

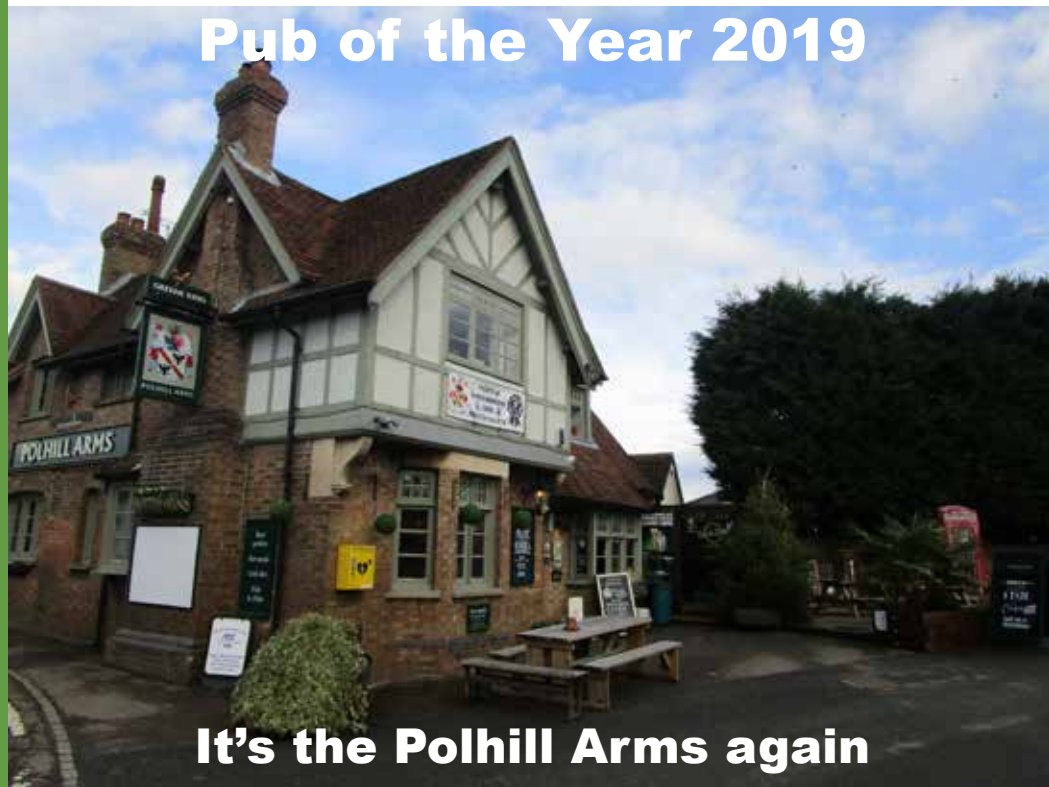
FREE

The Firkin



Magazine of CAMRA North Bedfordshire • Vol 44 No 1 Spring 2019

Pub of the Year 2019



It's the Polhill Arms again

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER
FULLER'S SELLS OUT
LOCAL CHAMPION PUBS
BEER AND BEAUTY
BEDFORD BEER FESTIVAL
PUB AND BREWERY NEWS

SPRING FESTIVALS
NOVEMBER PUB TRIP
THE JANUARY ROUND
BEER IN SPACE
BRANCH DIARY

The Campaign for Real Ale is a consumer organisation founded in 1971

The Fox at Carlton



**North Beds
CAMRA Country
Pub of the Year
2016 & 2017**



Beer Festival – 24th–27th May 2019

18 Real Ales and 6 Ciders

Live music and food Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening

01234 720235



[thefoxatcarlton](https://www.facebook.com/thefoxatcarlton)

www.thefoxatcarlton.pub

THE DEVONSHIRE ARMS

*Serving Real Draught
Cider
Fine Wines*



*Lovely courtyard
garden
Free Wi-Fi available*

*A local community pub in the
Castle Road area of Bedford with a
warm welcome and friendly
atmosphere.*

*Serving a range of Quality Cask Ales
— Eagle IPA, Young's London Gold,
Courage Directors and range of three
guest ales.*

**CAMRA North Beds Pub of the Year 2013,
Cider Pub of the Year 2018, Town Pub of the Year 2019**

Devy Beer Festival, Friday 3rd - Monday 6th May

www.devonshirearmsbedford.co.uk

32 Dudley Street, Bedford MK40 3TB Tel: 01234 301170



Chairman's Corner

It's awards time again and the decisions have been made. Our trips over the past year have revealed a good number of pubs with

seriously good beer, more than I can recall in previous years. That is encouraging, as is the fact that more pubs are stocking real cider throughout the year. After due consideration we picked the Polhill Arms, Renhold, as North Beds CAMRA Pub of the Year, retaining the title they won in 2018. They also reclaimed the title they had in 2017 of our Cider Pub of the Year.

Also reclaiming its title was the RAFA Club as Club of the Year, a title it held in 2017. North Bedfordshire was among the first branches to name a Young Members PoTY. It is hoped that the idea will grow with the development of other rounds they can go

on to, as is the case with the other category winners mentioned above. We hope to make an award in this category again in the future.

Our final two awards are again branch-level only. The Devonshire Arms is Town Pub of the Year while the Three Compasses at Upper Dean has been named Most Improved Pub of the Year. The Three Compasses has never been in the Good Beer Guide but has been improving steadily over a number of years. That last award highlights an issue we have – finding all the pubs worthy of consideration – which is where you come in. If you like pubs and good beer are you a member of CAMRA? If not, why not? If you are then start helping by scoring your beers through WhatPub.com. That helps us identify which pubs are worth a closer look on one of our trips.

