

ISSUE 123 SUMMER 2005

FREE FREE FREE

OPENING TIMES

CAMRA HUNTINGDONSHIRE BRANCH



GET WILD ABOUT MILD

May is being celebrated as Mild Month in CAMRA's annual promotion. Mild is brewed with a low gravity and hop rate and is rounder, normally slightly sweeter and less bitter than more highly hopped bitters. Roast malt, caramel or occasionally roast barley are used to darken most milds.

To help highlight that mild is an endangered beer style, CAMRA is running a 'Spot a Mild in the Wild' competition. Consumers will be able to tell CAMRA where they spotted 'a mild in the wild', and report back on their website, for a chance of winning a mystery prize. Details of the competition can be found at www.camra.org.uk/mild.

Locally, Elgoods of Wisbech fly the mild flag throughout the year. Their Black Dog mild with its liquorice character and distinctive bite is sold at the Cock at Hemingford Grey and occasionally at the Floods Tavern in St Ives. Batemans' nutty, fruity mild is usually available at the Lord John Russell in St Neots, and sometimes at the White Hart, Great Staughton. Greene King's XX Dark Mild can be found at the Crown Litlington, and the Waggon and Horses, Steeple Morden. And look out for milds during May at the Green Man, Colne and the Chequers, Little Gransden.

KING OF THE BELGIANS

The King of the Belgians in Hartford was saved from closure in February as the local authority refused two planning applications to turn this historic pub into residential dwellings. A shadow had been hanging over the pub for two months after its owners applied for change of use and structural changes to convert the community local to housing.

Closure was against the wishes of licensee Jamie McAuley, who leases the pub from owners Alliance and Mutual Pubs, and was very much against the wishes of the many regulars of the pub, who had been running a spirited campaign to oppose the planning application. A petition of 480 signatures and 167 letters of objection had communicated to Huntingdonshire District Council's development control panel the level of local support for the continued operation of this pub. The panel unanimously voted to refuse both planning applications after local councillor Mike Simpson had told the meeting that the pub would probably remain open if the plans were refused.

Submissions to the panel from the Hartford Conservation Group and from the Huntingdonshire branch of CAMRA had pointed out that the King of the Belgians provides the only traditional community pub in Hartford, an essential social focus and a unique amenity that is not otherwise available. The submissions also stressed that the pub is an integral part of the com-

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is a consumer organisation founded in 1971

KING OF THE BELGIANS

munity's historical heritage and that the proposed changes would have an adverse impact on the character of a Grade II listed building and the economic and social heart of the Hartford community.

Early in the campaign to save the pub local CAMRA branch members Paul Moorhouse and Kathy Hadfield-Moorhouse spoke at a public meeting of Huntingdon Town Council, which agreed to formally recommend refusal of both applications.

Some of the key arguments put forward by the Hartford Conservation Group and CAMRA concerned the potential viability of the pub as well as the fact that licensee Jamie McAuley had put in a formal request to buy the pub from Alliance and Mutual as a going concern.

In February, on the same day as the decision, CAMRA issued a revised version of its 'pub viability test' guidance to help save Britain's pubs. CAMRA says that 20 pubs are "lost" every month and the guidance helps local authorities to objectively test claims of lack of economic viability often made by developers. The guidance includes case studies of planning appeals, including one at Reach, Cambridgeshire, in which planning inspectors have dismissed changes of use for pubs where lack of viability has not been demonstrated.

In a similar appeal decision for a pub near Bristol, an inspector had ruled that a similar pub was valued by the local community. This case was cited by Huntingdonshire council's development control panel in coming to their decision on the King of the Belgians. Their report stated: "In view of this material consideration, the loss of the King of the Belgians would result in the loss of a valuable community facility."

In the end, though, the level of local support may have also been a deciding factor. This was eloquently demonstrated

when 80 supporters of the pub cheered when the applications were unanimously rejected by the councillors.

The King of the Belgians is a 16th century pub on the old main street in the picturesque village of Hartford, a stone's throw away from the River Great Ouse. The ceiling in the public bar displays a collection of aviation-related memorabilia of British and international units of the Cold War era, and also national and international air-related events. Some of these memorabilia are unique, referring to units that have been disbanded and events that form part of our regional and national history. The pub was once called the King of the Prussians, but the name was changed during WWI. It is believed that Oliver Cromwell used to frequent the establishment.

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A LOOK BACK IN TIME

25 YEARS AGO

CAMRA's 'Make May a Mild Month' campaign was promoting four real draught milds that were available in local pubs in 1980, including three brewed by Greene King. Paines of St Neots then supplied their sweetish dark mild to the Prince of Wales at Hilton and the Royal Oak in St Neots. The Crown at Litlington and the Old Sun in Eaton Socon both stocked Greene King's KK pale mild. Different versions of Greene King's XX dark mild were brewed in Biggleswade and Bury St Edmunds. The Darby and Joan at Abington Pigotts served the dryer Bury version, and the malty Biggleswade dark mild was on offer at the Spread Eagle in Croxton, the Windmill at Somersham and the Wheatsheaf, St Neots.

In May 1980 CAMRA launched a Bass battle call over the plan by the national brewer to close its famous historic Burton Unions – a system using large interconnected wooden casks to ferment the cask ale draught Bass and the real bottled ale Worthington White Shield. Bass eventually closed their Union system but Burton-on-Trent neighbours Marstons kept theirs and in 2005 it is still used for Marstons Pedigree.

