

Opening Times

ISSUE 173
SPRING 2018

Huntingdon branch of CAMRA
hunts.camra.org.uk

INSIDE FEATURES

CAMRA's Revitalisation Project

CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2018

Booze on the Ouse

St Ives Beer & Cider Festival
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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the spring issue of Opening Times 173; the magazine from the Huntingdonshire Branch of CAMRA (the Campaign for Real Ale). This is the launch edition of a new format produced for us by the team behind ThinkLocal in St Neots. With a clear, modern design, we hope that the new format will be more readable and will provide improved, interesting content. We also hope that this will provide an enhanced response for our advertisers, who receive our grateful thanks as without them our magazine could not be printed.

This year is an exciting one for CAMRA nationally as the Revitalisation Project comes to fruition. This project has been ongoing for a couple of years and is the biggest review into the organisation's purpose, vision and mission conducted in its 47 year history. It's time for members to take the decision on the changes recommended by CAMRA's volunteer leadership. We would encourage all CAMRA members to get involved in the debate and decision making process. See the following article for more details.

We would like to bring your attention to the revamped branch website (see www.hunts.camra.org.uk). As well as making it easier to navigate and deleting some out of date links and content, our new webmaster (Chris Bee) has added a lot of additional material. This includes copies of Opening Times magazine going back to the first issue, published in 1976 - probably a few years before many readers of this edition were born! The website is also a good source of information regarding forthcoming branch committee meetings, social events and local beer festivals (some of which we hear of at short notice). CAMRA members are welcome at all meetings, whilst both members and non members are usually welcome to come along to our social events.

Finally, thank you for reading this magazine. We hope you like it and would love to hear from you. What do you think of our new format? Would you like to submit an article? Have you any pub or brewery news you would like to pass on?

Your comments would be welcome (please advise whether you wish your comments to be considered for publication). Please send an email to news@hunts.camra.org.uk or contact a member of the branch committee; details are shown on our branch website or see page ? of this magazine.

Richard Harrison, Chairman of Hunts CAMRA on behalf of the Branch Committee



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The main branch contacts listed. Please visit our website for a full list of our branch Committee members. hunts.camra.org.uk

**BRANCH
CONTACTS**

Opening Times by post:

If you would like to receive Opening Times by post, please send a cheque for £2.50 for an annual subscription (payable to Huntingdonshire CAMRA) TO Graham Mulchinock, 17 Park Drive, Little Paxton, PE19 6NS

CAMRA's REVITALISATION PROJECT

CAMRA is set to widen its remit to represent drinkers of quality beers, ciders and perries of all types, as well as moving its focus beyond traditional pubs, if its members approve recommendations put before them in April.

A root and branch review of CAMRA's purpose and objectives, called the Revitalisation Project, was launched early in 2016. CAMRA's 190,000 members have been involved and consulted throughout the process and will soon have their say on whether the resulting proposals for change are adopted.

While continuing to advocate that real ale is the pinnacle of the brewer's craft, the Campaign's wider focus will mean all drinkers who enjoy a range of beers, ciders and perries will feel welcome in the organisation.

If the changes are approved, the Campaign will work to provide an enhanced education and information experience for its members, and all drinkers who attend CAMRA festivals, to help them appreciate and learn about all types and styles of beer, cider and perry - and make informed decisions about what constitutes "quality".

While campaigning for the continued production and consumption of real ale, cider and perry will remain at the core of CAMRA's objectives, members will be asked to consider changes to the organisation's Articles of Association which will widen the range of types of beer that it represents - including quality beer which does not meet the organisation's definition of "real ale".

The recommendations also propose that as a result of widening its scope of interest CAMRA will be able to represent and engage with all beer drinkers and with all pub-goers, irrespective of what they choose to drink, increasing its ability to campaign in the interests of a much larger constituency.

This broadening of consumer representation will also see CAMRA demonstrate an interest in and lobby for a much wider range of on-trade

outlets. While the organisation will continue to campaign for the preservation of the traditional British pub, it will also encourage on-trade outlets of all kinds to serve quality beer, cider and perry. CAMRA will continue to advocate drinking in public social venues, rather than the increasing practise of consumers buying their drinks from supermarkets for home consumption.

The proposed changes may take the form of:

- CAMRA festivals offering a wider range of quality beers, ciders and perries in all formats
- CAMRA engaging with drinkers of all types - with the hope of taking them on a 'journey of discovery' of why real ale, cider and perry is particularly special
- CAMRA supporting members in their appreciation of beer, their ability to both recognise quality products and campaign effectively for them to be stocked in pubs and bars
- CAMRA providing information about all kinds of beer, not just real ale, as well as opportunities for members to learn more about brewing and the different types and styles available to drinkers
- CAMRA recognising a wider range of drinks and establishments in its local and national competitions

Seeking approval for their recommendations, the Campaign's leadership argue that a wider appeal and closer connection with the current revolution in beer and bars will enable the organisation to connect with modern-day beer drinkers and pub goers. This in turn will strengthen CAMRA's campaigning voice: enabling it to increase the already-considerable influence it exerts on the Government and industry decision-makers.

CAMRA chairman Colin Valentine said: "It's always been important that our members have had a say throughout this review process and

we're now at the point where we'll be giving all our members the chance to vote on the final Revitalisation Project recommendations."