Roger Stokes

Fuller's Sells Out to Asahi

Fuller's in Chiswick was for some time the only remaining large, long-established independent brewery in London, until some the recent spate of microbreweries began to grow bigger and are now known as craft breweries. Fuller's is very successful – its flagship beer London Pride even gets on to airlines in canned form – so everyone thought it was a permanency. It took over Gale's, but continued to make their beers at Chiswick. Very recently it took over the justly famed Dark Star Brewery in Sussex, keeping their site at Partridge Green open but starting to badge the beers as 'Fuller's Dark Star'.

So it came as a great shock to read that Fuller's are selling their brewery and, like Young's, becoming just a pubco. This is sadly what tends to happen when a family-owned brewery becomes a plc and the money-men replace the brewers in charge.

But the buyer isn't one of the international megabrewery combines, it's a Japanese brewer, Asahi. Tokyo Pride, anyone? Fuller's says that Asahi will continue to brew at the Chiswick site and will still produce the same beers, but one cannot help having some fears. Just as Molson Coors bought Sharp's to get hold of the Doom Bar brand, perhaps Asahi really wants Fuller's for London Pride. And real estate alongside the Thames in Chiswick is very valuable. What is the future for beers like ESB, Oliver's Island, Bengal Lancer, Gale's Seafarer's, not to mention the Vintage Ales, Brewer's Reserves and, of course, Dark Star Hophead? In the meanwhile pop into the Parcel Yard in Kings Cross station, and taste a wide range of Fuller's cask ales while you still can.

Fytton Rowland



Bedfordshire's
Premier Home
Brew and
Wine Making
Specialists

- Comprehensive range of bitters
- Large choice of wines
- Wide selection of lagers
- Excellent prices
- Free advice

HOME BREW HELPLINE
01234 353856

contactus@thehappybrewer.com
www.thehappybrewer.com

Open Tuesday to Saturday 9.30am to 5pm
Sunday 10.30am to 4.30pm
Closed Monday except Bank Holidays

Roxton Garden Centre

@ The Black Cat Roundabout
Bedford Road, Roxton, MK44 3DY

POLHILL ARMS



New Garden & Play Area

sky sports

BT Sport



Follow us on
Facebook

Cask Ale is our Speciality

Greene King fine Ales & Changing
Guest Beers on Five Handpumps

Great British Pub Food Served

Large Family Play Garden & Car
Park



T: 01234 771398 W: www.polhillarms.co.uk
Wilden Road, Renhold, Bedford, MK41 0JP



A quintessential village
pub

Real ales - Greene King
IPA & Abbot regular,
plus up to three guest ales

Relaxed charm of a
village local with a
varied menu of quality
home cooked food

*No gimics - just a great
British pub!*

Bell, Odell

Horsefair Lane
MK43 7AU

01234 910850



TheBellInOdell

Opening times:

Mon-Thu 11.30-2.30,
5-11; Fri-Sat 11.30-
11.30; Sun 12-10.30



The Anchor
Riverside Pub & Dining

The Anchor Inn and
Restaurant is by the river
Great Ouse in the village
of Great Barford, next to
the famous bridge.

We have a restaurant that
seats 40 guests, and a
more informal dining
area in the main bar.

All food is prepared on
the premises, by our
highly skilled chefs from
locally sourced produce.



We have a wide range of
real ales from a variety
of sources that we offer.
You will find that we
change our range
frequently!

Open: Mon-Thu 12-3,
6.30-11; Fri 12-3, 5.30-11;
Sat 12-11; Sun 12-10.30

Food: Mon-Thu 12-2.30,
6.30-9.30; Fri 12-2.30,
6-9.30; Sat 12-9.30; Sun
12-8

Anchor Inn, High Street, Great Barford,
MK44 3LF, 01234 870364

www.anchorinngreatbarford.co.uk

AnchorGreatbarford

They are the Champions!

North Beds CAMRA has chosen its best pubs for 2019 – and guess what, several of them are the same as the 2018 champions! Which is not really surprising, as good pubs tend to stay good, although changes (for better or worse) can happen when a new licensee takes over looking after the cellar. Here are the 2019 winners.



Polhill Arms

Pub of the Year

The overall Pub of the Year (PoTY) for North Bedfordshire is, for the second year running, the **Polhill Arms** at **Renhold**. Licensees Paul Smith and Lindsay Kent have run this pub for a long while now, and have taken it from being threatened with closure to being very successful, and deservedly so – both the drinks and the food are excellent, and the atmosphere is warm and welcoming too.

It's a Greene King house, so if you're a fan of Greene King IPA, you'll find the best pint of it for miles around at the Polhill. But

interesting guest beers appear as well as Greene King ones. Meals are served, except on Sunday evenings and Mondays.

It's now the only pub in Renhold, and it is in Salph End, the part of the village nearest to Bedford. This means that to sample its charms, townsfolk can get to within ten minutes' walk of the Polhill Arms on town bus number 5, which runs in the evening. If you haven't been there yet, give it a try. If you must drive, it has plenty of parking too.



Devonshire Arms

Town Pub of the Year

Since the Polhill Arms is technically a country pub, we also have chosen our best urban pub for 2019. It is the **Devonshire Arms** in **Dudley Street** in Bedford's Castle Road neighbourhood. Licensees Ronnie and Rebecca took it over a few years ago when Martin and Naomi decided to retire. We all said (the Devvy is my own local) that they'd be a very hard act to follow, but Ronnie and Rebecca have managed it! It's a proper town local pub, with limited food (pies only) but an excellent choice of cask ales well kept, a couple of real ciders, and always a friendly welcome from licensees and staff alike. It's been a Charles Wells house ever since the man himself bought the site from the developers when Dudley Street was under construction in the 1890s. Nowadays that means various beers from the Marston's stable can appear, though Eagle remains the best-seller. Take town bus 4 (another route with an evening

They are the Champions! ... continued

service) to the Dudley Street stop; it's just a couple of minutes walk down the street. Just don't try to park in Dudley Street in the evening...