St Neots and District CAMRA's beer exhibition at the Riverside Festival at the end of May was a sell-out despite adverse weather on the Saturday, and 1800 gallons of real ale and 260 gallons of cider were consumed over the weekend event. Brewers Paines donated prize beer for a tug-o-war contest held on the Sunday and Greene King donated XX dark mild for a yard of ale competition.

Eynesbury became a real ale desert as the Plough ceased serving Watney's Stag real ale, while new outlets for the new Wells Bombardier real ale were the Bell, Stonely, the Three Shuttles, Tilbrook, the Wheatsheaf, Eaton Socon and the Wool-

pack, St Neots.

Tolly Cobbold were significant suppliers of real ale to the local area in 1980. The Black Bull and the Manchester Arms in St Ives both stocked the new Tolly Original beer and the Black Bull also served Tolly Bitter by handpump. The Queens Head in Needingworth and the Swan at Blunfisham also served real Tolly ale. Ipswich company Tollemache Breweries acquired a number of local pubs in their 1934 takeover of the Star Brewery on Newmarket Road, Cambridge and its 119 pubs. Tolly Cobbold came about through the merger in 1957 of Tollemache's with fellow Ipswich brewers Cobbold.

The Old Sun at Eaton Socon served Greene King Abbot, IPA and KK light mild using electric pump dispense.

The St Neots branch of CAMRA held branch meetings at the Pear Tree, Bassingbourn, the Lord John Russell in St Neots and the Spread Eagle at Croxton. There were summer trips to Batemans Brewery and to Oxford and socials at the Lion in Ramsey and the Sun and the Half Moon at Kimbolton.

Summer 1980 saw the launch of CAMRA's What's Brewing as a public sale magazine. Book stalls and bookshops were selling the magazine priced at 50p. Previously produced only as a members' newspaper, the new magazine featured a colour cover and articles on Monty Python's Terry Jones and his Penhros brewery and a photo feature on East Anglian pubs at the turn of the century.

Tony Millns, CAMRA Tyneside branch chairman, was elected to CAMRA's national executive on his first attempt at the membership's 1980 Annual General Meeting. As a resident of Cambridge Tony was later to become well known in Cambridgeshire CAMRA circles and as an indomitable national CAMRA chairman.

A LOOK BACK IN TIME

10 YEARS AGO

In summer 1995 CAMRA called for a takeover bid for Courage breweries by Scottish & Newcastle to be referred to the government's Monopolies and Mergers Commission. But CAMRA feared that the 'big is beautiful' attitude of Trade and Industry Secretary Michael Heseltine would result in the £435m merger being given the nod in order to boost the UK's standing in world markets. CAMRA argued that UK brewers export only a fraction of their output and that ales are not in great demand in other countries.

CAMRA held a protest march in Nottingham in a bid to stop the closure by Scottish & Newcastle of their Home brewery in the city. CAMRA were correctly predicting that Home would be a victim after a Scottish Courage merger.

St Neots CAMRA presented its Pub of the Season award in summer 1995 to the Golden Miller at Longstowe. A May social visited the Wheatsheaf at Perry and the Mermaid at Ellington. Summer branch meetings were held at the Three Horseshoes in Ramsey and the Nelsons Head in St Ives. In July the branch ran a real ale bar at the St Neots Riverside Festival and made a presentation to the licensee of the Wheatsheaf in St Neots.

CAMRA opened its new St Albans headquarters in newly converted premises and local brewers McMullens brewed a special beer to commemorate the event.

All day Sunday opening was on the way as a new Bill passed its final stage in the House of Commons and started its passage through the House of Lords in May 1995.

Charles Wells re-opened the Old Falcon in St Neots after a £100000 refurbishment, one of five Wells pubs to have had major refits ten years ago. In 2005 the Old Falcon is closed and its future is uncertain.

CAMRA chairman John Cryne launched CAMRA's new battle to save pubs at the campaign's national Annual General Meeting in Wolverhampton, after estimates had predicted 5000 pub closures. 'The pub is central to CAMRA's activity because without it there could be no real ale' John told the AGM, 'Good pubs enhance the image of real ale. CAMRA has identified 250 pubs worthy of listing. We need more or we face a future of Scruffy Murphy's.'

Fullers of Chiswick again brewed Hock dark mild as a seasonal beer to coincide with CAMRA's annual 'Make Mine Mild' campaign in May 1995. Other brewers had been dropping the 'mild' tag from their brand names. Greene King XX Dark, Highgate Dark, Banks's Ale had all lost their 'mild' tag in a bid to boost their flagging image, while McMullens AK pale mild had even been re-badged as a bitter.

CAMRA's Cambridge branch welcomed Adnams to the city as it bought former Allied Breweries pub the Castle and re-opened it as an Adnams tied house selling the full range of the Southwold brewers' beers.

Peterborough CAMRA's reaction to Greene King's purchase of the city's long lost alehouse, the Still, was not reported in an item announcing this news in the CAMRA members' newspaper 'What's Brewing'.

Bedford brewers Charles Wells splashed out on 3000 new casks to meet the 22% increase in demand for their Bombardier real ale.

And in Cambridge, Charles Wells offered free beer in its Cambridge pubs to drinkers attending the Cambridge Folk Festival. It was Wells's second year as sponsors of the annual event after taking over from local rivals Greene King. 100,000 pints of beer had been sold in the festival beer tent the previous July.

Cambridgeshire Hunter, Eynesbury

As previously reported, the Cambridgeshire Hunter has undergone an extensive refurbishment. Peter Sturman, the new Manager, arrived in January to oversee the timely improvements. Peter is no stranger to real ale, having run large real ale pubs in London and Ipswich in the past, so he is keen to see a guest real ale being offered alongside Eagle and Bombardier. Improvements to the kitchen will mean bar food being available for the first time, but Peter stressed that the Cambridgeshire Hunter will not become a food pub, with offerings limited to bar snacks.