The vote will be held at our Annual General Meeting, in Coventry in April. In the months between now and then we'll be making sure members can access the full details of the changes we're recommending, along with the analysis of the impacts and potential opportunities the changes will have.

Colin continued "My colleagues and I will be making ourselves available at meetings around the country over the next three months so that members can ask us questions about the proposed changes. We'll also be making sure that we're available online at frequent intervals. At the end of this process our aim is to make sure that every member has been given the opportunity to learn more about the proposals before they voted."

More information about CAMRA's Revitalisation Project, as well as detailed information about the proposed changes, is available at revitalisationdecision.camra.org.uk

Members of CAMRA's National Executive will be holding briefing sessions for members across the country, starting in January. They'll also be hosting online Q&A sessions where members can ask them questions

See revitalisationdecision.camra.org.uk for details of regional meetings and follow @CAMRA_Official or visit CAMRA's Facebook page to see the latest information

All CAMRA members who attend the Members' Weekend in Coventry (20-22 April 2018) will be able to vote on the changes. Members who do not attend the AGM will be able to vote by proxy ahead of the meeting.



The recommendations will be presented as Special Resolutions to change the wording of CAMRA's Articles of Association - these changes will require 75 per cent of those voting to be in favour in order to pass

"Our recommendations mark an important stage in CAMRA's long history. We recognise that the beer and pub landscape has changed and continues to evolve, and our place in that landscape has changed as well. We're determined to make sure that we continue to change and evolve so that we are relevant to drinkers of all types and continue to offer a compelling reason for people to join our organisation."

Huntingdonshire CAMRA would like to encourage all members to get involved in the discussion and debates. Please attend a briefing session, seek more information on the revitalisation website or come along to a local branch meeting to discuss this with the branch Committee. Your opinion is very important for the future of CAMRA and we would ask that you vote on the proposals, either at the Members weekend or by voting in advance by proxy.

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HUNTS PUB NEWS

We are sad to report the death of one of St Ives' longest serving landlords. Terry Richardson, licensee of the **White Hart**, has died, aged 67, after a long illness. His funeral took place at Cambridge Crematorium in September and was well attended by family and friends, including many regulars from the pub. Our condolences go to his wife Ann and his family.

The **Three Horseshoes** in Wistow closed in October 2017. The Keep Wistow Flowing steering group has been formed by a group of villagers with the intention of reopening it as a pub so that it can continue to serve the village and local communities. They have been running a regular pop-up pub in the village to help raise funds. The steering group and the parish council have had the pub listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) with Huntingdonshire District Council. It is anticipated that the pub will be placed on the market soon, initiating a moratorium period to enable the group to mount a bid to buy the pub under the ACV rules.

The **Three Tuns** in Guilden Morden has been closed since early 2013. The pub has been put up for sale by its current owner and the **Three Tuns** Community Group (TTCG) is trying to raise £300,000 to purchase it. Substantial funds have been raised, but as we went to press, we had not heard whether the required target had been achieved.

The Grade II listed **White Horse** in Eaton Socon was re-launched last year under the team behind the Cambridge restaurant Alimatum. Chef-patron Mark Poynton aims to appeal to the whole community, from those looking for a drink after work to those seeking an occasion destination for lunch or dinner. The pub offers a British-inspired food menu and features a gin bar.

The bar area of the **George & Dragon** in Elsworth (just outside our branch area) has been refurbished and a new menu that includes 28-day aged Herefordshire steaks and a selection of fish dishes has been introduced by managers Paul and Karen. Please visit their website for more information.

Finally, for many reasons (e.g. through choice or ill health), some people are unable to drink beer

or are looking for something with a low alcohol content. It is good to see that some local pubs are looking to cater for these customers with something other than the usual national or foreign products. As mentioned in the following pub news, several of our local pubs are being more adventurous in their offerings of gluten free (note that most Nene Valley Brewery beers are gluten free) and low alcohol beers which although not 'real ale' are an alternative especially for drivers.

News from the old riverport & surrounding villages

The St Ives Jazz & Blues Festival at the end of October attracted extra customers to the town's pubs and hotels with most putting on at least one event. Amongst these was the **Oliver Cromwell**, which has recently been selling beers from Grainstore and Lacon's, whilst guests have included Long Man Brewery Blond, Banks's Mild, Jennings Hop Commotion and beers from Manchester Brewing Company. Gluten-free beer is stocked here in the form of bottled Vagabond Pale Ale 4.5% from Brewdog (not bottle conditioned though).

The **Slepe Hall** Hotel has new owners; former investment banker Shammi Malik and his wife Emilie. They don't plan to make too many changes to the popular 4-star hotel. Two real ales from Adnams were on sale in early November. A range of gins have been introduced including some from the Ely Gin Company.



Winter at the Slepe Hall Hotel, St Ives

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Floods Tavern often sells Elgoods' latest seasonal beers, with the occasional guest from other breweries.

At the **Royal Oak**, minor improvements included the wooden floor of the rear bar area being uncovered and stained. Guest real ales here come from local SIBA (Small Independent Brewers Association) members, with up to three of their beers appearing alongside the permanent Oakham Inferno. These usually include a dark beer, with porter being landlord Dave's favourite beer style. The **Royal Oak** received the Hunts CAMRA LocAle Pub of the Year award for 2017 at the St Ives Booze on the Ouse beer festival.