Cider Pub of the Year

In 2018, the Devonshire Arms was our cider pub of the year. For 2019, though, it's....

the **Polhill Arms at Renhold!**

Paul Smith keeps two real ciders all year round, rising to four in the summer months. Nuff said.

Most Improved Pub of the Year

This year's most Improved pub is possibly one of the least-known pubs in North Beds. It's also the furthest north pub in



Bedfordshire, tucked away in the country lanes – the **Three Compasses at Upper Dean**. Its improvement has been slow and gradual rather than a sudden affair in a single year, and has taken place under several successive licensees, so we decided its improvement should now be recognised. This attractive, thatched village pub serves GK IPA, St Austell Tribute and Tim Taylor's Landlord all in good condition, and serves good pub food on Monday-Saturday evenings and Saturday and Sunday lunchtimes.

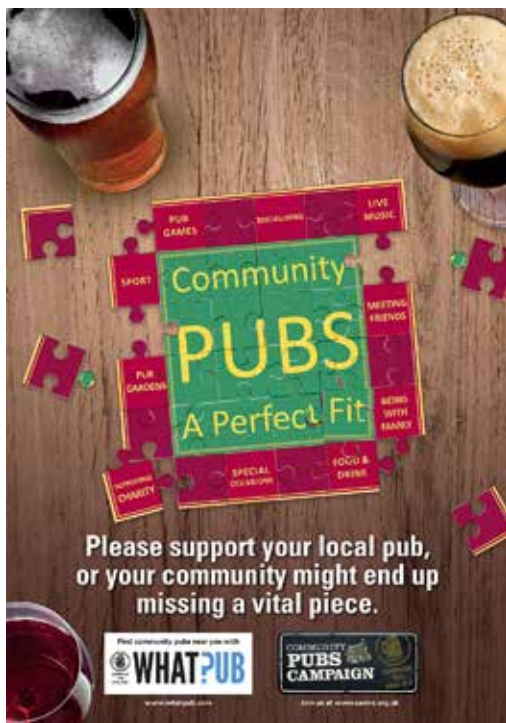
Club of the Year

The Royal Air Force Association (**RAFA**) **Club** in **Ashburnham Road**, Bedford, has been selected as North Beds CAMRA's club of the year. The club is happy to admit card-carrying CAMRA members, and you don't have to be ex-RAF to belong to the club



either. It has several cask ales on all the time, and these can include quite unusual ones nowadays, though Wells beers tended to predominate in the past. The steward and committee have always been friendly to CAMRA and we have held meetings there from time to time, including an East Anglian Regional Meeting on one occasion.

Fytton Rowland



Beer, the Unusual Beauty Aid

We strive to be beautiful and there is a massive market out there selling a range of beauty products.. There are some people who swear by using beer to make themselves look beautiful, this article explores these beauty tips and I try them out for myself.

Foot Bath The Tip – Fill a bowl with warm water and add half a bottle of beer, the enzymes will soften dry skin on the feet.

Result – My feet were softer. However, I feel that the warm water would've done the job alone. **BEAUTY.**

Shiny Hair The Tip – Whilst in the shower instead of using your regular shampoo reach for a bottle of beer instead.

Result – My hair smelled of beer all day, but it felt as dry as straw. **UGLY.**

Face Mask The Tip – The various vitamins and minerals found in beer should aid in preventing premature aging. Mix beer, egg white and almond oil together to make a face mask, Allow it to dry then peel and wash.

Result – It made my face feel sticky and the egg white went all flakey. It seemed to have no effect (compared to actual face masks). **UGLY.**

Exfoliator The Tip – Mash three strawberries together with beer to form a paste, and then apply to the face like a standard exfoliator. It should clean the skin as well as improving skin tone.

Result – The strawberry seeds worked as an exfoliator but I feel the beer was just a liquid base and water would work the same. **UGLY.**

As you can see by my results, I found that typically beer doesn't seem to have achieved the ultimate effect with beauty. The wise thing to do is to drink it and not splash it on your body.

Dan Veal

The Firkin

Published every three months by the North Bedfordshire Branch of

CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. The Firkin is produced and distributed by volunteers to most pubs and clubs in Bedfordshire north of a line joining the M1, Clophill, Shefford and Tempsford. We welcome correspondence and any relevant features for publication. Views expressed here may not be those of the Editor, the Campaign for Real Ale, or its North Bedfordshire Branch.

Items for publication in the next issue should reach the Editor by the date shown at the foot of this page.

Edited by Fytton Rowland, 73 Dudley Street, Bedford
MK40 3TA, firkin@northbeds.camra.org.uk
Printed by CKN Print, Northampton
Advertising sales by Neil Richards MBE, Matelot Marketing
Tel 01536 358670 Mob 07710 281381
N.Richards@btinternet.com
© Campaign for Real Ale Ltd 2019

Contact us

Chairman, Press and Publicity Officer and Clubs Officer: Roger Stokes –
chairman@northbeds.camra.org.uk
pressofficer@northbeds.camra.org.uk
clubsofficer@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Secretary and Pub Campaigns Co-ordinator:
Peter Argyle – 01234 822698
secretary@northbeds.camra.org.uk
pubcampaigns@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Newsletter Editor and Pubs Protection Officer:
Fytton Rowland – 01234 303221
firkin@northbeds.camra.org.uk
pubprotection@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Festival Organiser: To be appointed for 2019
beerfestival@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Socials: Gary Mudd – 01234 741871
socials@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Finance: John Keays –
treasurer@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Membership: Neil Ratnett – 01234 344388
membership@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Website: Alan Hawkins –
webmaster@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Cider Rep: Sue Fossey –
cider-representative@northbeds.camra.org.uk

Young Members' Rep, Social Networking and Vice-Chairman:

Dan Veal – youngmembers@northbeds.camra.org.uk
vice-chairman@northbeds.camra.org.uk
socmedia@northbeds.camra.org.uk



Bedford's Oldest Beer Festival is CAMRA's - Accept no Substitutes!