Other improvements include an expansion of the pub games activities, with new darts and pool teams being formed, a regular quiz night on Tuesdays, and with 3 big plasma screens, the Cambridgeshire Hunter will be a good place to enjoy major sporting events televised on Sky. The pub reopens on Friday 22nd April.

Lord John Russell, St Neots

Claire and Ryan Kirk are the new tenants at the Lord John Russell in St Neots. They have been in pub management for 8 years, and this is their first tenancy. The pub has been re-decorated throughout, and a Sky screen is being installed. Other changes Claire and Ryan are introducing include live music and karaoke evenings and bingo and special OAP evenings. Alongside the regular Batemans XB Bitter, two regular guest beers will be featured—Batemans Dark Mild and Elgoods Cambridge were on offer on a recent visit. Claire will also be offering good value pub food. The no smoking area in the conservatory is proving to be very popular.

Victoria, Huntingdon

Phil Beer, licensee of the **Green Man, Colne**, with his partner Teresa, has taken on two additional leased pubs from Punch Taverns, the **Victoria** in **Huntingdon** and the **Cherry Tree** at **Haddenham**. Real ale will be the focus at these pubs, and is already being well received. The Victoria offers Adnams Bitter and two to three guest cask beers – these have included Shepherd Neame Spitfire and Cromwell's Delight, brewed by Cottage brewery to celebrate Huntingdon's 800th anniversary as a town.

- The **Old Falcon** in **St Neots Market Square** is on the market at a guide price of £1m, with potential for pub/restaurant/retail at ground floor and with flat/housing above and to rear.
- The **Mill** at **Alconbury** is a recent convert to real ale. New licensees have been serving well kept cask beers – Adnams Bitter and Potton Village Bike have been sampled.
- Potton Brewery now features as a regular guest beer at the **Tavern on the Green, Great Staughton** alongside three Greene King beers.
- The **Fox, Catworth** will be holding their annual beer festival from June 24th – July 4th. Live bands will include Doctor Buster on Fri 24th, GlamRock on Fri 1st, and Bedside Manner on Sat 2nd.
- The **Bridge House, St Neots** was closed for refurbishment during April and was expected to reopen in May.
- The **Three Horseshoes** at **Wistow** has new owners, Gerry and Julia Berry, who took over in April. They've no plans to make any changes, and Adnams Bitter and Broadside plus a guest beer will continue to be offered.

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YORKSHIRE DRINKING

A recent visit to some old friends in North Yorkshire allowed me to spend a couple of days in York to visit one or two of the Good Beer Guide listed pubs in this historic city.

The first pub I visited was the Maltings, probably because I had been there before and knew it offered an excellent range of well kept beers. The pub always seems to be busy, both with locals and tourists and is especially popular at lunchtimes when all the tables are usually reserved. The pub also hosts regular beer festivals which are popular with beer drinkers from all parts of the country (www.maltings.co.uk for details). On this visit I sampled Anglo Dutch Devils Knell 4.8%, Hambleton Passion Killer 4.3% and Roosters 2005 Chinese New Year Beer 4.3% (2005 is actually the Year of the Rooster). Regular beers were from York Brewery and Black Sheep and on this visit Oakham Cold Turkey was one of the guests.

The York Brewery became the first brewery in the city for 40 years when it opened in 1996. The brewery has set up a small chain of pubs in the city and also a visitor centre at the brewery. The latest of their pubs is the Rook and Gaskill to the south of the city just outside the city walls; its distance from the city centre probably explains why I was the only customer at 1.30pm on a weekday. The walk is rewarded by a good choice of York Brewery beers. I tried Progress 4.0% brewed with Progress hops. A number of guest beers were available on this occasion from Slaters and Beartown breweries, and while Slaters beers are often available around the country, I can't recall seeing Beartown beers featuring as guest beers too often.

On the way back into the city is another York Brewery pub, the Last Drop on Colliergate. Unlike the Maltings and the Rook and Gaskill, this is a modern pub which

was converted from a solicitor's office. The Last Drop serves a selection of York Brewery beers and a guest beer - on this occasion Crouch Vale Essex Boys Bitter. I decided to have lunch here and washed it down with a pint of another single hop beer from York Brewery, Mount Hood 4.0%.

On the way to the station I passed the York Brewery shop which sells souvenirs (T shirts, glasses, key rings etc.) as well as bottled beers. The shop and visitor centre are in Toft Green, just behind Micklegate. Contact York Brewery on Tel: 01904 621162 or at www.yorkbrew.co.uk for details of brewery tours.

The next day I visited Knaresborough to see the ruins of the castle which was destroyed during the civil war. Not far from the castle is Blind Jacks, a Good Beer Guide listed free house with an excellent range of beers all from Yorkshire micros. Although the town seemed fairly quiet at 5pm on a Friday evening, the pub was really busy. Blind Jacks won the CAMRA Best New Pub award in 1992 and remains an excellent place for good beer and conversation, with none of the piped music and electronic games and vending machines which spoil too many good pubs these days. As for the beers, these are detailed on a blackboard above the downstairs bar. I tried Drunken Duck 4.3% and Nector 5.0% from the local Roosters Brewery (whose products are regularly available alongside Black Sheep beers), Copper Dragon Challenger IPA 4.4% and Goose Eye Migrating Goose 4.3%. Also available but not tried were York Mount Hood 4.0% and Village (Hambleton) White Bear 3.7%.