The **Golden Lion Hotel** had guest beers from Butcombe and Box Steam and over the river the **Dolphin Hotel** was serving four cask beers recently with two each from Greene King and Adnams. The two rotating real ales at the **Ivy Leaf Club** usually include something of interest. Recently Hancocks HB and Westgate Crystal Gold were stocked there.

The **Nelsons Head** usually dispenses a dark real ale, which is normally Egyptian Cream or Dark Horse from Nene Valley Brewery, with Nethergate Growler and Greene King XX Mild also making an appearance. Local real ales are still available with Southgate English Bitter from Angles Ales seen in November.



Local ales are a feature at the Nelson's Head in St Ives

Out of the town centre, the **Seven Wives** is now selling four cask beers, with several from Sharps Brewery usually available along with Hop Back Summer Lightning and often Brains Reverend James. The pub has recently extended its opening hours and is now open all day (except on Monday). Several more WivesFest families' days have been held.

Guest ales at the **Haywain** continue to include beers not normally seen in this area. Recently these have included Roosters Stars & Stripes 4.3%, Moles Molecatcher 5.0%, Black Sheep Rye Mild, Castle Rock Sheriffs Tipple and Peerless Kneebuckler IPA.

A couple of visits to Fenstanton (including a post-beer festival thank you trip for volunteers) found six real ales at the **Duchess** with regulars Adnams Ghost Ship, Sharps Doom Bar and four guests, which have included Adnams Southwold and Lighthouse, Elgoods Cambridge and Castle Rock Harvest Pale.

At the **King William IV**, new manager Ray is settling in; Greene King IPA and a guest beer are the real ales available.

On the other side of the road, at the **Crown & Pipes**, real ales from Charles Wells provide a good and unusual option for the area.



Crown & Pipes in Fenstanton - one of several pubs visited on our coach tour

The **Green Man** in Colne has been selling a selection of beers from Milton. Noted by our correspondent so far have been Medusa 4.6%, Justinian 3.9%, Nike 4.7%, Pegasus 4.1% and Sparta 4.3%. It looks like the beers from this local award-winning brewery are popular with

the locals. Thanks to Roger Jerham for sending this report from his local pub.

The **Crown Inn** lies in the picturesque village of Broughton, north west of St Ives. The pub concentrates on food, but this doesn't stop it selling several real ales. Mauldons Moletrap and two changing beers are usually available here, although only two beers, What The Fox's Hat 4.2% and Cuthbert's 3.9%, both from Church End, were on sale when visited. On weekdays, the pub opens for lunchtimes and again in the evening. On Sundays it stays open all day.



Crown Inn, Broughton, on a sunny summer afternoon

Huntingdon area news

At the **Falcon**, two beers from Lincoln Green Brewery plus Muirhouse Summit Hoppy 4.0% and Bartrams Cambridge Rock Festival Beer 3.7% were among some of the more unusual real ales recently. The wide range of dark beers here includes some from the pub operator's brewery, Olde England. This ensured that the **Falcon** again won the Hunts CAMRA Mild & Dark Beer Pub of the Year award.

Elsewhere in Huntingdon, Wetherspoon's **Sandford House** often has beers from local breweries on offer, including from Oakham and **Rocket Ales**. In October there was a 'Meet the Brewer' evening when **Rocket Ales** visited the pub. See the Brewery News section for details.

Wychwood Hobgoblin was the real ale at **Cromwells** on the High Street; our contact was informed that if a planned refurbishment goes ahead more real ales may be available in future.

Current Cambridgeshire Pub of the Year, the **King of the Belgians** in Hartford, had Nobbys Best Bitter in fine fettle, alongside Milestone Rich Ruby 4.5%, Nethergate Alan & Paul's IPA and Adnams Ghost Ship. Crystal Ship from local Papworth Brewery was seen here recently, with plaudits received from pub regulars. The next beer festival here will be on from 25-28 May 2018.



King of the Belgians, Hartford - Cambridgeshire Pub of the Year

Also in Hartford the **Barley Mow** was selling Wells Bombardier and Young's Winter Warmer late last year.

We have heard that the Victoria Inn in Huntingdon sadly closed down early in January. The fate of this well-loved pub is currently uncertain, although we understand it is listed for sale by auction in late February. We have also heard that the **Three Horseshoes** in Great Stukeley has closed. At the time of going to print, we don't know when or if this pub will reopen. Please contact us at news@hunts.camra.org.uk if you can update us on the fate of these or other pubs.

Other news from around the branch area

The Hunts CAMRA Committee met recently at the **Anchor** in Little Paxton; Adnams Southwold and Ghost Ship were the real ales available. A beer festival was held at the pub in early autumn and the first anniversary of Rachel and Kevan

taking on the management was celebrated in December. The pub (and restaurant) has gone from strength to strength and is a great asset for the village. Visit the **Anchor's** Facebook page for details of upcoming events.