The local branch of CAMRA has been running a beer festival in Bedford for 41 years - all but one of them in the Corn Exchange - and the 42nd will take place there on **2nd-5th October 2019**.

Although other beer festivals take place in the town, and CAMRA members enjoy visiting them, none of the others have such a long continuous history. The Borough Council for some years ran a German beer festival each spring in connection with the town's twinning with Bamberg, but it ceased after the 2017 event. The Bedford Swan Hotel also ran a festival for several years in the autumn, shortly after the CAMRA one each year, but again their 2017 festival was the last. A number of our favourite pubs in the town and the surrounding villages run annual beer festivals too, again they are very enjoyable and successful, and we certainly aren't knocking them.



But the fact remains that **the** Bedford Beer and Cider Festival, the oldest and biggest, is CAMRA's. We pride ourselves that, like other CAMRA festivals, it is run entirely by volunteers. As we go to press, planning for this year's festival is just beginning, so we can't yet reveal much detail about it. We do now know though that our indomitable chairman, Roger Stokes, will be festival organiser, though he will be assisted by his

two immediate predecessors Lynne Ratnett and Fytton Rowland, who between them have led eight festivals. All of the regular ingredients will be there - a wide choice of cask ales, many of them rarely available in Bedford; a similarly wide range of real ciders and perries; beers from around the world, including some from Bamberg, chosen by our resident expert Malcolm Roxburgh; excellent meals at lunchtime and in the evening; pub games; mead and chocolate stalls. But there may also be innovations that cannot yet be revealed, as we know that we can't stand still and new generations expect new ideas. Beer tastes change. And one of the things CAMRA stands for is a wide choice of beer, which we wouldn't have if a handful of international megabrewery companies were to control all beer production, as is already the case in some countries.



So please support the oldest beer festival in the town, preferably by volunteering to help with the event in some way. Help is needed before the event as well as during it email beerfestival@northbeds.camra.org.uk

But even if that isn't possible for you to help, support a wide range of independent British breweries and cider producers by coming along to the Corn Exchange in the first week of October and sampling a selection of their wares!

Fytton Rowland

Pub and Brewery News

Bridge, Shefford



Welcome to new licensees Tom and Vicki, who recently took over this popular pub in High Street, near where a

railway bridge once stood. Eagle IPA and up to two guest ales are available. The pub caters for all ages, with a large sports TV screen in the larger bar, while the smaller bar is quieter. Wednesday is quiz night and there is usually live music or karaoke at weekends. 01462 351395 or [facebook/The-Bridge-Shefford](https://www.facebook.com/The-Bridge-Shefford)

White Hart Hotel, Shefford

This handsome old coaching inn in the town centre reopened after refurbishment and



exterior repairs. Greene King IPA and up to two guest ales are available, with a range of bar snacks and

full meals served in the bar or restaurant. Four ensuite rooms are available for bed and breakfast. Families welcome, with a child-friendly garden available in good weather. 01462 811144 or whitehartshefford.co.uk

Cricketers, Goldington Rd, Bedford



After a short closure in November for refurbishment, this popular community pub reopened with new landlords Clay and

Jacqueline Spencer. Beers are much the same as before with Black Sheep Best Bitter, Fuller's London Pride, Sharp's Doom Bar and a guest ale. The pub is closed on Monday. 01234 330049.

Three Cups, Newnham St, Bedford

Welcome to new manager Sarah, who is running this popular old pub on much the same lines as her predecessor. Although the Cups is now home to White Park Brewery, brewing has not yet re-started following the move from Cranfield last year. Greene King IPA, Old Speckled Hen and five changing guest beers usually from microbreweries are available, together with good home-cooked meals. Local CAMRA Town Pub of the Year 2018. 01234 352153.

Horse & Groom, Clapham



A new landlord recently took over the Horse and Groom, an attractive old inn on High

Street. Greene King IPA and Abbot are served, with a guest ale usually available and perhaps a real cider when summer comes. He is trying out new menu ideas, but the pub is no longer linked to the Barrel & Stone pizza company. 01234 217502.

Brewery Z, Bedford

Brewery Z was formed in May 2018 by some of the team at a valve distributor called Zoedale Ltd, who sell valves, pumps and actuators to the UK brewing market. It is located with Zoedale in the Priory Business Park, Bedford. They use a small-batch brewing system marketed by Zoedale. Their craft beers (bottled only) are available for on- and off-sale at the Beerfly in St Cuthberts Street, Bedford.

