bus duly turned up and we were off.

Our first stop was Brauerei Honig at Tiefenellern, where we had a swift one to avoid the crowds. We then choose the scenic route to Lohndorf, rather than walking along the road, which did mean walking up and down a few hills.

Coming into Lohndorf, we found the Privatebrauerei Reh. It has no bar, but we were invited in and could select a bottle to drink. Soon after, a bunch of fellow walkers turned up, took a table outside and proceeded to have lunch, inviting us to part take as well. Not far down the road was our next venue, Brauereri Holzlein. The landlord here was proud of his Pilsner which although it is made with same hops as the other beers, it uses different method of brewing and is only available occasionally. We shared a Pilsner and a Bock and also had Bratwurst.

From Lohndorf it was uphill through woods. A steep and winding path brought us into Melkendorf where we would hope to find the next Brewery. Brauerei Winkler and Gashaus had been shown as closing in 2015, so we were unsure what we would find. Research before we left had the brewery listed as Brauerie Melkendorf. Luckily on the day of our visit they had some type of festival with music in the yard. It was mainly traditional with several speakers. We found out the local people want to keep the brewery and a guesthouse going and the local Council was trying to help them through some type of crowdfunding. We think beer is normally only available at these Special Events, one in spring and another in the autumn, so we were lucky. Beers brewed under name of Brandholz

were a Bock and another one called Golden Brown. Surprisingly our new-found lunch companions appeared from nowhere to join us for a beer.



From Melfendorf, the route is via a minor road that becomes a track climbing steeply then going through woodland before climbing down to Geisfeld. Here, when we were planning were two breweries, but one had recently closed. We did visit it to take pictures – Brauerei Krug. The Brauerei Griess was a short distance away and interestingly we had to sit outdoors here. I think they wanted to keep locals away from the walkers!

Another lengthy walk took us to Brauerei Sauer in Rossdorf am Forst. This was the final stop on the walk, but we had to walk to Strullendorf to catch the train, another few miles. At Strullendorf station we decided to go one stop in the opposite direction to Hirschard to find Brauerei Kraus. Arriving just in time for dinner and in the middle of football supporters coach trip.

In all, a rewarding and but tiring day. We are already planning the next instalment.

***Reported by Roy Endersby and Clive Parcell***

***XL PRESS FULL PAGE***

# STYLE STORIES

This is the third of a series of features on different beer styles, describing some of their history and characteristics and highlighting some significant examples, local production and outlets.

## Porters and Stouts

This is the third of a series of features on different beer styles, describing some of their history and characteristics and highlighting some significant examples, local production and outlets.

British draught beers as they were before the advent of porters and stouts would be unrecognisable today. They were mostly a lot stronger, and often aged for up to a year or more by a wholesaler or the pub. A fresher draught beer had become popular around 300 years ago and came to be known as mild, distinguishing it from the harsher aged beers.

Porter beer came into being around 1720-1730. Initially a blend of three styles of beer mixed in the pub and known as 'Entire', it came to be known as porter because it became a drink of choice for London's porters who carried goods around the capital city's streets and markets.

The porter style came to revolutionise the brewing industry across much of the world. London's brewers began the process, developing porter as a dark, highly hopped beer of 6-7% alcohol content, aged at the brewery. Only the larger brewers were able to invest in the huge vats that were needed to age their porter for enough time.

Initially, porter was brewed with brown malt, but when more highly roasted black malts became available these came to be used in a proportion within a pale malt grist that gives a more efficient extraction of fermentable sugars.

The ageing of porter gradually became less important. London porter came to be produced by blending a small volume of aged beer with

fresh porter, which resulted in a beer that tasted similar to the earlier 100%-aged porter. Towards the end of the 19th century, the aged flavour of porter became less popular, and brewers began to supply porter that was 100% fresh.

Porter brewing in Ireland had begun in 1776. Within twelve years, Guinness had started producing it and nine years later had discontinued production of other beer styles. Irish brewers Beamish and Murphys did the same.

Stout was a name originally applied to stronger porters, many brewers offering a range of 'stout porters' sometimes known as single, double or triple stout porters according to their strength. Gradually, 'stout porters' became 'stouts'.