Another local beer festival was held in Papworth Village Hall in early October. A range of eight beers were on offer from Papworth Brewery, together with a similar number from local breweries and those further afield. The festival also featured products from Simon's Cider. We understand that it is planned to hold one or more beer festivals at this venue during 2018; the first probably in April. Dates will appear on the Papworth Brewery Facebook page.



Ale Taster, Micropub & Bottleshop, St Neots

Many pubs sell at least one alcohol free or low alcohol beer; usually this is a foreign beer such as Becks Blue. The **Ale Taster** is a pub that offers something different, with a Pale Ale and a Milk Stout, both at 0.5% ABV, from Big Drop Brewing. Gluten free beers here are from Greens Brewery of Manchester, as well as canned beers from Nene Valley (although unfortunately none of these are real ales).

If you see a Nene Valley Brewery draught beer on at your local, it is very likely to be gluten-free, as all of their core range is certified gluten-free. Please check with the bar staff before ordering.

If you have visited a pub after reading about it in this magazine, please mention this to the staff.

Credits: Lawrence Stevens, Andy Blagbrough and Roger Jerham.

Reports from pubs in our branch are always most welcome; please send emails to news@hunts.camra.org.uk

CIDER SECTION

Branch cider social

As part of CAMRA's Cider Month (October), Huntingdonshire CAMRA held its first 'cider social' in two pubs in St Neots. Hunts branch members, together with visitors from our neighbouring Cambridge branch, visited the **Pig 'n' Falcon** and the **Ale Taster** where a large number of ciders were available.

To coincide with our event, the **Pig 'n' Falcon** held its first cider festival which ran from 25 October to 5 November. Over 20 ciders were on offer, including several from local producers Potton Press, **Spinney Abbey** and Watgull Orchards. Cider producers from further afield were also represented.

Trade was brisk at the smaller **Ale Taster** and here too a good range of ciders were available, including three from the **Cambridge Cider Company**. There were also examples from Simon's, Potton Press and Mayfly.

Our thanks go to John and Paul for hosting the event in their respective pubs; John had driven to some of the producers to collect their ciders. The day was definitely a success and it is intended to repeat the event next year.

Camra's annual cider trip

Another event during cider month was CAMRA's annual cider trip, which was held in West Sussex in October. Our branch representatives, Andy Blagbrough and Ian Baptist, joined a group of CAMRA members from around the country to visit two local cider makers.

First stop was at Wobbly Press Cider in Bolney which started in 2009. A large part of their production is apple juice, but they also make a range of ciders. Innovation is at the heart of their business as shown by the hopped cider and canned ciders that were available for us to try. Three traditional ciders and two fruit ciders were also available.

The other visit was to Village Green Cider in

Turner's Hill. This was a much smaller operation housed in the owner's garage. Some of the group helped to load apples into the scatter before the mash was put into the homemade cider press. Their two ciders, Dry and Medium, were available for us to sample. The products of a sister operation, which also uses the Village Green name, but is based in Norfolk, are sometimes seen in pubs in our area (two of which were available at our recent cider day event).

Local cider news

Local cider maker **Cromwell Cider** made improvements to their cider store during summer 2017. All our local cider makers were busy during the autumn as they collected the new crop of apples and pears to produce their next batches of cider and perry.

A new cider at the **Pig 'n' Falcon**, **Spinney Abbey** Monk & Disorderly, was well-received and **Spinney Abbey** ciders can be expected to appear here again. It has been available at our 'Booze on the Ouse' festivals previously.

Local real cider is part of the offer at the **Ale Taster** in St Neots. **Cambridge Cider Company** ciders are available here and selling well, especially the Angry Wasp (dry). It is understood that they may be looking to stock the products of another local supplier. The **Ale Taster** also sells a range of Saxby's bottled fruit ciders. Both pubs are contenders for our next Cider Pub of the Year award.

Unfortunately, the **New Sun** in St Neots no longer sells real cider.

A beer festival was held in August in the **St Neots Scout Hall** at which three ciders were available. These comprised two from Gwynt y Ddraig and the first local sighting of one from Grainstore.

It is understood that the **Coach House** in St Neots may be planning to organise a cider festival.

The **Eight Bells** in Abbotsley sells two ciders, Three Counties Bounty and Three Peace Suite, from **Hardings Cider**, whose products are made in the village.

The **Oliver Cromwell** in St Ives reduces cider prices on Wednesdays with all real ciders selling for £2.75 a pint.

At the **King of the Belgians** in Hartford, good sales of cider at their festivals has resulted in an increased range of local Cromwell cider being available, in addition to Weston's Old Rosie.

On the other side of the River Ouse in Hemingford Abbots, the **Axe & Compass** also sells cider from **Cromwell Cider**. A cider festival was recently held here with around twelve ciders on offer.

CAMRA'S GOOD BEER GUIDE 2018

The latest edition of CAMRA's annual Good Beer Guide was published in September with 16 pubs in our branch area listed in this best-selling guide to the best pubs and beer in the UK. Two of these pubs also won awards at our recent Booze on the Ouse beer festival. You can buy your own copy of the Good Beer Guide direct from the CAMRA online shop with a substantial discount for CAMRA members.



The Wheatsheaf

This idyllic village pub situated next to the church in Gamlingay is under new management. Deryck and Lorna ensure a warm welcome to our valued customers.