Next door to Blind Jacks is the Beer Ritz off licence which sells a really extensive range of beers. Not visited but also recommended is the Mitre Hotel near the station which always features local beers

YORKSHIRE DRINKING

including Roosters. I will make sure that I visit Knaresborough and in particular Blind Jacks again.

Next day I made a return visit to York. First stop was of course the Maltings. I had lunch here washed down with some excellent Outlaw Silver Lining 4.3% (from Roosters) and Burton Bridge Spark and Ride 4.5%.

From here I visited the Minster Inn, which although only just outside the centre of York is off the tourist trail and remains an unspoilt community pub with several rooms off a central corridor. It was frequented by employees of the local Royal Mail depot and it reminded me of the Hand and Heart in Peterborough. Regular beer here is John Smiths Cask together with up to 4 guest beers. I tried Blindmans Mine Beer 4.2%. Also available were Skinners Betty Stogs, Moorhouses Pre-

mier and Broadstone Black Abbot.

A short walk away is the Three Legged Mare, another York Brewery pub which featured a selection of York Brewery beers and a number of guest beers including Castle Rock Harvest Pale 3.8%, Bear-town Bear Ass 4.0%, Slaters Bitter 3.6% and Slaters Original 4.0%.

A number of other York pubs are featured in the Good Beer Guide but limited time meant that these will have to wait for my next visit. With a journey time of just over 1 hour from Peterborough, York is easily accessible and well worth a visit with lots of attractions, including the Minster, Jorvik Viking Centre, National Railway Museum, The Walls and an abundance of shops to keep the family happy. The Yorkshire Moors and the seaside resorts of Scarborough and Whitby are also a short journey from York by car, bus or train.

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A FEW HINTS AND TIPS ON HOMEBREWING

The following are purely a few personal observations made over many years of home brewing and are in no way intended to be a definitive guide. Several good books, published by CAMRA, are available for the home brewer.

The three normal ways in which homebrew can be made are as follows:

1) From a Kit.

You are obviously connoisseurs of fine ales; we don't need to dwell any further on that. Only to say that if you do want to make some quick and easy "beer" then it is always best to get a well known brand with 3 kilogrammes of malt extract. But I have found that what ever kit is used there is always that taint of extract and you know it's not the real thing. You are better off getting some bottle conditioned beer.

2) Using Malt Extract Syrup

This makes a much better brew than the kit as you have more control over the finished product, there are numerous recipes available, and you have the opportunity to try some of your own.

It is possible to almost eliminate that taint of extract. Crystal malt, black malt, roast barley, sugars, syrups and your own choice of hops can all be used in recipe formulation. Water treatment is also recommended to produce an acceptable beverage (see below). However, the quality of beer is still not up to the standard of brewing by the full mash system.

3) The Full Mash

This is the best way to brew good beer at home. You have total control over every thing and the quality and taste of the beer produced is second to none.

I don't want to go into the full procedure here, I would just like to share a few tips that I have found give me just that extra quality.

My water treatment consists of putting 12 grammes of gypsum into 25 litres of water and then boiling the water for 15 minutes—do this the night before you intend to brew. After it has cooled transfer 15 litres of the treated water to the mash tun and add 2 grams of Epsom salts. This will bring the mash to about pH 5. This is worth the trouble.

The strike heat of the mash liquor is 76 degrees C. The mash will then settle out to 66-67 degrees C once the grist has been added. Keep this temperature for 1½ hours so that the wort will ferment out a bit further and produce a slightly dryer taste,

Sparge until a pH of 6.3/6.5 or an O.G. of 1005 is reached, and any more unwanted residues are taken into the boiler. I then top the boiler up to about 33 litres, add hops and then boil for 1½ hours. Add late hops and Irish moss 15 minutes from the end. Always boil with the lid off the boiler as this will let the volatile hop oils evaporate and stop any off flavours developing in the finished beer.

Enjoy your brewing

Malcolm Lloyd

Home Brewing books available from CAMRA – www.camra.org.uk

"Brew Classic European Beers at Home" by Graham Wheeler

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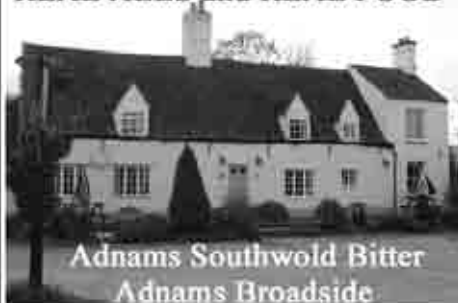
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HUNTINGDONSHIRE CAMRA BRANCH

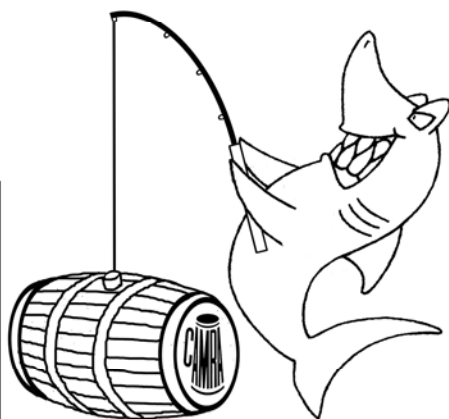
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PUB OF THE YEAR—CHEQUERS, LITTLE GRANSDEN

The Chequers, Little Gransden has been selected as the 2005 Pub of the Year by the Huntingdonshire branch of CAMRA. There was a presentation of a framed certificate to licensees Wendy and Bob Mitchell on Friday 25th February.



Bob and Wendy Mitchell have owned and run the Chequers for 12 years and the pub has been in the Mitchell family since 1950. Bobs' late father, Syd, ran this classic village local for 42 years.