Spring Beer Festivals

Loughborough Beer Festival

7-9 March at Polish Club, True Lovers Walk, off William St, LE11 3DB. More than 60 beers plus cider and perry, food at all sessions. Regular train connections from Bedford and Luton. loughboroughcamra.co.uk

Leicester Beer Festival

13-16 March at Haymarket Theatre, LE1 3AF. About 240 real ales plus cider, perry and gin bar, hot and cold food all sessions. Regular train connections from Bedford and Luton. leicester.camra.org.uk

St Neots 'Booze on the Ouse' Beer & Cider Festival

14-16 March at Priory Centre, PE19 6BH. Over 70 real ales plus 15 ciders. Free soft drinks for drivers, hot and cold food at all sessions. X5 bus from Bedford, Market Square 5 min. hunts.camra.org.uk

11th Sir William Peel Beer Festival

25-28 April at Sir William Peel, High Street, Sandy SG19 1AG. 40 real ales and ciders available, barbecue and live music. 73 bus from Bedford. sirwilliampeel.webs.com

27th East Anglian Beer & Cider Festival

1-4 May, The Arc, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3FD. Over 100 real ales and ciders, including many regional brewers. Rail and bus stns easy walk. westsuffolk.camra.org.uk

Devvie Beer & Cider Festival

3-6 May at Devonshire Arms, Dudley St, Bedford. Extra real ales and ciders on gravity plus the regular range. Local

CAMRA Town Pub of the Year 2019. devonshirearmsbedford.co.uk

46th Cambridge Beer Festival

20-25 May under canvas on Jesus Green. Wide selection of local and national beers, plus cider, perry, mead, wines and foreign beers. Food includes local bread, pies, ham and cheese. X5 bus from Bedford, Victoria Ave 5 min. cambridgebeerfestival.com

Fox Spring Beer Festival

24-27 May at Fox, High St, Carlton MK43 7LA. About 18 real ales + 6 ciders served from a temporary bar in the garden. Four live bands, pizza, curry and hog roast. CAMRA Country Pub of the year 2016-17. 25 bus from Bedford. thefoxatcarlton.pub

Northampton County Beer Festival

31 May to 2 June at Becket's Park, Northampton NN1 5BB. Wide range of real ales, craft beers, lager, cider, wines and spirits, food and local bands. Run by CAMRA with Phipps NBC Brewery. 41 bus from Bedford. northants.camra.org.uk

Hitchin Beer & Cider Festival

6-8 June at Rugby Football Club, Old Hale Way SG5 1XL. About 150 real ales, ciders and international beers, food at all sessions. 9A/B buses from Bedford. hitchinbeerfestival.org.uk

And not in the Spring, but put the dates into your diary anyway:

Great British Beer Festival 2019

6-10 August at Olympia, London

**Black headings: CAMRA festivals;
blue headings, others**

Heading West

The recently reopened **Foresters Arms** in **Bedford** was the starting point for our November trip. Some may have thought there was no hope, as it had been shut for several years, but now it has been thoroughly refurbished to form a bright attractive pub with food available as well. Eagle was 'coming soon' but we still had a choice of Young's Special, Adnams Ghostship and the latest Wandering Brewer ale (despite it being called Error 404).

While there I was shown the cellar, enough to make some licensees jealous as it is spacious and with a relatively high ceiling so they can use the spear taps which help keep the beer in good condition throughout the barrel.

Then it was time to board the bus and circle the town (to avoid the Christmas lights switch-on) to head out to the



Stewartby Club

Stewartby Club. Rather than being among the bingo players we were in the back room

where Ringwood's Razor Back and Banks's Amber were on the bar. Mansfield's Cask Ale was available from the other bar but it was the end of the barrel.

Heading out of town towards Ampthill we came to the **Chequers**, officially **Houghton Conquest** but well out of the village. The Doom Bar and Bombardier were both in reasonable nick in what, given its location, has to be a food-led pub.

Back in the village proper the **Knife and Cleaver** is another food-led hostelry.



Knife and Cleaver

Here the choice was provided by Marston's – Directors and Wainwright. Both were fresh casks and in good condition.

The **Royal Oak** was the next port of call where we found ourselves to be the only customers. Eagle is the only choice here as there isn't enough demand to allow a second ale to be offered if they are both to be in reasonable condition.

Wilstead was the next village, where Eagle was again the only ale available in the **Red Lion**. The later arrivals at the bar were more fortunate than those at the front of the queue. A fresh barrel replaced one that was showing it was near the end.



No need for the coach to take us to the next venue as it was just across the road to the **Woolpack**. GK IPA

drinkers were out of luck here as it was not available. The choice was between the seasonal Gangly Ghoul (on special offer at £2.50) and the familiar Olde Trip. Despite the special offer price on the Ghoul both were eminently drinkable.

Given the time we did not visit the Red Lion in Elstow but headed straight back into town for our regular drop-off at the **Pilgrim's Progress**.

Roger Stokes

Ten Things You May Not Know About Beer

1. The water you brew with can have an impact on the final taste of the beer. Because of the success of beers from Burton upon Trent, people realised it was due to the water. Thus the process of Burtonisation was born, this is adding gypsum into water to make it similar to the water from Burton upon Trent.
2. There are only two drinks consumed more than beer worldwide. These are water and tea.
3. The oldest known beer recipe is about 3900 years old! It was created by the Sumerians in southern Mesopotamia (now known as Iraq). The recipe was part of a poem honouring Ninkasi, the goddess of brewing. Although there is evidence of alcoholic drinks similar to beer as far back as 7000BCE in China.
4. Zythology is the study of beer and brewing.
5. In Norse mythology they believed that upon reaching Valhalla, there would be a goat called Heiðrún waiting for them that provides an endless supply of mead.
6. In ancient Babylonia if a brewer made bad beer they were punished severely. This

punishment was to be drowned in it.

7. Think beer is a “man’s drink”? Think again! In ancient Egypt there was a law that prevented men from making or selling beer. Also across the ancient world brewing beer was linked to bread making so the first brewers were women. In ancient Peru only women of noble birth were allowed to brew beer.
8. In 19th Century Germany, it was believed that nursing mothers had to drink up to 7 pints of beer a day to healthily breast-feed children.
9. Cenosisilicaphobia is the fear of an empty glass.
10. India Pale Ales (IPAs) were invented to survive the long sail between Great Britain and India. They found that the pale ale would go bad during the voyage, so brewers began brewing it with a higher alcohol content and added more hops to preserve the beer. Thus a new style of beer was born and was named IPA. Why not go to the bar now and try an IPA?