As well as serving exception food daily there are weekly events including Quiz nights on Mondays (please call to check), Music jamming nights (all instruments welcome) on Tuesdays from 7.30pm as well as a pool, with music and a lovely courtyard garden suitable for children's clubs. Parties are also catered for. The pub also has a large off-road car park.

Offering a full range of beer and larger including Sharps Doom Bar and Adnams Southwold Cask ales the pub is a welcome place for everyone.

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BREWERY UPDATES

Papworth Brewery

Papworth Brewery successfully completed their move to a new location in Earith with the commissioning of an 11 barrel (2000 litre) brewing plant which saw its first brews in December. Look out for them appearing in your local free-house.

A range of eight regular beers is produced, including the award winning Robin Goodfellow 5.4% and Crystal Ship 4.2%, plus Half Nelson IPA 4.2%, Red Kite 4.7% and Big Sur APA 5.0%. Other beers produced include Koura 4.7%, a fruity wheat beer brewed with Australian and New Zealand hops.



Richard & Chris on the Papworth Brewery Bar, St Ives 'Booze on the Ouse'

As mentioned earlier, the brewery organised a beer festival in Papworth Village Hall early in October and also ran their 'brewery bar' at our 'Booze on the Ouse' festival. Hopefully, following the expansion their beers will appear regularly at many more pubs in our branch area. Subject to the necessary license, it is intended to open a brewery tap and to sell bottled beer direct to the public in Spring 2018.

Rocket Ales

Rocket Ales visited the **Sandford House** in Huntingdon in October for a 'Meet the Brewer' event to launch their new beer Bloodhound. Brewer Dave Smith and partner Mike Blakesley discussed their plans for the brewery and beers. Dave was a home brewer for many years until

he and Mike assisted Kings Cliffe Brewery with development of their P51 Porter.

Following this they decided to brew commercially themselves. They set up **Rocket Ales** in 2015 using spare capacity at King's Cliffe. The **Rocket Ales** name comes from Mike's former RAF career.

Their first brew was Atlas, a 5.7% IPA brewed with Admiral hops and launched at the Draper's Arms in Peterborough. This was followed by Vostok Stout, 4.6%, made with Maris Otter malted barley. Their third beer was Komet, a 3.8% Kolsch style beer. Vostok Stout recently won a 'gold' award at Northampton Beer Festival.



Dave & Mike from Rocket Ales, visit Sandford House in Huntingdon

Much of Rocket's production is bottled, but they continue their association with Wetherspoons who sell most of their cask-conditioned products. As well as the Draper's Arms, their beers are regularly available in the Sandford Arms and the Swan & Angel.

Their latest beer is Bloodhound Bitter, a pale amber beer at 4.2% ABV that is hopped with Admiral hops. It was officially launched at **Sandford House** and will be seen in the three local Wetherspoons pubs. At the Swan & Angel, it has been rebadged as Riverport Bitter with a distinctive pump clip featuring the town bridge, and should be regularly on sale there.

Mike and Dave outlined their plans for the brewery. Having outgrown the spare capacity that was available at King's Cliffe they have been

looking to set up on their own. Having looked at a number of potential new sites, the unfortunate closure of Red Brewery in July provided an ideal opportunity. **Rocket Ales** moved into their new premises in Great Staughton at the end of November.

Rocket is looking for new outlets, with local free houses being looked at as well as farmer's markets for their bottle sales. The beers may also appear in other Wetherspoons pubs locally. Rocket has sold their beers at several events locally including at the Shuttleworth Trust where the rocket-related names resulted in good sales.

Dave has several new beers in the pipeline including a 4.4% raspberry wheat beer to be named Redstone. Some impressive samples of the first brew were available. Another possibility is a 'house beer' for the Sandford house.

Draycott Brewery

Jon Draycott is still busy brewing a range of bottle-conditioned beers in Buckden. His planned IPA is still work in progress. They recently helped with the Buckden Scouts Beer Festival.

Son Of Sid – Ten Years On

It's hard to believe that the Son of Sid Brewery at the Chequers, Little Gransden, has been brewing for ten years. Bob Mitchell, licensee and brewer, named the brewery after his late father, Sid, who owned and ran the pub before him.

I remember a visit to the Chequers one Christmas; I think it was 2003. Bob was keen to show me his plans for an extension to the pub, including a small brewhouse. As ever, these plans would take a while to mature and develop. But with much anticipation, in late 2007 the brewery was ready.

The first brew was the aptly named 'First Brew'. Subsequent beers were often amusingly named after topical subjects connected with the pub:

customers' dogs or wives, local events and so on.

Production soon settled down to a few favourites: English Ale, a well-balanced easy-drinking bitter with a clean malty taste; the fuller-bodied Golden Shower, light golden and crisp with a light hop character and defined maltiness; followed by Muck Cart Mild, which has turned out to be one of the all-time great milds.

This smooth black mild, with its resounding roast malt presence, has picked up numerous awards for best mild at beer festivals and area heats for CAMRA's Champion Beers of East Anglia awards, culminating in the bronze medal for milds in CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain competition at the Great British Beer Festival at London Olympia in 2012.

Always keen to push the boundaries and try new ingredients, Bob decided to brew a beer using berries from the Wild Service tree, also known as the Chequers tree. These are not common trees, but a local source was found. The brew was bottled and matured, resulting in a splendid dry, tartish beer.