CAMRA gives this annual award to the pub that it judges to provide the widest appeal for its combination of good beer, atmosphere, style, service and value. We are delighted to give this award to Bob and Wendy - they are enthusiasts for good beer and pubs and excel in all these criteria. The convivial public bar with its plain wooden seating and open fire is an unaltered gem and there is a choice of



two other rooms. The ales are well kept and there is always an unusual guest beer.

The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA)'s Huntingdonshire branch announced the award to coincide with CAMRA's National Pubs Week which ran from 19-26 February.

The branch winners will now enter county, regional and national stages and the national Pub of the Year award will be made during next year's Pubs Week in February 2006. The 2005 winner was the renowned Fat Cat pub in Norwich (see page 21).

The Pubs Week celebration in support of British pubs has been declared an unprecedented success with over 10,000 pubs participating.

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REAL ALE IN A BOTTLE



Last year CAMRA launched its accreditation scheme for Real Ale in a Bottle, the bottled equivalent of the draught real ales you can enjoy at the pub.

Real ale in a bottle is unpasteurised and a natural live product which contains yeast for a slow secondary fermentation in the bottle. This process preserves the wonderful fresh flavours of the brewer's craft, and ensures a pleasant natural effervescence.

CAMRA launched its scheme because of the difficulty in spotting 'real ale in a bottle' in the supermarket. Real ale in a pub has always been easy to identify by its traditional dispense system, the handpump.

Many people wrongly assume that the real ale brands that they enjoy in the pub are the same as their counterparts in bottle. This is not always the case. Those in the know have previously looked for the words 'bottle-conditioned' or 'conditioned in the bottle' on the bottle label. Another method is to hold the bottle up to the light to see if it contains any sediment – the life-giving yeast that makes all the difference.

It is now possible to identify 'real ale in a bottle' by checking labels for the logo 'CAMRA says this is real ale'.

The idea behind the accreditation scheme, with its distinctive logo (above) on the bottle label is to ensure instant recognition on the shelf.

With the "CAMRA says this is real ale" hallmark, real ale in a bottle will now be easily identifiable. As Steve Draper of the City of Cambridge brewery said, "CAMRA is a publicly recognised organisation supporting quality produced real ale. By using the logo on our bottles this reinforces the message that the public are buying a

genuine and traditionally produced bottle conditioned beer."

CAMRA piloted the scheme with over 40 breweries and over half of eligible breweries now participate. The intention is that the identifiable mark will show drinkers what type the beer is, how it was made and how the beer should be stored and served. Consumers will be able to more easily differentiate real ale in a bottle from other bottled brands.

As well as having the logo on the bottle, CAMRA will be working with retailers to provide materials that will help them promote real ale in a bottle and outlets that stock it. Eventually, CAMRA would like to see these beers stocked as a separate category.

Hand-in-hand with the launch of the scheme, came the publication of CAMRA's Good Bottled Beer Guide, edited by Jeff Evans and sponsored by ASDA. It is a mark of how things are improving that the guide now lists over 600 bottled beers from 143 breweries. This is up by more than 100 beers and 30 breweries since the last edition, and light years away from the mere 5 bottle conditioned beers that were available when CAMRA started life in 1971. The Guide costs £9.99 and can be bought at www.camra.org.uk.

Shop	Beers	RAIAB
Lidl St Neots	0	0
Morrisons Cambourne	58	4
Rainbow St Neots	21	2
Sainsbury Huntingdon	45	8
Somerfield St Neots	14	1
Tesco Huntingdon	35	2
Tesco St Neots	25	1
Unwins St Neots	10	2
Wadworth St Ives	62	16
Waitrose St Ives	36	5
Waitrose St Neots	32	4

REAL ALE IN A BOTTLE

So where can you buy all this good stuff? During March I surveyed all the supermarkets, specialist beer shops, and off-licences in the local area. Here is a summary of the total number of total number of bottled beers and 'real ales in a bottle' I found.

Top marks goes to J Wadsworth, the specialist wine and beer merchant in St Ives, for its range of bottled beers, many from microbreweries, and the total number of 'real ales in a bottle'.

Of the major supermarket chains, Sainsbury is the notable leader for choice. Morrisons has an impressive range and is excellent value with all bottled beers at £1.59 and "4 for £5". Waitrose has a reasonable selective range with numerous specialist products like organic beers but Tesco is very disappointing, with their bottled beer shelves often empty.

Of the smaller supermarket chains, Rainbow has a good range given the size of store, Somerfield has a limited range but Lidl currently offer none. Hopefully improvements will be encouraged here by the new CAMRA scheme.

You would not expect small off licence shops to compete with supermarkets, but for example, Unwins offers a respectable range given their size. The full details of all the 'real ales in a bottle' I surveyed can be found at www.huntscamra.org.uk/raib.

Other sources for 'real ale in a bottle' are mail order companies, and farmers' markets where small brewers now sell their beers (Wissey Valley Brewery regularly has stalls at St Ives and Huntingdon farmers' markets). A small selection of specialist shops, details of the scheme's supporters and other information can be found at www.camra.org.uk/raib.