Dan Veal

AWARD WINNING BEERS BREWED IN HERTFORDSHIRE



Our 12 Monthly Specials for 2018 are themed around the heroic wartime achievements of the Bletchley Park codebreakers and are brewed as part of a fundraising campaign in support of Bletchley Park and The National Museum of Computing.



WEEKLY DELIVERIES IN YOUR AREA



TRING
BREWERY Co.

Dunsley Farm, London Rd, Tring HP23 6HA



01442 890721



www.tringbrewery.co.uk

The January Round

As regular Firkin readers will know by now, North Beds CAMRA always does a series of pub crawls – sorry, pub assessment visits – in January, usually two rural minibus trips and one walking tour of Bedford town centre. This year, no minibus was available to us on 17th January, so we did the walkabout first, starting at the **Bear** in the High



The Bear

Street. Since it reverted to being a proper pub, the Bear has become a good real ale place, and on this

occasion it had Bombardier, Marston's Pedigree and Hobgoblin Gold on the handpumps – all of them from the Marston's stable, though it isn't a tied house and once belonged to Greene King!. It wasn't busy at 7 p.m. on a very cold Thursday in January, so having three cask ales on was pretty good, and the Hobgoblin was in good nick.

A one-minute walk across the street brought us to the **Brewhouse and Kitchen**, a little busier than the Bear as people were having an early meal. There were no changes in the usual range of four cask ales available – Banker's Draught, Braxator, Intrepid and Invarsity – and I tried the strongest, Invarsity at 6% abv. It was in good shape, though perhaps a little cold for a cask beer – it must have been hard to keep the cellar *up* to temperature on those frigid nights!

Next we set off for the long march down to and across the town bridge to the **Kings Arms**. This large Greene King house has been kept by the enthusiastic Sean O'Donnell for a number of years and he

welcomed into his warm pub, which offered GK IPA, London Glory and Fireside (GK's winter ale) together with Brains Rev James as guest. I tried the Fireside and found it very palatable, and quite similar to Young's Winter Warmer.

Next, a new experience for us all – a pub visit to the **Swan Hotel**! The former hotel bar, which for years had only Bombardier



Pen and Cob Bar

on a handpump, is no more, but a new bar in the River Room has been christened the Pen and Cob and

had two handpumps in use, with Eagle and Marston's EPA available. I found the EPA acceptable, and it's good to see that the Swan has decided to be a year-round pub.

A stroll along the Embankment then brought us to – the **Embankment**. This hotel-restaurant-pub, a Wells house, has four handpumps of which three were in use that evening – Eagle, Pedigree and Marston's 61 Deep were on them. I like 61 deep, and I found it in an acceptable condition. Like the Brewhouse and Kitchen the Embankment had a fair number of diners in, though by now they were enjoying a late dinner. Strolling up the alley alongside the pub, we reached Newnham Street and our last two pubs of the evening.

The **Castle**, another Wells house, had Eagle, Directors, Young's Bitter and Special, 61 Deep again, and as guest Adnams Ghost Ship. I can't resist Ghost Ship, even though it's now widely available, and I found it in excellent condition. The pub was warm and

The January Round ... continued

welcoming, as was our last stop, the **Three Cups**. Its popular manager, Bev, had just handed in her notice, but there was no noticeable change in the welcome or the quality of the beer. Greene King was represented by IPA and Old Speckled Hen but the local(ish) beers available were Kelchners Ampthill IPA (4.5% abv) and Small Batch (4.1% abv), XT's Animal Milk Stout (4.6% abv) and Tring Side Pocket for a Toad (3.6% abv). Also in this 'local hero' house was Severn Brewery's Late Hopped (4.4% abv)! The Kelchner's IPA was very nice.

On the following Thursday, our minibus tour started at the **Burnaby Arms** in Bedford's Prime Ministers district. This Wells house, kept by licensee Will, offered Eagle plus the then-current Wells Wandering Brewer beer Pilgrim Pale Ale, and Young's Winter Warmer. Winter Warmer didn't appear so much in Wells houses this year as it had in previous winters, so I tried it while I had the opportunity, and found it pretty good. We clustered around the Burnaby's cosy open fire to get warm for the long minibus ride to the **St John's Arms** in **Melchbourne**.



St John's Arms

handpumps: Marston's powerful Owd Rodger (7.4% abv!), Ringwood XXXX Porter (4.7 % abv), Wainwright (4.1 % abv) and the innocuous Brakspear's Bitter (3.4% abv). We were told that Directors and London Pride were waiting in the cellar, though. I like Brakspear's and

found it acceptable, especially in front of another roaring fire.

Next, on to a real favourite pub – the **Bedford Arms** at **Souldrop**, a lovely old village pub now extended for dining, quite busy on that evening. A free house, it offered some unusual beers alongside GK IPA and Black Sheep Best – the Old Pie Factory Brewery's Mince Pie and Parkway Brewery's Talking Parrot. So many of our group ordered the Parrot that it ran out, so I contented myself with Black Sheep, which I found to be very well kept as we expect at Souldrop. Licensee Fred, back at the helm after a bout of serious illness a couple of years ago, was behind the bar to welcome us.

Another favourite came next, the **Bell** at **Odell**, a GK house now back to its best under licensee James after a bad patch with the previous tenant. It offered GK IPA, Olde Trip and Ruddle's Best alongside guest Hogs Back TEA; Woodforde's Wherry had run out. The Hogs Back was just my cup of TEA, and well kept by a licensee who cares about cask ale.