Bob came to my rescue when, in 2011, my youngest daughter wanted a bottled beer for her wedding. We managed to concoct this from a stronger version of Muck Cart Mild; it was a great success at the wedding.

Over the years, more beers have been added to the regular range. A full-bodied stronger bitter, Fine Ale Furlong, is named to reflect Bob's love of horse racing. Bee Sting Bitter recalls an incident when Bob was stung by one of his bees. Ragwort is a light cask lager.

On the brewery front, there has been a modest increase in capacity; not by a huge amount but just enough to make brewing a batch more economical. Son of Sid beers can usually be found at local beer festivals and some beers have escaped further afield when brewery swaps take place. Now, I wonder if a 10th anniversary beer is on the cards? I'll have to find out!

**Roy Endersby, CAMRA Brewery Liaison
Officer for Son of Sid**



The White Hart is a traditional village local offering good homecooked food, the meat is supplied by the local butcher, good beer and good cheer.

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE PUB AWARDS 2017

Huntingdonshire CAMRA's regular pub awards aim to draw attention to pubs that operate in ways that CAMRA seeks to encourage - premises with atmosphere and style, good service and welcome, a good community focus and good value.

The latest batch of awards, presented in October at the branch's 'Booze on the Ouse' beer festival in St Ives, celebrated a number of pubs that hit the spot by providing well-presented ranges of real ales of varied styles including milds and other dark ales, and LocAles - real ales sourced from local breweries.

Most Improved Rural Pub: Royal Oak, Hail Weston



Branch Chairman, Richard Harrison, presented the award to licensees Tony Baker, Chris Couzens and Graham Bassett

The **Royal Oak** is a picture postcard village pub and the heart, soul and social centre of the village. The building dates from the 16th century. It has recently re-opened, having been closed for five years and is now owned by a village consortium. There is a well-chosen range of four real ales and a varied traditional pub food menu.

Most Improved Urban Pub: Ale Taster, St Neots

The **Ale Taster** is a small back-street pub operated in the style of a micro-pub. Renamed by the enthusiastic new owners, it was previously the Hog and Partridge and before that the Lord John Russell. It features up to three changing beers, served from stillage behind the bar, five real ciders and perry. The owners are looking at sourcing beer and cider from local producers.



Chris Jones of Papworth Brewery presented the award to the Ale Taster licensee Paul Greenwood.

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Mild and Dark Beer Pub of the Year: The Falcon, Huntingdon



Jon Neale from Lord Conrad's Brewery presented the award to the Falcon licensees Alyson, Paul & Nathaniel Hepworth

Steeped in local history, the **Falcon** reopened in December 2014 after a six-year closure and lengthy campaign by local community groups. An ever-changing selection of beers of varied styles, including dark beers, is served from up to eighteen hand pumps, including many beers from Northamptonshire breweries, along with a range of real ciders. In 2016, the **Falcon** won the Huntingdonshire Branch and Cambridgeshire Pub of the Year awards.

LocAle Pub of the Year: Royal Oak, St Ives



Booze on the Ouse Bar Manager, Kathy Hadfield-Moorhouse, presented the LocAle award to the Royal Oak licensees Lindsay & Dave Sanderson, and their son, Lucas

The LocAle Pub of the Year award, for pubs that source real ales locally, went to the **Royal Oak**, St Ives, one of a number of historic listed pubs in the town. The room layout and character was happily preserved in a sensitive renovation in the 1990s and has changed little since. The **Royal Oak** serves a varied range of regular beers and a changing range of at least three guest beers, which often from local breweries.

Cambridgeshire Pub of the Year: King of the Belgians, Hartford



The Cambridgeshire Pub of the Year award was presented to King of the Belgians licensee Matt Spicer by St Ives Town Mayor, Councillor Philip Pope.

The **King of the Belgians** went on to lift the county award after winning the Huntingdonshire Branch Pub of the Year award in March. This is a genuine community pub which offers an ever-changing selection of real ales, cider and good value food every day. Solid oak beams and a copper topped bar are features of the public bar and there's a separate peaceful dining area. Also awarded the Hunts CAMRA Community Pub of the Year 2013, Hunts CAMRA Pub of the Year 2014 and 2015, Cambridgeshire CAMRA Pub of the Year 2014 and 2015 and Hunts CAMRA Urban Pub of the Year 2017.

'BOOZE ON THE OUSE' BEER FESTIVAL

The St Ives festival took place at the Burgess Hall in October and featured over 70 real ales and 18 ciders. Planning for the festival began many months before the event as our festival committee members arranged everything that is needed to ensure that the festival takes place. The hall had been booked well in advance. As with all CAMRA beer festivals, a detailed budget has to be submitted to CAMRA headquarters many months before the festival is due to take place. Fortunately our budget was approved, allowing us to continue the planning process.

As well as selecting and ordering the beers and ciders there are many other things that need to be arranged before we can open the doors. All our committee members have their own areas for which they are responsible. This includes arranging our volunteer staff who, as well as serving behind the bars, perform many other duties at the festival. These include behind-the-scenes tasks such as setting up and dismantling the stillage and bars before and after the event. With many CAMRA festivals struggling to find sufficient volunteers, we are fortunate to have a great team of volunteers for our 'Booze on the Ouse' events. Other jobs that the festival committee do include ordering the stillage, bars, glasses and other essential items,

such as a glass washer, ensure the smooth running of the event. Festival food also has to be arranged, not only for our visitors, but also to keep our volunteers fed.