Andy Shaw



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32nd Cambridge Beer Festival

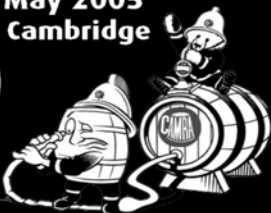
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Concessions for designated drivers

Opening Times

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Tuesday 24th - Friday 27th
11am - 3pm & 5pm - 10.30pm
Saturday 28th
11am - 10.30pm

HALF PINTS

ELGOODS GOLDEN NEWT

Our Fenland neighbours Elgoods are now producing the pale hoppy bitter Golden Newt all year round. The Wisbech brewer's beers are noted for their dry, malty character but their Golden Newt, previously a seasonal beer, features an aromatic hoppy quality and a Golden colour. A blend of Fuggles, Goldings and Cascade and lavish use of late hops in the brewing copper brings the delicate hop flavours & aroma to the fore. The use of Cascade gives a pleasing citrus aroma. Wheat malt and rye crystal are used in the mash along with maris otter pale malt.

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CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

20 All CAMRA approved beer festivals are listed on www.camra.org.uk

JENNINGS TAKEOVER BID

CAMRA calls for Jennings shareholders to take action

CAMRA is calling on Jennings Brewery shareholders to act now to protect the independence of the Brewery. CAMRA's call follows speculation that Wolverhampton & Dudley Brewers (W&DB) are poised to make a takeover bid.

Jennings is a very successful regional brewer with rising profits and sales and an estate of 128 pubs. In the last financial year Jennings beers enjoyed an 8% growth in freetrade volume. The Brewery also recorded an impressive 13.4% rise in profits.

Mike Benner, CAMRA's Chief Executive said, "Any bid from W&DB for Jennings Brewery will be bad news for consumers and employees, but also for the wider community in Cumbria who face the potential loss of a unique local brewer. CAMRA is calling for shareholders to put pressure on the Jennings board to reject any bid from W&D Brewery."

"W&DB's promises to keep Jennings Brewery open, however genuine, are no guarantee. In 1999 W&DB acquired Mansfield Brewery and closed it within two years. CAMRA are urging all shareholders to oppose a takeover to save Jennings Brewery from a similar fate."

"Like many local and regional brewers Jennings has a large number of small shareholders who are committed to the future of the Brewery. W&DB will have a hard task persuading them that a takeover is in the interests of Jennings Brewery."

Visit CAMRA online:

CAMRA's Home Page

<http://www.camra.org.uk>

Huntingdonshire Branch Home Page

<http://www.huntscamra.org.uk>

NATIONAL PUB OF THE YEAR

East Anglian pub voted 'Best in Britain' for a second time!

The Fat Cat in Norwich, Norfolk, has won the 2005 'National Pub of the Year' title - the only pub to have been voted best pub in Britain twice since the competition began in 1988!

The Fat Cat is described in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2005 as an "Ale drinkers' paradise. This award winning pub serves a range of ales; the tap room can be seen behind the bar. Up to 25 guest beers include one mild and a dark ale, sourced from leading breweries around the country. Themed weeks are held throughout the year. The pub stocks up to 30 Belgian bottled beers, plus six on tap. CAMRA's National Pub of the Year in 1998, its popularity ranges from locals to students; visitors to Norwich should not miss it."

Colin Keatley, owner of the Fat Cat said, "I am overwhelmed at winning the National Pub of the Year award for the second time. I am just about to open a new pub in Norwich so this news could not have come at a better time! To be voted best pub in Britain for the first time in 1998 was some achievement, but to run and own the only pub in Britain that has won this award twice is just unbelievable. We have run a good operation at the Fat Cat for over 14 years and my wife and I would like to thank all the staff and locals for their support - without them this wouldn't be possible!"

Mr Keatley plans to open a new pub called the Shed in Lawson Road, Norwich in April. There will be a small brewery adjoining the pub, called the Fat Cat Brewery Company, that will brew some of its own beer to sell at his two pubs.

LOOKING BACK AT PUBS ALONG THE OLD A45

The former county of Huntingdonshire has, like all areas, seen big changes in pub ownership over the last 30 years.

I have travelled through the area regularly since the early 1960s when I used to cycle from Higham Ferrers to St. Neots to watch steam trains hauled by LNER pacifics hurtling through the station. So I got to know the road well. In those days it was the A45 - now it is the more humble B645.

As a schoolboy I could not fail to see that many of the pubs were run by Paines, with its brewery on the market square at St Neots. There was a Paines pub opposite St Neots station, to where the station staff would disappear at lunchtime. Not any more. No station staff and no pub. The area around the station became industrialised and the pub became (in the early 70s) "Bruno's Steak Bar" to cater for this. A few years later it was an office. A few more years and it had been demolished.

Looking at the pubs in the area it is clear that national trends have been followed. Pubs have been taken over by groups, and traditional breweries have "rationalised" their estate. In St. Neots there has been considerable de-pubbing, particularly affecting the former Paines pubs, several of which have closed or changed use. Charles Wells have opened a pub/hotel next to the A1, which was a private house when I first knew the area. One gain is that a former Paines pub, the Lord John Russell, is now Batemans.

Moving west the village of Hail Weston



Royal Oak, Hail Weston

has a bendy road through it and effectively a by pass. There were two Charles Wells pubs in the village. The Royal Oak is a pleasant pub which operates as a "family" venue.

The Crown was at the junction of the village road and the by pass. It closed a few years ago and has now been replaced by new housing. One pub lost.

The next village is Great Staughton. This had three pubs in recent times. The White Hart is a former coaching inn. It was formerly a Watneys outlet but is now thankfully Batemans.



White Hart, Gt Staughton

At the other end of the village were two pubs. On one side of the road was Charles Wells's New Tavern, a lively,

popular locals pub. Directly opposite was The Crown, a former Paines pub that was rather more upmarket. What happened was that the New Tavern closed about ten years ago but moved across the road complete with name. One pub lost.

The next village was Stonely, near to Kimbolton. This had a Charles Well pub, the Bell that I never, regrettably, visited. It had very little in the way of parking, which did not help passing trade. This too closed about ten years ago. One pub lost.