Around the time of CAMRA's formation in the early 1970's, draught stout and porter was largely unavailable in cask-conditioned form, so was not regarded as 'real ale', although most bottled Guinness in the UK continued to be bottle-conditioned until the 1990s.

But with the revival in fortunes of cask beer over the last five decades, driven by CAMRA, draught porter and stout have become firmly re-established as part of the brewing repertoire of innovative cask beer brewers.

The differences in flavour characteristics between porters and stouts is a subject for debate amongst beer aficionados but in reality, are marginal if they exist at all, although some brewers make a point of using traditional higher hop rates in the beers that they badge as porters. A small number of brewers have also created sour porters in reinterpretations of the aged porters of old.

There are several style variations. The use of unmalted roasted barley is regarded as a common feature of dry stouts. In contrast, the addition of lactose to stouts became popular in the late 19th century to produce sweet stouts, often known as milk stouts, although the use of the healthy-sounding word 'milk' in beer names has been banned as misleading in the UK since 1946. Other stouts benefitted from



the inclusion in recipes of oatmeal, or oysters.

Typical alcohol levels for modern day stouts and porters are around 5% ABV. Strong stouts began to be brewed in London in the 18th century for export to Russia and the Baltic States. Known as Imperial Stouts, these were much more rich, complex and full-bodied than other stouts, with alcohol levels of at least 9%. Baltic Porter is a similar style originally produced in the Baltic region. Some modern-day UK brewers have recreated live beers based on these styles, either as cask-conditioned real ales or live bottle-conditioned beers.

Amongst our local brewers, some of those in the Cambridge area have ruled the roost in recent awards for stouts and porters in CAMRA's Champion Winter Beer of Britain competition.

Calverley's brewery, just off the city's Mill Road, scooped the gold national award in February 2019 for their Porter which has firm chocolate and coffee flavours and an attractive malty sweetness. In 2012, the silver award for stouts went to Moonshine brewery at Fulbourn for its full-bodied Black Hole Stout, and Milton brewery won the bronze award for stouts in the previous year for its bittersweet, roasty and fruity Nero stout.

Other East Anglian brewers have done well in CAMRA's national awards with stouts and porters. Wibblers brewery at Southminster near Burnham-on-Crouch won joint gold in 2016 for its 5.3% ABV Crafty Stoat. In the porters category, bronze awards in the Champion Winter Beer of Britain awards were picked up in 2018 by south Norfolk brewery Grain for its Slate, and in 2016 for Black Fox Porter, produced by the Red Fox brewery at Coggeshall, between Braintree and Colchester.

Nethergate brewery is in Long Melford in Essex, close to the Suffolk border. Its Old Growler is a complex, satisfying with roast malt and fruit on the palate and a powerfully hoppy finish. It snapped up the gold award in 2003 and joint gold in 1998. The gold award in 1991 went to Mauldons Blackadder, 5.3% ABV, described by CAMRA as malty

with roast and dark soft fruit overtones.

In CAMRA's Champion Beer of East Anglia awards, Colchester Brewery is the current gold award holder for its Old King Coel London Porter, brewed in the old way with brown malt. In 2018 another Essex brewer, Mersea Island, won gold for its Oyster Stout, produced with oats and oysters.

In 2016, gold award winners were Cambridge Brewhouse for its Night Porter and the 7.5% Marcus Aurelius stout brewed by Milton, who describe it as enormous, luscious and velvety, bursting with dark roasty flavour and an underlying vanilla richness.

In the next edition, as we look forward to warmer days, we'll look at blonds and golden ales.

*Written by Paul Moorhouse*

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Grafham Brewing Co is a brand-new brewery based in the idyllic surroundings of Grafham Cambridgeshire, famous for the beautiful countryside surrounding Grafham Water. The brewery was established by Paul Robinson in a converted space on Breach Road. It is 1.8 barrels in size and capable of fermenting 900 litres simultaneously.



The brewery will be creating a varied range of craft beers and traditional ales, supplying surrounding pubs, hotels & shops. The intention is to brew small batch, high quality products, served from cask, keg and bottle with an emphasis of introducing new flavours and styles to our customers. The first beer on offer is an award-winning Pale Ale called "Hodders Panama". More products are in development and will be available soon.