St Ives Town Mayor, Councillor Philip Pope, formally opens the 'Booze on the Ouse' Festival

The festival opened its doors at midday on the Thursday and the afternoon included our trade session with local pub licensees and brewers. The afternoon began well with a good attendance in the hall. However, shortly before our pub award presentations were due to be made, the festival was suddenly brought to a halt by the sounding of the centre's fire alarms - due to a few pies becoming a little overheated - forcing the evacuation not only of the hall where the festival was taking place but also the adjoining leisure centre. The local fire brigade soon arrived and after checking that it was safe for us to re-enter the hall the festival resumed after a delay of about half an hour.

A little later than planned, the presentation of our annual pub awards took place. Councillor Phil Pope, the Mayor of St Ives, attended the festival and officially opened the festival (pictured left) after presenting the licensees of the **King of the Belgians**, Matt and Jane Spicer, with their Cambridgeshire CAMRA Pub of the Year certificate.

The Thursday evening saw the hall filling up and everyone appeared to be enjoying themselves. Beers from local breweries were proving to be popular. Papworth Brewery, with their own section of the real ale bar, had a good flow of visitors.

Friday started off with dull and windy weather, but a good crowd attended the festival. Some of the real ales were starting to run out at the end of the evening session. Cider sales were also brisk, with two ciders from Northern Ireland proving to be particularly popular.

Saturday, the last day of the festival, started with bright and sunny weather which encouraged good crowds to visit the festival. All the beers were selling well, but with plenty of staff behind the bar there were few queues of people waiting to be served. On the cider bar one of the flavoured ciders managed to make it till just a few minutes past opening time with others selling out during the day.

Over the period of the festival nearly 1,200 visitors drank over 500 gallons (4,000 pints) of beer from nearly 50 breweries. Golden Ales proved to be as popular as ever with festival visitors drinking 92% of those that we had on sale. Our range of cask porters also sold very well.

A big thank you goes to our membership secretary, Varina Howell, who had a busy three days signing up 56 new members. Thanks also to the local group of the Wildlife Trust who ran the glasses stand and raised more than £770 for their funds from donations and unused beer tokens.

Although the festival was over, our volunteers had one final day to go. The earliest start of the week saw around 20 of us arriving at the hall to take down the casks, bars and stillage. Quite a lot of takedown work had been completed on the Saturday evening, but there was still some heavy lifting work to be done. By midday, everything had been loaded on to the various vehicles going to CAMRA HQ, the local store in Royston and Papworth Brewery. The hall was empty and the festival already just a memory.



Roll on St Neots in March! The dates are Thu 15 – Sat 17 March 2018. See the diary section later in the magazine for more details.

Finally a huge thank you to all our volunteer staff whether you worked all festival or for just a few hours. Without you the festival just wouldn't be possible!

More photographs of the festival can be found on the branch website. These include some interesting panoramic views provided by member Roberto Zanconato. Hopefully, some of these will appear in future printed editions of Opening Times.

Ian Baptist (Festival Committee Member and Cider Bar Manager)

A Look Back In Time

10 YEARS AGO

The Son of Sid brewery, operated by Bob Mitchell at the Chequers in Little Gransden, became the first commercial brewery in the Huntingdonshire CAMRA branch area since the closure of Paines in St Neots just over 20 years earlier, shortly after its takeover by Tolly Cobbold. By late 2007, the Chequers had been in the Mitchell family for 57 years and had been run by Bob's father Sid before him.

CAMRA's Cambridgeshire branches sponsored and presented an award for the Community Pub of the Year organised by ACRE (Action with

Communities in Rural England). The award to the Blue Bell at Maxey, near Peterborough, was presented at a prestigious event at the Burgess Hall in St Ives by Kathy Hadfield-Moorhouse, chair of Huntingdon CAMRA. The Blue Bell was selected from eight nominations by the four CAMRA branches in the county.

The 'Intelligent Choice' report, jointly organised by CAMRA, brewers and other industry players, refuted a prevalent view at the time that real ale was in terminal decline. Report author Pete Brown said that 'we now have more brewers in the UK than at any point over the last 50 years, many of whom are reporting soaring sales'.

CAMRA launched a campaign to point out the environmental benefits of real ale. CAMRA research had shown that nearly half of the UK's beer sales were sold in non-returnable containers. Drinking real ale in pubs was cited as a way of making a significant environmental contribution and promoting local economies and fewer 'beer miles'. The research project also reported that 54% of adults wished to see at least one local brew in every pub. CAMRA pointed out that with 600 UK brewers few pubs lacked a local brewer, yet the domination of global drinks companies was evident from the lack of local beers in many pubs. The campaign urged consumers to choose local beers and help keep money and jobs in the local communities.

25 YEARS AGO

St Neots CAMRA held meetings to plan the second CAMRA beer festival in St Ives. This followed a successful first St Ives Booze on the Ouse at the town's Burgess Hall in summer 1992, which had offered a range of 35 real ales. It also trialed CAMRA's prototype cask cooling system, which was then used at CAMRA's Great British Beer Festival for the first time later that year – the first event at its current venue, London Olympia.