We were spoiled that evening, as our next stop was another excellent village

real ale pub, the **Fox** at **Carlton**. Licensee Alison was alone behind the bar but coped admirably with the rush of business from our bus load. She had her usual Eagle and London Pride on, but her guest beers were uncommon in this area – Grundy's of Derby had supplied No Man's Land, a malty 4.5% abv beer which I sampled, and Firebird Brewery of

The January Round ... continued

Rudgwick in Sussex was represented by Parody, a so-called session bitter – at 4.5% abv!

Then we moved on to the Cock at Pavenham, where the fire was warm and licensee John O'Grady was welcoming but unfortunately little cask ale was available, so our visit was brief.

Our last stop before returning to Bedford was the **Royal George at Stevington**, no longer the only pub in the village, as the Red Lion reopened in November after several years of closure. The Royal George is, however, a 'proper pub' even though it does pub food, whereas the reopened Red Lion is more of a restaurant, so perhaps they won't be in direct competition for the village's trade. Even though it was close to eleven o'clock when we arrived, we were made very welcome and all three handpumps were in use: the regular beers, Eagle and Doom Bar, were accompanied by a very welcome guest to me, Adnams Ghost Ship, which I enjoyed greatly as it was in good condition. An oddity of the Royal George is that the bar is designed for heavy crowds – it has straps, as in old-fashioned London tube trains, for the standees to hang on to! Fortunately there were seats for us at the end of a long evening.

Another January Thursday, another trip... We started this time from the **White Horse** in **Newnham Avenue**, Bedford, a large suburban-style interwar pub kept by the popular Steve and Lucie Fuller for the last few years. We found the pub quite busy even at 6.30, with some people already dining. On that evening the cask ales on the handpumps in this Wells house were Eagle and Directors accompanied by Brakspears Bitter and two non-Marston's beers – Adnams Ghost Ship and Black Sheep Ram Tackle, the last-named a special for the Rugby Six Nations

tournament. I sampled the Brakspears and the Ghost Ship and they were in good nick, if a little pricey at £2/half.

Our minibus arrived and conveyed us the short distance to **Goldington Green**, where we dropped in to the **Anchor**, a modern family-friendly Greene King house mostly devoted to food.

Nevertheless, it has an area for drinkers



Anchor, Goldington Green

and it had GK IPA and Abbot, plus Belhaven Robert Burns Brown Ale (4.2% abv) from GK's

Scottish outpost, on its handpumps. Presumably the Belhaven was left over from Burns Night the week before; I tried it and found it a pleasant winter ale and well kept. GK's Six Nations beer, Scrum Down, was due up next. Of the three chain pubs near Goldington Green the Anchor is definitely the most real-ale friendly.

From the Anchor we travelled next to ...



Anchor, Great Barford

the **Anchor!** The one at **Great Barford** this time, the pleasant Wells house right by the River

Great Ouse. It was quite busy at 8 p.m. with diners and drinkers in the bar. Its handpumps offered Eagle, the then-

The January Round ... continued

current Wells Wandering Brewer beer, Pilgrims Pale, and Adnams Broadside. I'd had the Pilgrims elsewhere, so I tried Broadside for the first time in a long while. It's strong – 4.7% abv – dark and malty, rather like Directors, and it was in good condition.



Moving on again we next arrived at the **Royal Oak** at **Roston**, a good

example of the pub becoming the community hub – it also incorporates the village post office and a cycle repair shop, and a restaurant on Thursdays to Saturdays. On the other hand, it also has gambling machines, making it a bit like an Australian pub. The present licensees try to offer beers not usually found in Bedfordshire and on this evening they offered three beers all at 3.8% abv: Woodforde's Wherry (Norfolk), Cotleigh Tawny Owl (Somerset), and Parkway Brewery's Talking Parrot (also Somerset), the last-named at a bargain price of £2/ pint! Most of us chose the bargain, which turned out to be a traditional-style bitter.

Next stop: the **Hare and Hounds** at **Old Warden**, a Wells house best known these days for its food. It offered Eagle, Courage Best and Adnams Ghost Ship, but the Ghost Ship ran out before I could get my ration of it. Fortunately a cask of Young's Special was ready to replace it, and I got the first half out of the barrel and found it in good condition. It was getting late by now but some people were still eating and the pub was quite busy.



Which could not be said for our next stop, the **Greyhound** at **Haynes**, but even though it wasn't busy it had stayed open, and was rewarded by our custom. It had GK IPA, Timothy Taylor's Landlord and Oakham Scarlet Macaw on, though Tolly's low-gravity English Ale was coming on at the weekend. Many of our company chose Landlord but I can never resist Oakham's hoppy beers and found the Scarlet Macaw excellent.

Final stop of this January odyssey was the **Stone Jug** at **Clophill**, which was busy as usual despite the lateness of the hour. Its regulars are Otter Amber and St Austell Trelawney, both West Country beers rarely seen anywhere else in Bedfordshire, and in addition it was offering Leighton Buzzard Captain Cook, Mighty Oak Captain Bob – all of them 3.8% abv session bitters – and Cotleigh Barn Owl (4.5% abv) for those customers wanting something a bit stronger. I wasn't one of those and tried Captain Bob (which sounds as if it was named after Robert Maxwell!!) and found it a conventional traditional-style bitter, acceptable but not exciting.

Then it was home to Bedford after a month's hard work pub-assessing.

Fytton Rowland

Beer in Space

Their mission was to explore strange new worlds, seek out new life and new civilizations. To boldly go where no man has gone before! Wouldn't it be brilliant on such a mission to sit down and enjoy a pint of beer? In this article we explore Beer in Space!