## RAMBLINGS FROM AFAR

There is no "Cider Matters" article in this edition as your intrepid cider reporter has been away in the beauty of the Scottish Lowlands sampling cider, perry and beers, as well as investigating some good pubs and a distillery.

### *Steilhead Cider*

Scotland is renowned for many good things to drink, but few would think of cider as one of them. This is unfair as good cider made from Scottish apples is available. This branch's "Booze on the Ouse" festivals have had cider from Waulkmill in the past.



Steilhead cider is produced in Auldgirth, near Dumfries and generally available as "Real cider in a bottle" from local shops and farmers' markets. This correspondent encountered it at the monthly market in Moffat. As expected, there is a range of ciders from dry to sweet, each having a different blend of apples, some of which are 'proper' cider apples. The cider itself is refreshing and pleasant to drink.

### *Blue Bell, Annan*

Decent bars which focus on good quality beer, cider and perry, as well as offering a congenial atmosphere are few and far between these days. Fortunately, the Blue Bell is one which exists to provide relaxation, a welcome and something good to drink.

The highlight of this recent visit was a perry from Warwickshire and a full-bodied bitter brewed on the premises - you do not get more LocAle than that. The pub is well worth a detour to if you are travelling along the A75 between Gretna and Dumfries.

### *Weaving About*

The 'Weavers' in Strathaven, (pronounced "Strayven" - see below\*), is an oasis of excellent quality real ale for those in South Lanarkshire. Usually there are four beers on, one from the local brewery and the others being high quality low-volume regional breweries.

\* Sassenachs might like to work out how the locals pronounce the towns of Lesmahagow and Anstruther!

### *Lowland Brewery*

Your intrepid cider representative was in the Black Bull in Moffat for the launch of a winter beer from the Lowland Brewery (based in Lockerbie). This is the first brew produced by Michael (the majority shareholder) since taking over the brewing processes.



The first pint pulled, described as a 4.2% ABV "Winter Brown Ale" was consumed and thoroughly enjoyed by your humble reporter. It has a dark hue and could be described as a traditionally Scottish 80/- beer, but with added hops. The beer, called "Santa's Little Belter", was produced in response to public request for a darker more full-bodied beer.

### Annandale Distillery

What, you might ask, has whisky to do with brewing? Hopefully, most can answer that question: you need to ferment barley before you can distil it. It was quite a strange experience

seeing the brewing process up to and including fermentation, and then the wort being whisked off and the alcohol evaporated in a pot-still. The other strange experience was that the fermenting vessels were made from wood and not the usual copper or stainless steel, as the wood contributes to the flavour of the whisky.



The distillery primarily focuses on 2 whiskies, a peated and non-peated, both of which are bottled at cask strength of between 60% and 63%. They have a richness of flavour, sweetish with a dry finish

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# A LOOK BACK IN TIME

## 25 Years Ago

The first St Neots Winter Ale Festival was put on by St Neots CAMRA; the predecessor of the Huntingdonshire branch. It was the first of a series of annual winter events held at St Neots Town Football Club. It ran from Thursday evening until Saturday evening and was attended by around 300 customers, it was hailed by the branch as a resounding success.

CAMRA reported that its branches were 'wading into battle against new age nitrokeg beers'. These included Caffreys, newly launched by Bass. The use of nitrogen gas in the gas mix resulted in low carbonation levels unprecedented in keg beers and similar to levels in cask-conditioned real ales. CAMRA complained that because of this, some trade promotions had implied that the new beers tasted like real ale. In addition, many pubs were advertising nitrokeg beers on guest-ale chalk boards alongside cask beers, and CAMRA warned of a deliberate blurring of differences between product formats, with some brands being available as cask, mixed-gas keg and canned versions.

Wells Fargo, a 5% ABV cask-conditioned beer last seen in the 1980s, was being well-received in Charles Wells pubs in the Bedford area. Fargo had been relaunched by CAMRA's Roger Protz and brewery chairman John Wells at CAMRA's beer festival in the town after taste trials of the new brewing recipe conducted with the help of local CAMRA members.

London brewer Fullers dropped its cask Hock mild. Although Hock had been popular with many CAMRA members, Fullers claimed that, because of the success of its other cask beers Chiswick Bitter and Mr Harry, most of its pubs did not have a spare pump for Hock.