Kimbolton has the air of a small town with its impressive main street which makes a sharp turn at each end. On a street parallel with this was a Charles Wells pub, the Half Moon. This closed over fifteen years ago. One pub lost.

In the main street of Kimbolton are the Saddle (a former Watneys pub) and the New Sun (formerly Paines). Some years ago Charles Wells re-established itself in Kimbolton by taking over the New Sun. The remaining pub here, the White Horse, is well off the main road.

At Tilbrook there used to be a Charles Wells pub called The Three Shuttles, which had unusual high-level metal hand pumps. This also closed over fifteen years ago and, as is often the case, it is difficult

LOOKING BACK AT PUBS ALONG THE OLD A45

now to see which of the houses is the former pub. Charles Wells took over the other much larger pub the White Horse (formerly Watneys). One pub lost.

Some two miles from Tilbrook, in the middle of nowhere and next to the long closed Kimbolton station, was the Manchester Arms. I visited this one the 80s for a pint of Paines. I was the only customer. It has closed - hardly surprising given its location. One pub lost.

Travelling west we reach the point where the three counties of Bedfordshire, Northants and Huntingdonshire came together. Covington had the Red Cow, a pleasant, thatched Charles Wells pub, doubtless more valuable as a private house. Another pub lost.

Further west, just into Northants and just off the main road is the village of Hargrave. Here is the Nags Head, formerly a Charles Wells pub, latterly a free house. I believe it is still open.

The final village before Higham Ferrers is reached is Chelveston. This has one pub, the Star and Garter, which used to be Watneys but was taken over by Charles Wells some years ago.

So what can we conclude about the changes in pubs in this area over some thirty years? The statistics do not look good. Between St Neots and Higham Ferrers (excluding both) were a total of 15 pubs of which 7 have now gone. This is, however, a very rural area with little passing trade. A glance at an old OS map will show many more pubs no longer in business in the villages off the main road.

Thirty years ago there was no real ale at the Watneys or Paines pubs and the only chance of getting real ale west of St. Neots was at Charles Wells's pubs, most of which were serving real ale. This could be because the brewery had not yet modernised these rural outposts. In those

days many Charles Wells pubs in other areas used top pressure for cask beers.

Today most of the pubs sell real ale. This must be considered a gain even if the choice offered by the 'free houses' could sometimes be more imaginative.

Charles Wells has disposed of many low-turnover rural pubs and there are several examples in the area. On the other hand there are examples where Charles Wells have moved to larger more promising premises in the same village, and also where they have taken over Watneys pubs - surely a gain.

Paines beers were never top of the pops and the brewery was slow to respond to the real ale movement. Their bitter, even under top pressure, was a pleasant malty light bitter. They introduced a stronger bitter, EG, as their "vanguard" beer. I also remember with pleasure drinking their dark mild (it was all that was left!) at an early Northampton Beer Festival.

To me, however, Paines is a sad case. It was always a small brewery, owning 24 pubs in 1973. It finally dispensed with top pressure in its pubs. In some cases this was not a good idea many of its pubs were low turnover and quality could suffer. I remember my only visit to the Bull, the "brewery tap". It had a fascinating old-fashioned bar, like a Victorian drawing room, no customers, and a loud clock that somehow discouraged conversation. The beer, served by gravity, could have been used to season fish and chips. Given the present day real ale scene, though, Paines could have been a treasured asset to the area if it had survived, with its picturesque brewery and small country town image

Peter Fleming

SEA, SAND, SEAWEED . . . HOPS—WE MUST BE IN SOUTHWOLD!

It was a spring beach party as 28 Huntingdonshire CAMRA members and guests enjoyed a weekend visit to the Suffolk coast and Adnams brewery.



Adnams' superb beers usually seem to taste even better closer to the brewery. Friday evening gave plenty of opportunity to check this in the brewery's hostelry in and around the town, particularly the Lord Nelson.

At 9.30 sharp on Saturday we were ushered into the Adnams brewhouse for the rare privilege of a tour of this mecca for enthusiasts of good beer. Our guide was Fergus Fitzgerald, affable assistant brewer to head brewer Mike Powell-Evans. His enthusiasm was obvious as he explained the brewing process and the all-important selection of ingredients that produce such a wide-ranging portfolio of distinctive beers.

All the malt is East Anglian. Maris Otter pale malt is preferred and believed to give a biscuity quality to the beers, although the Optic variety is occasionally used instead in seasonal beers. Crystal and chocolate malt and other specialist malts as well as rye crystal and Scottish oatmeal are stored in sacks and pale malt is stored in large silos. The malt mill has given 45 years' service; settings are adjusted and locked for each season's malt to grind the malt for the best extraction

and filterability.

The two major products, Broadside and Bitter, use a similar mix of grain but are mashed separately. These days the two mash tuns and two coppers process many more brews than of old – new fermenting vessels have vastly increased capacity.

The characteristic and intense Adnams hop aroma and taste have been maintained over the years despite steady production increases to keep up with demand. Hops for the brewing coppers are supplied compressed into 'type 90' pellets, called off as needed in sealed packs. This gives good keeping qualities and a more uniform bitterness, compared with the old method of storing large quantities of hops in sack 'pockets' in the brewhouse.

Hop varieties are selected give the varied spicy, earthy and citrus hop flavours of the different beers. Fuggles and Goldings are staple varieties and First Gold, one of the dwarf hop varieties developed for easier harvesting, provides citrus notes. Distinct grapefruit flavour in some beers comes from American Columbus and Chinook hops, and similar characteristics have been exploited in a new English hop, Boudicca, that has been tried.