Alcohol has already made it into space; in 1969 when Buzz Aldrin took communion on the moon he noted that the wine swirled like syrup in the chalice. The Russians took alcohol, mainly spirits, to space which led to grumblings when the International Space Station (ISS) was established and it was decided that it would be alcohol free. Spirits and wine are ok in space as they are flat, so act like water. Beer, however, contains gas.

In 1985 Pepsi and Coca-Cola were taken into space to observe the effects of carbonated beverages in space. They found that the gases stayed within the liquid instead of rising to the top, which meant that each sip was foamy. On top of this the astronauts were consuming more gas than usual, leading to a greater need to burp, but in micro-gravity the gases and liquids don't separate in the stomach, meaning that the astronauts had 'wet-burps' where small amounts of liquid were expelled with the gas. This would mean that a space beer would have to be fairly flat to be enjoyed. However, in 1996 Coca-Cola developed a system of dispensing a carbonated drink in space. It involves pumping the drink into a bottle (similar to a key-keg) where the bag inside the container maintains pressure around the liquid which helps to preserve the carbonation, taste and to serve it more easily.

Due to limitations of what astronauts can take to space they may not be able to take a few bottles or cans of their favourite beer as it would also lead to extra rubbish. So could they brew it in space?

Kirsten Sterrett of the University of Colorado was sponsored by Coors to study the effects of fermentation in micro-gravity back in 1998. She sent up a small sample of wort with a packet of yeast, the yeast was pitched in space and left to ferment. They found that instead of the yeast piling at the bottom it was evenly dispersed throughout the solution. When it returned to Earth they found it was very similar to beer brewed on Earth. Which means it is possible to ferment a beer in space.

In December 2017 Anheuser-Busch (owners of Budweiser), sent some barley seeds to the ISS as part of an experiment. They intended to study the effects of microgravity on the seeds and then study how barley would grow in space. Currently the results are unpublished, but this could lead to an exciting time for beer in space. If we could grow barley successfully then we are most of the way there. Anheuser-Busch do intend on being the first brewer on Mars. However, there is no research into growing hops, which require a lot of sunlight, in space.

Currently we know that water can be taken to space, we also know as of July 2018 that there might be a lake of water on Mars. We know that yeast can survive and ferment alcohol in space, if the barley was grown successfully then we are very close to seeing beer in space.

Dan Veal

Join up, join in, join the campaign



From
as little as
£25*
a year. That's less
than a pint a
month!

Discover
why we joined.
[camra.org.uk/
members](http://camra.org.uk/members)



Join us, and together we can protect the traditions of great
British pubs and everything that goes with them.

Become part of the CAMRA community today – enjoy discounted
entry to beer festivals and exclusive member offers. Learn about
brewing and beer and join like-minded people supporting our
campaigns to save pubs, clubs, your pint and more.

Join the campaign today at
www.camra.org.uk/joinup

*Price for paying by Direct Debit and correct at April 2017. Concessionary rates available. Please visit camra.org.uk/membership-rates



**CAMPAIGN
FOR
REAL ALE**

Branch Diary

CAMRA North Beds Branch business meetings are normally held on the second Thursday of alternate months. Social events are held on the third Thursday of each month.

Guests are welcome at social events, but members have priority on brewery visits. For latest information visit the branch website at northbeds.camra.org.uk

Unless otherwise stated, for all events further details can be obtained from, and bookings made with, Gary Mudd on 01234 741871 or e-mail

socials@northbeds.camra.org.uk

MARCH

Thursday 7th – Branch Meeting

Business Meeting at Kings Arms, St Mary's Street, Bedford, at 8 p.m. CAMRA members only.

Thursday 14th-Friday 15th – Informal Socials

At the St Neots Beer and Cider Festival (see page 10)

Monday 18th – Branch Annual General Meeting

At Eagle Brewery Visitors' Centre, Havelock Street, Bedford, at 7.30 for 8 p.m. CAMRA members only.

APRIL

Thursday 25th – Local brewery visit

To Potton Brewing Company. Booking essential.

MAY

Monday 6th – Branch May Day Breakfast

Details to be announced.

Thursday 9th – Branch Meeting

Business Meeting at Bedford Rowing Club, Duckmill Lane, Bedford, at 8 p.m. CAMRA members only.

Thursday 16th – Pubs visit

Details to be announced.

JUNE

Thursday 6th – Summer Day Out

Details to be announced.

Thursday 20th – Pubs visit

Details to be announced.

CAMRA CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

WHAT? PUB

whatpub.com
Featuring over 35,000 real ale pubs

Over 95% of Britain's real ale pubs featured

Information updated by thousands of CAMRA volunteers

Created by CAMRA who produce the UK's best beer & pub guide

Thousands of pubs at your fingertips!

The Anchor at Goldington Green – an Apology

In the Winter 2018-19 issue of the Firkin, we described a visit to the Anchor at Goldington Green, Bedford, illustrated by a photograph. Unfortunately the photograph was not The Anchor!

We apologise to the manager of the Anchor for this error. An actual photograph of the Anchor is included in this issue – see page 15.

The wrong photo was actually the Park Pub and Kitchen in Kimbolton Road. We also apologise to its licensee for attributing that photo to another pub.

by the people for the people

THE POTTON BREWING CO.

The Potton Brewing Company crafts a variety of small batch beers using only the finest ingredients, unfiltered and vegan friendly. From our core range to seasonal specials and experimental one-offs, all beers are available in cask and mini-keg to both pub trade and public. Selected beers also come bottled.



07789 680049

rich@pottonbrewingcompany.com

www.pottonbrewingcompany.com coming soon!

Potton Brewing Company
Unit 3, 8 Market Square

Potton
BEDS

SG19 2NP