A CAMRA delegation presented a petition to the Czech government in support of local opposition to the proposed privatisation of the state-owned Budvar brewery, brewers of Budweiser-Budvar. USA brewers Anheuser-Busch, makers of the American version of Budweiser, had been stalking the Czech brewer. Britain's biggest brewer, Bass, also emerged as a potential suitor for Budvar as it publicly announced its intention to expand its brewing interests in the Czech Republic.

Britain's second biggest brewer, Courage, was the subject of intense city speculation as its Australian owner Fosters announced that it was reviewing its UK assets in the face of mounting debt. UK brewers Scottish and Newcastle breweries were in the frame to take over Courage, as were the Whitbread British brewing group.

## 10 Years Ago

The **King William IV** at Fenstanton was being taken 'more upmarket' by its new tenants Nick Steiger, formerly chef-patron at the Grange Hotel in Bampton, and Trevor and Karen Fowler who had run the Samuel Pepys in Huntingdon for the previous three years.

Meanwhile, in Kimbolton, the Saddle had reopened as an Italian bistro. CAMRA reported that non-diners remained welcome.

CAMRA issued a legal challenge to the Office of Fair trading for its decision to reject CAMRA's first super-complaint. This had asked the OFT to assess whether the operation of the tie was in the consumer interest and whether reform was needed to remove anti-competitive practices in pub leasing arrangements and get a better deal for pub users.

CAMRA reported that the lease of the **Falcon** in Huntingdon was on the market and that Great Gransden's village local, the Crown and Cushion, had been closed and a public meeting held to discuss its future.

**The Cock** at Hemingford Grey was declared the best dining pub in Britain by the 2010 Good Pub Guide.



The Meantime brewery in London launched a cask-conditioned beer, London Pale Ale, the first regular cask beer from Meantime after ten years during which its permanent range had consisted entirely of keg brewery-conditioned beers. The new

cask beer was brewery-conditioned and then re-conditioned in cask.

Jennings brewery in Cockermouth reopened in January 2010, two months after flooding had left the brewery site under five feet of water.

The lease of the **Royal Oak** at Warboys was taken on by Darren Thompson and partner of the **Mad Cat** at Pidley.

Lancashire brewer Thwaites was under attack from CAMRA for continuing its policy of using restrictive covenants to prevent others from operating its properties as pubs after their closure and sale.

It was announced that the Molson-Coors brewing museum and visitor centre in Burton-on-Trent had been saved and would reopen in 2010. The centre, formerly the Bass brewing museum, had been the subject of a protest march around the town and campaigning by CAMRA, the local MP, local councils, Civic Society and Chamber of Commerce.

*Compiled by Paul Moorhouse*

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# IN OTHER NEWS

## CAMRA's National Pub of the Year Competition

The race is on for the national Pub of the Year competition, with three of the final four pubs having previously scooped the title.

The Swan with Two Necks in Pendleton, the **George & Dragon** in Hudswell and The Bell in Aldworth have all claimed the prestigious award in previous years. The newcomer to the scene is from the East Anglian region and is the Red Lion in Preston, which became the first community-owned pub in Great Britain in the 1980s.

The Swan With Two Necks in Pendleton (2014 winner) – an outstanding and recently renovated traditional pub set in a pretty Pendleside village that's deservedly popular with locals and visitors alike. Five constantly changing ales and one real cider are served along with delicious home-cooked food, and there's plenty of outdoor seating and lovely open fires when the weather grows colder.



**The George & Dragon** in Hudswell (2016 winner) – a pleasant walk from Richmond (if you don't mind the 300+ steps!) brings you to the pub's large beer terrace with fantastic panoramic views over the Swale valley. Rescued by the community in 2010 and refurbished, it boasts its own library, shop, allotments and other community facilities as well as food and drink.



Bell, Aldworth, Berkshire (1990 winner) – this perennial gem is the only pub with a heritage interior in Berkshire. Its name refers to bells which were part of the coat of arms of the traditional landowners. It's large open garden and excellent beer attract walkers and drinkers from far and wide.



Red Lion, Preston, Hertfordshire (new finalist from the East Anglian region) – This attractive free house dating back to 1844 stands on the village green and is the first community-owned pub in Great Britain. There is an ever-changing list of beers including many from small breweries and Ray and Jo prepare the fresh home-made food, sourcing their ingredients locally. The pub also hosts the village cricket teams and fundraises for charity.