CAMRA accused the UK's national brewers of sabotaging the government's attempts to free up Britain's beer market, by 'back door deals' with numerous pub chains. These has been

newly created from the estates of pubs that the big brewers had been forced to sell under the government beer orders. The aim of the enforced sale had been to increase competition and consumer choice by freeing pubs from the tie, but CAMRA's Iain Lowe said 'Our investigations show that drinkers are seeing their pubs change ownership but the beer choice is the same or often reduced.'

But one area where the beer orders appeared to be working was in the guest beer provision, requiring the big brewers to allow its pub licensees to buy a guest beer. CAMRA lobbying led to clarification from the government's Office of Fair Trading that licensees could buy the additional guest beer from any source, even if the landlord brewer was also supplying guest beers. CAMRA reported that wagon loads of cask ale were being ferried into the depots of Bass, the biggest UK brewer. Conversely, Bass was enjoying a revival in sales of its real ale Draught Bass, its most popular beer being supplied as a guest beer to other brewer's pubs.

CAMRA launched its first Dan Kane Award for academic studies on real ale as a memorial to CAMRA's former Scottish regional organiser Dan Kane, who had died in 1992.

Compiled by Paul Moorhouse

HUNTS SOCIAL DIARY

Recent events organised by Juliet Ferris, our branch Social Secretary, included a post beer festival 'Mystery Coach Trip' on 18 Nov to Lord Conrad's Brewery in Dry Drayton. Owner Jon Neale put on a number of real ales and also ciders from the **Cambridge Cider Company** for us to try. Our large group filled the small brewery and Jon was really grateful for the donations to Cancer Research UK which totalled a tremendous £250.

Following the brewery visit we called in a several local pubs. Everyone had a fantastic day and

photographs can be found on our branch website.



The final social event before the New Year was the now annual Christmas Beer shopping day in St Neots on 17 Dec.

Social events planned so far for 2018 are:

Sat 24 Feb - 14:00

Festival Promotion around St Neots, Meet for a beer before and after.

Sun 11 Mar - 13:30

Festival Set-up for Booze on the Ouse at the Priory Centre, St Neots. Really good fun, everyone welcome to come get involved, contact the Social Secretary. Food and beer provided.

Thu 15 - Sat 17 Mar

Festival opens at noon. **Booze On the Ouse**, Priory Centre, St Neots. Please come along to our local branch festival or why not volunteer to assist!

Sun 18 Mar - 09:00

Festival Take-down at the Priory Centre, St Neots. Breakfast provided after take-down (along with beer if you want it!)

Sat 12 May - 14.00

Hunts Branch AGM, Upstairs in The **Falcon**, Huntingdon. All branch members are invited to attend; please bring your membership card

An up to date listing of events can be found at: **www.hunts.camra.org.uk/diary**, or please contact our social secretary, Juliet Ferris, at **socials@hunts.camra.org.uk**

BEER FESTIVAL DIARY

East Anglian / Regional

There are a number of CAMRA beer festivals taking place in the East Anglia region in the coming months. Most of these festivals will be looking for volunteer staff. So even if you can only spare an hour or two, please go online and complete a volunteer form. Note that to volunteer for some festivals, you will need to be a CAMRA member.

Tue 20 - Sat 24 Feb

Great British Beer Festival Winter (GBBFW), The Halls, Norwich. Several local pubs usually hold their own beer festivals at the same time.

Fri 2 & Sat 3 Mar

Chappel Winter Beer Festival, East Anglian Railway Museum, Chappel.

Wed 11 - Sat 14 Apr

Maldon Beer & Cider Festival, Plume School, Maldon.

Wed 18 - Sat 21 Apr

East Anglian Beer & Cider Festival, Apex, Bury St Edmunds.

Mon 21 - Sat 26 May

Cambridge Beer Festival, Jesus Green, Cambridge.

Tue 29 May - Sat 2 Jun

Colchester Real Ale & Cider Festival, Arts Centre, Colchester.

Details of local beer festivals, especially pub festivals and events held in local villages are posted onto our website as soon as we hear about them. Last year there were more than ever with many accessible by public transport so there is no need to drink and drive.

Look out for the dates for the following festivals that are expected to take place in 2018.

Papworth Beer Festival, Papworth Village Hall, organised by Papworth Brewery (April and Sep/Oct)

- King of the Belgians (25-28 May & late Aug)
- Crown Inn, Broughton (late May)

- White Swan, Conington (mid June)
- Pig 'N Falcon, St Neots - at least four beer festivals annually and a cider festival in October
- Willingham Village Beer Festival (late June)
- Swavesey Cider Festival (late July)
- St Neots Football Club (early June)
- Oliver Cromwell, St Ives (late June)
- St Ives Rugby Club (late June)
- Falcon, Huntingdon (mid June)
- St Ives Craft Beer & Cider Festival (28-29 July)
- Oliver Cromwell Winter Ale festival (late Nov)

Please contact us at news@hunts.camra.org.uk if you have relevant festivals you would like us to publicise in Opening Times and on our website.

Opening times

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