For Bitter, the copper receives an extra charge of late Fuggles hops for the last 15 minutes of the boil to provide hop aroma that would be lost from the main charge of hops used to provide bitterness. A few whole hops are also added to 'dry hop' every cask as it is filled – this develops the hop aroma further during distribution and cellaring. Broadside does not need any late or dry hops and the relatively subdued hop character allows its more malty features to be enjoyed.

A whirlpool is used to aid separation of solids as the hopped wort is discharged for fermentation. A two-strain yeast is used for all beers. The new enclosed vessels for Bitter and Broadside each hold up

SEA, SAND, SEAWEED . . . HOPS—WE MUST BE IN SOUTHWOLD!

to 240 barrels. Smaller open vessels ferment seasonal cask ales and bottled beers.

Regular attention is needed to remove surplus yeast and monitor the drop in gravity as sugar turns to alcohol. At a gravity specified for each beer the vessel is cooled to slow fermentation and keep a controlled residual level of sugar that, with the required amount of yeast from controlled settling, will provide secondary fermentation in the cask.

After around 7 days the beer goes into casks with isinglass finings that ensure the yeast settles effectively to give clear beer. Typically, four days' stock of beer is in store at the brewery. Casks reach pub cellars within a week of filling when supplied direct by Adnams.

A new-found sprightliness was noted amongst some members as we were

whisked to the sample cellar. The beers we sampled there were in magnificent form. The Broadside was superbly malty and the Explorer had a particularly intense grapefruit flavour. The Bitter provided the ultimate in hop aroma and flavour, enjoyed again later in the back bar of Southwold's Crown and at the Harbour Inn. Here the Adnams Bitter as well as the chocolatey Oyster Stout were amongst the best samples that weekend in Adnams' Southwold pubs, all of which ooze character and distinctiveness to match the beers they offer.



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EVENTS AND SOCIALS

May 2005 Cambridge Beer Festival

Sat 21st Heritage Pubs Trip by rail to Telford to visit Mild passport pubs. Contact Andy Shaw for more details.

Wed 25th Visit to the Cambridge Beer Festival, Jesus Green (7:30pm). County bus services are available from Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots.

Jun 2005 Wissey Valley Brewery Trip

Tues 7th Open Committee Meeting, **Woolpack, St Neots** (8.30 pm)

Sat 25th Trip to **Wissey Valley Brewery, Stoke Ferry**, Norfolk. A tour of the brewery, a mini beer festival and food has been arranged for CAMRA members and their guests. The event starts at 2:30pm.

Jul 2005 Shaw's Stroll

Fri 1st Visit to the beer festival at the Fox, Catworth.

Tues 5th Open Committee Meeting, **The Horseshoe, Offord Darcy** (8.30 pm).

Sat 16th Heritage Pubs Trip by rail to Faversham, Kent. Contact Andy Shaw for more details.

Sun 17th If you agree that the definition of a perfect Sunday is a walk through the countryside followed by a pub lunch, join Andy Shaw and friends on a **Shaw's Stroll** of Keyston & Bythorn (4 miles). Meet at the **Pheasant, Keyston** at 11am.

Aug 2005 Greene King Trip / Rockingham Brewery Talk

Tues 9th Open Branch Meeting. **Brian Bosworth** of **Rockingham Brewery** will be joining us at the **Swan, Old Weston** to talk about how he began brewing. Also, there will be the chance to hear from the Committee about recent branch activities (8.30 pm).

Sat 20th Trip to **Greene King, Bury St Edmunds**. A tour of the brewery has been arranged for CAMRA members and their guests, commencing at 12 noon. Transport may be available.

Wed 24th Evening trip to the **Peterborough Beer Festival** by rail. For current timetables please refer to www.rail.co.uk.

Sep 2005 Booze on the Ouse Beer Festival

Tues 6th **Pre-festival meeting**, at the **Oliver Cromwell**, St Ives (8.30 pm) for all those helping with the St Ives Beer festival. If you would like to help at the festival, please contact Andy Shaw, on 01480 355893.

Thurs 15th to Saturday 17th **Booze on the Ouse** – St Ives Beer Festival, Burgess Hall, St Ivo Centre. Opening Times: Thurs: 6-10.45 pm; Fri 12-3 pm & 5-10.45 pm; Sat 12-10.45 pm. FREE ENTRY to CAMRA members. VOLUNTEERS WELCOME!

Thurs 22nd Evening trip to the **Letchworth Beer Festival**, Plinston Hall, Letchworth by rail. For current timetables please refer to www.rail.co.uk

For further information please contact Pete Godfrey, Social Secretary, on 01480 212849 or e-mail: socials@huntscamra.org.uk. For an up to date listing, log on to: www.huntscamra.org.uk/diary. For current train timetables please refer to www.rail.co.uk.

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OPENING TIMES

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To Advertise

To place an advert or enquire about our rate card please contact:

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N.Richards@btinternet.com

Deadline for Autumn 2005 issue (124) is Tuesday 26th July 2005.

TRADING STANDARDS

Your local Trading Standards organisation is Cambridgeshire County Council Trading Standards. If you have any complaints about trading standards issues at local pubs please contact them.

They have a role to protect consumers from errors or frauds concerned with quality, description or price of goods, services or facilities and to detect and rectify unfair advertising practices.

Contact **Cambridgeshire Trading Standards** helpdesk on 0845 3030666, or at Trading Standards Division, Sackville House, Sackville Way, Great Cambourne, Cambridgeshire, CB3 6HD. The trading standards web site is www.tradingstandards.gov.uk



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