National Pub of the Year Coordinator Andrea Briers said: "It is amazing to see so many

well-respected pubs return to this prestigious competition to compete for the ultimate title of the best pub in Britain. We wish them – and our newcomer – the very best of luck. It is a huge honour to come this far in the competition and be named one of the best four pubs in the country, and all four finalists should be very proud.”

The pubs in the competition were selected by CAMRA volunteers and judged on their atmosphere, decor, welcome, service, value for money, customer mix and quality of beer. The four finalists now have a chance to win the National Pub of the Year title, which will be announced in February 2020.

## The Best UK Clubs

CAMRA has also named the best four member clubs in the country as part of its Club of the Year competition. Among the finalists include former winners the Cheltenham Motor Club in Gloucestershire (2017), the Flixton Conservative Club in Greater Manchester (2018), and the Appleton Thorn Village Hall in Warrington (2019). The Orpington Liberal Club in Greater London is also in the running, which has made it to the final four in past years.



Keith Spencer, Club of the Year Coordinator said: “Congratulations to all of the finalists. The fact that there are so many well-known

faces in the competition demonstrates that these four truly represent the very clubs in the country. All four clubs demonstrate a first-class commitment to real ale and dedication to the respective communities they serve, making them absolutely vital to their local areas.”

CAMRA Club of the Year competition is run in conjunction with Club Mirror magazine with the simple aim of finding the clubs with the greatest commitment to quality real ale. It takes into consideration clubs that offer a fantastic atmosphere, welcoming surroundings and most importantly, top quality real ale served in great condition.

The finalists will now have to wait until the spring to discover which will be named CAMRA's Club of the Year.

## Best Bottled Beers in Britain

A mighty Imperial Russian Stout, a delectable golden ale and a hoppy IPA have been named the best bottled beer in Britain by CAMRA.





Thornbridge's Saint Petersburg Imperial Russian Stout (7.4% ABV) won crown as a rich and full-bodied stout with black treacle and dark notes. It has a robust, bitter finish that gives it a great balance and is the perfect brew to pair with your Christmas cake.

Runners up include not just one, but two beers from the same brewery. St Austell's Proper Job (5.5% ABV) came in second, while BIG Job (7.2% ABV) placed third.

**Cambridge Brewers Awarded in SIBA East Competition**

Two breweries located in the nearby Cambridge branch took the two overall top spots at the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) East Independent Beer Awards, beating brewers from across the East of England, stretching from North Lincolnshire down to Essex and Hertfordshire, as well Norfolk,

Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire. Milton Brewery won overall Gold in the cask competition with Minerva and Calverley's Brewery was top with their Pale Ale in the bottled & can competition.



The prestigious awards were held at Elgood's Brewery in Wisbech prior to their beer festival in September. They were judged by brewers and beer experts and are seen very much as the brewers' choice awards in the industry. Full results can be found in the media section on the SIBA website.

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# HUNTS CAMRA SOCIAL DIARY

The following meetings and events are planned. All members are encouraged to attend and contribute to Open Branch Committee Meetings. Things can change and new events will be added, so please visit our website or social media channels for up to date information. Alternatively please contact Juliet, our Social Secretary (see contact details on page 3)

**Sun 22 Dec 2019, from 2 pm**

Christmas beer shopping in St Neots

See the branch website or social media for details of pubs and timings

**Sat 1 Feb 2020, 2 pm**

Open Branch Committee Meeting

Venue TBC

**Thu 12 – Sat 14 Mar 2020**

'Booze on the Ouse' Beer and Cider Festival

The Priory Centre, St Neots

**Mon 6 Apr 2020, 8 pm**

Open Branch Committee Meeting

Three Horseshoes, Graveley

All branch members are welcome at Open Committee meetings and it's always nice to see some new faces.



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<b>5 SAVE YOUR LOCAL</b>	<b>6 FIND THE BEST PUBS IN BRITAIN</b>
<b>7 GET GREAT VALUE FOR MONEY</b>	<b>8 DISCOVER</b> pub heritage and the great outdoors
<b>9 ENJOY GREAT HEALTH BENEFITS</b> (really!)	<b>10 HAVE YOUR SAY</b>

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### Opening times

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